

RACE IS A VERB:  
AN EFFECTIVE HISTORY OF YOUNG ADULTS SUBJECTED TO RACIAL VIOLENCE

By  
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(Under the Direction of: Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre, PhD.)

Abstract:

This study uses poststructuralism, Michel Foucault's "Effective History," and Africanist epistemology to examine ways in which scholars in k-16 schools perpetuate subjugation by using Eurocentric and other discourses. This study focuses on an interview study I conducted with three students I taught as a high school literacy educator. I use effective history to examine a racially motivated shooting event in which these one sixteen-year-old African-American male, three fifteen-year-old African-American females, and one fourteen-year-old African-American male shot at by a white security guard while attending a field trip in the southern United States. I examine reasons why these students were more afraid of revealing the fact that they were violated to their chaperones than in demanding the justice they deserved. As a participant as well as researcher, I enlist a qualitative researcher and university professor to conduct an intrasubjective interview with me. As a result of this interview, I discovered ways that my discourse as an African-American female educator reflected discourses characteristic of white supremacy. Using effective history, I examined events in the lives three of the young people involved and disclosed how their lives did not always circulate around race issues. This methodology revealed discourses participants used to resist effects of the shooting and other events in which they were raced or subjugated. Participants used Africanist, Eurocentric, and other discourses to negotiate their lives and challenges. I analyzed how discourses often oppressed them and spawned resistances or capitulation. In addition to the shooting, students experienced black-on-black violence, physical injury, abuse by collegiate athletic apparatuses, and efforts to diminish their scholarly achievements by professors. The methods of

resistance they engaged in tandem demonstrated the array of discursive tools needed by young people of color in order to succeed in secondary and postsecondary institutions. It also shows how poststructuralism, particularly “effective history,” is used along with race theories, Africanist epistemology, and Eurocentric discourse for qualitative studies.

INDEX WORDS: African-American athletes, African-American students, Africanist Epistemology, Bricolage, Discourse, Gossip data, Effective history, Eurocentrism, HBCU, Higher Education, Interviews, Panopticon, Postmodernism, Poststructuralism, Racial violence, Secondary schools, Student resistance, Subjectivity, Surveillance, Aristotle, Molefi Asante, Patricia Hill Collins, Jacques Derrida, Rene Descartes, Cynthia Dillard , Cheikh Anta Diop, Michel Foucault, Lewis Gordon, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Thomas Jefferson, Immanuel Kant, Abraham Lincoln, Fredrick Nietzsche.

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## DEDICATION

First, I dedicate this work to the ancestors. Ethel Jones Sr., my mother-in-law, was with me in spirit throughout though she departed this world in 1999. Other ancestors visited me in spirit during this journey. They include my father, Paul Johnson Jr., my grandmother, Julia Taylor, and her husband “Papa Sam” Taylor, my grandfather, Joe Franklin, and my uncle and sometimes surrogate father, John “Uncle Sonny Boy” Franklin. Secondly, I dedicate this to our future, my fifty-some-odd nieces and nephews, great-nieces and nephews, my cousins, and my young adopted family members, all of whom need someone to show them that we can do it. Finally, I dedicate this to my unborn blood who probably will one day talk about that crazy relative with the wild hair, the loud voice, and the genuine love for family, friends, and all things that live on the planet.

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## CHAPTER 1

*SANKOFA*<sup>1</sup>The Journey and the Cutting

"Knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting".(Foucault, 1984, p. 88)

Journey with me, reader, for I must “get the victory back,” as many black preachers say. In order to get back this victory I must cut. I must cut through a mangle of events to get at and past (or as the old folks say “through”) the shooting event in which five of my former students were victimized. Cutting necessarily precedes and follows this journey. Although it is not arduous from a physical or even scholarly perspective, this journey may challenge the reader on a level deeper than thought, rationality, and even ethics. Be patient with me, as I explore some ideas propagated for millennia with a twist, with a twisted measuring stick. Journey with me as I cut not up the tap root to the trunk and out to the usual branches, but across rhizomes long ago dead and regenerated (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). I will cut through canals that are continually restoring themselves, like the ends of a hand of ginger root. I will cut through, up, across, atop, up under, around, tangentially, diagonally about this philosophical landscape. I will miss some ideas to which I wish to, but could not, do justice. Likewise, I will belabor some that are so important to understanding how we resist this Event<sup>2</sup> as well as other events. I will also go through and across and around and up under other events and their effects. Please reader, bear with me. I am going somewhere and many places. I am crossing strata, sediments, and peaceful rocks worn by the water of powerful streams. I am cutting:

[B]eneath the great continuities of thought, beneath the solid, homogeneous  
manifestations of a single mind or a collective mentality, beneath the stubborn

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<sup>1</sup> *Sankofa* is the Andinkra word that is interpreted as “return and get it.”

<sup>2</sup> For future reference the shooting incident that precipitated this study will be referred to as the “Event” with uppercase first letter or as “the shooting.” Events with a lower case will be used to describe other actualities that are used to analyze effects and resistances to those effects.

development of a science striving to exist and to reach completion at the very onset, beneath the persistence of a particular genre, form, discipline, or theoretical activity. (Foucault, 1972, p. 4)

I am also cutting epistemology that created itself thousands of years after it was formed. I am cutting through religion and ideology that people mutilated so they could use it as a sword to cut the literal and spiritual heads of their enemies. I am cutting through cultures and sciences that have produced discourses, subjectivities, marginality, objectification, colonization, oppression, subjugation, rationality, and a variety of “centrisms.”

I am going to cut hybrid discourses created in Europe and America. These discourses include those generated by the Diaspora in the lush philosophical landscapes in the Caribbean, where the droppings of colonialism continually confuse those who stayed long after the master and his money left. They also include discourses used in postcolonial Mexico, Central and South America, places where folks have neither forgotten how to celebrate nor how to think. Finally, I will cross the Indian Ocean, or perhaps the Atlantic, since there are many oceans that can take me to the Motherland; and I will need to cut oceans in order to build a theoretical *Middle Passage* between North and South America and the formerly colonized in South, Central, and West Africa.

The discourses Michelle, Amari, and Stephanie, three of the five young adults involved in the Event, as well as the discourse of the guard who shot at them are formed in the nexus of hybrid epistemologies (Crenshaw, 1995; Visweswaran, 1994). Because it is difficult to capture these hybrid epistemologies, I feel the most suitable approach is one that disavows the essentializing of what it *means* to be Africanist, what it *means* to be Eurocentrist, what it *means* to be man, and what it *means* to be woman. Instead, I will describe what Eurocentric discourse and Africanist epistemology *do*. Additionally, postmodernism and poststructuralism, with their constant critique and deconstruction of master narratives and discourses, the subject, and power are well suited for this work (Butler, 1992;

Collins, 2000a; Foucault, 1972/1980; Lather, 2001; Lyotard, 1984; Rella, 1994; Smith, 2002; St. Pierre, 2000; Visweswaran, 1994).

Within poststructuralism, the work of Michel Foucault (1977), especially his idea of *effective history* is the best approach for analyzing Michelle, Stephanie, and Amari's stories. Effective history is best suited, first, because it disavows progressive, linear analyses of history. Secondly, effective history repudiates the focus from grand movements that take us from one period of "enlightenment" to another. Instead, it focuses on the disruptions and acts of resistance in a micro-history that does not necessarily revel in its progress. Effective history also allows focus on seemingly small insignificant events and the way power and resistance operate to change the way subjects constitute themselves or are constituted through these acts.

Just as effective history allows a focus on the small incident, the use of Africanist epistemology (Asante, 1998; Dillard, 2000; Gordon, 1990; Gordon, 1999; Hudson-Weems, 1995) allows me to seek those particularities, those hybrid ways of ethical existence created by people of African origin prior to and after colonialism and African slavery. Later these epistemologies were necessarily woven into new tapestries necessary to resist the effects of slavery and colonization (hooks, 2003; Smith, 2002).

### Falling

Events. They bring to mind concerts, southern state fairs, football games, or in my family, Thanksgiving dinners, the birth of a new one, or the farewell to a special ones gone on to where we will again see them one day. Jacques Derrida talks about the "event" differently. He speaks of it in a way that brings to mind a catastrophe, a crisis, a cataclysmic occurrence that no one expects because one is so busy living (or dying) in the nomadic journey that is life (Habermas, Derrida, & Borradori, 2003). Derrida speaks of the World Trade Center tragedy that occurred on September 11, 2001 as such an event. This event "fell on" the United States and the world (class notes, St. Pierre, 2002).

When something falls on us, we are hit from above in the most vulnerable part of our anatomy, our head—the nexus of operation for the rest of our body parts. If the event that falls is heavy enough, it can utterly crush us. Likewise, depending upon where we are standing when the event falls, perhaps the ground underneath gives way, and instead of crushing us, the substrata subsumes us and mires us in the murky soil that cushions us as it swallows us up under the event's pressure.

Events have effects, and sometimes these effects produce resistances (Foucault, 1977). This is a study of one Event and many events. These events are less like something falling with no wind to direct it, and more like twisters, eruptions, and violent convergences of fissures in our under-girding foundation. This is about the nomads upon whom these events fall, who fall into these events. These nomads, Stephanie, Amari, Michelle, Roseanne, and Josh's, psychic skeletons were twisted and bent by these events as they rambled, rove, and roamed through the political and physical geographies created by Eurocentrism, colonialism, and their offspring, self-hate and nihilism.

This is a study of how people live their past, present, and future armed with a psychic array of tools of resistance. It is about how failure to arm oneself with this array produces a folding of oneself into the statistics and summaries that serve to make one indistinguishable from any other Other—any other faceless, unimportant, invisible, but embodied specter.

This study seeks to explore what events are, not for black people, not for women, not for young black men and women, but for one black teacher, two young black women, and one young black man. Although this study will produce new ways of understanding events, effects, and resistances, these analyses are not necessarily generalizable to others similar in ethnicity or gender to the participants in this study. I write with an acute awareness of the need to avoid creating more victims, because as bell hooks (2003) and Cornel West (1994) suggest, the representation of people as victims only serves to reinforce the nihilism and self-hate that is becoming increasingly prevalent among the current generation of young African-Americans.

### The Event

The shooting occurred on a November weekend in 1997 in Brownsboro, a large southeastern city where the academic competition team that I coached along with a team from another high school in our city traveled to compete in a national tournament. Our team comprised seven students, three young women and four young men. Both my team and the other team stayed at the same hotel but on different floors. Amari's mother, Carolyn, joined us as a chaperone. She and I roomed together, while the young women slept in an adjoining room. The young men slept in the room on the other side of ours.

Of the seven-team members, three fifteen-year-old women, Roseanne, Michelle, and Stephanie, one sixteen-year-old man, Josh, and one fourteen-year-old man Amari were present when the shooting occurred. The other two young men, both fourteen-years-old, were in their room at the time.

This is an excerpt from my journal written around the time of the shooting. All names and places are pseudonyms. Please excuse any grammatical, semantic, or rhetorical errors, but I chose to keep this passage as close to the original as possible. I made changes only to provide clarity.

#### November, 1997- The Shooting

*We arrive at the hotel at about three in the afternoon. It is a nice place in a reputable neighborhood in Brownsboro, a large city in a neighboring southeastern state. Amari's mother Caroline has taken the day off from her job in management at a corporate insurance office to accompany our group. I am glad. I like Carolyn's company. Carolyn is self-taught. She is the ultimate expression of self-accomplishment. She came from the wrong side of the track. She has told me that after she ended her oppressive marriage to Amari's father, she found herself and someone who gave her the unconditional love she deserved. Like me, Caroline is also a reader, so we have lots to talk about. The first time I seriously talked to Carolyn was a Saturday when a group of black women activists were holding a march called the "Mourning Mother's March" against black-on-black youth violence. We marched from one of the city's largest black*

*neighborhoods to City Hall in order to demonstrate our solidarity to this cause. Carolyn and I marched alongside the mayor of Murphey. The mayor was a white former-college professor who later became a United States congressional representative. The mayor impressed me with his very presence at this event. Carolyn and I talked all the way past the shotgun houses, across the river, and through downtown. By the time we reached our destination, we were instant friends. Now we have withstood what neither of us can adequately describe to others. So we will always be dear friends. Our friendship was born of the tragedy that happened that Friday night in November.*

*After everyone received their keys and unpacked in their rooms, the team members reunited in the room that Carolyn and I shared. A couple of the girls asked if I would call the desk and request an iron for them to use. Two young white men, one dressed in the uniform of a security guard and another dressed in the shirt and tie uniform of the hotel representative, delivered the iron. We had small talk with these two young men, and they left.*

*We then set up our buzzer systems, divided into teams, and practiced for a couple of hours. After practice, we walked across the street to the mall. It was a little misty, with a light shower falling just enough to let you know the clouds were looming, but not enough to stop you from thinking things were all right. Most of these kids did not have much money, yet, the lure of the mall always draws them to it. While the kids surveyed the mall, Carolyn and I sat in the food court and talked about families, husbands, children, people we both knew from high school, worries, politics, and anything else we could cram into two hours.*

*We finally returned from our expedition in the mall and walked across a divided four-lane highway to the hotel. By then, it was dark outside and the rain had increased slightly. The droplets tapped me on the shoulder, but I tried my best to ignore them so the kids would not*



*complain about getting wet. When we returned to the hotel, we practiced another hour after which I gave the usual safety rules: no leaving the hotel property; lights out at 11:00; and most importantly, no visiting in rooms of the opposite sex. (Just think, if I had let them go into each other's rooms, this tragedy might never have occurred.)*

*It was dark, about 10 in the evening. Carolyn and I had continued the conversation we began at the mall, and then settled into our beds with whatever novel each of us was reading. We were startled by a telephone call from the front desk. They needed me to come to the hotel lobby immediately.*

*I went down to the lobby. As I exited the elevator, I saw teary-eyed Michelle and Stephanie sitting on a bench directly across from the check-in counter. I asked the clerk, who happened to be one of the young men who brought us our iron earlier, what had happened. He said the security guard saw "them" acting suspicious and arrested "them." I then asked the security guard, who was also behind the counter, what the girls had done. He said that he was walking around the back of the hotel by the pool when he saw a group of black kids (he "saw a group of black kids"—those were his exact words) standing around the pool looking suspicious, so he figured they must have been selling drugs or something. I reminded him that these girls were the same ones who were in my room when he came there earlier to deliver the iron. Besides, Michelle had that all-important letter jacket on, so it was obvious she was with our group.*

*The guard told me that he had not done anything but fire his pistol over their heads to scare them into stopping. He then took out the pistol and showed it to me. It looked to my former police eyes like the .38 revolvers I used to carry as an Air Force police officer. He said he only fired blanks, that the boys and one girl ran and got away, but these two girls did not. I asked him again why he shot at them, and again he said that he "saw a group of black kids who looked*

*suspicious,” so he tried to sneak up on “them,” but they must have seen the light reflect off the muzzle of his gun and they ran. He said to me that usually when “we” (in my naiveté, I wonder, “who the hell is ‘we?’”) see a group of black kids huddled in a group we assume they are up trying to sell drugs or something else illegal.*

*I later discovered that five of the team members (Josh, Michelle, Stephanie, Roseanne, and Amari) were standing outside the door leading from the hotel lobby to the pool. They were talking and relaxing before lights out at eleven. As the guard tried to sneak up on the kids, someone saw the light reflect off his weapon. Since they were standing in a covered area just outside the hotel lobby, the two young men (Amari and Josh) and one of the young women (Roseanne) ran directly into the hotel, got on the elevator, and went to their rooms. Meanwhile the guard was shooting towards the group. Oddly, the students did not immediately come to our room to tell us what had happened.*

*In the confusion, the two other girls (Michelle and Stephanie) attempted to run around the building to the front entrance of the hotel. The guard ran after them. One of them stumbled, allowing the guard to catch them. Once he caught them, he had them kneel on the wet cement, handcuffed them, and took them into the hotel lobby. Even though the guard searched both Michelle and Stephanie and found no evidence of drugs or any other contraband, he refused to remove the handcuffs.*

*I was later told that when one of the young women asked the guard to loosen the handcuffs. His response was that they should be used to wearing handcuffs. He forced the two women to sit directly across from the hotel registration desk while hotel guests paraded in and out of the building. The guard only removed the handcuffs immediately prior to my arrival at the lobby.*

*After several visits to and from my room where the students assembled, I finally understood what had occurred. Consequently, I called the coach from the neighboring high school. He, Carolyn, and I met at the hotel registration desk. When the hotel denied any culpability in this incident, and the clerk threatened to call the police if we did not leave, I asked him to call the police. The police arrived and issued a warrant for the arrest of the security guard (who, in the meantime, had left the premises) on a charge of illegal discharge of a firearm.*

*After the police took our statements and those of the two young women, I called my principal, and we decided to stay at the hotel since we could not afford to go elsewhere. My kids were scared. Scared is the situation that one feels when one feels danger is imminent. They all asked to sleep in my room, which I allowed them to do after we had called parents and I had prayed. They talked all night and I wrote all night. I refused to cry, because it would generate fear among my kids if I did not appear to be holding it together.*

*Predictably, we did pitifully at the tournament the next day. After the tournament was over and we finally got on the road, it was dark. I lay with my body extended across two seats in that yellow school bus in the dark. The rain was pouring by now. My Grandma's handmade quilt covered my entire body, and for four dark hours, I either slept fitfully or cried quietly.*

After the shooting incident, I tried to repair my spirit and, as singer India Arie suggests, bring my mind "back to the middle." I could not believe how much more race-conscious I had become in the four short years since my return to the South. Coming to the same school for two years after the shooting and seeing the same students whom I felt I had failed to protect gave me mixed feelings that migrated from sadness, to anger, to despair. Consequently, I sought employment in another system.

I tried to run away from reminders of the effects of racism on the young whom I loved so dearly; but the faster I ran, the closer race came to me. The seed was planted long ago during the 1960's when, as a young student, I sat in the back of the bus due to sanctioned Apartheid in the American South. Now

it was different. It was no longer sitting in the back of the bus where sitting in the front indicated racial transgression; instead, one is perceived to be a transgressor when one is young, and black, and stands outside a hotel located in an affluent area in a southern town. I was the adult, the teacher, the one who was supposed to make a difference; and I could not.

Before I changed employment, I began to see the effects of seeds planted by this incident. I saw Michelle become increasingly more angry in general and resentful towards me in particular. Amari began to fight with his mother and stepfather. After unsuccessfully attempting to live with his biological father, then his paternal grandmother, he eventually moved (with his mother's and the court's blessings) in with my husband and me. By then Amari showed visible emotions towards white people, reactions ranging from animosity to indifference. After moving into our quiet ranch home in the country, Amari found a job, gained 15 pounds, became a stellar football player, and maintained his place at the top of his class. He graduated valedictorian.

The year before, Michelle was the salutatory speaker, in spite of all she had endured. Stephanie was president of the student council. All three of these students received full scholarships to college. Of the three, only Michelle chose to attend a predominately-white college.

Given the triumphs in their lives as well as the disappointments and troubles they have endured, I felt it was time to talk about the shooting. The problem is that talking about the shooting in a way that circulates the rest of their lives around it would foreground it in a way that suggests it as a beginning. The shooting was not a beginning, it was an *Event*, an "irruption that cannot be absorbed or smoothed over by flowing narratives" (Caputo & NetLibrary Inc., 1993, p. 270). Instead of suggesting the 1997 shooting as a beginning, I discussed it as well as other events that participants identified. I then asked participants to discuss the effects of the 1997 shooting and the discourses they used to resist its effects, as well as the effects of other events and their resistances.

## Statement of the Problem and Research Questions

### How I “Came to” the Problem

I suppose one should not say that I came to the problem; instead, I believe that the problem came to me. Although race and racialized acts are critical issues in this study, an analysis that focuses only on “race theory” as it is defined in much existing literature (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Parker, Deyhle, & Villenas, 1999) might do a disservice to those who, along with being raced are also subjugated in other ways. Not only does a sole focus on race theory diminish subjugation based on other “isms,” it also denies the myriad ways in which people recapture agency by resisting the effects of subjugation. Instead, I analyze not only acts that are seemingly instigated by an individual, but I examine corporate acts as well. The corporate axis of power networks that are often seemingly invisible, but always present are what Foucault (1972/1980) and Althusser (1969) refer to as “apparatuses.” Foucault describes apparatuses as:

A thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural form, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions—in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the apparatus. The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements. (pp. 194-95)

In the case of this shooting as well as other events cited by these three young adults, many corporate entities acted as subjugators or failed to intervene on their behalf. A few that influence this Event include, commerce (hotels), education (the school system), the juridical system (lawyers and the courts), and surveillance systems (security guards).

### Statement of the Problem

This qualitative interview study uses Michel Foucault’s (1977) effective history to explore events, effects, and resistances that contribute to the developing subjectivities of two African-American young

adult females, one African-American young adult male, and one middle-aged female African-American educator who were involved in a violent racially motivated incident in 1997.

### Research Questions

1. What are the effects of the 1997 shooting event on the participants' understanding of themselves as subjects?
2. What other discourses, events, and apparatuses do participants identify as major influences on their developing subjectivities?
3. How do subjects accommodate and resist discourses, events, and apparatuses that seek to produce them as subjects in their everyday lives?

### Significance of the Study

This study is significant and has impact on multiple levels. First, it illuminates the continued enactments of racializing incidents in this country. This is important because much of the existing literature in education highlights violent occurrences in schools. Additionally, much of this same literature oddly focuses on inner-city schools that are composed of majority ethnic student populations (Ainslie & Brabeck, 2003; Archer & Yamashita, 2003; Browning, Miller, & Spruance, 2001; Collins, 1998; Weis, 2001). Yet very little literature examines racial violence enacted against students and the effects of these acts on students' developing subjectivities.

Secondly, this study engages the semantics of "race" as well as other subject categories as verbals. In other words, it seeks to disrupt the discourse race as ontological (Anderson, 1995). Perhaps, (re)presentations of the effects of racing will encourage more study of how discourses cause actions against people of color as well as member of other subjugated groups.

In terms of education, from pre-kindergarten through graduate schools many educators and educational administrators are reluctant to admit that these kinds of events occur; or they choose to dismiss them as aberrations. I have shared the 1997 Event with many of my colleagues who generally

they do not believe that things like this happen in today's world. Even if they do believe it happens, as educators they usually feel impotent in finding ways to engage students in their classrooms in discussions about being raced, the ways they racialize others, and the effects of their actions. Although I do not propose solutions to these problems, I hope that this study will serve as an "incitement to discourse" (Foucault, 1976/1978, p. 105-106), leading to unique solutions given each individual set of circumstances.

Likewise, the idea of "racing" as a verb extends to other acts of essentialism based on arbitrary subject-categories. For instance, just as people are raced, they are also gendered, (dis)abled, and classed. Oddly, those who are raced in one situation may perpetrate racializing, gendering, (dis)abling, classing, and other essentializing acts on member of their own subject group as well as members of others groups. These acts sometimes produce negative effects regardless of the actor's intention. Similarly, these acts are not contained within the troubling black/white racial binary, but extend to other racial and ethnic groups.

As an educator, I cannot overemphasize the importance of recognizing this dimension of humanity. Often behavior that appears to be directed against others is really a manifestation of the actor's hatred or ambivalence toward him/herself. Furthermore, educators often view acts of resistance to self-hate as acts of rebellion. From what I already know of my participants, there are many instances in their lives when others misunderstood their resistance. This exploration should prove very efficacious for creating democratic, reflective teachers, students, and administrative practitioners in education.

### Overview

In this chapter, I described the Event that precipitated this study. I also explained the research background and the questions. In Chapter 2, I provide a poststructural analysis of discourse and its relationship to ideology. I then frame my analysis within what I call Africanist epistemology, an emerging discourse that relates to people of the African Diaspora as well as those who apply Africanist

ways in their daily lives. After a survey of key aspects of Africanist epistemology, I discuss Eurocentric discourse, particularly rationalism and the discourse of white supremacy. While rationalism leads to racism as a verb and white supremacy, it also appears as the participants analyzed and internalized the events in their lives, as well as the effects of these events, and their resistances to them. In Chapter 3, I focus on methodological questions including research criteria, data collection, and an explication of effective history as a tool for data analysis. In this chapter, I also explain why I chose not to interview Roseanne and Josh for this study. I examine my own subjectivity as it has developed since the Event and through the interview Dr. Tarek Grantham conducted prior to my collecting further data. Chapter 4 examines the findings of this interview study. I focus first on the Event and discourses Amari, Stephanie, and Michelle use to resist its effects. I then examine other events in the lives of these three young adults including a life-changing sports injuries and its fallout, another shooting incident, conflict with parents, and Stephanie's first encounter with an all-black school environment. In Chapter 5, I revisit Africanist epistemology and Eurocentric discourse and their relationship to the findings. I also discuss areas that require further study.



## CHAPTER 2

*EPA*<sup>3</sup>

*"The inability to 'see' from several angles is perhaps the one common weakness in provincial scholarship"* (Asante, 1998, p. 1)

## Introduction: Race as Productive Verbal

Amari, Michelle, Stephanie, and I circulate our lives among various discourses. Although we work within many discourses, the two that dominate our reality are Africanist and Eurocentric. Africanist epistemology comprises the many discourses that Africans and those in the African Diaspora use. As I will demonstrate later, Africanist epistemology is pivotal in the survival of my participants and me. Sometimes Africanist discourse tools us for resistance, while at other times we resist it when we view it as oppressive.

Similarly, we use Eurocentric discourse to resist, while at other times it is used against us. In this chapter, I would first like to explain what I mean by the term discourse. Then I will develop the relationship between discourse and ideology. Following this I explore some aspects of Africanist epistemology and show how Eurocentric discourse has developed through various "discursive regimes" (Foucault, 1972, p. 45). This work does not consistently center Africanist notions while marginalizing Eurocentric discourses. Factually, this work has no center and no margin (except, perhaps, in the mind of the reader). Consequently, I hope to demonstrate the postmodern mandate for a blurring of the center/margin binary by speaking of the participants in terms of what discourse does, what Africanist epistemology does, and what Eurocentrist discourse and philosophy do.

In this poststructural analysis, my goal is to peel away, to unwind, and to aerate Eurocentric discourse by spading deeply into its most basic forms and effects. This analysis will identify how discourses shaped the violent actions of the security guard who shot on these three young people and

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<sup>3</sup> Andinkra for "Shackles"

other acts they identified as subjugating. I will show how, "the turning of deconstruction not only opens the constellation of forces (peeling, unwinding, exfoliation), but its amassing effects draw the event (or the text) out of itself" (Doel, 1999, p. 31).

As I have indicated earlier, I have chosen to analyze events, effects, and resistances of my participants using Foucault's (1977) effective history as it intersects what I call Africanist epistemology (Asante, 1998; Collins, 2000a, 2000b; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Davis & James, 1998; Dillard, 2000; Gordon, 2000; Morrison, 1992; Smitherman & van Dijk, 1988; Woodson, 1933). Similar analysis will apply Eurocentric discourse to events, effects, and resistances of the participants as well as those who they perceive as subjugators. Discourse is the key term throughout this study, consequently I will problematize discourse as it intersects the "relationship between ourselves and the Other and, in fact, [recenter] the question of otherness altogether, asserting what Bakhtin elsewhere called 'exotopy,' the affirmation of the Other's exteriority which requires acknowledging its subjectivity" (Harootaunian, 1988, pp. 111-12). My analysis of discourse will focus on its role in Africanist epistemology and Eurocentric discourse.

#### Discourse under Deconstruction

In order to deconstruct Africanist Epistemology, Eurocentric discourse and their effects, I must first impress upon the reader how discourse and power work together. As Foucault (1972) says, discourse is one of the many offspring of power. Discourse is the soul and heart of any movement in ontology as well as epistemology. In fact, in *The Afrocentric Idea*, Asante (1998) suggests that although many people of African descent have mastered the *master's* discourse, this same discourse is constantly being morphed into something different to keep the Other off-balance. In other words, once discourse becomes commonly and effectively used by the masses, it no longer has the elite edge that allows holders of the discursive regime to speak in unknown codes.

According to Asante (1998) discourse is the purveyor of ideology. Indeed, Asante stresses that "without the ideological context, the discourse is vacuous, a hollow form without power" (p. 37).

Similarly, Bakhtin (1975/1998) critiqued the illusion that discourse is separate from ideology when he said:

The study of verbal art can and must overcome the divorce between an abstract 'formal' approach and an equally abstract 'ideological' approach. Form and content in discourse are one, once we understand that verbal discourse is a social phenomenon—social throughout its entire range and in each and every of its factors, from the sound image to the furthest reaches of abstract meaning. (p. 259)

Foucault (1972/1980), on the other hand, problematizes the idea of ideology. Foucault finds its practical use questionable for three reasons. First, “it always stands in virtual opposition to something else which is supposed to count as truth” (p. 118). Foucault states that science is often set in opposition to ideology. Foucault further explains that what is more important is seeing “historically how effects of truth are produced within discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false” (p. 118). I believe that ideology develops from a narrow view of “science” and various other related discourses. Consequently, Foucault’s analysis of ideology works well as I deconstruct discourses that enabled the events, effects, and resistances discussed herein.

Foucault’s (1972/198) second problem with ideology is that it refers to “something of the order of a subject” (p. 118). The problem with positing ideology as a subject is that once the subject is posited, it is “either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness through the course of history” (p. 117). Consequently, this attribute of ideology, as Foucault posits, would embody ideology as subject—making it continuous, indestructible, and metaphysical—a way in which discourse takes on a power all its own. Foucault’s critique of ideology stresses the fact that the traditional view allows recourse to abstraction (ideology) without actors who cause events based on ideology.

Finally, Foucault critiques ideology as standing “in a secondary position relative to something which functions as its infrastructure as its material, economic determinant, etc.” (1972, p. 116). My reading of Foucault’s third criticism is that ideology is a determinist objective, an objective embodied by

powers and apparatuses that are corporeal. This follows closely with Asante's (1998) criticism of the hierarchical nature of discourse and the way it empowers ideology. Simply put, discourse and ideology are not ideas, things, figurations that are "out there," moving about with no purpose and no locomotive operators. They do not lack source, intent, or subjects who put them to work for their purposes. Discourse and ideology cause effects. An analysis of effects is key in using effective history (Foucault, 1977).

Moreover, Derrida (1967/1978) devotes much of the first section of *Writing and Difference* to the ways in which writing as a form of discourse is "*inaugural*" (p. 11). In my study of the word "inaugurate," I found that one of its meanings in *The American Heritage Dictionary* was, "[to] cause to begin, especially officially or formally" (mydictionary.com, 1996-2002). In this source's account of the word's roots, the word *augur* or "soothsayer" appears to form the Latinate root of the word *inaugurate*. Consequently, a Latin to English interpretation of this word would read, "to consecrate by augury." Derrida uses this word, *inaugural*, to describe the act of discourse, particularly writing, that is "dangerous and anguishing" (p. 11). Again, in this present study, issues of "danger" and "anguish" will become evident.

In Derrida's (1967/1978) figuration of writing as *inaugural*, he suggests that language, and therefore discourse, has the power to *bring forth*, the way a soothsayer divinates those things that are already dead in flesh but not in spirit. In this figuration, writing and discourse do not create; instead, they only "bring forth" what was not animated in the present. It works only insofar as it is able to cause thoughts, feelings, and experiences, or serve as a point of transfer from one idea to another. For example, when the security guard who shot at these five young people captured Michelle and Stephanie, Michelle complained about the handcuffs being too tight. He responded by telling them that they should be used to wearing handcuffs. The discourse of white supremacy that the security guard used inaugurated feelings and emotions in these two women. His language transferred the subject positions of the two women from carefree high school students on a field trip to prisoners.

### Discourse as “Othering Machine”

Many theorist have deconstructed the idea of the Other (e.g., Abrams, 2002; Bhopal, 2002; Braidotti, 2001; Britzman, 2000; Chaudhry, 1997; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Derrida, 1967/1978; Harootaunian, 1988; Mudimbe, 1992; Popke, 2003; Rella, 1994; Spivak, 1993; Villenas, 1996). According to Homi Bhabha (1994), “that space of the other is always occupied by an *idée fixe*: despot, heathen, barbarian, chaos, violence” (pp. 93-101). Similarly, Lewis Gordon (1997) explains that he titled his book *Her Majesty’s Other Children* in critique of the use of the term “post” to indicate that the realities of Othering no longer exist. Gordon continues by explaining that perhaps for the forgotten and dismissed Others, the term “neo” “is persistently appropriate ... *neohunger, neoexploitation, neomortality, neoviolence, neoinvisibility, and neoetcetera*, all of which are bitterly familiar manifestations of much older régimes” (p. 5). Othering is characterized by slow metastasis and apparent innocuousness (Karatani, 1998). Similar to the drain of chlorophyll that turns annual flora into beautiful displays of colors in the fall, ironically, it is also a signal of impending death. This cancer treats people as if they were dispensable like flowers planted only to provide beauty for one season.

In *Poststructuralist Geographies : The Diabolical Art Of Spatial Science* (1999), Marcus Doel suggests that, "difference, then, is the condition of (im)possibility of identity. Identity thinking knows nothing whatsoever about difference *as différence*" [emphasis added] (p. 51). As Doel (1999) also posits, “it’s apparent integrity and self-sufficiency is illusory” (p. 27). Othering is a dangerous monolith that ignores the mutual interdependency of all peoples to the survival of humanity in the wake of the destruction we have wrought on our planet and the people who inhabit it. Othering, or what is variously called “oppression” or “marginalizing,” is according to Friere as destructive for those who enact it as it is for receivers of those actions.

In his “Letter to My Nephew,” the first chapter of *The Fire Next Time*, James Baldwin (1963/1993) echoes the sentiments of Friere (2000) when he remarks that:

[European-Americans] are, in effect, still trapped in a history which they do not understand; and until they understand it, they cannot be released from it. They have had to believe for many years, and for innumerable reasons, that black men are inferior to white men. Many of them, indeed, know better, but, as you will discover, people find it very difficult to act on what they know. To act is to be committed, and to be committed is to be in danger. (pp. 8-10)

### Discourse and Hierarchialization

Once the nature of discourse, the fact that it is alive, and the conclusion that it carries with it ideology (Bakhtin, 1975/1998) are established, Asante's (1998) suggestion of the hierarchical function of Eurocentric discourse seems to follow. Asante suggests that the hierarchical nature of Eurocentric discourse allows its adherents to define "not only the terms of discussion but the also the grounds upon which the discussion will be waged" (p. 34). According to Asante, keepers of the discursive regime (Foucault, 1984) attempt to continually change the discourse of power. Likewise, through code and codicil they establish whose discourse is inside and whose is outside. Lyotard (1979/1984) indicates the complicity of apparatuses in perpetuating discursive regimes when he states that, "the limits the institution imposes on potential language 'moves' are never established once and for all (even if they have been formally defined). Rather, the limits are themselves the stakes and provisional results of language strategies within the institution and without" (p. 17).

This idea of the discourse of power has also been heavily discussed by Delpit (1995) and Gee (2000). Gee and Delpit both emphasize the way dominant discourses and cultural capital are critical to the success of students from non-dominant groups in K-12 schools. On the other hand, Asante (1998) is talking about a different type or level of discourse than that of Gee and Delpit. Delpit and Gee's "discourse" relates to language, social codes, and norms. Asante, on the other hand, refers to an entire ideology that might encompass Gee and Delpit's definitions of discourse. Discourse, as Asante explains it, causes effects far beyond the years in which we school young people and is a much more powerful apparatus in its own right.

Indeed, Doel (1999) critiques the, “agonizing over the respective merits, coherence, and side effects of the various theoretical endeavors,” and the

[d]issimulation of contradictions and paralogisms, the obscuring of lacunae and aporias, and the suppression of dissenting voices and opposing forces, to the local skirmishes between competing theories, the all-out conflict of the opposing war machines, and the terror tactics of hostage-taking, sabotage, and mutually assured destruction. (p. 29-30)

In other words, Doel hearkens to Foucault’s (1984, p. 88) use of the cutting figuration. Like Foucault, Doel suggests that the war over discursive power is dynamic and continuous. An analysis of the way in which the participants in this study use often-contradictory discourses to examine events in their lives suggests the appropriateness of Foucault and Doel’s assertion that a discursive war exists.

#### Africanist Epistemology

I approach the critique of particular selections from the plethora of documents comprising what I call Africanist Epistemology with humility. I stated in my introduction that this study is not about all black teachers, young men, or women. Likewise, I do not speak for all or even a majority of Africanists perspectives, for they are as varied as the number of nations where African descendents live.

#### Notions on Anti-essentialism

Another concern for anyone who talks of such a large group of people is the tendency for those comments to be labeled as essentialist. I define essentialism as the tendency to attribute characteristics or *essences* to a group, thereby denying members of that group the opportunity for discursive movement outside this essence. bell hooks (1990) stresses how

The critique of essentialism encouraged by postmodern thought is useful for African-Americans concerned with reformulating outmoded notions of identity. We have too long had imposed upon us from both the outside and the inside a narrow notion of blackness. Postmodern critiques of essentialism, which challenge notions of universality and static overdetermined identity within

mass culture and mass consciousness, can open up new possibilities of the construction of a self and the assertion of agency. (p. 28).

Although it is difficult to avoid a work such as this being labeled essentialist, I stress that when I speak of Africanists, I am not talking about every person of African origin. Similarly, all people of European origin do not use Eurocentric discourse. Again, if I continue to focus on what these discourses and epistemologies do and have done, it will avoid the tendency toward essentialist language.

### Definition of Africanist Epistemology

Africanist epistemology as I define it encompasses discourses that privilege the way Africans and people of African origin know. I realize that some of the scholars I cite (e.g. West, hooks) do not consider themselves Africanist. However, how scholars identify themselves is immaterial to my discussion. What is important is who the scholar speaks to and about and the fact that they reckon the source of their ideas to African or African-American origins. With this caveat in mind, I use the term “Africanist” in the broadest sense. The theorists I cite speak to the history of Africans and those in the Diaspora, to the collective and individual struggles and triumphs of Africanist peoples and they share a respect for knowledge produce by indigenous African people as well as black people across the world. In general, I use the term African-American as a demographic marker that does not denote a person or group’s tendency toward Africanist ways. The term “black” usually suggests intentionality to incorporate Africanist ways through all or part of one’s life.

Although Africanist epistemology predates the ideas formed and written in this and many other nations, it is difficult to articulate in one work. Perhaps this is a good thing, because once it is bound and covered in leather, it may cease being a living breathing, developing set of thoughts. Likewise, once the various (and sometimes conflicting) ideas of Africanist epistemology, axiology, and thought are bound in the decidedly western form of a book, one then is able to say what “isn’t” Africanist (because, of course, it’s not in “The Book”). Africanist epistemology, axiology, and thought are myriad and rhizomatic (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). They are unalterable in their beauty and mysticism. They touch the formerly



colonized or enslaved, as well as those who colonized and enslaved them. It is also far-reaching in terms of the menagerie of ideas from which it speaks. It draws on Middle, West, and East Asian thought and philosophy, and Native, South, and Central American traditions. In addition, it includes Hasidic, European, indigenous Caribbean, and American Colonial ideas.

Africanist epistemology, axiology, and ethics are like lava flowing from a volcano. It flows from its source, cools, crystallizes, and over millennia becomes partly what it was, partly what it is, but always what it will be. Also, like the lava that flows from the volcano, once the original becomes less viscous, cools, aggregates, sediments, morphs, compresses, weathers, corrodes, is abused, fossilizes, and decomposes, its form may look nothing like the original; yet the original still forms part of it.

I will limit my discussion to areas of Africanist Epistemology that relate to this study in a major way. Some features, like spirituality, are salient in Africanist epistemology to the extent that I cannot exclude them even though they often work in the background of people's lives. The way some people of African ancestry know is paramount to this study. It is important because it bears on issues related to power, events, and the resistances to these apparatuses. Philosophy, a practice I cannot extricate from epistemology, provides the blueprint for life in any variety of Africanist thoughts. History and the oppositional ahistory has circulated for the past 400 years to disperse and dispense with concerted Africanist thought (Gordon, 1997; e. g., 1956). Finally, deconstructing the discourse of African ahistory provides some understanding as to why some young African-Americans and others of African descent have trouble negotiating their place in the present.

Corollary with the disavowal of (a)history Gordon (1997) and Asante (1998) suggests three themes salient to Africanist discourse. Asante states that Africanist discourse is created on the axes of "human relations, human relationship to the supernatural; and human relationship to their own being" (p. 184). With this in mind, I will endeavor to explore Africanist spirituality (not to be confused with religion) (West, 1999; Wiredu, 1996). Spirituality links to family, community, and the ways people in the

Diaspora and the former African colonies renegotiated and reconstructed discourse after emancipation or colonization.

Another aspect of Africanist Epistemology that I believe is important is the premise that they do not always express a uniquely Africanist perspective. In other words, in many ethnic groups spirituality, respect for the elder, perceptions of ahistory, or community are central tenets to their ways of knowing. I do not look for comparisons between these groups and Africanist, not do I wish to contrast, hierarchilize, or determine whose idea it was first. Instead, I simply wish to acknowledge that these features comprise Africanist ways of knowing, not that Africanist are the owners or even the initiators of them.

Similarly, many scholars of African origin do not necessarily express views grounded in Africanist epistemologies. Africanists perspectives, like others, are more or less hybridized depending on the culture and people who use them (Crenshaw, 1999). Consequently, non-African Europeans, Asians, and indigenous North, South, and Central Americans often reflect Africanist perspectives even though these people are not necessarily of African descent (Hountondji, 2002; Wiredu, 1980).

### Is There an Africanist Philosophy?

*The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language* (online, 1996-2002) cites several definitions of the word “philosophy.” Among the descriptions are: “Love and pursuit of wisdom; investigation of the nature, causes, or principles of reality, knowledge, or values; the critical analysis of fundamental assumptions or beliefs; and, the discipline comprising logic, ethics, aesthetics, metaphysics, and epistemology.” In spite of these descriptions of philosophy, some scholars persist with the assumption that people of African descent only recently entered the scene of philosophy. Even books written by people of African descent such as *African-American Philosophy* (Lott & Pittman, 2003) state that “African philosophy is closely associated with *fairly recent* developments in the discipline, *most notably the arrival of a critical mass of African, Caribbean, and African-American*” (p. 151, emphasis added). This statement ignores centuries of philosophical work by people of African descent in western languages and millennia of oral and written Africanist philosophy in indigenous languages.

Some would argue that the field of philosophy owes its origins to former occupants of the Nile River valley, Egypt, Ethiopia, and other areas of what was once called “Nubia” (Axelson, 1969; Davidson, 1970; Delpit & White-Bradley, 2003; Diop, 1974; Woodson, 1933). This region produced volumes of so-called scientific discourses and philosophical tomes. Also, this region was the birthplace of many great philosophers in the ancient western tradition such as St. Augustine of Hippo (Augustine, 386 BCE/1999).

Modern western academics are producing little knowledge of life within Africanist communities and how one enables it within a decolonized discourse. Nevertheless, even within the western tradition prior to the last 100 years we could cite, Olaudah Equiano (Equiano, 1837/1969); Phyllis Wheatley (Wheatley, 1838/1995), Frederick Douglass (Douglass, 1855; Douglass & Foner, 1950; Douglass & Garrison, 1845), Sojourner Truth (Gilbert, Titus, & Truth, 1881), and Arna Bontemps (1969) as examples of those who spoke about Africanist ways of knowing, thinking, and living during and immediately after North American slavery.

Likewise, in the twentieth-century we find W.E.B. DuBois (1903; Du Bois, Gates, & Oliver, 1999), James Weldon Johnson (1912; Johnson & Wilson, 1995), Marcus Garvey (Garvey & Martin, 1986), Alice Dunbar (Dunbar-Nelson & Hull, 1988) Nelson, Zora Neale Hurston (1935/1969, 1938/1990, 1939), Franz Fanon (1967, 1967, 1967, 1968), James Baldwin (1963/1993), Cheikh Anta Diop (1960/1987; Diop, Salemon, & De Jager, 1991), Lucius Outlaw (1996), Martin Luther King, Jr. (1959, 1963, 1964, 1964, 1965, 1967, 1967/1968), and Malcolm X (X, 1992; X & Breitman, 1970; X & Epps, 1991; X & Haley, 1965). Each of these theorists provided their unique perspective of how Africanists people know, live, and practice ethical existence.

Finally, in the current century we have a plethora of Africanist philosophers of various theoretical persuasions notably Toni Morrison (LeClair, 1981/1994; McHenry, 2003, 1992, 1992, 1994, 1996), Joy James (1999, 2000; James & Farmer, 1993), Angela Y. Davis (Davis & James, 1998), Patricia Hill Collins (1996, 2000a, 2000b), Cornel West (hooks & West, 1991, 1993, 1994, 1999), V. F. Mudimbe

(1988, 1992, 1994; Mudimbe & Jewsiewicki, 1993), Henry Louis Gates (Appiah & Gates, 1995; Appiah, Gates, & Vasquez, 1997, 1986, 1994), Molefi Asante (1980, 1998), Lewis Gordon (1997) and many others. This list excludes many European, Caribbean, African, Central and South American, and African-Americans who are thinking and writing about the way black people believe, live, know, think, and order their lives.

My point is to remind the reader that Africanist philosophy has existed for millennia; but I must also express my concern with the way it is now being characterized as “ethnophilosophy” (Lott & Pittman, 2003). According to Lott and Pittman, “ethnophilosophy takes the set of values, categories, and assumptions implicit in the language practices, and beliefs of African cultures as fundamental” (2003, p. 153). The editors explain that ethnophilosophy draws on theories such as Negritude (Coundouriotis, 1999; Sharpley-Whiting, 2002) whose proponents argue that the orientation of Africanists toward reality is based on emotion and not logic, encourages participation, and is based on the aesthetic as opposed to the scientific. This view is expounded most notably by Leopold Senghor (1962, 1964) but has garnered many objections from philosophers such as Diop, John Mbiti, and Julius Nyere. I see the term “ethnophilosophy” as a way of tagging or bracketing philosophy produced by and for Africanists. In other words, ethnophilosophy hierarchilizes scholarship produced in previously colonized nations, while implying that the *real* (read Eurocentric) philosophers maintain the entitlement to the only legitimacy in this discipline (Higgs, 2001).

Another problem with ethnophilosophy is that it privileges written and rational discourse over oral and artistic ways of showing beliefs. Braidotti (1993) critiques the privileging of “mimetic repetition of established academic and intellectual conventions based on the ‘phallogocentric codes’” (p. 2). Braidotti also suggests a new philosophy, a philosophy in which, “systems of thought or conceptual frameworks ... help me think about change, transformation, living transitions. I want a creative, non reactive project, emancipated from the oppressive force of the traditional philosophical approach” (p. 3). Again, since what is written has been for several millennia considered more valid than what is passed down through

oral tradition, bracketing this type of philosophy is a way of calling it “folk” in a pejorative, binary way that privileges the traditional philosophy Bradiotti critiques.

Finally, many current Africanist thinkers call for an Africanist philosophy that is neither center nor margin. This philosophy would comprise a “critical reflection on the most fundamental ideas and principles underlying our thoughts about human life and its environment, natural and supernatural” (Higgs, 2001, Pp. 215-27) Similarly, it disabuses the practitioner of a narrow view about what constitutes reason within philosophy. This Africanist philosophical perspective contains, “a view of reason, located in plural conversations which have their origin in practical activities such as speaking, listening and reflecting, rather than in objective and dispassionate observation, logical deduction or a scientists’ search for facts” (Higgs, 2001, Pp. 215-27).

Consequently, the expanded definition of what constitutes philosophy within an Africanist perspective (and one could argue feminist as well) establishes that:

reason is neither necessary nor universal, but nor is it arbitrary, for it emerges in plural conversations, in which people together inquire, disagree, explain, or argue their views in the pursuit of a consensual outcome. Such an outcome is one that the participants, after careful deliberation of different opinions and alternative perspectives, are satisfied with for that moment in time. (Higgs, 2001, Pp. 215-27)

This view of philosophy does not exhibit the Cartesian separation of spirit and reason. Nor does it rely on rigid rules of proof. Instead, it accepts the existence and viability of various systems of belief and ways of practicing philosophy and science.

### Spirit, the Matrix of Africanist Life

One reason I focus on how Africanist people practice philosophy is because Africanist spiritual practices have been othered in the west. One way of othering Africanist spiritual perspective is by expounding the view that nations and cultures in Africa were animistic and polytheistic prior to the advent of Christianity during the Colonial period. Although there is nothing wrong with being either animistic or

polytheistic, these ideas should not be used to other a people as savages. Actually, some scholars agree that the majority of people in Africa believe in one Creator, they just may not name and gender that Creator the way western Christians, Jews, and Islamic people do (Gordon & Gordon, 2001; Nwagwu, 2002; Wiredu, 1996).

Another aspect of Africanist religion that is being revived by authors like Alice Walker (1989), theologians such as Vanderbilt University's Renita Weems (1988), and cultural advisor and Yoruba priestess Iyanla Vanzant (1998) is the questioning of the Creator as a gendered entity, especially as male-gendered. The result of this questioning is that (with the exception of the Nation of Islam) black worshippers across the United States have more quickly embraced the woman as pastor, spiritual leader, and minister. This change began with the questioning of Jesus as a white man. Jesus was portrayed as a white man because of the way westerners anthropomorphized god and Jesus into their own image. This humanizing of god was successful to such a degree that many westerners believed that if they were male and white and wanted to determine god's appearance, they only had to look in a mirror.

Likewise, biblical exegesis led to the understanding of the spirit-nature of the biblical god. Hence, many progressive black spiritual practitioners no longer search for a corporeal god. This idea of the omnipresent god/goddess/creator has empowered black women throughout the world. It has caused a shift in focus from religion to spirituality. Within this focus, scholars like bell hooks and entertainers like Tina Turner have learned to embrace Spirit in its many forms, its ever-presence, and its transformational and healing properties. The result is an embracing of many views of spirituality including Yoruba, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christian spirituality, Judaism (especially the practices of the Kabala), and even aspects of Islam. This results in a hybrid spirituality for many Africanist people—people who believe that a full embracing of Christianity as it is practiced in the West is antithetical to all that their ancestors endured under the auspices of colonial missionary zeal. Christian beliefs about the natural inferiority of black people, and the misogynistic nature of mainstream faiths have also encouraged Africanist people to search for new or hybrid sources of spiritual practice (Dillard, 2000; hooks, 2003).

This change in the spiritual practices of many Africanist has also caused a revitalization of traditional views of the Earth. In many traditional African cultures, the Earth is alive, as are all of her inhabitants, animal, plant, mineral, human. Likewise, the spirits of the elders are of special importance in helping those in bodies navigate their daily lives. Africanists do not worship Spirits in the traditional sense of the word, because it is possible for a spirit to have evil intent or give bad advice. In the Africanist tradition, a spirit can even lie. Nevertheless spirits are consulted and those who follow their advice do so at their own risk (Diop, 1974; Gordon, 2000; Grillo, 1992; Kopytoff, 1981; Minkus, 1980; Wiredu, 1996).

The spiritual practices of Africans survive in some religious practices in North America. Primarily one sees these practices in everyday rituals that African-Americans and others follow. For instance, W. E. B. Du Bois speaks of the “veil.” The veil is actually a caul or fibrous film the covers the faces of some babies at birth. In Tina McElroy Ansa’s *Baby of the Family* (1989) she reveals the effect of being born with “the veil.” Lena, the protagonist in Ansa’s novel, “sees things” about people and events. Many black readers do not find it hard to accept a precocious little girl who knows more than she should for her age and experience. In fact, McElroy Ansa was born with a caul over her face (based on personal communication with the author); and as she grew to adulthood in Macon, Georgia, she was told the very things about Africanist beliefs that are written in her novels.

Likewise, Alice Walker speaks of Celie “visiting” her as she wrote *The Color Purple* (Walker, 1982, 1996). Morrison cites similar experiences with Sethe and other characters in her novels (McHenry, 2003). It is not anomalous for an African-American to say they saw or spoke to someone deceased. Likewise, we carry the Spirit with us; believe people can bring them into our homes; and believe they animate our bodies to shout, stomp, and dance.

Shouting, stomping, and dancing are aspects of Africanist spirituality that have permeated the Christian church in general; just as voodoo have melded with Roman Catholicism in some regions to produce hybrids like the Santeria that is practiced in much of the Caribbean, South, and Central America.

Hence, dancing is more than a physical or sexually demonstrative act; it is a spiritual practice, an expression of how the spirit animates the body, of the joy of life, birth, death, rebirth, and prosperity (Dillard, 2000). The Africanist spiritual tradition considers shouting at funerals as a relatively normal event. When people shout, those who are present generally continue with the program at hand and act as if nothing has occurred (Gordon & Gordon, 2001; Mbiti, 1990; Newlin, Knafl, & Melkus, 2002).

Another way that spirit animates the lives of African-Americans is through language. Obviously, song has been a way to communicate code from slavery to the present, but song is not the only language that embodies spirit. The spirit is found in the actual rhythm of African-American speech, in the rises and falls of the meter, in the use of repetition, alliteration, assonance, and especially in the call and response style of interchange (Daniel & Smitherman, 1976). It is in the rhymes that we used as children, many of which survived slavery and described despicable acts. In spite of the animation of speech, it is important that clarity not rest with the speaker; instead, it is the receiver's responsibility to connect with the speaker's code (Smitherman, 1997). When the speech code is deconstructed, it loses its value as a spiritual practice or an expression of Africanist art. I believe this is the reason black American youth are constantly rewriting their discourse. Their code is one thing that belongs exclusively to them, and once the media or the "man" deconstructs it and uses it for their purposes, it loses its value.

Discourse also shows the bond among a people. These bonds are more specific and meticulous than race. They reach to regions, localities, neighborhoods, and even families. Use of this discourse is a sign that the speaker in a psychic space of ethnic freedom—it is a carryover from a time when slaves necessarily had to watch what they said around the master and even around certain other slaves (Dillard, 2000).

The reason I give such an extensive analysis of spirituality is that based on the sources I reviewed, most African and African-American people work within some kind of spiritual practice. Spirit informs philosophy, ideology, discourses, and resistances. When Stephanie says she had to ask God to forgive her for the way she treated a young African boy when she was in the third grade, she is not just



using aphorisms for rhetorical effect. Stephanie really means what she said. In addition, I know that each participant in this study practices some form of spirituality. It is very difficult to get young people to talk about spiritual practice, but they made passing remarks that reminded me that their spiritual grounding helped them survive the Event.

### Africanist Epistemology and the Unspoken Discourse around Sexuality

Although the role of the mother and father figures in the Africanist community are frequently the subject of scholarly study, some areas related to sexuality receive little attention from major Africanist scholars. In the discussion of sexuality, one cannot ignore issues related to gay, lesbian, or bisexuality discourses and practices. I have tried to pin this issue through reading the works of those who speak to gender and sexuality issues. Audre Lorde's (1982) comments that the "Zami," the woman who loves women more than men, was a normal part of life as early as the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Lorde's experiences agree with my own as a child. I can vividly remember knowing that some women loved other women more than they loved men; while some men love men more than women. Even though people talked about this fact, these gay and lesbian men and women were not treated as social pariahs. Families invited these women and gay men to parties, welcomed them in their homes, and treated them like any other sister, brother, friend, uncle, aunt, or church member. I specifically remember a close friend of our family who lived two doors down from our shotgun house. This man was married and had six children, yet his affairs with men were no secret. He was a nice man and always kind to my siblings and me. My Daddy, on the other hand, was happy to fill in for this man when his wife tired of sleeping alone.

As early as the 1950's, black feminist scholars were documenting the need for engagement with issues of homosexuality and its nemesis patriarchy. In fact, Lorraine Hansberry (as cited in Hull, Bell-Scott, & Smith, 1982), prize winning playwright and political activist, wrote the following comments to *The Ladder*, a lesbian periodical:

I think it is about time that equipped women began to take on some of the ethical questions which a male-dominated culture has produced and dissect and analyze them quite to pieces in a serious fashion ... In this kind of work there may be women to emerge who will be able to formulate a new and possible concept that homosexual persecution and condemnation has at its roots not only social ignorance, but a philosophically active antifeminist dogma. (p. xxiii)

As a result of the pioneering efforts of Hansberry and others, the Combahee River Collective, a group of black feminists, first met in 1974 and published its manifesto (Collective, 1977/2001). In part, this document states that:

We reject the stance of lesbian separatism because it is not a viable political analysis or strategy for us. It leaves out far too much and far too many people, particularly Black men, women, and children. We have a great deal of criticism and loathing for what men have been socialized to be in this society: what they support, how they act and how they oppress. But we do not have the misguided notion that it is their maleness, per se—i.e., their biological maleness—that makes them what they are. As Black women we find any type of biological determinism as a particularly a dangerous and reactionary basis upon which to build a politic.

In spite of my experience as a young person observing the acceptance of gay and lesbian men and women, I believe that the black community has become less tolerant of people's differences than they were fifty years ago. As I sought comments addressing homosexuality in the many books about Africanist thought, I found few that addressed this issue (e.g. Appiah, 1992; Diop, 1960/1987, p. 48, 1974; Du Bois, 1903; Fanon, 1967, 1983/2001, 1997/2003; Gordon, 1997, 2001; Hudson-Weems, 2001, 1990; Mudimbe, 1997, 1999, 1999).

There are many possible reasons for the dearth of scholarly work deconstructing patriarchy and heterosexism within the black community. None of these explanations cast a positive light on African-American and other Africanist scholars. Perhaps scholars choose to embrace the same type of argument about homophobia that many level against feminism. Within this view, one assumes that one subjugated

group has to have primacy. Therefore, race becomes a more pressing issue, and women's issues (or in this case homophobia) must take a back seat. Another reason for the lack to scholarly work regarding heterosexism in the black community may be that Africanist scholars knowingly or unknowingly choose to other black gay/lesbians in order to avoid offending people who view homosexuality as an abomination. The final reason concerns the issue of "guilt by association," an issue about which Cornell West readily admits concerns.

Cornell West's (1984) remarks indicate one reason why many black men, clergy, and political and cultural figures are reluctant to address heterosexism and homophobia. West states that he feels it his duty as a Christian and a democrat to address heterosexism and homophobia because they produce "unjustified suffering and unmerited pain" (p. 402). West continues by stating that he had to first identify deep-seated homophobia within himself before he could publicly criticize this ill. West suggests that his way of dealing with this problem was to acknowledge that gay and lesbian love was different in terms of his own enculturation without thinking of it as degraded or disgusting. Another issue West discusses that I believe permeates black heterosexist thought is the concern that when one takes a stand against heterosexism and patriarchy, one becomes suspect by others as having "a secret life or something" (p. 403).

Exceptionally, Spears (1999) remarks about the link between white supremacy and heterosexism. In *Race and Ideology : Language, Symbolism, and Popular Culture*, Spears comments that:

There is, then, a chain of oppression deflected downward to whoever falls below in the racist, patriarchal, heterosexist society. One of the interesting features of this chain, not discussed enough, is that it is not unilinear in terms of any one particular category, whether it be race, class, sex, sexuality, or whatever. For example, the offspring of upper-middle-class, urban, college-educated African Americans would normally have better life chances than those of poor, rural whites lacking high school educations.

However, of all the categories, gender and race are the most predictive in terms of degree

of oppression (defined in terms of income, wealth, and quality of life); even whites belonging to nonracial oppressed groups (e.g., white male *homosexuals*) typically do better than blacks not belonging to those nonracial oppressed groups (e.g. black male *heterosexuality*). (p. 21)

### Africanist Community and Family Perspectives

Africanist perspective on community is its plurality and accessibility. As Higgs (2001) explains:

The exercise of certain intellectual skills does not foster this attitude. Instead, the exercise of a disposition and capacity for restraint foster it. Such a capacity for restraint reveals that we are able to recognise what our own prejudices might be, acknowledging the limits of our own capacity to appreciate fully the viewpoints of others, and caring enough about others to exert the effort necessary to hear and comprehend what they are saying. A sense of plurality, therefore, has to do with commitment, caring, and feeling. It is clearly not purely rational, in the sense of cognitive, endeavour. (pp. 215-27)

There are several key concepts in this idea of Africanist community. First of all, what Higgs (2001) calls “restraint” is what I call spiritual and emotional honesty. This restraint or spiritual honesty is similar to what Foucault (1983/2001) calls *parrhesia*, a Greek word loosely translated as free speech. The difference is that in Foucault’s explication, the speaker bears great risk in speaking the truth. Conversely, true Africanist communities allow space where one can speak truth less risk of danger and ostracism than in the wider community (Gwaltney, 1980). In other words, many times we will present a truer version of ourselves to those in the community than we do to those outside it as long as we perceive acceptance as an authentic insider in that community.

Additionally, John Mbiti (1990) provides an excellent analysis of the principals that are salient in Africanist communities. One feature that Mbiti examines is the role of kinship in Africanist communities. According to Mbiti, kinship is a taken for granted state among all people in the community. Mbiti describe the kinship network as “a vast network stretching laterally (horizontally) in every direction, to

embrace everybody in any given local group” (p. 102). Since kinship extends to everyone in the community, “each individual is a brother or sister, father or mother, grandmother or grandfather, or cousin, or brother-in-law, uncle or aunt, or something else, to everybody else” (p. 102).

Mbiti (1990) further mirrors the way Africanist community is lived throughout the Diaspora when he says that from the moment one meets a person and determines the kinship relationship as described above, “a person has literally hundreds of ‘fathers,’ hundreds of ‘mothers,’ hundreds of ‘uncles,’ hundreds of ‘wives,’ hundreds of ‘sons and daughters’” (p. 102). In like manner, Mbiti explains how the kinship network operates vertically to include those departed as well as the unborn. Hence, one finds many African-Americans who speak of their dearly deceased in the present tense. This is not a failure of the speaker to master proper verb tense; instead, it is a tacit acknowledgement that the spirits of those gone on still cohabit with us in the space we occupy.

I would like to make one final observation about this issue of the unborn. Even though Africanists traditionally consider the unborn to be members of the community by vertical filiations, many Africanists allow for the choice of a woman to carry or abort the unborn. This practice is consistent with Higgs’ (2001) comment that Africanist postmodern practice in the community embodies “respecting diversity and unassimilated otherness in the experience of finding the space to listen and converse” (pp. 215-27). Likewise, the fact that the unborn, in the Africanist perspective, never dies allows some comfort for those women who are at conflict in making such a difficult choice.

Even though much of Africa has moved from matrilineal orientations to patrilocal ones (Diop, 1960/1987), the role of the mother in the families in Africa as well as the rest of the Diaspora continues to be very important. Mothers were the crux of many families who survived the Middle Passage. Consequently, her abilities to resist by various means are one of the things that helped the slaves survive. Evidence of the importance of the mother exists in pre-Christian African societies where a father’s title passed to his sister’s son even if he had a son of his own. For instance, in Ghana circa 1067 the emperor’s heir apparent was not his son, but his sister’s son. In explaining this tradition, Al Bakri (as cited in Diop,

1987)notes, “the sovereign can be sure that his nephew is indeed his sister’s son; but nothing can assure him that the son he considers his own actually is” (p. 48).

Unfortunately, this focus on community mothering has suffered under the feminist critique (Bell-Scott, 1991; Collins, 1996; James, 1999). This critique, one often lodged by black feminists, associates the mothering voluntarily done by black women with the archetypical “mammy” or day-worker who cared for white children (Tucker, 1988). Another feminist critique of black mothering is that it assumes a black mother who is sacrificial toward everyone including the children of her employer, her own children (especially her sons), and others in the community. Although the characterization of “mammy” is a distortion of black matriarchy through slavery and white supremacy, the strength and leadership of black women in the family and community is a tradition in most African cultures. Likewise, it is traditional but not required, for Africanist women to assume matriarchal duties for those who have no mother.

Finally, Mbiti (1990) focuses on one aspect of Africanist community that is essential to the Event discussed herein, the ways those victimized resisted its effects, and the efficacy of those tools of resistance. The aspect of which I speak is the interdependency between members of an Africanist community. For instance, according to Mbiti, “the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately” (p. 106). With this statement, Mbiti answers Beverly Tatum’s (1997) rhetorical question, “Why are all the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?”

Mbiti (1968) continues his analysis of the role of the individual within the Africanist community by explaining that, “[t]he community must therefore make, create, or produce the individual; for the individual depends on the corporate group. Physical birth is not enough: the child must go through rites of incorporation so that it becomes fully integrated into the entire society” (p. 106). Assuming that the research participants are native informants or adopted into Africanist communities, how that community responds to this Event is essential to the effectiveness of tools of resistance.

## Eurocentrist Discourse and Its Creation of the “Other”

In *"Society Must Be Defended": Lectures At The Collège De France, 1975-76*, Michel Foucault (1997/2003) speaks extensively about the ways race has been discursively constructed from the Enlightenment through the current period. Foucault states that during and after the French Revolution, the idea of race became two transcriptions. The first was a biological transcription “which occurred long before Darwin and which borrowed its discourse, together with all its elements, concepts, and vocabulary, from a materialist automato-physiology” (p. 60). Further, Foucault states that this discourse “also has the support of philology, and thus gives birth to the theory of races in the historico-biological sense” (p. 60). This discourse on race is “ambiguous theory, and it is articulated with, on the one hand, nationalist movements in Europe and with nationalities’ struggles against the great State apparatuses” (p. 60). Hence, Foucault establishes a link between the will to history and the template of race.

The second transcription Foucault (1997/2003) describes was “based upon the great theme and theory of social war, which emerges in the very first year of the nineteenth century, and which tends to erase every trace of racial conflict in order to define itself as class struggle” (p. 60). Foucault describes these transcriptions as “biologico-social racism,” an idea that is:

[a]bsolutely new and which will make the discourse function very differently—that the other race is basically not the race that came from elsewhere or that was, for a time, triumphant and dominant, but that it is a race that is permanently, ceaselessly infiltrating the social body, or which is, rather, what we see as a polarity, as a binary rift within society, is not a clash between two distinct races. It is the splitting of a single race into a superrace and a subrace. (p. 61)

Foucault’s explication of the establishment of racial determinacy helps in introducing this section devoted to explaining some of the European contributions to the idea of “ontological race” (Anderson, 1995) and the ways in which Eurocentric discourse established it as an insurmountable discursive construct. Africanist discourse, as stated earlier, is itself a hybrid of many discourses. This fact seems

obvious when one considers the number of nations on the Mother Continent, the number of people of African ancestry who carried Africanist ways to other nations, and the number of non-Africans who embrace this discourse. Another reason Africanist discourse is hybrid is that it stands beside, not in opposition to or in place of, other discourses. The primary discursive regime that stands beside Africanist discourse is Eurocentric discourse.

The relationship between Africanist discourses and Eurocentric discourse is rife with irony. For instance, when one seeks the definition of Eurocentric, it is defined as, "considering Europe and Europeans as focal to world culture, history, economics, etc." (Flexner, 1987). Concomitant with this definition, Eurocentrists tend to view their world as *The World*. Not only do Eurocentrists tend to view theirs as the only world that matters in terms of geographical parameters, they also focus discourse in their world.

The hybridization between Africanist and Eurocentric discourse leaves us with a mass of discursive confusion. Two parallel ideas cause this confusion. First, Africanist epistemology, practices, ethics, and discourses existed before the incursion of Europe into the continent. Many of these discourses have maintained themselves in relative purity. On the other hand, most Africanist discourses reflect the colonial imprint. Consequently, these discourses are a hybrid of a discourse that by its very definition denies the ability of the Other to reason. In other words, Eurocentrism, an extreme position but one expounded by many in the past three centuries, generally places itself as the yardstick by which the relative value of all other discourses are measured. This is why theorists such as Edward Said (1994), Guyatri Spivak (1999), Michel Foucault (1976/1978), and others call this discourse a "master narrative," or what Lyotard (1979/1984) calls a "grand narrative."

Because of the imperial nature of Eurocentric discourse, one cannot discuss most indigenous cultures without explicating the ways Eurocentric discourse has shaped the subjective and objective view of the Other (1942/1989). In this section, I will not exhaust this analysis, instead I will focus on elements of Eurocentric effective history that appear to influence Africanist thought in a significant way. First is



the defense of natural slavery by Aristotle and Aquinas. The primacy of reason and the view that Africans were incapable of exercising reason is also a key attribute of Eurocentrism. Another salient feature is the belief that black people were of no consequence because they lacked history (Hegel & Hegel, 1956). Finally, Hegel and Kant perpetuate Eurocentrism by focusing on the artifacts of the Other, yet refuse to recognize the Other as capable of appreciating beauty and the sublime (1977; Hegel & Hegel, 1956; Kant, 1764/1960, 1994). This analysis extends critiques by Diop (1960/1987), Spivak (1993, 1999), Said (1994), Asante (1998), Gordon (1997), and Hountondji (2002).

### Ontological Blackness and the Eurocentric Imagination

Prior to analyzing Eurocentric discourses, I will discuss what Victor Anderson (1995) describes as *Ontological Blackness*. Anderson states that racial discourse is used in African-American thought, “as if it objectively exists independent of historically contingent factors and subjective intentions—in the writings of historical and contemporary African-American cultural and religious thinkers” (p. 11). Anderson says these types of discourses connote, “categorical, essentialist, and representational languages depicting black life and experience” (p. 11).

Instead of ontological blackness, Anderson (1995) and hooks (1990) establish the need to conceptualize postmodern blackness. Postmodern blackness, “recognizes that black identities are continually being reconstituted as African-Americans (and I would add others of the Diaspora and the African continent) inhabit widely differentiated social spaces and communities of moral discourse” (Anderson, 1995, p. 11). Anderson suggests that race as an ontological property constitutes what Erikson (1968) describes as a *psuedospecies*. Anderson explains that the use of *psuedospecies* is synonymous with othering, and that the use of this idea “endangers the individual” (p. 13). The development of subjectivities in my participants relates to the belief that people of African descent are members of a *psuedospecies*. In Chapters 3 and 4, the relationship between racial thinking and racializing acts will become clearer as my participants describe ways in which they are conscious of being raced black.

In *Playing In The Dark : Whiteness And The Literary Imagination* (1997) Morrison speaks to, “criticism as a form of knowledge,” that is “capable of robbing literature not only of its own implicit and explicit ideology but of its ideas as well (p. 9). Within criticism, Morrison warns that one must be cognizant of the “wanton” ways in which criticism can, “elaborate strategies undertaken to erase [Africanists’] presence from view” (p. 9). With this warning in mind, I would like to establish how literature, specifically philosophical and religious literature, established ground upon which Africanist discourse was deemed irrelevant.

### Ontological Race and the Ancient Europeans

The espousal of natural slavery by Plato, Aristotle, and Aquinas precipitated the dismissed Africanist people by practitioners of Eurocentric discourse. Molefi Asante (1998) argues that footnotes in many European writings relating to Plato are, “in the European reach for intellectual exclusivity. All roads backwards supposedly lead to the Greeks” (p. 40). Plato (born *Aristocles*) was the primary (assumed) spokesperson for Socratic theory. Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle theorized the idea of *forms*. These forms in the Platonic sense exists in abstract perfection, while in the Aristotelian sense they join with matter and propel it through reason to some future progression (Aristotle, 1, A.D./1966; Brickhouse & Smith, 2003; Cooper, 1997; Frost Jr., 1942/1989; Plato, 1992, V.476d; Plato, Cobb, & NetLibrary Inc., 1993, 211e; Plato, Gallop, & Inc., 1988, 75 c-d). This establishes the connection between the idea of reason and progress. As I will demonstrate later, central to the exclusion of Africans and other Others is the fact that many Ancient Greeks and their western European progeny believed that reason was what constituted humanity.

The type of figurations the Sophists, Platonists, and Peripatetics posit with variations falter within postmodern, poststructural, and Africanist critiques. For instance, Asante (1998) cites Aristotle as espousing a materialistic view. Asante states that Aristotle’s view is materialistic because he “defines the soul as the function of the body and argues that body functions are the individual’s behaviors that are observable and therefore should be measurable” (p. 15). If Asante’s interpretation is valid, Aristotle’s

view suggests that behavior is not only a reflection of the soul, but also a reflection of an individual's ability to reason. Hence, an individual would be considered less human when she or he were unable to reason like the ancient Greeks.

### Normalizing "Natural Slavery" in the Discourses of Aristotle

One easily sees Asante's point after examining the Aristotelian idea of progression of a thing or person who is always *becoming* a perfect *form* (emphasis added). Aristotle (1, A.D./1966) gives an example of this idea by discussing the relationship between the material bronze and the sculpture. According to Aristotle, Bronze is an elemental form, a piece of matter (like the pieces of wood used to build a house, another Aristotelian example). Bronze becomes complete when the sculptor shapes it into the statue it was destined to be. Form is what propels or puts matter into motion. Matter is constantly striving for the perfection of the form; therefore, the form is matter's goal, exemplar, and perfection. Additionally, Frost (1942/1989) uses the example of an acorn becoming a tree to demonstrate Aristotle's idea of a progression. Hence, form causes progress. Progress, the idea of something becoming more perfect from its beginning throughout its life, is not something that postmodernists can allow as an always already state in every living thing (Lyotard, 1979/1984).

Indeed, Foucault (1972) demonstrates the fallacy of the idea of progression. According to Foucault, the new historian should "show that the history of a concept is not wholly and entirely that of its progressive refinement, its continuously increasing rationality, its abstraction gradient, but that of its various fields of constitution and validity, that of its successive rules of use" (p. 5). Foucault, a serious student of Ancient Greece in his own right, does not specifically point to the discourse of the Ancient Greeks in his analysis. Nevertheless, the need to critique progression within all discourses is central to many of his writings, notably the one mentioned above.

One could argue that Aristotle is a major contributor to the way structural logic and discourse is practiced (Asante, 1998, pp. 15-16, pp. 39-40). Likewise, Aristotle is significant because he tutored Alexander the Great, the emperor responsible for the imperial spread of Greek ideas into the European

continent. As with the Roman or any other conquest, imperialism is not simply the spread of a political system; it is also the imposition of systems of thought (Spivak, 1999). Consequently, the conquests by the Roman Empire under the reign of Alexander precipitated the rain of the Greek ideas relating to forms, matter, science, and metaphysics. These ideas about reason, progression, and perfection were translated by later Europeans into colonialism and African slavery (Sachs, 2003). The conquests of Alexander are one example of the poststructural argument that history is not always necessarily progressive.

Aristotle's (1, A.D./1998) ideas about human equality, especially slavery, cannot be overemphasized. First, in discussing the Aristotelian idea of "natural slavery," one must extend this idea to the insistence by modern Eurocentrists that black people are not deserving of acknowledgement (e.g., Asante's (1998) critique of Hegel and Nietzsche in *The Afrocentric Idea*). One must also acknowledge the hierarchical nature of man in the early Greek thought. In this example, I will use Aristotle, but there are examples of this belief in the natural inferiority of certain people in the writings of Plato and the other Greek writers as well.

As for Aristotle, he argued that slaves should be those who "lack , by nature, the capacity to engage in broad deliberation" (Harvey, 2001, pp. 41-65). Of course, this category of humanity would not include any Greeks. Likewise, the "natural slaves suffer from a defect in their *humanity* [emphasis added] in that they are ultimately incapable of determining, and subsequently pursuing, those ends (i.e., virtuous activity and philosophical contemplation) that are constitutive of *eudaimonia*." The word *eudaimonia* denotes "happiness or the highest goal of the rational person" and literally is interpreted as "having a good indwelling spirit" (Aristotle, 1, A.D./1998, 1094a17-1094b10, 1, A.D./1946a18-19).

Not only does Aristotle examine the rational parameters that delineate the *natural* slave from the master, he also discusses the physical attributes that inherently predispose certain people to a life of servitude, while rendering others more adept for mental labors (Aristotle, 1946, 1255B7). To this end, Aristotle insists that "a set of objective criteria must be identified whereby we can readily distinguish between master and slave" (Harvey, 2001, p. 5). In other words, the slave's appearance needs to be

different from the master's. Furthermore, Aristotle argues that "a combination of differences in physical and mental capacity is what legitimates the distinction between master and slave" (Harvey, 2001, p. 7). According to Aristotle, nature has fitted the slave with the body befitting "a life meant solely for physical toil"; consequently, the slave is a "lumbering 'living tool' while the master exudes bodily grace and poise" (Aristotle, 1946, 1254b31-32).

### Justifying Slavery in a Christian Context

Similarly, St. Thomas Aquinas (1273/1920), agreed with Aristotle's views and attempted to parlay the latter's theories within a Christian context. Like Aristotle, Aquinas argued that slavery of the vanquished by the victor in, say, the case of war was natural. Moreover, Capizzi (2002) credits Aquinas with having a major influence on the massive colonization, imperialism, and enslavement that followed the medieval period in which Aquinas lived. Capizzi, argues that the type of slavery that existed during Aquinas's life and the type that was propagated in the new world were drastically different in degree of violence enacted on the slaves. Nevertheless, Aquinas's view is untenable because he fails to articulate a critique of the issue of free will as it conflicts with the acceptance of any form of slavery.

To determine how Aristotle's and Aquinas' beliefs about natural slavery survived through the post-Enlightenment period, I will examine Martin Bernal's essay on Aryan models and Greek origins in V.F. Mudimbe's (1997) edited book, *Nations, Identities, Cultures*. Bernal argues that "there was no color prejudice in ancient Egypt and no anti-African feeling in ancient Israel or Homeric Greece (Indeed, Homer saw the Ethiopians as the most virtuous of all people)" (p. 18). Bernal indicates that the Portuguese, Dutch, and English revived the Aristotelian view of natural slavery at the onset of transatlantic slave trade. According to Bernal, around the seventeenth century, the slave trade caused a system of "caste racism whereby the best black was seen as worse than the worst white" (p. 19). Bernal further suggests that Europeans resuscitated Aristotle's views about slavery along with the alleged "Curse

of Canaan”<sup>4</sup> (p. 19) to satisfy the needs of European Christian morality as it relates to enslavement. In other words, the Europeans who supported slavery needed to dehumanize the African in order to justify inhumane treatment based on race, while still justifying it as consistent with Christian doctrine.

One may ask what all of this discussion about slavery in Ancient Greece and during medieval times has to do with racializing events in the present or recent past. Again, I will remind the reader of what Bakhtin (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1981), Derrida (1967/1978), and Asante (1998) said about the relationship between discourse and ideology. Likewise, we must remember the fact that Eurocentrists like to reckon their cultural heritage to the Ancient Greeks and Romans. This cultural reckoning carries with it certain ideas about the nature of humanity, who is greater or less, and the dispensability of human beings like Michelle, Amari, and Stephanie. In order for a security guard to shoot upon a group of young people of any ethnicity, he had to believe that they were less human than he. He had to believe that they were dispensable commodities. My suggestion is that Europeans conveniently adopted this idea of the commodification or the dispensability of black people espoused by the Greek theorists mentioned above.

### Racing through Rationalism

The ideas of rationalists of the recent and far past are heavily documented. In fact, these ideas live in the reality of Eurocentrists and those who follow their ideals today. In order for racial totalization to exist, one must believe in the essential nature of blackness or ontological blackness (Anderson, 1995). Descartes, Kant, and Hegel stress this type of essential racialized ideology.

I will discuss these three theorists in chronological order, not because it shows a progression, but because it shows how one's theories build on others. First, Descartes is extraordinary because of his profound influence on the way people in today's world think. It is Descartes' discourses on the humanities that most concern my discussion herein.

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<sup>4</sup> The “Curse of Canaan” has been used as justification for black subservience and slavery since Biblical times. According to the myth, Ham, the father of Canaan and son of Noah, was cursed with black skin because he gazed upon a drunken naked Noah. One finds references to what is sometimes called the “Curse of Canaan” or “The Hamitic Curse” in writing of Europeans in the Americas, in Europe, and in Africa. It is especially used by African colonists to justify the taking of indigenous property and the subjugation of native African people.

It would not be a stretch to describe Descartes as the first to articulate idea of the mind/body split. In other words, Descartes says, “it is [reason] alone which constitutes us men, and distinguishes us from the *brutes*” (1649/1996, 2.14)[emphasis added]. If one chooses to look beyond the apparent innocuous nature of this statement, one might distinguish a central characteristic of Descartes’ language, a trait that is common in much Eurocentric discourse. Stated simply, Descartes’ statement delineates an *us* and a *them* (or Other) by using ones ability to reason as the yardstick. As I will show, this focus on European reason is central to the ontological racism espoused by each of the theorists I discuss herein.

Furthermore, Descartes (1649/1996) states that *reason* is what separates *real men* from *brutes*. I infer from this statement that real men necessarily have the ability to *reason*. Likewise, those who appear to be real men, but are really brutes lack this capacity. Following Spivak’s (1999) lead in her critique of Hegel’s criticism of the *Indians*, I would like to ask Descartes, “who are these brutes.” Are they animals, plants, or homosapiens? Are they only are gendered *male*? Whose *reason* is it to which Descartes refers? Is it the European system of reason, the Native American, the Indian, the Chinese, or the African?

### Rationalism in Blackface

To demonstrate the power of Descartes’ thinking, I will examine how Africanist philosophers in the Twentieth Century echo his ideas. For instance, Anthony Appiah (1992)} uses two African-American leaders as exemplars in *In my Father's house: Africa in the philosophy of culture*. Appiah states that he wrote *In My Father’s House* to prove that “ideological decolonization is bound to fail if it neglects either endogenous ‘tradition’ or exogenous ‘Western’ ideas, and that many African (and African-American) intellectuals have failed to find a negotiable middle way” (p. x.). Apparently, Appiah felt that W.E.B. DuBois and Alexander Crummel exemplified the “negotiable middle way.”

With Appiah’s (1992) purpose in mind, I question his efficacy as an advocate for “ideological decolonization” (p. x). Appiah speaks reverently of both Crummel and DuBois, great African-American men who spoke for the masses in Africa and the Diaspora. Likewise, both deserve merit for the

contributions and sacrifices they made to enable a better future for black people. Nevertheless, both prove inadequate in eliminating traces of Eurocentrism, elitism, and rationalism from their discourse. Furthermore, both these Pan-Africanists argue a top-down, hierarchical approach to solving the problems of Africans and those in the Diaspora.

In the first instance, Alexander Crummel, the Liberian, Cambridge educated, Episcopalian priest betrays his Africanist origins by arguing that Liberia had been the benefactor of an unexpected *gift* through the institution of African slavery and colonialism. This *gift*, according to Crummel, is the Anglo Saxon tongue. According to Crummel, the Anglo-Saxon language is “superior to the ‘various tongues and dialects’ of the indigenous African populations” in its “euphony, its conceptual resources, and its capacity to express the ‘supernatural truths’ of Christianity” (Appiah, 1992, p. 3) [emphasis added]. Similarly, Du Bois (1903) expresses his aristocratic views when he asks:

Can the masses of the Negro people be in any possible way more quickly raised than by the effort and example of this aristocracy of talent and character? *Was there ever a nation on God's fair earth civilized from the bottom upward?* Never; it is, ever was and ever will be from the top downward that culture filters. [emphasis added]

In his assumption that intellect and leadership filter from the top down, Du Bois, like Crummel, adopts a rationalist Eurocentric stance. His assumption that there is a top, and by extension a bottom, reiterates previous Eurocentric ideas like the “Great Chain of Being,” as well as the mind/body split espoused by Descartes. Du Bois’ attention to the idea of reason likewise is an iteration of the supremacy of the elite. In like manner, Crummel reiterates the centrality of the Eurocentric discursive practices that Asante (1998) and others have critiqued.

The final problem with the views expressed by Descartes, Dubois, Crummel, and Appiah is that they rely on the essentialized blackness that Anderson (1995) critiques. One reason Anderson critiques ontological or essential blackness is that it uses “species logic” (p. 51) to define what it means to be black. In fact, Anderson describes how categorical racism and “species logic” were projects undertaken by



“England France, and Germany” in order to “isolate and describe those essential features that differentiate the European consciousness from others” (Pp. 51-2).

Anderson (1995) explains that in order to employ species logic the Eurocentric system established essential traits of Europeans “in terms of rationality, aesthetics, morals, and race” (p. 52). Within this developing discourse, it became as essential to define who *was not* European as it was to define who *was* European. Categorical racism, according to Anderson, allowed the substantiation of Eurocentric views about race through cultural anthropology conducted in so-called “Third World” areas.

#### Kant, Jefferson, and Speaking for “The Other”

Anderson cites two figures as crucial to the development of categorical racism, Immanuel Kant, and Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson provides extensive proof of his assessment that African-Americans are ontologically inferior and unable to act as moral agents in his *Notes On The State Of Virginia* (1797). Jefferson wrote *Notes* while assigned as U.S. Ambassador to France around the time of the French Revolution. *Notes* responded to requests by French officials for Jefferson to describe his homeland, Virginia. In his thorough manner, Jefferson addresses the issue of black people similar to the way he describes the horses, cows, and swine in his native state. In describing black people, Jefferson comments:

It will probably be asked, Why not retain and incorporate the blacks into the state, and thus save the expence of supplying, by importation of white settlers, the vacancies they will leave? *Deep rooted prejudices entertained by the whites; ten thousand recollections, by the blacks, of the injuries they have sustained; new provocations; the real distinctions which nature has made;* and many other circumstances, will divide us into parties, and produce convulsions which will probably never end but in the extermination of the one or the other race. *To these objections, which are political,* may be added *others, which are physical and moral.* The first difference which strikes us is that of *colour.* *Whether the black of the Negro resides in the reticular membrane between the skin and scarf-skin, or in the scarf-skin itself; whether it proceeds from the colour of the blood, the colour of the*

*bile, or from that of some other secretion, the difference is fixed in nature*, and is as real as if its seat and cause were better known to us. [emphasis added]

Jefferson (1797), using reason to show the ontological inferiority of black people, effectively continues this discourse of subjugation. Jefferson was not the only statesperson to support slavery; nevertheless, his significant role as coauthor of both the *Declaration of Independence* and *The Constitution of the United States of America* seems ironic given the statements in those documents about the equality of men. Most of these conflicts can be *rationalized* by the Eurocentrist view that people of African origin were not *real men*, but *brutes* as Descartes, Kant, Nietzsche, and others so carefully demonstrated (Gordon, 1997; Spivak, 1999).

Guyatri Spivak (1999) focuses her critique of Kant on his description of rational man as *noumenon*. In the philosophy of Kant (1781/1990), *noumenon* suggests “a thing which must be cogitated not as an object of sense, but as a thing in itself (p. 164). Kant contrasts *noumenon* to phenomenon. According to Kant’s description, phenomenon would be a state in which the object only has meaning in relation to something outside itself. In the Eurocentric worldview, people of African descent only have meaning insofar as their thoughts and action are articulated by Eurocentrists. Therefore, they are phenomena.

According to Spivak (1999), in Kant’s view, “initiation into humanity is rather the project of culture.” A culture that would dismiss the “polytheism [that] is here defined as demonology and Christian monotheism as ‘wondrous’ [*wundersam*] because, in a certain sense, it is almost philosophy, philosophy’s supplement” (Kant, 1781/1990, p. 310).

Finally, Spivak (1999) summarizes the mission and effects of rationalist discursive regimes, what she calls the “master discourse” (p. 37), by stating that “Kant began a global project for the *subject*” [emphasis added], a project which purposes to transform “them from the raw to the philosophical” (p. 36). The problem Spivak poses with this project is that it establishes “imperialism as social mission [where] God’s image is that of the governor: ‘an author and governor of the world, who is at the same

time a moral lawgiver” (Kant, 1892/2000, 310, cited in; Spivak, 1999, p.31). Hence, Christianity, or the beliefs therein, becomes a gauge of one’s ability to reason, of one’s ability to exist as *noumenon*.

Lewis Gordon (2000) also criticizes Kant’s statement that people of African origin were untalented, unimaginative, and inherently beneath people of European origin. What he does not mention is the fact that Kant (1764/1960) categorically races the so-called “Arab” as having an “inflamed imagination. He likewise mentions that” the “Persians” are “the French of Asia,” after citing the French as having a “national spirit ... only a step to sacrilegious mockery.” Kant has no tolerance for the Japanese, whom he claims, “display few signs of a finer feeling”; the Chinese, who “have venerable grotesqueries”; or the Indians, who “have a dominating taste of the grotesque” (pp. 109-10).

Finally, Kant (1764/1960) reserves his harshest assessment for the Negro of Africa and those of the Diaspora. For instance, Kant states that:

The Negroes of Africa have by nature no feeling that rises above the trifling. Mr. Hume challenges anyone to cite a single example in which a Negro has shown talents, and asserts that among the hundreds of thousands of blacks who are transported elsewhere from their countries, although many of them have even been set free, still not a single one was ever found who presented anything great in art or science or any other praise-worthy quality. (p. 111)

### Hegel and Ahistory in Africa

In addition to Kant, Spivak (1999) also analyzes the Eurocentric aspects of Hegel’s theories. Spivak is not the only scholar to analyze Hegel’s Eurocentrist leanings. Fanon (1992), Gordon (2000; 1997), Diop (1991), and other Africanist scholars also critiqued his focus on the insignificance of people of African origin *vis a vis* what Hegel perceives as the ahistory of the African. In fact, according to Westley (1997) Hegel expounded a “view of culture as based on a hierarchy in which the European experience was dominant. He thus introduces into the field of ethnological theory the notion of ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture” (pp. 94-95). Similarly in *The Philosophy of History* (Hegel & Hegel, 1956), Hegel

asserts that “such people of weak culture lose themselves more and more in contact with peoples of higher culture and more intensive cultural meaning” (pp. 200-201).

The issue of Hegel being a Eurocentrist is not nearly as problematic as the suggestion that his ideas heavily influenced Du Bois’ (Du Bois, Blight, & Gooding-Williams, 1903) ideas in *Souls of Black Folks*. After reading Hegel’s ideas and their critiques, evaluating Appiah’s (1992) argument for African assimilation as well as DuBois’ arguably Eurocentric analysis of the “Negro problem,” I have concluded that Du Bois appears to display attitudes similar to those of Hegel.

### Nietzsche on Africans

Nietzsche, along with Hegel was another nineteenth-century European scholar who had oppressive ideas about black people. It is ironic that I as one who finds poststructuralism most able to embrace my Africanist epistemology, must criticize the ideas of one who is credited with foresaging the postmodern, Friedrich Nietzsche. It would not be a stretch to say that Nietzsche expressed cultural elitist ideas. It appears that in many of his works, Nietzsche also expresses lack of concern for human suffering. What many may find surprising is that Nietzsche was decidedly not anti-black, because in order for him to be anti-black, he would have to consider the black person as worthy of thought.

In fact, there is no term to describe Nietzsche’s (anti)sentiments toward black people. Nietzsche (1918, 1997), for instance, in *Genealogy of Morals*, explains that the more susceptible to pain a group or individual is, the further away that group or individual is from the ‘best constituted European’ or the ‘bluestocking’ (pp. 67-68). In this example, Nietzsche uses black people as the best example of this fact. Hence, surviving the Middle Passage and slavery becomes, in Nietzsche’s line of thinking, a reason to consider black people as not as human as Europeans.

Allman (1995) conducts an excellent, and what I consider relatively unbiased, analysis of Nietzsche’s (1896/1995) elitism as expounded in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.. Allman, in examining Nietzsche’s political proposal *vis a vis* the *Urbemensch*, says that:

the typological cast of Nietzsche's social and political thought is fundamentally inegalitarian, for out of a typological assessment of human beings arises the political task of relating in order of spiritual rank the different human types. Nietzschean typology, however, rests not on a science of nature but on an insight into the encompassing historicity of existence. (pp. 69-77)

Preston (1997) seems to agree with Allman's (1995) analysis when he states that

Nietzsche's writings address themselves only to people from certain cultures: Brahman India, Aryan Persia, Jewry, Semitic Islam, Russia, Scandinavia, and Europe with England as its westernmost outpost. What Nietzsche calls the "poles of philosophical endowment" run from India to England. (Preston, 1997, p. 169)

Since Thomas Jefferson (1797) stated essentially the same sentiments as Nietzsche over 100 years earlier, Nietzsche's sentiments do not surprise me. What is rather disturbing as a critic and supporter of postmodernism is that so many gifted theorists would subscribe to Nietzsche's theories while failing to mention in their academic discourses that he was anti-black. This oversight would be similar to discussing the great scientific discoveries advanced under Nazism while failing to mention that Hitler was an Anti-Semite and a Eurocentric extremist. It signals something in the character of western philosophy that does not allow for the admission of good ideas without the concomitant goodness of the speaker of those ideas. It fails to acknowledge that good people can have bad ideas and bad people can speak the truth (Foucault, 1983/2001).

#### The Great Emancipator on Black Inferiority

In the United States, racist discourse against black people proliferated for at least two centuries prior to the Civil War (Allen, 1994). This focus on the difference and inferiority of black people followed the need to justify subjugation in order to sustain slavery's impact on the economy of the United States. Contrary to popular belief, white supremacy is and was not a uniquely southern phenomenon. For instance, there are extensive records demonstrating Abraham Lincoln's antipathy for black people in spite

of his insistence on the cessation of slavery. Lincoln's insistence was based on his desire to keep the Union together, not on any conscience desire to give equality to black people. Lincoln's goals are clear in this speech abstract:

I will say then that I am not, nor ever have been in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the White and Black races—that I am not nor ever have been in favor of making voters or jurors of Negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with White people, and I will say in addition to this that there is a physical difference between the White and Black races which I believe will forever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality. And inasmuch as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior, and I as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the White race. (Lincoln, 1858, cited in Angle & Miers, 1992, pp. 613-15).

Lincoln laid the groundwork for black suffrage, an accomplishment that was not realized until after his assassination. Black suffrage accomplished two objectives. First, it aligned the anti-slavery cause to the Republican Party, thereby eliciting loyalty at the ballot box from many blacks. Secondly, it aggravated animosity between southern whites and blacks by allowing black people to vote while denying that right to former Confederates.

#### The "Final Solution" Continues

As I stated earlier, Eurocentrists hearken their discourses and beliefs along two axes, cultural and racial. While the cultural Eurocentrists are logocentric, the racial Eurocentrists are ethnocentric. In other words, those Eurocentrists who hearken their beginnings along the lines of Aryan or Anglo-Saxon roots are what I call white supremacists. Both logocentrism and white supremacy follow similar lines of development from the ancient Greeks; but when the issue of chattel slavery was politicized, different and more overt versions of white supremacy emerged specifically in the United States, Northern Europe, and South Africa.

I will focus my discussion of the advent of modern white supremacist discourse in the United States and Germany. Following the Civil War, white supremacists perpetuated perceptions of black people as recipients of unwarranted handouts and robbers of white rights. Additionally, white supremacy in the southern United States is based on two other emotions, fear and blind obedience (Allport, 1954; Cardyn, 1992; Futrell & Simi, 2004; Gossett, 1997; Weisenburger, 2003). White supremacists use fear to perpetuate the image of black men as sexual predators whose ultimate desire is to ravage white women, and black women who wish to be raped by white men (Ferber, 1998; James, 1999; Rushing, 2002). Supremacists also use fear to advance notions that reparative programs like affirmative action take from white people what should inherently be theirs (e.g., Stormfront.org, 2004 White Supremacist Website).

Allport (1954) suggests that one of the central mobilizing tenets of white supremacy is its leaders' strict enforcement of extreme obedience. Allport argues that leaders enforce this "neurosis of extreme conformity" (p. 274) through propaganda, cultural education, and ethnocentric creeds. Similarly, Rushing (2002) and Cardyn (1992) maintain that supremacists in the southern United States imbued sexual fear in white women and a nostalgic but spurious sense of protectiveness in white men. Rushing also analyzes ways in which schools and churches were complicit in maintaining this social order.

Based on defeat during the Civil War, groups of white men began organizing across the South under various banners. These include the "Pale Faces," the "'76 Association," the "White Brotherhood," the "Knights of the White Camellia," and the "Ku Klux Klan" (Cardyn, 1992). Most historians agree that the Klan began in Pulaski, Tennessee shortly following the war's end. The name "Ku Klux" derives from *kuklos*, the Greek word for circle. From the Tennessee Klan, small groups, or "Claverns" formed across every former Confederate state by 1868. Klan membership drew on all classes and occupations among like-minded white men including farmers, wealthy planters, lawyers, physicians, and judges (Cardyn, 1992, pl. 683). The post-bellum Klan eventually became the umbrella organization of the aforementioned groups within the United States.

The Klan (similar to Holocaust revisionists) argues young vigilantes operating independently committed atrocities after the Civil War. Contrarily, Cardyn (1992) argues that documentary evidence attests to the central leadership of these bands of terrorists. The Klan uses extreme violence to further its aims of white purity, the protection of white womanhood, segregation, and the suppression of upward mobility for blacks, Jews, and other non-protestant or non-white people. Their techniques included the burning of homes of black people and those who sympathized with them (Weisenburger, 2003), lynchings and/or castration (Ainslie & Brabeck, 2003; Woodson, 1933), rape, and murder.

The Klan grew to a nationwide organization by the early 1920's. By this time, many former slaves had migrated north or west creating objects for white hate in communities across the country. I believe that the ideas of Adolph Hitler and the German Holocaust during the 1940's reified the white supremacist agenda (Foucault, 1977). Allport (1954) poses the question: "Is conforming a superficial phenomenon or has it deep functional significance for the person who conforms?" (p. 273). Allport suggests that the blind obedience instilled in Nazi officials during the Holocaust exemplifies how conformity can breed ethnocentrism, which in turn breeds extremism. As evidence, Allport cites the Commandant of the Auschwitz concentration camp, Rudolph Hoess's, testimony during the Nuremberg Trials. When questioned as to whether he had any feelings when carrying out these horrors, Hoess states, "'Don't you see, we SS men were not supposed to think about these things; it never even occurred to us.'" Hoess further stated that, "'We just never heard anything else ... It was not only newspapers like the *Stürmer*, but it was everything we ever heard. Even our military and *ideological* training took for granted that we had to protect Germany from the Jews'" [p. 275, emphasis added]. Hoess's statement reiterates Foucault's (1997/2003) description of the racist cry that, *Society Must Be Defended*.

As Allport (1954) so aptly suggests, Hoess's statements demonstrate "a neurotic degree of conformity. The loyalty and obedience involved were prepotent over every rational and humane impulse." Allport further explains that, "we can only learn from this case that fanatic ideology may engender conformity of incredible tenacity" (p. 275). This tenaciousness describes white supremacy as it



manifests in nations across the globe. In the United States specifically, this discourse furthers beliefs predating the Holocaust.

Part of the problem with white supremacy is that its adherents reckon their cause to cultural memory (Kansteiner, 2002). As Giroux and McLaren (1994) state, "the heroic cult of modernism which has naturalized the power and privilege of 'dead white men' and accorded the pathology of domination the status of cultural reason has all but enshrined a history of decay, defeat, and moral panic" (p. 133). Another aspect of this discourse, similar to the arguments of Nazi annihilators, is its positioning of supremacists as victims. For instance, Greenberg, Kirkland, and Pyszczynski (1988) explain that:

Recently [T. J.] van Dijk (1984) identified prejudiced discourse as an important contributor to the formulation and diffusion of ethnic prejudice. In his research van Dijk used interview questions to elicit prejudiced talk. Among his interesting findings were the following: that majority members use stories to place themselves in the victim role and thereby justify prejudiced views; that majority members tend to present themselves to the interviewer in a positive light; and that majority members often explicitly communicate tolerance while implicitly conveying prejudice. (p. 74)

Kansteiner (2002), also argues that we exercise caution when accepting group social memory without critique. The author observes that:

The history of collective memory would be recast as a complex process of cultural production and consumption that acknowledges the persistence of cultural traditions as well as the ingenuity of memory makers and the subversive interests of memory consumers. The negotiations among these three different historical agents create the rules of engagement in the competitive arena of memory politics, and the reconstruction of these negotiations helps us distinguish among the abundance of failed collective memory initiatives on the one hand and the few cases of successful collective memory construction on the other. (pp. 179-197)

As Kansteiner suggests, collective memory is a type of political discourse. This type of memory has creators, those with a political and ideological goal in mind. Collective memory predominate in the tales of the heroes of the Confederacy, heroes whom white supremacists revere. For example, a former Confederate soldier documented his memoirs in "Diaries of Carroll H. Clark" (1911/1963). About 30 years after the war, Clark dictated his memoirs, which were initially published in a Tennessee newspaper in 1911. During the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Civil War, Clark's nephew republished these memoirs.

The creation of white supremacy in this country is predicated on the black person as different, as Other. There innumerable examples in which writers, both black and white, tag the black character by referring to his or her color, yet do not color the white characters. Notice how Clark describes black people in his diaries:

We began to mix and mingle with other companys [sic] and soon became acquainted with many of them, whose names are yet familiar and honored. I remember the big fat Negro who had a cake and cider stand. Millions of flies swarmed around and on the cakes. We got plenty of meal, flour, bacon, sugar, coffee, etc. while there. About the latter part of June, the measles infested our camp, and all who never had them were soon down.

Not only does Clark race the black man, he associates the man's business with dirtiness and disease.

In another entry, Clark associates black people with Yankees:

One day while the tide was down, one of my messmates and I went out on the sandbar, just below the Causeway leading toward Beaufort Island, and saw some Yanks in a skiff making their way to the point of the island, and we fired on them with our muskets, but failed to hit them. They fired on us with their long range guns and clipped the seagrass close to us and we pulled for the "Live Oak." The boys would tear up little huts vacated by negroes, catch large rats and eat them. I am one old Rebel who never eat rats, turtles, frogs, and possums, although I saw the time when I would give the world and fullness thereof for a square meal and one good night's rest. In the early days some negroes were

carrying cotton to market with one mule and dray, and the mule balked and could not be whipped or persuaded to go, when an old negro came along and said 'poke his tail, he go.' Afterwards, that place was called Pocataligo.

First, Clark indicates that both the black people and the Yankees eat rodents and other wild animals, an action that in his view denotes savagery (Lowealal, 1998). Second, he indicates the contrast between his own vernacular and that of black people through his tale of the black man and the mule. Clark (1911/1963) clearly ties his beliefs about race and the Civil War to his political leanings. He discusses an incident when

Col. Bill Stokes of Dekalb Co. went out in the Southern army, but left it, made up and commanded a Regiment in the Yankee army, and was a candidate for United States Congress soon after the war, on the Republican ticket. He had an appointment to speak here, and many of us gathered to hear him speak. He came at the appointed time, and brought a guard of blue coats with guns with him. I guess he was afraid some ex-Confederate might kill him. Election day came on, and I was not allowed to vote, notwithstanding and had to work roads and pay taxes, and had taken an oath to honor the "stars and stripes". Republicans and Negroes were allowed to vote. Later on, C. C. Senter (?) was elected Gov. and commissioned a man in each county to give certificates to such ex-rebs as he thought were loyal. I remember that U. Y. Drake (?) was the commissioner in this county and gave me a certificate entitling me to vote, and I began with the Democrats, have followed them through evil as well as good report, and will never forsake the party unless I find a better one, which is not in sight yet.

In this passage, Clark suggests three themes that permeate white supremacist ideology. First, the Republican party is portrayed as the party that freed the slaves. Second, Clark alludes to a consistent theme in white supremacist discourse, that black people robbed white southerners of something, in this

case, the right to vote (Coleman, 2003). Finally, Clark suggests that white solidarity in the South mitigates the damaging effects wrought on southern whites by the North and the Negro.

White supremacist discourse permeates writings such as Clark's and 1920's Klan Grand Wizard Hiram Wesley Evans (Evans, 1925, 1926) whose association of "whiteness with Americanism made charges of white race betrayal cosubstantial with anti-Americanism" (McGee, 1998).

The similarities between the white supremacist discourse of Hitler's regime and that of Americans from the Civil War to the present are clear. Following World War II, neo-Nazi's and white supremacists began to coalesce on common goals of racial purity. To this end, white supremacists' media cite Hitler as a hero deserving reverence. These propaganda organization include *Stormfront* (*Stormfront.org*, 2004), Military Order of Stars and Bars (Sons of Confederate Veterans) (MOSB, 2004), *L'Association des Anciens Amateurs de Récits de Guerres et d'Holocaustes* (Holocaust Revisionist) (AAARGs, 2004), and Ernst Zundel (2004).

Howard Winant (1997) describes the confusion in racial discourse in the United States aptly:

Just as the movements partially reformed white supremacist institutions, so they partially transformed white racial consciousness. Obviously, they did not destroy the deep structures of white privilege, but they did make counterclaims on behalf of the racially excluded and subordinated. As a result, white identities have been displaced and refigured: they are now contradictory, as well as confused and anxiety ridden, to an unprecedented extent. It is this situation which can be described as white racial dualism. (pp. 876-884)

Smitherman and Van Dijk (1988) argue that the discourse of discrimination propagates the white supremacist agenda. Evidence revealed in the present study supports these assertions. Some statements the guard makes to the students after firing upon them attests to his acceptance of white supremacist propaganda. His actions also support my assertion that discourse informs ideology, which in turn creates actions. Black youth are particularly vulnerable to white supremacist vigilante acts because

the youth are easy to identify. Their ease of identity creates an atmosphere for capricious and organized acts of hate against them based on their skin color.

I will remind the reader that this study deals with racializing acts—acts that I believe Eurocentrists sanctioned through their discourses. Likewise, as some might call these actions white supremacist, I need to stress the point that white supremacy is just one facet of Eurocentric discourse. These discourses produce effects. The effects these discourses had on Stephanie, Michelle, and Amari are discussed in Chapter 4.

### Conclusion

In this Chapter I have tried to deconstruct ideology, discourse, race, and epistemologies with a minimal reliance on the binaries postmodernists eschew. First, I discussed discourse because discourse is what establishes ideology, and ideology precipitates events. Then I discussed Africanists thoughts and ways of being because the participants and I employ Africanist epistemology as well as Eurocentric discourse. Finally, I discussed Eurocentric discourse, a specific type of discourse that I believe played heavily in the actions of the security guard. I show the development of Eurocentric discourse through a selected list of theorists: Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, Kant, Nietzsche, and Hegel, Jefferson, and Lincoln. Eurocentric discourse, as stated earlier, is as important in its use by those enacting racialized violence as it is to the way those raced deconstruct the Event in order to make sense of their worlds.

## CHAPTER 3

FINDING *PARRHESIA*<sup>5</sup>

## Introduction

At this moment when I begin to explain details of conducting research with my former students, issues such as research site, methodology, subjectivity, and analysis become troubling. Consequently, I will first explain how I operationalize effective history (1985) in my study and analysis. I will then explain why I decided that I must study the Event and those victimized by it in spite of my earlier reluctance as well as how I obtained entrée, selected participants, and other issues related to sample selection criteria. Subsequently, the research schedule will describe this one-year process. Following the research schedule, I will explain the difficulty I have employing the term “site” as it is traditionally used in qualitative research. I will explain why I chose to focus on nomadic site, sites that are sometimes physical, but many times psychic. I will then give a description of those sites. Following the description of sites, both physical and psychic, I explain how my committee and I determined to deconstruct my subjectivity prior to the onset of data collection.

Michael Crotty (1998) suggests four salient questions any qualitative researcher must answer prior to embarking on the research project. The first question asks what methods will be used to gather data. In other words, what are the techniques, procedures, and devices used to gather data. The second question relates to the first. It asks what methodology the researcher will use. Crotty describes methodology as the strategy, plan of action, process, or design underlying the methods used and linking them to the desired outcomes. The third question is the theoretical perspective that provides the context for and grounds the methodology, its logic, and criteria. Finally, Crotty suggests that the researcher must

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<sup>5</sup> In *Fearless Speech*, a collection of Michel Foucault’s lectures of the subject of free speech, Foucault focuses on the Greek word *parrhesia*. According to Foucault, *parrhesia* is speech that speaks what an individual views as truth. This truth is spoken in a particular situation in which the speaker expects no reward, and does not feel the audience will be receptive to the words he or she speaks.

answer the question of epistemology. Epistemology is the theory of knowledge imbedded in the other research processes.

### Operationalizing “Effective History”

First, I will explain the dilemma facing me as I endeavored to research a racializing incident. One of the problems with some research into these types of events is that it couches the “victim” in a way that discloses him or her as a subject incapable of resistance and action. In my experience, readings and studies about the victimized usually evoke reactions of pity on the part of the reader or listener. Since pity does no service to the victimized (1996), I have chosen a type of data analysis that does not represent the participants in such a way.

After reading several of Foucault’s (1972, 1976/1978, 1977, 1977/1995, 1997/2003) works and others including Arac(1988), Agnello (2002), and Rella (1994), I found that Foucault’s “effective history” best fitted the type of research and analysis that I desired because Foucault critiques the purposes and effects of traditional historicizing. According to Foucault, traditional history, or what Nietzsche calls *Ursprung* (Foucault, 1977) is linear, reductionist, and heavily concerned with utility. Likewise, traditional history focuses on static discourses as if they have not changed over time, and it ignores the “invasions, struggles, plundering, disguises, ploys” (Foucault, 1977, p. 139) that have disrupted the spoken word. My participants’ lives and their resistances to efforts of subjugation were not linear and were irreducible to a moment, an outcome, or an essence that was progressive, rational, or liberatory. Therefore, focused on what the participants saw as important in their effective histories.

Furthermore, Foucault (1977) describes effective history as focusing not on the normal, but on the aberration. Again, using Nietzsche’s terminology, Foucault, opposes *Ursprung*, a type of historicizing that focuses on “the exact essence of things, their purest possibilities, and their carefully protected identities” (p. 142) to two other German words used to denote origin, *Herkunft* and *Entstehung*. *Herkunft*, “seeks the subtle, singular, and subindividual marks” (p. 147), that describe one person’s subjective actions, their effects, and the resistances to them. Since this term relates to “affiliation to a

group, sustained by the bonds of blood, tradition, or social class” (p. 145), its application in the analysis of my data fitted nicely with my desire to use Africanist epistemology and Eurocentric discourse in analyzing my participants’ daily existences. Effective history also considers the participants as a part of the various cultures through which they move. The product of this type of analysis becomes evident in this and the next Chapter. Again, I remind the reader that within this analysis, Africanist Epistemology and Eurocentric discourse are just two of myriad players in the events, resistances, and effects described herein.

In talking about effects, the term *Entstehung* (Foucault, 1977) approximates the type of analysis I used. *Entstehung*, according to Foucault, designates “emergence, the moment of arising” (p. 148). It disavows the search for “descent in uninterrupted continuity” (p. 148) and instead focuses on the participants’ “attempt to avoid degeneration and regain strength” (p. 149). It also focuses on how the participants act against themselves “at the moment when [resistance] weakens,” and “inflicts torments and mortifications” (p. 149). Consequently, I have conducted an effective history analysis that examined emergences of the subject as agent, resistances of the subject against harmful forces, and unintentional acts of the subjects against themselves followed by their emergence from these acts.

#### Research Schedule

April-August 2003	-	Contact Participants/Parents and obtain verbal consent
October 2003	-	Defend Prospectus
October 2003	-	Submit IRB Application
October 13, 2003	-	Participate in Subjectivity Interview
November 15-30		Contact Participants to determine where they would like to be interviewed.
November 1, 2003	-	Transcribe and analyze Subjectivity Interview
November 12, 2003	-	Received IRB Approval
December 2, 2003— February 22, 2004		Transcribe, code, and analyze data.



December 1, 2003	-	Travel to Sandpiper and interview Caroline Chastain
December 15, 2003	-	Interview Amari at my home
December 29, 2003	-	Interview Stephanie at my home
November 1, 2003 – January 31, 2004	-	Write Introduction and Review of Literature
February 4, 2003	-	Interview Michelle at my home
February 22-March 12, 2004	-	Conduct follow-ups via telephone with participants
March 12, 2004	-	Send Data stories to participants for member checks
March 12, 2004	-	Send Data to peer debriefer
March 12, 2004 – April 5, 2004	-	Write methodology, data analysis, and conclusion
		Make revisions to Introduction and Review of Literature
		Evaluate and Incorporate feedback from member checks and Peer debriefer.
April 15, 2004	-	Meet with reading committee
June 15, 2004	-	Defend Dissertation
		Entrée

In March 2003, I telephoned Caroline to discuss the possibility of studying her son and the other participants for my dissertation project. Caroline was the best person to get a pulse of the attitudes of families in the six years since the Event occurred because she remained somewhat socially connected with most of the participants' families. During this conversation, Caroline gave me an update using what she knew about things that had occurred in participants' lives since I left Murphey East in 2000.

Leaving Murphey East was one of the hardest career decisions (and maybe one of the most misguided) I have taken. In good and bad, I was at home at Murphey East High School. My problem was that after what I perceived as a failure to protect the young people whose parents trusted me to keep them safe, I never recovered from the fallout of that phantasmal Event. I thought I could continue after first sharing academic and debate team coaching duties with a peer, then relinquishing my role in quiz

bowl altogether. One of the new coaches was a white male and the other was a white female. Although I believe both genuinely cared for their students, both of them had to tread lightly in this brown territory. First, the male coach could not take young girls home from practice because doing so might place him in what appeared to be a compromising position. This would be true even if he were African-American, but as a single white male, his position was even more suspect. The female coach also nurtured and cared for her students and team members, but her youth belied her shrewdness in these situations and caused her to be more cautious in dealings with students. They needed me as the face of quiz bowl and debate at Murphey East, but I could not take the constant reminders of my own failures. Therefore, I left for an integrated high school in a nearby rural setting. Although I again embraced quiz bowl in this school and even developed a middle school program, the long commute coupled with the obvious racial tension played out in overt acts of power from both black and white educators set me again on a hunt for a less politically charged school.

At the end of my initial year at the rural high school, the principal at the lone high school in the county where I reside recruited me to replace another black teacher who was moving to a middle school in the same district. Again, I was not mindful of the question this teacher's abrupt departure raised. In addition, I was flattered by the way this principal singled me out to recruit me to his school without my even having applied. Consequently, I accepted the job. I taught there for one year—the worst year in my teaching career. This school climate rubbed salt into the wounds caused by all of the racial dilemmas I had faced since returning to the South in 1994. Students freely and proudly wore Confederate flags, the community was xenophobic and highly socialized hierarchically, and my challenges to the Eurocentric literature selection were poorly received.

In the meantime, I began the doctoral program at the University of Georgia in 2001, shortly after leaving Murphey East. I attended the spring of the year in the rural school in 2001 as well as the entire year that I taught at the school in my county. No matter where I went and what I studied or taught, the Event lingered somewhere on the periphery of my brain. I could not let it go, so I went around to come

around. I went around Murphey East, literally, moving to schools that sandwich it in adjacent counties. I moved around the Event by studying the Neo-Confederate child and white supremacy. The Event was asleep in my bedroom and I did not wish to awaken it.

Caroline was my connection to the world I left at Murphey East. Even though she had moved to a coastal city I call Sandpiper, she stayed in touch with school officials. As Amari lived in our house, Caroline made sure she kept abreast of his academic and extracurricular activities by contacting teachers and coaches. Caroline agreed that Amari and Stephanie were in a position in their lives where they could participate in the study. She had no information about Michelle's life since graduation, and she expressed concern about including Josh and Rosanna because of what she knew from talking to their family members.

I contacted Stephanie via e-mail and explained what I was thinking of doing. When she responded, we agreed to talk by telephone within the next week. In early April, Caroline called me to tell me that Amari had been shot by a young black man during while attending a fraternity party. She explained that he was not critically injured and I spoke with Amari via telephone to assure myself of his condition. I also called Stephanie who expressed concern because she believed this study might violate the agreement they signed upon settling with the hotel lawyers.

In April 2003 I contacted Caroline because she led the parents in pursuing the lawsuit. I asked her if they had signed a nondisclosure agreement when they settled the suit. Caroline told me that the original offer included this caveat, but in her words, "I told them they couldn't pay me enough money not to talk about what happened." She further stated that all five families had to sign the same agreement; therefore, she knew the nondisclosure was not in the settlement. At this point, I felt I could pursue the study without risking ramifications for at least two participants. My next step was to contact Michelle and continue to find out what was going on with Josh and Roseanne.

In April 2003 I telephone Amari at his school (Weldon University) and he agreed to participate. We decided to discuss my study when he visited at the end of spring semester. I was continually trying to

find Michelle's address or telephone number at her university (Gulf State). First, I tried to locate her through the college's online directory. I found a name that matched hers and sent an e-mail to that address that read:

Is this the Michelle who was a track star and scholar at Murphey East High School? If so, this is Mrs. Jones and I am getting a PhD at the University of Georgia. Please let me know if this is the right person.

I telephoned Michelle's home in Murphey and left several messages on her mother's answering service asking her to contact me. My first few messages elicited no response. I contacted Stephanie by telephone and told her what Caroline said about the settlement. She agreed to participate in the study. Stephanie also gave me information about Josh and Roseanne that corroborated with Caroline's concerns. I decided not to ask them to participate.

From March to May, 2003 the war in Iraq begins and activities there occur at a feverish pitch. My only child is there. I am extremely distracted.

In June 2003 I received a call from Michelle's mother. She told me that Michelle was living at home permanently. I told her about the study and she agreed to do whatever she could to help. She also said she would have Michelle call me. Amari came for a weeklong visit at the end of Spring Semester. We discussed the shooting. This was the first time I had seen Amari since he was shot in April. I saw his scars (at least the physical ones). This is the point at which Amari made the statement that the 1997 shooting was more traumatic for him than this most recent one. This was the turning point at which I realized that I had to do this study.

In August 2003 Michelle finally called me and told me about the sports injury she sustained at Gulf State. She was obviously traumatized by the fall out from her injury, and we talked at length about her options for finishing her education. Even with all that happened at Gulf State, Michelle managed to leave there with a 3.8 grade point average. I explained the study to Michelle and she agreed to participate.

On October 9, 2003 I defended my prospectus and submitted the IRB application. On October 13, 2003 I traveled to Athens to meet with Dr. Grantham for my subjectivity interview. We had arranged to meet at 10:30 at Vonelle's. After I arrived in Athens, I went to the restaurant where I thought we were supposed to meet. It was closed. I called Dr. Grantham on his cell phone and we agreed to meet at the International House of Pancakes. I had tapes and a recorder, while Dr. Grantham brought a list of ideas and questions that have occurred to him since my prospectus defense and during the conversation we had a few days prior to this interview. The interview lasted about three hours. Other than the explanation of what it means to be an African-American teacher from the "old school" (explained later in this chapter), Dr. Grantham cited these as themes and concerns he thought I should address: (1) privileging the young men in my discourse; (2) possibly recounting the court case and its results; and (3) my feelings of guilt because I hardly ever talked to the students about the shooting after we returned to Murphey East

On November 12, 2003 my IRB application was approved. I telephoned Caroline and we agreed that I would visit Sandpiper the weekend after Thanksgiving to interview her. I telephoned the other three participants and talked more extensively about how I envisioned effective history interviews. I told them to think about important events in their lives, how those events affected them, and how they resisted the effects. Michelle spoke extensively about her sports injury, so I told her to think about it more and be prepared to talk about it if she thought it was important and was willing to share it. Stephanie and I talked about her involvement in school governance and her weight. I told her that I thought the weight was an issue we need to explore during the interview.

On December 1, 2003 I drove to Sandpiper to visit with and interview Caroline at her home. It was in the mid-afternoon when I arrive and Caroline was in her pajama pants and a tee shirt. We exchanged our usual jokes aimed at one another, our way of grounding ourselves in the reality of our friendship. We must always keep laughing, else we would cry far too much. Caroline talks about going to church earlier that day with her husband and his elderly aunts. The three of us talked about these two extraordinary women and how one aunt who is visiting from Philadelphia was introduced during the

church service. We also had a conversation about how those who come back to their home church, the church of their childhood, after living away were introduced as visitors. In this unspoken tradition, the person who formally welcomes visitors during the church service asks for visitors to stand. The returning member does not stand because she does not consider herself a visitor. After prodding by relatives and friends, she stands and talks about what has happened in her life since she last visited the home church. This is a ritual in predominately-black churches throughout the South. Revisiting it with Carolyn and her husband reconnected the three of us with our roots.

Carolyn and I retire to the family room and catch up on gossip until bedtime. We agreed to conduct the interview first thing Monday morning. The next morning I interviewed Carolyn at the table in her breakfast room. Actually, since I gave Carolyn the same briefing about my study that I gave the students, she already had a picture of what she wanted to say. Consequently, I ask her one question and from that question she talked for about two hours with little interruption from me. Occasionally, I stepped into the kitchen to freshen my coffee or onto the patio directly adjacent to the table to smoke a cigarette. In the meantime, I could hear Carolyn talking about her past, the mother who was absent as often as she was there, the breakup of her first marriage, and the 1997 shooting event. She also discussed the most recent event in which her son, Amari, was shot.

After we finished the interview, we took a ride in Carolyn's new SUV to the neighborhood Kroger and Walmart. We picked up items to supplement the shrimp her husband has so meticulously cleaned and frozen for this special occasion when his two favorite aunts will dine with us later that evening. We then picked up the aunts from the senior citizens' facility where the elder aunt resides. We had dinner with the aunts and Carolyn's brother-in-law, and after they left, we debriefed (as we always do when one of us spends the night with the other) and retired for the night. The next morning I left for my home in Yargary. I immediately began transcribing Carolyn's interview. Carolyn's story could make a research study in its own right. I decided that I did not want to include her effective history in this study

because it would not do her justice. After talking with my committee chair, we decided to use her data for validation and informant purposes in this study. I plan to write about Carolyn singularly at a later date.

On December 3, 2004 I called participants and asked them where and when they would like to be interviewed. All three agreed that they would like to come to my home for their interviews. I would interview Amari when he stayed with us during Christmas holidays. I would interview Stephanie on December 29 at 12:00 P.M. and she requested that I prepare lasagna for lunch. I would interview Michelle on February 4, 2004, at 1:00 P.M. and I agreed to prepare lobster linguini for her lunch.

On December 15, 2003 I interview Amari early in the morning. This interview was part interview, part discussion, and part debate. This occurred in most of my conversations with Amari. I believe one of the reasons our relationship is so strong is that Amari and I can disagree, clash, and argue; yet, we leave the conversation with stronger mutual respect and love than when we began. Amari's interview lasted about ninety minutes. On December 29, 2003 Stephanie arrives right on time and we talk in my living room. Like Amari and Carolyn, Stephanie did not need much guidance to discuss her effective history. Occasionally I asked questions, but mostly she described and analyzed events in her life without much help from me. Stephanie's interview also lasted about ninety minutes. I made Stephanie a pillow in the colors of her sorority and nestled a bit of lavender essential oil in the middle of the filling. As Stephanie leaves, she yelled out of her car window that her car smells "so good!"

On February 4, 2004 I interviewed Michelle at my home. She arrived at about 1:00 P.M. Our interview was a bit more formal than the other three. Michelle talked about college and sports first, and then she discussed the 1997 Event. Since she was a bit late, we conduct about 30 minutes of the interview during lunch. This interview lasted over ninety minutes.

### Types of Data

#### Quilting Lives

I perceived my function in this study as that of *bricoleur* or "quiltmaker" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). The term *bricoleur* activates the noun *bricolage*, which describes "something made or put

together using whatever materials happen to be available” (“Yourdictionary.Com”, 1996-2004). Denzin and Lincoln use this French term interchangeably with the term “quiltmaker,” implying improvisational research in which “many different things are going on at the same time—different voices, different perspectives, points of view, angles of vision” (p. 7).

My data is like the pieces quiltmakers or the tinkerers use in their crafts. The researcher as *bricoleur* or quiltmaker never knows exactly how the innovation will appear visually. Similarly, as I tinkered with pieces of cloths (I know I am mixing my metaphors), some bought for this purpose and others left over from some other sewing project, I discovered how they could be pieced together to form a tapestry, a quilt that is different from all others created before it.

Also like the quiltmaker (a group of craftspeople to which I belong) I first pinned these pieces together to see if they made visual meaning. If they did not, I put away pieces that did not fit and saved them for some other use. Sometimes the pieces did not fit because I needed to clarify their visual appeal by adding transition pieces between them and the pieces beside them to enhance elements I wished to highlight while backgrounding those I wished the viewer to perceive subliminally. Once I had a block or design that satisfied the purpose of the quilt, I sewed them together.

In comparing these processes, quiltmaking and the bricolage, to collecting, sorting, analyzing, and reassembling data, first I determined what I wanted my data and analysis to do. As Mary Leach (Leach, 2000) suggests, I wished to “create new lines of flight, fragments of other possibilities, to experiment differently with meanings, practices, and our own confoundings” (p. 223). Having been in communication with these participants in the years since 1997, I determined to first foreground the Event, its effects, and their resistances to those effects; then I used other events in their lives to demonstrate how people who are raced do not always live their lives with race at the center. Again, Leach suggests similar objectives in regards to feminist research—as she says, following Foucault, Deleuze, and Irigaray, “and their suggestions of routes of escape, moments and practices to refuse what we are, to contest the [dominant] in order to move toward some place that might be called a counterdiscourse” (p. 223).



This counterdiscourse serves different purposes for those outside the particular group or individuals raced than it does for consumers of data about those people. For those raced it discursively liberates their documented representation. In other words, it helps decolonize them from those who race them. For those who are raced, it will help them mentally actualize these participants as far more than what they are when they are raced. It forces all of us who consume literature like this to see young black people as making meaning of their lives through many epistemological and axiological views.

The strips I used to make this quilt included autoethnographic data in which I recalled my journey through segregation in the same community where the participants attended the school I call Murphey East in the city I call Murphey. This impressionistic data represents a limited version of the social reality that formed Murphey East and its mostly African-American student and teacher populations.

### Reflexive Ethnography

Within this autoethnographic data as well as in the memory data specifically related to the 1997 Event, I used what Ellis and Bochner (2003) call “reflexive ethnographies” (p. 211). Ellis and Bochner emphasize that reflexive ethnographies “focus on a culture or subculture” in which “authors use their own experiences in the culture reflexively to bend back on self and look more deeply at self-other interactions” (p. 211). I used reflexive ethnography to deconstruct and critique my role in the lives of the participants, especially the period during and immediately after the 1997 shooting Event. These data also constitute “complete-member research,” in which the “researcher explore[s] groups of which they already are members or in which, during the research process, they have become full members” (p. 211).

My journey into, out of, and through this culture is *nomadic* (Braidotti, 1993; Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987; St. Pierre, 2000). I believe this because I began my life in the town where two of the participants were born and all three lived large portions of their lives. On the other hand, I left and traveled around the world as a military person during the time when they were children. Whenever I returned to Murphey during this period, I felt as if I were in an alien land. In 1994, my family and I returned to Murphey to live permanently. After obtaining a position at Murphey East, I easily became an

insider once I demonstrated my desire for permanence in the East Murphey community by residing there and involving myself in community and school activities. This nomadic movement is key in deconstructing the discourses I employed with my students as a teacher and coach at Murphey East High School.

### Researching the “Hows” through Intra Views

Another type of data I used is the interview. Fontana and Frey (2000) emphasize the fact that “qualitative researchers are realizing that interviews are not neutral tools of data gathering but active interactions between two (or more) people leading to negotiated, contextually based results” (p. 62). These authors emphasize the way interviews are now focusing as much on the “*hows* of people’s lives (the constructive work involved in producing order in everyday life) as well as the traditional *whats* (the activities of everyday life)” (p. 62).

People like me who were not aware of what qualitative research does until entering graduate studies are sometimes unaware of how recently this type of data collection came to the research scene. For instance, Bogdan and Biklen (1998) explain how qualitative research in general was characterized as “soft” early on because it was “not easily handled by statistical procedures” (p. 2). These authors further examine how qualitative researchers “are concerned as well with understanding behavior from the subject’s own frame of reference” (p. 2). Accordingly, Bogdan and Biklen believe that participant observation and in-depth interviewing “most embody [these] characteristics” of qualitative research (p. 2). I chose qualitative research, particularly, interviews, as a method because it does precisely what Bogden and Biklen say it should do.

Within interviewing as a method of qualitative research, Bogden and Biklen (1998) assert that researchers “spend considerable time in schools, families, neighborhoods, and other locales learning about educational concerns,” and that “mechanically recorded material [collected at these sites] are reviewed in their entirety by the researcher with the researcher’s insight being the key instrument for analysis” (p. 27). Additionally, Kvale (1996) posits that the interviews allow the subjects to “not only

answer questions prepared by an expert, but themselves formulate in a dialogue their own conceptions of their lived world.” Kvale also explains that this method must be “neither a progressive nor an oppressive method,” but in the postmodern approach, it must “emphasize the constructive nature of the knowledge created through the interaction of partners in the interview conversation” (p. 11).

In interviewing within postmodern efforts to avoid essentializing (Britzman, 2000), postcolonial efforts to decolonize (Smith, 2002), and the ethnographic mandate for “thick description” (Geertz, 1973), I focus on Kvale’s (1996) figuration of the interview as literally “inter view, an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest” (p. 14). Kvale gives a visual representation of the interview through a drawing that depicts two silhouettes facing each other. The silhouettes are shaded in dark gray while the space between them is light gray. Kvale explains how the two faces of this “ambiguous figure” (p. 15) represent the interviewer and the interviewee as they face one another in the interview process. When one looks at the figure and foregrounds the light gray space between the two silhouettes, the outline of a vase is visible (assuming one has the cultural referent that allows the visualization of a vase that looks like the one in the picture). Within this caveat, the vase could contain the “knowledge constructed *inter the views* of the interviewer and interviewee” (p. 15).

#### Interviews: Or Growing Love Food

Although Kvale’s figuration helped me think more clearly about the interview process, to internalize this metaphor and (re)present it in a figuration that incorporates my Africanist views, I thought of the garden. Specifically, as a gardener, I thought of the way my spouse and I grow collards and okra.

My spouse loves okra, while I tolerate them only mildly; but I prefer collards. On the other hand, we both love tomatoes. In every location we have lived since we first married, we have built a garden. The garden is like a sacred space that allows us to stay connected to our roots and to each other. Because my spouse loves okra, I love collards, and we both love tomatoes, we communally prepare a raised bed and use our individual horticultural gifts to make sure it is the most nurturing ground for our vegetables.

My spouse is very good at tilling the earth to aerate it and make it ready to receive the seed. I, on the other hand, have become an expert at recycling household and yard refuse, allowing the worms and the natural environment to do their work and create compost that makes this garden soil optimally receptive and nurturing to the plants once the seeds germinate and begin to grow. In my figuration, our love of various vegetables and our divergent skills are like the views each of us brings to the interview.

The garden is one product of our mutual interchange on the field of our private lives and the space in which we have chosen to produce. However, this figuration goes even further. The harvest its yields are an evolved product of our mutual effort to recreate.

As I stated earlier, I mildly tolerate okra, we both love tomatoes (and hot peppers), and my spouse likes greens, but I really love them. In order for us to be mutually satisfied at what we produce together, we have to bring the harvest in and use it to create love food. Love food comprises collards cooked to a tender perfection with a smattering of the onions and jalapeño peppers that we also grow, and small diced pieces of flavorfully cured ham. Love food also includes the gumbo that I carefully prepare by simmering flour in olive oil to the perfect brown roux color, adding peppers, onions, celery, and other Creole vegetables until they begin to sweat, and then pouring in the flavorful seafood stock and spices to cook the gumbo sauce for hours to perfection. After adding the ham, shrimp, crawfish, and other meats and seafood items, I must crown this gumbo with the okra that we have harvested from our love garden, rinsed, and sliced to the perfect size for a spoonful of flavor. Finally I sanctify the gumbo with a dusting of filé powder to make it rich and thick. Although the word *gumbo* literally translates as “okra,” what my spouse and I make from it is much more, much richer, and more valuable than the sum of any of its parts.

I think of gumbo in the way I think of intersubjectivity. Wertsch (1985) explains that when [I]nterlocutors enter into a communicative context, they may have different perspectives or only a vague interpretation of what is taken for granted and what the utterance are intended to convey. Through semiotically mediated ‘negotiation,’ however, they create a temporarily shared social world, a state of intersubjectivity. (p. 161)

Gardening, greens, and gumbo are the expressions of mediation between my spouse and me. Even though I do not care for okra, I have learned to appreciate its presence, even its necessity, in gumbo. Not only that, but as we commingle the seed, soil, air, and water that make this key ingredient possible, we also create a new space of intersubjective joy, consumption, and love food.

Like our gardening endeavors, the interviewer and interviewee each bring something to the discursive space where the interview resides. Intersubjectivity allows them to acknowledge what is alien or gaps in their communal knowledge. The prefix “inter” indicates occurrence among or between, “in the midst of,” or “reciprocal” (Soukhanov & Ellis, 1984, p. 635). The prefix “intra,” on the other hand, implies “within” (Soukhanov & Ellis, 1984, p. 639). Accordingly, the properly conducted interview is a method that explores spaces and discourses by creating new knowledge among, between, and in the midst of interlocutors. This knowledge is reciprocal and intersubjective.

On the other hand, I visualized the product of the interview as a new discourse that is within its own psychic and discursive space. I make this statement based on the assumption that one cannot completely capture the ontology, epistemology, and axiology of the person or group one interviews. Knowledge created between or among two or more participants in this method is always partial and always incomplete as far as the referents are concerned. Nevertheless, the representation is also a complete discourse in that it stands as a new intersubjective representation. Therefore, representations of data in the form of interviews could be called (intra) views because they exist as extant discourses somewhat independent of the separate knowledge participants bring to the interview.

Since the interview in Kvale’s (1996) assessment forms new representations in what he calls “the vase” between interlocutors, how I as the interviewer conduct, analyze, and represent the “intra view” becomes important in terms of both ethics and validity. First, I will discuss the exigencies I had to resolve prior to beginning this project. I will follow this with a discussion of the process of conducting these interviews. Finally, I will examine the types of data I used and their purposes in this study.

### Gossip Data

In addition to searching for new figurations, Leach (2000) seeks to foreground gossip as a legitimate form of discourse and data. After reading Leach's essay, I realized that I used gossip data significantly in this study. Gossip, according to Leach, pejoratively connotes as a female form of discourse. Leach seeks to trouble this view by highlighting the patriarchy exhibited in this view of gossip as feminine while demonstrating the legitimacy of gossip as a method of discourse. Leach also critiques the logocentric view of language as the imparting of knowledge in the male-gendered public sphere. She cites theorists like Aristotle, Aquinas, Kierkegaard, and Heidegger as espousing this pejorative view of gossip. She concludes that although no form of discourse can operate outside the power relations within which we operate, gossip "shows us an alternative space in which to find the actual *conditions of possibility* for both the creation and examination of differences" (p. 234).

The way I used gossip in this study was to avoid hurting someone by raising a subject that was not only painful for him or her but unproductive for the purposes of my study. Obviously, many issues suggested in the interview data are painful for the respondent, but this pain was the product of the participant's singular decision to take the risk and speak about it. In other words, although I believe I can assist in the decolonization of representations of people like my participants, the participants must choose to decolonize their minds by revisiting the pains of their past.

#### Simulacrum, Simulation, Representations, and Decolonization

Spivak (1999) gives a timely warning about the role of writing the world and its colonizing effects when she discusses the East India Company's representations of themselves and the Indians. She notes that the, "colonizer constructs himself as he constructs the colony. The relationship is intimate, an open secret that cannot be part of the official language" (p. 203). This tendency to write the world around myself, thereby minimizing the effects and subject position of the researched is a colonial tendency that I must be wary of as I (re)present my participants. My research methodology comprised a "decolonizing methodology" (Smith, 2002).

I talked to my former students and their parents, and they all must love me tenderly, else they would not agree to relive such horrendous times in their lives. Nevertheless, I had a problem—it is a “crisis of representation”(Marcus & Fischer, 1999). I asked myself what would be the effects of (re)presenting their subjectivities from the time the incident occurred to the present. One answer is that this displaces the effects of this incident on their overall subjectivities. In effect, it denies or excludes all the ruptures and resistances that took place prior to the event and places the event at the center of all future actions related to their subjective formation. It discursively places the subjects within a space that privileges their being raced above all other events that create their subjectivities. It also discursively colonizes their adult lives by ignoring the ruptures, discontinuities, and resistances that constructed their subjectivities prior to and after the incident.

My solution was to examine how power traverses throughout their young lives, focusing, as Foucault (1977) suggests on the, “plurality of resistances, each of them a special case: resistances that are possible, necessary, improbably; others that are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant, or violent; still others that are quick to compromise, interested, or sacrificial” (p. 96). In this model, I endeavored to begin somewhere on the space of their continually changing lives—a space that was suggested by each participant according to where his or her mental plane was at the time that the interview took place.

For some participants, the interview began at the incident, because the Event brought singularity to the participants in spite of their various lives before and after the Event. Others had catalogued the Event along with other experiences in their life’s landscape, and in doing so wanted to proceed from some other juncture in their past. Some felt more comfortable speaking about more recent events, such as those that had occurred since they entered college. Whatever their choice, I attempted to travel with the subject wherever they choose to go.

#### Finding Me: Revisiting the “Testimonio

As the writer of ethnographic research, I realized that I had a great deal of power in shaping the (re)presentations of these research subjects. In some ways my oral narratives resemble the “testimonio,” a form of oral history in which one person speaks of experiences, but in which those experiences can be generalized to an entire culture (Tierney, 2000). One preeminent, though recently challenged example of this genre is *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala* (Menchú & Burgos-Debray, 1984). Tierney uses this testimonio as an exemplar. In *I, Rigoberta Menchú*, the title character narrates her life-story and tells of the atrocities and events that occurred during her 23 years as a Guatemalan woman.

The testimonio narrative strategy, according to Tierney (2000) lets the subject speak without the interference of a researcher/narrator. In other words, it assumes a researcher who is invisible in the representation of the data. Although I see how this genre works for certain consumers of qualitative research, the idea of the absent researcher is contrary to methods for writing within a poststructural framework. Contrary to Tierney’s definition of traditional testimonio, within poststructuralism researchers change and create the researched reality as they document it. This changing and creating is not a conscious effort on the researcher’s part, instead it is an inevitable product of coming into contact with others. In other words, one can never be outside the representation, and the best and most valid research documents how and where we are “in” the research process and the data we collect and represent.

Another aspect of the testimonio is that it is designed as an appeal from, “those who have been silenced, excluded, and marginalized by their societies” (Tierney, 2000, p. 140). Since I studied a group of people with whom I share a common racializing experience, one might assume that the testimonio would be an appropriate genre, but I did not think it was. Again, terms like “silenced” and “marginalized” must be troubled within the poststructural critique because the reiteration of this center/margin binary perpetuates discourse and knowledge construction along those lines. Instead of center/margin or “marginalized” people, I think of myself and my subjects as being “subjugated” and



having resisted. I must think in these terms because I love these young people; therefore, I do not want them living on anybody's "margins."

In addition, as Tierney (2000) suggests, this type of representation falls decidedly within the hermeneutic/interpretive paradigm, even though it assumes the researched as author and has a critical appeal to justice. One of my concerns was that I was not interested in (re)presenting my subjects as authors. I was not even sure this was a possibility. Secondly, as I stated earlier, I was not interested in locating them in the margins of society (there is no margin). Consequently, I used some of the techniques of the testimonio without framing my questions or (re)presentations in a way that appeal to a social justice agenda.

Tierney (2000) suggests problems with the traditional testimonio as defined above. He then develops methods for using similar devices while changing them to fit a postmodern methodology. One problem with the traditional interpretive testimonio is the idea of it representing a "portal." The idea of a "portal," or "a method by which a reader understands a culture different from their own" (p. 545) does not reflect the goals of my own research. One objection with understanding as an epistemological endeavor is impossible from the standpoint of the outsider (and perhaps even the insider). The idea of understanding seems to me to relate to closely to the idea of "meaning," a discursive construct that suggests totalizing, discovering the "essence" of something, or in the case of the narrator, being able to "speak for" (Alcoff, 1991) others. I believed that the most I could hope for was to allow the narrator/researched to speak in the text.

If researchers do our job, the narrators, in the case of testimonios, or the participants in the case of ethnographic effective histories will represent their subjectivities during the interview. Even the representation given in the dialogic moment is already always changing, shifting, and being repositioned. This may occur because the interviewer/researcher unknowingly changes the nature in which the subject presents their story. By Tierney's (2000) own admission:

The portal approach exoticizes the Other and tries to enable the reader to understand the life fantastic. An undertaking of this kind inevitably privileges the researcher and reinforces social relations circumscribed by power insofar as a dynamic is created in which the author has control over the final production of a text about someone else's life story. (p. 545)

The second way that Tierney (2000) envisions testimonio is by use of a "process" model. In this model, "the researcher and reader come to understand the semiotic means by which someone else makes sense of the world" (p. 545). He continues by explaining that the researcher and researched "reflect on their own lives," and they "achieve some understanding of one another and of the multiple realities involved in the creation of meaning" (p. 545). This approach, according to Tierney, is more commensurate with the postmodern approach to ethnography. Although I agree with the idea that viewing the testimonio as a process rather than a portal better fits the postmodern critique, I am still uneasy with the idea that testimonio is a suitable method for conducting poststructural research. I mentioned the testimonio because the methodology seems to be effective as an interview technique; nevertheless, I did not think it was suitable as the genre for representation of the complete data story.

Tierney's (2000) warning of the possibility of colonizing the subject by use of the testimonio served as an adequate warning for me as I endeavored to seek interviews about people's lives. Tierney also warns the researcher against "authorial narcissism" (p. 547) that causes the writer to overpower the text, thereby creating another imperialist discourse. Tierney challenges the postmodern researcher to "accept the multiple mediations at work in the creation of the text and expose them, rather than try to hide them, wish them away or assume that they can be resolved" (p. 543).

Tierney's "process" figuration fits nicely with Foucault's (1976/1990) explanation of power and resistance networks. Foucault explains that they form, "mobile and transitory points of resistance, producing cleavages in a society that shift about, fracturing unities and effecting regroupings, furrowing across individuals themselves, cutting them up and remolding them, marking off irreducible regions in

them, in their bodies and minds" (p. 96). I must also remember Richardson's (2000) warning that the, "worded world' never accurately, precisely, completely captures the studied world, yet we persist in trying" (p. 923).

### Racing Against the Panopticon

Foucault (1977/1995) also discusses another dimension of power apparatuses that is pertinent to my research. That is the idea of Jeremy Bentham's (1812) "panopticon." The panopticon is a model for building prisons in which the authorities are able to view the activities of all prisoners at all times. Schools, hospitals, and mental institutions are built along the lines of the panopticon. The problem with the panopticon is that, "society is very much like this prison for Foucault. With our contemporary political culture, comprised of markets, globalized communication, technology, and social sciences, we have become increasingly a surveillance society" (Abrams, 2002, pp. 185-92). Similarly, Foucault explains that the panopticon was established because, "exercises of discipline presupposes a mechanism that coerces by means of observation; an apparatus in which the techniques that make it possible to see induce effects of power" (pp. 170-71). Foucault further calls these mechanisms "techniques of subjection and methods of exploitation" (pp. 170-71). In other words we live within a society of voyeurs obsessed with observing people as they practice "technologies of the self" (Foucault, 1986). This voyeuristic gaze induces power effects that subjugate no matter how innocent their users' intentions.

This panoptic theory bears on my research subjects primarily because the surreptitious monitorings of the security guard precipitated the 1997 shooting. Voyeurism in general is an issue with many African-Americans. We often enter upscale stores, elevators, and expensive hotels only to find that the gaze is directed on us. The gaze that is facilitated by the panopticon is an effect of power in and of itself, but when it further manifest itself in more overt power moves, the subject of the gaze must either sit passively under it or resist. I explored this dimension of participants' subject-positions in the course of this research.

The second way the gaze effects the participants is that the products of the security guard's disciplinary gaze has propagated innumerable other instances of subjection to other gazes that each of these participants made an explicit agreement to avoid by keeping the shooting a secret. First, as the reader will see in Chapter 4, they wished to avoid my gaze and that of Carolyn. Secondly, they wished to avoid the gaze of administrators, teachers, and students at Murphey East. Stephanie cited her bewilderment when I caught her in a daze during a literature class shortly after the shooting. When I, in an effort to help her, took her outside and asked her if she was thinking about the shooting, the gaze intensified in a way that was uncomfortable for Stephanie.

Stephanie also mentioned that she felt the gaze (she stated this differently) from her parents, her white friends who knew about the shooting, and other relatives. One of the first major disagreements she had with her mother after the shooting was the result of her mother telling an uncle about the shooting. Likewise, both Stephanie and Michelle expressed relief that the guard was not tried; therefore, they did not have to return to the city where the shooting occurred to testify against him. They also were relieved that the suit was settled out of court, again alleviating the need for lengthy court battles.

Now I feel like I am a part of the cause and filter of the panoptic gaze directed at these young people. I cause the gaze because I have exposed them to so many people through conference presentations, papers I have written, and especially this research report. These participants have no idea how many insensitive and inappropriate questions and comments people have made as I presented parts of this data story. Many people do not realize that intent and effect are not necessarily conterminous. They often do not think of queries in terms of how they invade the intentionally unthought, or what Toni Morrison's (2000) "Sethe" calls those things "disremembered" in ways that do not balance the need to know with the effect of asking the question. As ethical methodologists, we must strike a careful balance between these two poles lest we become the panoptic eye (or ear, again a mix of metaphors) who discipline our participants into revealing things they would rather keep secret satisfying the voyeuristic gaze of our consumers.

Another dynamic I kept in mind is my own presence—my physical and psychic closeness to the subjects. I felt that I must try as much as possible to acknowledge implied yet unequal power relations between each of my participants and me. I was aware of their need to please the “elder,” an issue I discuss extensively in Chapter 4. I was also aware of how my positionality as their former teacher, friend, and sometimes mentor affected the way they presented their data story. I watched for that wary look that said, “Don’t forget, this is Mrs. Jones I am talking to.” During the interviews and even now I continue to deal with this issue. This was the unspoken question throughout the interview, and I continue to ask it as I document these results. If I felt the participant was reluctant to reveal important information because I am the interviewer, I used several approaches. One example is the interview with Michelle in which I ask her what she and Stephanie did after my arrival at the desk. When I arrived at the desk, I asked the hotel representative what they had done. When he replied with some vague comment about them standing outside the hotel lobby, I told the women to go to their rooms. I knew at that moment that race was part of the reason these two young black women were singled out by the guard, but at that time I did not realize the extent to which they were harmed. I dismissed them because I did not want them to be privy to what my grandmother calls “grown folks’ conversation.”

I interviewed Stephanie on December 29, 2003, and Michelle on February 4, 2004. During my interview with Stephanie, she revealed that she and Michelle left the desk area and ducked behind the elevator when I told them to go to their rooms. They did this so that they could hear what the hotel representative and the guard told me. According to Stephanie, they went to their rooms just before I returned to my own room after my first visit to the lobby. When I interviewed Michelle, she did not know that Stephanie had revealed this information to me. Consequently, when I asked her what they did after I told them to go to their room, she said they went to their rooms. Since this issue was not that important, I simply responded by saying that I knew that was not all they did after they left the lobby. Michelle still did not know what I was talking about; consequently, she revealed other information that Stephanie did not during my interview with her. Michelle told me that she, Amari, and Josh had returned

to the outside and that Josh said he had a cigar that they could smoke. In Michelle's account, she refused to smoke it, and after they agreed not to tell Caroline and me about the shooting, they returned to their rooms. I then asked her directly if they stopped to listen to the conversation between the guard, the hotel representative, and me. She said they did in a rather dismissive tone as if that was unimportant information.

Once Michelle revealed the story of the cigar, I remembered Amari's interview during which he made not comment about them returning outside and Josh offering a cigar. Then I began to wonder what other details he as well as the others omitted during their interviews. I thought about what I should do, if anything, to flesh out these incidents. Finally, I decided that both incidents were so peripheral to the study's focus and that I would leave them alone.

As a student of intersubjectivity, I must accept responsibility for the way I presented the question, thereby positioning participants to respond in a certain way. In other words I must remember that these 21 and 22-year-old bodies are still inhabited by the 14 and 15 year-olds who, in their own words, "looked like they were wrong" immediately after the shooting event. Unfortunately, I realized this after the interviews; therefore, it only advises my future qualitative endeavors.

### Validation

My position as teacher and mentor to the participant facilitated entrée into this community. Consequently, my knowledge of these participants is etic as well as emic (Creswell, 1998). In other words, my representation involves "views of the actors in the group (emic) and researcher's interpretation of views about human social life in a social science perspective (etic)" (p. 60). I continue to work and play with the participants as teacher, mentor, and friend. Our relationships embody elements of Africanist community life. On the other hand, my supraanalytical view places me on the outside. Ultimately, I cannot claim to know very much. Consequently, my method of data collection—specifically the flexibility of this postmodern study within the interview process, was critical in allowing the participants to speak for themselves.

As an insider in this community, I am privy to many aspects of the personal lives of my participants. Since I know things about the participants that they may not even know about themselves, I was careful and very ethical with my insider knowledge. Consequently, the information I provided only encompassed the elements salient to the portrayal of their subjective lives. Unlike traditional history, the lives of these participants have not always been progressive and consistently more rational from event to event. In addition, their lives are strongly tied to their subject-groups, women, men, African-American, middle-class, etc. Finally, their lives are rife with paradoxes. While on the one hand, they often have moments where they emerge as significant subject/actors and agents of power and resistance, other times their acts defy logic and exhibit self-hate, nihilism, and brokenness from which they always must emerge progressively or digressively.

Finally, this type of analysis was unusual in its focus on the one as opposed to the many and its concern with singular acts as opposed to grand events. It was novel and difficult, but was the best method of representation of my participants as subjects of their own lives. Throughout this process I heeded Cornel West's (1994) warning that we continue to demonstrate how black folks are *victimized* while not placing them within the binary of *victim*.

#### Transmigration to Decolonization of the Mind

In Chapter 1, I promised a journey, a journey in which I would cut. My participants and I began this journey long ago. This journey is a transmigration, an attempt to get somewhere in which we have to cross the alien territory that lies between our destination and our present location. Decolonization and recovery is sometimes a lifelong process (Smith, 2002). At the onset, I had hopes that the participants had come some distance in their journey toward deconstructing the Event and formulating resistances; but I really had no idea whether they had done so. This is ironic considering my self-characterization as an insider in this community; but the secrecy, shame, and unspoken rule not to speak of the Event imposed some restraints on my knowledge of how those victimized had coped.

In order to explain the difficulty I had in deciding to study this Event, I must describe the pivotal event that affected my decision. Last year, one of my participants, Amari, was shot twice at a fraternity event during his school's Spring Break. Amari is the participant with whom I have the closest relationship. After the 1997 shooting Event, Amari by his own admittance experienced trouble within his family. At the time, Amari lived with his mother and stepfather. Amari was in the ninth grade when the Event occurred. Throughout his tenth and eleventh grade years, I watched Amari become angrier, more distant, and rebellious toward his parents and other authority figures. In the meantime, Amari's stepfather relocated to Sandpiper because of a career move. Amari refused to move with his family and became even more rebellious.

During Amari's eleventh-grade year, his mother felt that he had become too rebellious. Consequently, she sent him to live with his biological father. The biological father also lived in Murphey. Amari was unhappy at his father's house because his father would not allow him to participate in high school football. For reasons that I do not know, Amari's father made him move into his paternal grandmother's home.

By this time, I had resigned as Academic team coach, yet I maintained a strong relationship with most of the team members. Amari visited my classroom daily and appeared sadder and angrier. Consequently, I proposed to his mother that he come to live with my husband and me. With the court's approval, Amari spent his last year of high school at our home. Amari's mother and I were already friends since she was our team's chaperone when the 1997 shooting Event occurred. After Amari moved into our home, she and I became even closer. Again, all of us in the Amari's family community worked to resolve this problem, acknowledging that in the Africanist tradition "the individual was a part of this collective unity; *i.e.*, the family" (Nobles, 1978, p. 684).

Amari graduated valedictorian of his class and received full athletic and academic scholarships to pursue aerospace engineering at Weldon University. Amari told me that he wanted to fly in a space shuttle one day. With all that he had overcome, I believed he would attain his goal.



As I mentioned earlier, Amari was shot twice, once in the foot and once in the groin, during an altercation at a fraternity party. The party was not at Weldon, the prestigious Historically Black College (HBCU) he attended. Instead, the shooting occurred at a large predominately-white research university in our state. Amari describes this event thusly:

Vj - So then you were shot at again.

Amari: This was March of this year, 2003. And we were on spring break. And it was supposed to be a pajama party at Piedmont. We had just got on spring break that Friday. So we all, me, Rico, it was about seven or eight of us. We piled up into cars and we went down there. A lot of other football players came too. In all it was probably about 30 of us. So we went to the party. It was in the Piedmont University gym. I think it was about 12. There were a couple of after-parties. So we found one to go to and next thing I remember we was in there for a while. It was in an apartment complex. I remember like looking at a little bar in the apartment. It was like a little circle. I was talking to some girls and a bunch of people came running in and said 'Rico fin'da get into it with some guys.' So I went outside and they were trying to hold Rico. And I didn't see who it was he was fin'da get into it with. But probably about two seconds later three guys come out the door. You could tell they was trying to go towards Rico. So I grabbed one of um. It's bout three of us so we grabbed them, we all football players so we bigger than them. I think first thing I was just trying to push them away. And they just kept on coming. It was aggravating then. So I pushed him real hard. And he fell back through the door. Rico still almost getting loose it's 'bout ten people, cause he kinda' strong you know. And I figured I can talk to Rico, 'cause we best friends. So I just told everybody to get away. So I took Rico round the corner. The way the balcony it was like ... you come out the apartment. But the balcony ... it's some steps where you can go down to your car or you can ... it connects to the other balcony where you can go to the other apartments too. So I just took Rico, bypassed the steps I just took him round the corner toward the other apartments. So we just cooling down; you know we was

just down there jokin' around and everything. We were just cooling down; letting everything blow over. And one of the other girls, one of our other friends came round there too.

Vj - Was she the one that the fight was about?

Amari: No. She wasn't the one. And we heard about three shots. And we thought we didn't have to worry 'cause we was about 20 yards away from them. And we get to runnin' and stuff. But we din' have to worry about it because we were far down as we were. And cause I had my back to the party and Rico. Cause I was holding Rico still. And I turned around and looked over my shoulder. And that's when the guy just rolled around the corner kinda'. And I heard like two shots and my body kinda' jerked. I figured he had shot me but I didn't know where he had shot me. And Rico ducked real quick. I was like "aint' no need in everybody dyin'," so I just threw myself around Rico, like torso and upper body. Everything happened so fast, I didn't really hear no more shots but they said they shot of 'bout ten.

Vj - Which guy was this?

Amari: I saw all three of um come out. But the only one I remember was the one I was trying to keep from getting over there.

Vj - That wasn't him?

Amari: No. It was a light-skinned guy. So Rico, he started stumbling. He started stumblin' to'rd some more steps. I was just gon' let him go that way, keep going. Then he turned around started going towards the guy. He had broke his leg and he was just like ... he was kind of delirious. He was like aah! aah! aah! On one foot and on both his hands just kind of hoppin'. So I grabbed him and snatched him toward the steps. The steps were probably a few feet away. And he fell on the ground. And that's my first time remembering that the girl was right there. Her and Rico side by side just screaming. And I knew I couldn't just take Rico and leave her. So I tried to grab both of 'em and pull 'em. That wasn't working. And 'bout a few seconds later everybody came running up ... Naw. First it was the guy up on the balcony. The white people up

on the balcony came out of their apartment and was askin' me if we needed help. I told them to call the police. And that's when everybody came running from upstairs. I just sat down. I told them to take him downstairs. I just sat down.

Vj - When did you realize you had been shot twice?

Amari: Ah. I knew he shot me. But I think when Rico started hobbling back towards the dude I was just trying to ... I was trying to get him back to the steps but at the same time I was trying to calm him down because he was like delirious. I was like, 'you been shot man, but I been shot too.' I was trying to show him that I was still calm, so he need to be calm. It didn't hurt. It was just kinda' stinging. Something like that. So that's my first time really realizing where I had been shot. So when I sat down I just took my shoe off and blood was pouring out. By that time, my foot had started hurting and I kinda' had forgot about my side. By that time, the ambulance had gotten there. They put me in an ambulance and took me to the hospital.

Vj - What happened to her?

Amari: Tore her Achilles tendon. Me and Rico were walking before her. But Rico still got a rod in his leg. She had that cast on for a long time.

This dramatic narrative demonstrates best Amari's subjectivity in the near present. First, Amari assumed a certain safety in the enclaves of a predominately-white university community. He did not expect this event to occur. When Amari's friend is involved in a fight, the community of football players congeals and gets Amari to extricate his friend from the situation. According to Amari, his friend Rico was protecting the honor of a young female friend who was called a "bitch" by a young man with whom she refused to dance. When Amari found Rico, Rico had lifted the offender over the railing of the upper-level apartment and threatened to drop him to the ground. I have had occasion to meet Rico, and I believe this account to fit his personality.

Amari and the other football players blocked the offenders' friends from attacking Rico. When they eventually become tired of holding back the offender's friends, they punched them harshly, and the

offender's friends fell under the substantial force of the football players' power. Amari took Rico out of the immediate area to allow him to cool down. In the meantime a female friend (not the one who was offended earlier) joined them. Amari was the first shot by the offenders. He acted instinctively to protect his friends. To Amari, there was no "I" without a "we." He risked his life to save his friends. While Rico, delirious because of his bullet-holed body, tried to reach the shooter by crawling towards him, and the young woman was disabled by a bullet through her Achilles' tendon, Amari collected both his friends and took them to safety. In spite of two bullets, one in the groin and one in his ankle, Amari carried both of the other victims out of reach of the shooters.

After returning from my own Spring Break in 2003, Carolyn, Amari's mother, called me and told me that he had been shot. Fortunately, Amari's injuries were not severe. After a short rehabilitation, he returned to spring training in football. Prior to this point, I felt that I could not study the 1997 Event without doing some harm to my former students. I saw no benefit in digging into the psychic ground of their past trauma.

However, my first visit with Amari after the shooting changed my mind about this study. Amari stayed at our home for a few days at the beginning of the summer. We had just eaten dinner, and I felt it was an appropriate time to discuss this most recent shooting incident with him. When Amari showed me the two wounds he had sustained during this shooting I thought I would faint. He had a deep glossy round scar the size of a silver dollar on his groin, very close to his femoral artery, and a similar one on his ankle. He seemed unconcerned about his injuries and indicated that they caused him no present pain.

I asked Amari a question, the answer to which I thought was predictable given his wounds. I asked him which he felt traumatized him more, this most recent shooting in which he sustained bodily injury, or the 1997 shooting from which he sustained permanent no bodily injury. Again, my thoughts wound away when he responded that the 1997 shooting was more traumatic. I was a coward and did not have the nerve to ask him why.

Prior to Amari and I having this conversation, my professors and colleagues tried to convince me that I needed to study this Event. Even though I was not totally convince, I went through the motions of explaining it to my committee and writing comprehensive exams with this subject in mind. This conversation with Amari convinced me that the 1997 shooting had effects even greater than I had suspected. It also propelled me toward using this event as a topic for this study.

#### Why It Was Worse

The question of why Amari perceived the 1997 Event as more traumatic than the 2003 shooting continued to worry me throughout this study. As I mentioned earlier, I had predicted that Amari would say the 2003 shooting was more traumatic; consequently, when he responded contrary to my expectations, I was taken aback and did not know how to respond. Later, I tried to develop theories about why Amari felt the way he did.

At the time of the 1997 shooting Amari had lived a relatively sheltered life within the close supervision and nurturing of his mother, his stepfather, and other members of the community. I remember that as a high school freshman, one of Amari's middle school teachers called me and warned me that she heard from some of her students that Amari was smoking cigarettes. This was considered a big deal at that time and I immediately confronted Amari about the rumor. As I recall, Amari did not admit smoking cigarettes, but neither did he deny it. Since he now knew that I was aware of the rumor, I felt my purpose was served and pursued the matter no further.

I also noticed that Amari demonstrated attributes of what I call and "gang wannabee." In other words, even though Amari would never join a gang, he wanted to appear as if he were dabbling in gang activity in order to be accepted in the high school culture. I spoke to Amari about this during one of our follow-up interviews. Amari credited his former desire to wear gang colors and use gang tags to a desire to break his image as a nerd and to attract the kind of girls who associate with gang members. Since Amari dated a young woman who not only was a senior when he was a freshman, but also who had a reputation for being involved with gang members, I must admit that his strategy worked.

In spite of Amari's desire to work the fringes of gang association, he remained a sheltered and protected young man. Consequently, he was not the same young man in 1997 as he was in 2003. By the time the 2003 shooting occurred, Amari had experienced two years on his own in a large urban environment. In our follow up interview Amari said that he felt the earlier shooting impacted him more because at that time he had never experienced racism to any large extent because he lived and was school in an almost all-black environment. Therefore, being raced along with being violently assaulted traumatized him more in 1997.

By the time the 2003 shooting occurred, Amari understood the potential for danger in his environment. I also believe that as Amari began to work with people of other ethnicities and live in areas where he assumed that danger was imminent. He assimilated himself to the potential for danger. Therefore, when he was victimized in 2003, he was not as easily shocked as he was in 1997.

Finally, college campuses where fraternity parties, step shows, football games, and other social activities are the center of social life are inherently dangerous because young adults away from home for the first time learn about the mixture of alcohol, drugs, and sex. Within this vortex of college social life, violence becomes inevitable. I know this is true because I have attended predominately-white or predominately-Hispanic institutions my entire post-secondary career. At every one of these institutions, parties are a key part of campus life. At my present institution I am not an insider in the undergraduate community, but I often hear my students talk about parties, drinking, and the inevitable fights that follow. Based on information provided by these participants, this phenomenon also occurs at HBCU's. According to Amari, the football players usually socialize in groups because they expect that violence will ensue when they attend social functions. The 2003 shooting was an extreme example of the problem of mixing young adults, drugs and/or alcohol, and sex on the college campus. Although I see it as extreme, I believe Amari was better prepared for an event like this than he was for the 1997 shooting.

### Sample Selection

As I stated earlier, five of the seven young adults who accompanied me on the trip were present during the shooting. These five young adults I call Josh (the 16-year-old), Michelle, Stephanie, Rosanna (all 15-years-old), and Amari (14-years-old). As I envisioned an effective history study, I believed that its application was predicated on discursive movement orchestrated by impressionistic accounts of events participants view as significant in their lives. Unfortunately, when one is experiencing a crisis or struggling with identity issues in a small community like East Murphey, many people know “your business.” Consequently, in spite of the fact that I have not worked with these young people in over five years, I still hear things in the wind about what is going on in their lives.

Using a specific group comprising only five individuals presents unique problems. One issue is the fact that these five people know each other and know that the other participants can only be among the other four. Specifically, when dealing with issues of anonymity, a predetermined sample group is problematic because other participants can easily triangulate what participants say. For instance, in the recollection of Amari’s shooting, all the other participants can easily triangulate the speaker’s identity because there were only two men among the five students present during the shooting. Once anyone familiar with this event looks at the behavior and details about the person who was shot, identifying him as Amari follows easily. Amari was aware of this risk and chose to disclose these details anyway. I did not believe Amari would be harmed if someone read this study and determined his identity, so I chose to include him.

The same is true of the two young women who I chose to interview. Again, there were only three young women present during the shooting. When one participant described an event in her life, she also provided strong clues for other participants to triangulate her identity. For instance, since Stephanie went to an HBCU, and Michelle did not, once either of these women spoke of her post-secondary schooling in terms of the college environment, she signaled her identity to the other participants by the process of elimination.

Since I feel it would be quite easy to identify these participants, I chose not to include any of my former students who were dealing with sensitive issues in their lives. Consequently, I did not include Rosanna and Josh in this study. I understand that these statements make the reader even more curious about what is happening in the lives of these two people, but I am not of the view that we are entitled to know everything. I also do not believe that I have to answer every question that the reader has about details I believe are privileged. This is qualitative research for education, not for *The National Enquirer*.

#### Compassionate Exclusion: Ethical Benchmarks in Sample Selection

As I stated in Chapter 1, five students were present during the shooting, yet I only interviewed three in this study. Gossip data gleaned from my former teaching peers, other participants, and relatives of the two students I chose not to include convinced me that there was a strong possibility that interviewing them and representing their effective histories would cause them harm. The first reason I believed this was that major life-changing events had occurred in the lives of both these young adults. Secondly, both were still in the midst of these crises, and I believed I would do them harm if I were to reveal any more about them than what has already been stated by the other participants.

Obviously, I cannot state what those conditions and events are because doing so would violate our community's tacit agreement to allow these young people to work through serious challenges with minimal pressure from those outside their immediate families. Consequently, I chose not to ask these two young people to participate in this study.

In order to be completely honest about my own subjectivity and how it effects sample selection, I must admit that the need to protect these young adults is a salient issue with which I struggled throughout this study. My struggle is both an emotional and a philosophical one. On an emotional level, I have discovered through my interview with Dr. Grantham and as I ruminate on what I am doing in this study that I still harness a certain guilt because of my perceived failure to protect these young adults in 1997. I will not attempt to justify the way I feel—but until I have sufficiently deconstructed this issue to the point that I feel comfortable placing the two students I chose not to interview at risk, I will continue to protect



them. Certainly, this is a validity issue as it effects the scope of this study and the potential for more data and more depth in terms of events, effects, and resistances in the lives of the five participants.

The philosophical issue has to do with my awareness of how these two young adults would likely respond if I asked them to participate. In determining whether to request their participation, I believed that both would agree to an interview if I asked them simply because I am their former teacher and they respect me. I am not convinced that I should just because I can. I am also much more keenly aware that many members of this small community are graduate students at The University of Georgia and are also aware of the shooting incident and the fact that I am doing a study of this Event. I could not take the risk of someone's tender secrets being exposed in order to further my own research agenda.

As I examined what I tried to portray as emotional and philosophical issues that predicated my decision not to ask Josh and Rosanna to participate in the study, I realized that my assumption of a maternalistic subjectivity is all this entire issue was about. Since I am not yet convinced that protecting these young adults is inherently bad, I decided to move on as planned and excluded them from the opportunity to participate. I do believe though, that I will revisit this decision should I choose to write a more comprehensive study documenting the effective histories of these five young people. In a longer tome, I would have the opportunity to fully and compassionately develop issues related to the lives of all five of these young adults.

### The Lawsuit

Similarly, I had to make decisions about discussing the lawsuit that followed this Event. By the time we returned to the school that Saturday night in November 1997, the principal had contacted parents, all of whom were gathered to greet us when we arrived. After unloading our gear from the bus, we gathered in the office and allowed the students to give a choral account of the shooting. The psychic trauma was fresh and palpable in both the students and their parents. Caroline had been discussing the possibility of a lawsuit with me as we move through the phantasmal day following the shooting. After the students finished telling their story, Caroline suggested that they discuss this possibility. I stepped out as

they held this discussion and tried to catch some air to help me cope with the nicotine fit that was enveloping me. I also felt that it was inappropriate for me to be involved in the lawsuit because I would be attempting to capitalize on the suffering of my students.

The parents arranged to meet several times, hired a lawyer, and filed suit. In the meantime, I had faith that our school system would also file suit and force the hotel to do right by these young people. Unfortunately, my faith in the system was unjustified. The system's lawyers wrote a letter to the hotel protesting the treatment of our team and demanded an apology. Of course, the hotel was happy to oblige, and that was the end of the system's involvement in the affair.

The private lawsuit filed by the parents lasted over three years. In the end, they settled out-of-court for an undisclosed sum. In the meantime, the young man who shot at the students was tried and convicted. By the time the lawsuit was settled, every student present during the incident had graduated from high school and started college. Moreover, other events had begun to eclipse the Event. I have never asked the parents how much money the students received in the settlement. I did not ask because I believed that asking for such information was an unnecessary intrusion on their privacy. In addition, focusing on money suggests that by paying these students, the responsible parties can alleviate the effects of this traumatic experience. Since I believe the settlement of the lawsuit has little bearing on the qualitative study, readers will have to follow me as I exercise the ethical choice to foreground people instead of things.

Another type of gossip date comprises this information about the lawsuit that the parents of these five students filed against the hotel where the 1997 shooting occurred. First, almost all the details I know of the lawsuit I obtained through gossip. I clearly remember three participants and one parent notifying me either telephonically or via e-mail when they reached the out-of court-settlement in the summer of 2001. Again, I believe that it is not the norm in our community to ask questions about the amount of money received in the settlement of lawsuits because it breaches the privacy of those questioned. I would have transgressed this implied boundary if I felt it would enrich this study in some way, but I do not see

any purpose in the consumer of this research or in me knowing the amount the parents and the company agreed upon when they settled the suit. My committee members and peer reviewers have challenged me about these the lack of discussion of the lawsuit and my decision not to interview Josh and Roseanne throughout the writing of this study. In spite of their questions, I chose to show solidarity to this Africanist community who adopted me in 1994 by not revealing anything they have not selected to reveal to me as data for this study. It is well with my soul.

### Gossip as a Source of Validation

Gossip data has been very useful for me. It has kept me from transgressing boundaries of private/public revelation. It has also protected my participants, their families, and other members of this community. Finally, it has facilitated validity in this study through informal checks of data in social conversations during which my interlocutors did not know I was checking data.

This explication of data has, as Robert Frost (1916/1996) put it, lead “from way to way” (p. 852). These representations circulate around autoethnography in my own personal and impressionist version of the history of Murphey. They move through reflexive ethnography as I look at my role in shaping discourse while functioning as teacher and coach to these participants. Key to this study is the interview data that is not only impressionistic, but also lucid in the participants’ recall of detail. Finally, gossip data effects not only the composition of the sample group, but the limits on what areas I will not visit in the effective histories of these three young adults.

### Contacting Participants

Once I decided to study the Event, I proceeded to contact the three people with whom I communicated most regularly, Amari, his mother Caroline, and Stephanie. Both Amari and Stephanie were away at college. After talking to Stephanie, I had concerns about the legality of this study. Stephanie stated that she thought that as a part of the settlement of the lawsuit regarding this case they had agreed not to discuss it. At this point, I felt that my endeavors might be crushed. I contacted Caroline, who spearheaded the lawsuit and who has experience working with the judicial system. Caroline

informed me that since her son was one of the plaintiffs in the case, they all had to sign the same agreement. She further advised me that the lawyers for the hotel had initially placed this restriction in the settlement, but she told them that they could not pay her enough money to agree not to talk about it. Therefore, the young people were free to talk with me about the Event if they wished.

Two of the three participants, Amari and Stephanie, agreed to participate by July 2003. I had difficulty contacting Michelle, the other young woman whom I wished to include. Michelle, as far as I could determine, was away at an out-of-state university. I attempted to contact her through that university to no avail. Finally, I called her mother to find out where she was. The mother informed me that Michelle has returned to Murphey.

The way I chose to obtain consent for these interviews fit with my understanding of Africanist epistemology or what Wade Nobles (1978) calls “Africanity” (p. 685). With an understanding of the interconnectedness of black families, I could not ignore the entire family unit in this research process even though all of the participants were legally adults. I felt that information disclosed during these interviews collaterally affected the families as well as the participants. Consequently, I chose to obtain agreement from parents as well as participants. Michelle’s mother agreed to allow Michelle to participate, but I did not talk to Michelle and get her verbal consent until late August. I also contacted Stephanie’s mother who was glad to do whatever she could to help me. Likewise, Caroline agreed not only to participate in an interview but also consented to my interviewing Amari.

Patti Lather and Chris Smithies (1997) discuss research within a context of personal crisis and loss of women in a support group for HIV patients. In her introduction, Lather acknowledges the careful balance a researcher must make between “[d]oing work that is both service and learning,” research that “risk[s] the necessary invasions and misuses of telling other people’s stories” (p. xiv). I too have had to balance the necessity for disclosure with the “necessary invasions” required in researching crises.

### Troubling “Sites”

This study has many geographic sites as well as a plethora of psychic locations. As Braidotti (1993) suggests, “the idea of the politics of location is very important” (p. 8). She stresses that, “[i]n its political applications the politics of location determines one’s approach to time and history” (p. 8). Braidotti further stresses that, “[t]he sense of location, for me, has to do with counter-memory or the development of alternative genealogies” (p. 8). Effective history is arguably an alternative form of genealogy. This method, especially when used in the narrow confines of a postmodern interview study must necessarily trouble the traditional way the term “site” is employed in conducting and reporting research. With these considerations in mind, I would like to speak of “site” in terms of physical as well as psychic locations.

Many theorists have discussed the nomadic nature of the Other (Braidotti, 2001; Elia, 2001; Hughes, 2002; Rella, 1994; St. Pierre, 2000). In fact, St. Pierre (2000) stresses that:

Ethical dilemmas proliferate in the sixth moment's vortex of crises that have emerged from the ruins of traditional epistemology and methodology and each research study produces specific, situated, and sometimes paralyzing complications that have no easy resolution. The richness and power of qualitative research is confirmed as its practitioners work through such complications, searching for less harmful possibilities for making sense of people's lives. (p. 405)

Defining the “site” in this study forces this researcher to confront specific, situated, but hopefully not paralyzing dilemmas. As I described research sites, I retained the mobility of my subjects, the events in their lives, and their methods of resistance. Indeed Doel (1977) is emphatic that poststructural critiques:

[require] a “philosophy of passage, and not of ground or of territory” for “traversing the chaos: not explaining or interpreting it, but traversing it, all the way across, in a traverse which order the

planes, landscapes, coordinates, but which leaves behind it the chaos, closing on itself like the sea on the wake of a ship." (p. 32)

At times Michelle, Stephanie, Amari, and I occupied positions of power, dominance, and subjection, while at other times we were overpowered, dominated, and subjected. Consequently, the ground of this research site will be somewhat complex. I will speak of sites that travel in the psyche of my participants. At times, this site is a clear and cogent past. At other times it is a muddle of emotions linked by trauma and disclosed impressionistically.

Kvale (1996) also speaks of a travel metaphor in describing the interviewing process. Kvale suggests that "The interviewer wanders along with the local inhabitants, asks questions that lead the subjects to tell their own stories of their lived world, and converses with them in the original Latin meaning of *conversation* as 'wandering together with'" (p. 4). Therefore, meandered through these sites and warn readers that if they try to locate many of the "research sites" described herein, they may become lost, like Daedalus seeking the diabolical flame.

### The School Site – Murphey East High School

#### Segregation and Beyond

I will first describe the city of Murphey and the school site. The high school, Murphey East High School, is located in a southern town with a population of about 200,000. In 1997, this city had five public high schools. The history of these schools is an interesting study in integration. The researcher was a witness to the advent of court ordered integration that began in Murphey in 1967. At the time, I was entering sixth-grade. Since the city comprises at least 50 percent African-American citizens, many students in elementary school were not directly affected by integration. On the other hand, there existed a few small African-American communities where predominately-white neighborhoods and their schools flourished around the older black enclaves. In those cases the black children who prior to integration had to travel on city busses for miles to reach a black school now simply walked to the neighborhood schools. My sibling and I belong in the latter group.

The situation in the junior high schools (now called middle schools) and the high schools was a bit more turbulent and divisive. Prior to integration, the city contained two black high schools for grades eight through twelve. One was located on the southeast side of the city, while the other was located in the northeast side. White junior and senior high schools were structured differently than black schools. There were six public predominately-white high schools. While the black high schools were organized as the center of large majority black neighborhoods, the white schools were organized according to the neighborhoods that had the most (or least) power and affluence. Another difference is that women and men attended the same black high schools, while the sexes were segregated in the six white high schools.

An interesting element regarding the organization and building of schools prior to desegregation is the fact that even though this city had a majority African-American population, there were only two black high schools while there were six white high schools, three for men and three for women. Rushing (2002) theorizes that the southern patriarchal apparatus designed schools during Jim Crow so that white women would neither associate with nor come to understand black men. Within this plan, if enough propaganda were fed to both blacks and women regarding each other without these groups having recurring contact on equal footing, myths about the sexual proclivities of black men and women as well as other racist propaganda would be reinforced.

After 1967, the debate about the names of the new schools threatened to dismantle plans for integration. The Board of Education (which by this time was integrated) resolved this issue by naming the high schools based on their location and not continuing the practice of monumentalizing them to some person's memory. Since the black high schools' facilities were inferior to the white campuses, the board easily decided to locate the senior high schools on the white campuses and the junior high schools on the black campuses.

Hence, in 1967, Murphey established three regular high schools and one technical high school, naming the academic institutions easily East Murphey, Murphey Midtown, and South Murphey High Schools. East Murphey, the school attended by the participants in this study, grew out of two formerly

white schools located adjacent to one another. One school previously served white males, while the other was for white females. Both these schools served a small enclave of white residents who resided in the hills alongside the east side of the river that traverses Murphey. The school lies along a deep curve on East River Road, so named because it parallels the river as well as the north-south interstate.

### The Black Bourgeoisie in East Murphey

At the onset of integration, Murphey East was the place where black folks wanted their children to go. Murphey East was a choice school for black teens for several reasons. First, Burlington, one of the most affluent neighborhoods in the city, lay within Murphey East's school zone. In Burlington, the first black affluent neighborhood in Murphey, major black funeral directors, black dentists, doctors, lawyers, educators, contractors, and other professionals built upscale homes. Prior to the occupants building this neighborhood, few black people in Murphey had lived in such luxury. The occupants built homes bordered by beautifully manicured rolling lawns of deep green St. Augustine grass, unlike the dirt yards that other black people in the city swept so meticulously. The homeowners or their gardeners planted colorful flower gardens; and brandished their affluence by changing those flowers regularly with the seasons. They built their houses with brick, or if the owner was truly modern, stucco. Many had two floors, another anomaly in black neighborhoods in Murphey. Those who could afford to live in this neighborhood were the envy of many other black people in the city.

### The Hill

While Burlington sat on the extreme southeast edge of the Murphey East school zone, the Hill community that also inhabited this zone was just a few blocks from the school and the inner city. The Hill community rested around the Indian mounds and between three major thoroughfares that fed into the school. At the onset of integration, The Hill had some degree of respectability and desirability. Unfortunately, rent-controlled housing became synonymous with shame and poverty, and living farther away came to signify more affluence. At this time, living on The Hill lost its respectability no matter how nice the home. Similarly, many African-Americans who lived in Burlington did not associate with those



who lived on The Hill, even though many of The Hill's occupants were respectable business people or worked in professions such as medicine, insurance, real estate, cosmetology, or at the nearby military installation.

The flight of white people who lived in the riverside community and the majority white working class neighborhood east of the river muddled efforts to keep the “talented tenth” (Du Bois, 1903) from fraternizing with the other ninety percent of African-American young people who lived in East Murphey. Once white flight took hold, many black people from other parts of Murphey moved into these previously white neighborhoods.

### The Black Panopticon in East Murphey

The egress of middle-class white people from East Murphey and its concurrent ingress of middle-class black families created a panoptic racial dystopia in the area zoned for East Murphey High School (Abrams, 2002; Bentham, 1812; Stoler, 1995/2000). It provided a method through which city government and school officials could monitor a large number of black people in East Murphey—through which apparatuses could “see without being seen” (Foucault, 1977/1995, p. 171).

African-American neighborhoods are magnets for certain types of apparatuses. To demonstrate this point, I would like to take you on a journey from the river where the school zone for East Murphey begins to the northeast edge of the city proper. The river divides the northeast area of Murphy and downtown. One crosses that river by two large boulevards, to the south, Malcolm X Boulevard, and to the north, Winter Street. An interstate highway that connects Murphey with Sandpiper, a large coastal city 160 miles east of Murphey traverses both highways. This interstate begins at Winter Street and literally runs into the Atlantic Ocean at its terminal point in Sandpiper.

In our journey, we will cross the river at Winter Street. We arrive at Winter Street by leaving the monumental main city library and the main post office across the street. We then travel north on University Avenue with its many small parks, azaleas blooming in more shades of pink, red, and white than one can count. We observe the sturdy Yashino cherry trees with their speckled shiny gray bark, and

myriad hydrangeas, creamy sweet shrubs, daylilies the color of sunsets, and magnolias older than the city itself.

As we pass the post office we turn south on Chinaberry Street and notice the Victorian mansions of Old Murphey. Some of these two and three story mansions are white with the typical Georgian columns one often sees in old southern neighborhoods while others are sided and painted in mauves and pale yellows that easily fit with the historical society's requirements. Finally a few houses on the west side of the river are maroon brick monuments to a time when labor was cheap or free and southern white gentry and those who serviced them were the sole occupants of these mansions.

Chinaberry Street winds south and east approximately one mile and veers to the east as it passes another public park also lush with azaleas, forsythia, hydrangea, cherry, magnolia, and oak trees. At this point Chinaberry becomes Winter Street and begins an east/west orientation. As one travels about two miles east, Winter Street crosses River Drive, then the Murphey River. Immediately across the river is the Interstate overpass, a high deep noisy overpass where many homeless people make their home in the crevices created between the interstate and its underlying supports.

After passing under the interstate, the apparatuses of poor and working class communities become apparent. First, is the McDonald's, then the Kroger. The street splits into the two highways that enclose most of East Murphey's school zone. The highway leading to East Murphey, Silver Street, moves in a Northeast direction, while the other one, Indian Mound Highway, moves in a Southeast direction. There are six or seven lottery outlets, several pawn shops, a Super Wal-Mart, a Krystal, Burger King, several beauty and barber shops, dollar stores, ethnic hair apparel shops, and fast cash businesses. There are few houses on the major highway because businesses displaced them. There are three or four banks, a few car repair and detailing shops, and several fast food chicken restaurants. The requisite CVS, Eckerd, and Walgreens pharmacies have also recently found space on this highway.

In East Murphey there are no malls, no major clothing stores except the usual discount outlets. There are more than seven liquor stores and an equal number of gun/pawn shops within a three-mile

stretch of highway. Yet, there are only two grocery stores (not counting the Super Wal-Mart), only about three medical facilities, no hospitals, and four pharmacies.

All of this description may make Silver Street seem dark and foreboding, but the opposite is true. Both Silver Street and Indian Mound Highway are alive with people. Halfway between the Kroger that sits at the beginning of Silver Street and the Super Wal-Mart at its other end (the city limits) sits a superstructure, a high rise that houses elderly of many ethnicities. These elderly people take their morning and evening walks on Silver Street. They often appear working in the community vegetable garden set aside for them at the ground level of the high-rise. Likewise, community members from the adjacent neighborhoods often walk to Krystal for a quick cheap burger or Dairy Queen for a smooth Blizzard. I have to travel this highway anytime I leave the small town where I live to go to Murphey. I usually travel the 15 miles to Murphey on a daily basis; yet, I have never witnessed an act of violence on this highway or in the neighboring public housing area.

Silver Street may have been disciplined to destroy the black people who occupy its adjoining neighborhoods through the establishments of gun shops, liquor stores, and businesses that serve unhealthy food. In spite of these disciplinary efforts, many of the same black business owners who lived in the neighborhood thirty years ago continue to live and prosper there.

As I mentioned earlier, the first affluent black neighborhood in this city is within the Murphey East zone. In addition, many educators who were highly esteemed prior to desegregation live in this neighborhood. After the commencement of desegregation, many of these educators requested assignment to Murphey East High School and its feeder elementary and middle schools. Consequently, the Murphey East area has a rich corporate cultural legacy. Even though the campus of Murphey East, a campus divided into three buildings, is old, crumbling, and receives minimal maintenance compared to other schools in the system, the legacy of educators who were indoctrinated into an “old school” educational design keeps this school at the top in many areas of academic and extracurricular endeavors.

For instance, three or four years before I returned to Murphey from San Antonio, Texas, a young woman from Murphey East was on the cover of *Parade* magazine because she had written and applied for so many scholarships that she was offered over one and one-half million dollars in scholarships from across the country. Murphey East's quiz bowl team was ranked eighth in the nation the year before the shooting incident. Murphey public high schools have a tradition of competing to see which school can garner the most monetary scholarship opportunities for its students. During the six years that I taught there, Murphey East won this unofficial award more often than any other high school in the city.

Murphey East occupies the large curve where East River Road rises to meet Old Reagan Road, and exited the city limits. As we approach the campus, we first see the track. In the Fall, the marching band might be working on their half-time show; while in the Spring, the state champion track team runs, jumps, leaps, and throws in practice for the next meet. Meanwhile, pedestrian community members, some with pets, some with children, and some alone walk the path that follows the track and moves into the adjacent woodlands.

The school proper faces East River Road where it begins. The first of three buildings houses the Language Arts, Social Studies, ROTC, and Exceptional Children departments as well as the regional school within a school for high school students with severe emotional challenges (SEC). The fact that the SEC facility is located within Murphey East's campus causes much chagrin from community members and parents because the SEC students often commit violent acts, acts that the press credits to the student population of Murphey East. In addition, most of the students in the SEC do not live in the Murphey zone. Many do not even live in the city of Murphey. The Center is a regional center that serves this county and several surrounding ones. Of course, many parents, teachers, and community members credit establishment of the center on Murphey East's campus to the fact that Murphey East student population is over ninety-five percent African-American.

In addition to the departments described above, an administrator's office, the nurse's office, part of the physical education department, the main gym, and a cafeteria are in the first building on the

campus. The second building that houses the main office is also called the vocational building. This building houses the media center, keyboarding, computer training, family and consumer sciences, and the health sciences magnet program. It also includes the greenhouse from which students often depart to peddle the products of their hard work to faculty and staff during the spring and fall months.

The last building houses the mathematics and science departments, another cafeteria, a gymnasium, counselors' offices, and administrative offices. The academic buildings (the first and the last) are older and designed on the same schema. Each building is red brick with red iron trim work. Each building contains an office immediately at its main entrance, and each has four hallways on its upper level to the right of the main entrance, a gymnasium on the lower level, and a cafeteria at the end of the long central hallway. My room was on the end of the second hallway in the first building. It was one of the largest rooms in the building because a technology lab as well as quiz bowl equipment rested within its walls.

#### Quiz Bowl at Murphey East

My classroom was a second home to about twelve academic team members. We practiced every weekday except Friday, from school day's end until five in the evening. Sometimes we also practiced in the morning when we had a major tournament upcoming. We practiced by playing against each other. When a major away tournament is upcoming, students competed for a spot on the away team. Team members obtained points for showing up for practice on time, for completing study cards in their given discipline, and for answering the most questions correctly. The team was also divided according to subject areas. Usually the subject areas were literature, history, mathematics, science, fine arts, sports, and popular trivia. Each team member selected one of the four major disciplines plus one of the ancillary ones. In the end, committed team members knew a lot about almost every discipline (except perhaps mathematics) because they had listened as I asked the questions during practice and noted the things they did not previously know.

## Site of the Event

Often when trauma occurs in one's life, those who were present have different memories of what the place was like. I will give my best account of the location here. This event occurred on a cold rainy Friday night in mid-November 1997. As indicated, the students had to compete for one of seven spots on this trip; therefore, they were very excited about this trip. We arrived at Murphey East in the morning at about seven o'clock. The students brought their gear into my classroom and placed their bags in the closet until the bus arrived. Since our school was closest to the highway that takes us to Brownsville, the bus picked up the Murphey Midtown team prior to coming to our school. The bus arrived at about ten o'clock in the morning. We loaded our gear, the buzzer systems that we used for practice, and the coolers that I had packed with snacks and beverages onto the bus. Everyone took a seat. There was usually enough room on the bus for everyone to have one seat to him or herself. Almost everyone had a pillow and a blanket. Likewise, almost all of the students had portable compact disc players and earphones. This day seemed like any other day, this trip like any other trip.

We stopped at the midway point where the interstate that covered the last leg to Brownsville intersected the US Highway that connects Murphey to the northeastern part of the state. There, we made sure that team members had a variety of fast food restaurants from which to choose. The other coach and I decided on a time for departure, and we advised the kids as to what time they needed to be back on the bus. I also warned them about crossing the four-lane highway.

After lunch, we departed for the last leg of our trip to Brownsville. From the midway point to Brownsville, travel took about three hours. By the time we arrived there, it was about four in the evening. The hotel was located just south of the main interstate in northeast Brownsville and immediately adjacent to an affluent suburb. The hotel was a nice facility. Its entrance was somewhat grand with the usual comfortable sitting areas, a café, and a large registration desk. The hotel was also quite large, probably about ten to twelve floors, and all the rooms opened to the inside. I remember the façade of the hotel as

stucco beige, while the interior lobby was full of dark earth tones, maroons, browns, forest greens, and golds.

As is our custom on away trips, the team members remained on the bus while the coaches went inside to check in and get room assignments. The other coach and I obtained the assignments and took the keys to the team members. Midtown was assigned a different floor than Murphey East. I generally had logistical ideas about where I wanted the boys' rooms to be and where I wanted the girls' to be. I usually assigned the boys to the room across from mine, and the girls to the one next door to my room. This was ideal because I shared a door with the girls, and if I needed to check on the boys, I could simply open my door. In addition, I could detect problems with loudness (always a problem with teenagers) before the hotel security had to come and tell them to be quiet.

We took our gear to the rooms and I called Caroline Chastain, the other chaperone for our group, who was driving to the hotel after work. I told her that we would practice for a short while and wait on her to arrive before going to dinner. Caroline was already en-route, so the wait was no more than a couple of hours. The team practiced for about one hour, and as soon as Mrs. Chastain arrived, we went to the mall for dinner.

Caroline Chastain arrived and freshened up. We then went to the mall across the street from the hotel. Actually, describing this mall as across the street is a bit misleading. The hotel was on a side street parallel to the interstate. In order to get to the mall, we walked up this street, crossed a six-lane highway, passed a group of restaurants, and crossed a large parking lot. Consequently, the walk from the hotel to the mall lasted about a fifteen-minutes. When we left for the mall, dusk was about to fall.

After arriving at the mall, I told the team members that they have two hours to do their shopping and eat dinner. I also advised them as to what time they must return to the food court so that we could all walk to the hotel together. Shopping malls are interesting phenomena. I believe malls in the United States represent a symbol of status and affluence. The type of department stores and boutiques in a community's mall reflects the level of affluence of the community. This mall was very large. It probably

had over 200 stores. This was not the Sears, Macy's, J.C. Penny type of mall, even though those stores did have branches in this facility. This was the Parisian, Dillards, Lord & Taylor, Saks Fifth Avenue type of mall. Mrs. Chastain and I were not interested in shopping, so we sat and watched. I observed a fair number of different cultures meandering through this mall, but mostly the customers were of European descent. This was no working class mall, and this hotel was not in a working class neighborhood.

As I have stated previously, I have vague memories of the exact layout of the exterior of the hotel in Brownsville. Apparently, there was a pool outside one door to the hotel's rear and a patio area outside another. In order to enter either door after dark, the guests had to use their assigned key card. The hotel's elevator was located to the right of the check-in desk. The shooting occurred outside the door that led to the patio area. This area seems to represent a very important psychic space to my participants, evidenced by the rich detail they used to describe it. Although I have noted that the participants' accounts of the Event are different concerning minor details, their recollection of the layout of the hotel's exterior is consistent. I will provide a more in-depth analysis of these accounts in the next Chapter.

### Psychic Sites

Since my analysis focused on the Event and the many other events in the lived experiences of the participants, there were many psychic sites. These spaces were more important for what they did in the minds of the participants than for what they were existentially. One of these psychic spaces was the athletic field. Both Michelle and Amari compete in collegiate athletics and have participated in competitive sports since childhood. Both participated in Tee-ball as youngsters. One played football in high school and is currently playing for a university team. Another competed in track and field from fifth-grade through college and at one time was a serious Olympic contender in her chosen field event.

The playing field for these two participants represented a psychic space of success and excellence. Both admitted that they were competitive, and both admitted to a degree of ego satisfaction from excelling in their chosen sport. Consequently, when events occurred relating to sports, their psychic effects were significant in this analysis. Both Michelle and Amari have experienced major events in their



lives involving sports. Michelle won two state titles in her field event, while Amari led his high school football team to the state semifinals during his senior year. In addition, Amari was accompanying some of his fellow college football teammates when he was shot in 2003.

Along with the high school sports arena, the college field, whether track and field or football, was also a major apparatus in the lives of these participants. One participant attended a Division 1 school that I call Gulf State after receiving a full athletic scholarship. During this participant's freshman year, she garnered all-conference honors in her event in spite of being red-shirted for part of the season. During this same year, this participant sustained permanent debilitating injuries during a team practice. The injuries this participant sustained were so severe that she was unable to return to the track. Two years and several surgeries later, this former high school salutatorian was advised that she was failing all of her classes and that her athletic scholarship was withdrawn. These injuries and the field of Gulf State will always serve as a psychic "site" for research into her effective history.

Likewise, another participant was successful in football at a prestigious HBCU. He also received a full scholarship in athletics as well as other scholarships for his academic performance. At the beginning of his third year at this institution, he had a major conflict with the team coach. The coach demanded that he "crab crawl" in penitence for what the coach saw as a bad attitude and poor leadership. After the coach issued his demand, this participant knelt on one knee and placed his helmet in his hand, a sign of non-violent rebellion. The coach continued to demand that he crab crawl, and the participant said nothing, but continued to kneel silently. The next day, the athletic department withdrew the participant's athletic scholarship and he was placed on academic probation. Again, this field at Weldon University served as a psychic "site" for this participant.

Another kind of site that was prominent in the participants' effective histories is elementary and middle schools. One participant explained how she became aware of not being "black enough" after attending Department of Defense schools her entire life, then returning to this state at the beginning of middle school. She cites two middle schools as pivotal to her subjective development, one is located

about 30 miles east of Murphey, in a city I will call Chanceville. The participant attended Chanceville Middle School for her entire seventh grade year and a few weeks at the beginning of her eighth grade year. She had to attend Chanceville because her parents were building a house in a suburb of Murphey called Taylor. As her parents built their house and prepared to retire from the military, they sent this participant to live with her mother's sister in Chanceville. The participant cited Chanceville Middle School and Murphey South Middle School where she attended eighth grade as pivotal to her consciousness of being black or not being black enough. Again, the psychic places of Chanceville and Murphey South Middle Schools are more important than the physical places.

#### Interview Site

By choice of the participants, I interviewed each of them at my home in Yargary, just a few miles northeast of Murphey. This seemed an ideal place to conduct these interviews because my ranch home sits in the middle of seven rolling acres, most of which is virgin forest full of oaks, hickory, sycamore, dogwoods, and pines. The two young women both came and had lunch with me. I let them choose what they wanted me to prepare for them. Stephanie wanted lasagna, while Michelle wanted linguini. I conducted both of these interviews in my formal living room. This room was bright and somewhat sparse. It had a cozy formal sofa upholstered in muted tones of mauve, green, brown, and yellow. The windows in this room faced three directions. The front two windows faced northwest, toward the street; but one could not see the street because the forests separated it from the house. The side windows faced the east. These were the windows with the clearest view of the sky as well as the stars on a clear night. Because the house was away from the street, it exuded a serene peacefulness. The eastern windows were flanked by ficus, begonia, ginger plants, several types of ivy, spider plants, and other houseplants that I had grown for years. Since it was the winter, these plants came inside and lived with the family.

The southern exposure was the door leading to the sunroom. This view overlooked the great creek a football field's length away from the house to the south. The entire first floor of the house was elevated, so one often saw owls, hawks, and other large predators as they soared graciously through the

sky. In the morning, if one looked through these windows the doves may be taking their stroll across the rear lawn of the property. This setting seemed to lend itself to these interviews. It was quiet, secluded, and had an air of privacy that set the mood for one being open about one's life.

While I interviewed the two women upstairs in the formal living room, I interviewed Amari in the downstairs family room mainly because Amari often spent several days with my husband and me during school breaks. Our house was Amari's second home. Consequently, he was more comfortable in the basement family room where our family spends most of its time. In addition to this formal interview, Amari and I talked about the Event and other events the entire time he was with us. This room was a bit darker and cozier than the upstairs formal living room where the other interviews were conducted. The furniture is leather and everything reclines, including a leather eggplant-colored sofa. The fireplace warms us and the large family kitchen is just a few steps away.

#### Description of Participants

Several times throughout this section, I have mentioned my concern for maintaining the anonymity of my participants. Lather and Smithies (1997) highlight this need in *Troubling The Angels : Women Living With HIV/AIDS*. Indeed, Lather and Smithies document interviews out of sequence and combine them across various groups "for purposes of theme development, dramatic flow and to protect confidentiality" (p. xvii). Because this issue was key to my research ethic, I believed the best way to portray my participants was to talk about them based on identified data themes instead of providing holistic individualized accounts of each participant.

Three young adults participated in this study. All three attended the same high school, Murphey East. Two attended the same middle school, Murphey East Middle School, the other attended Murphey South Middle School and Chanceville Middle School. One participant attended Murphey East as a part of the Health Science Magnet Program. This participant did not live within the area zoned for Murphey East. Instead, she lived in another zone; but after choosing health care as a career, she attended Murphey East's health-sciences magnet program.

All of the participants were African-American young adults. One was a male and the other two were females. Two of the participants were 22-years-old, while the other was 21-years-old. One had two sisters; one had two brothers and two sisters, while the other one had two brothers. Of the three only one did not live with both the biological mother and father. The participant whose parents were divorced lived with the biological mother and stepfather. In this case, the biological mother was a business professional; the biological father was an entrepreneur; the stepfather was a public official; and the stepmother worked in publishing. In addition, the stepmother is of European descent while her husband, the biological father, is African-American. Two of the participants were essentially the youngest in their immediate family unit. One was the oldest and had two younger sisters. All of these participants are solidly middle-class. The one whose stepfather is a public official is upper-middle class.

Two of the participants were seniors in college and one was a junior. Two participated in collegiate sports. One was heavily involved in the school social scene, evidenced by her membership in a sorority as well as her leadership in her university's Student Government Association. All three participants received full scholarships to college. One received an academic scholarship, one received an athletic scholarship, and one received both.

One participant was valedictorian of his senior class, one was salutatorian, and the other was president of the high school senior class. Two graduated the same year, while the other graduated a year later. All of these participants were either in the ninth or tenth grade when the shooting Event occurred.

One of the women's skin was the color of nutmeg, while the other's was the color of cinnamon. Both of the women were full-bodied women, yet both appeared healthy and fit. One is approximately five-feet-ten-inches tall; the other is approximately five-feet-eight-inches tall. Both were conservative dressers. They wore khakis and alligator type shirts for the interviews. Both women had straight, relaxed, shoulder-length, ebony hair. Both women had strong personalities and expressed their feelings freely. While one's voice was cheerful and her tone optimistic, the other's voice is deeper and velvety, her manner was serious and more direct.

The young man was about six-feet-two-inches tall with the muscular build of a serious athlete. He weighed about 180 pounds. Generally, he wore hip-hop style clothes, with his pants baggy and his shirts only the most popular brands. He had close-cropped wavy ebony hair. His skin was the color of honey. One interesting observation about all three of these participants is that the young man spoke with black vernacular more frequently during our interview than the young women did. Although all used some elements of African-American vernacular during the interviews, both Amari and Stephanie used it more and generally spoke in a more relaxed manner than did Michelle.

I had a very close relationship with two both Amari and Stephanie. These two always came to see me whenever they were in Murphey for a school holiday. Michelle and I had a more formal relationship. At one point during the interview, Michelle commented that we were probably not as close because I talked so much (which is true). I credited our lack of closeness partly to the fact that this participant and I have similar personalities as well as the fact that she simply did not seek out a close relationship with me when she was in high school.

All of these participants were what the educational apparatus would describe as “gifted.” However, I hesitate to use this totalizing label in describing them for two reasons. First, even many African-American students labeled “gifted” try not to focus on the label because they only see it as a way to separate them from their friends. Secondly, the label is ultimately useless because being labeled “gifted” did not prevent these young people from being racially violated during the Event.

#### Analysis of Data

As the researcher, I assumed much more knowledge on the consumer’s part than I should have. Kvale (1996) suggests that the interviewer should first ask, “How do I go about finding out what the interviews tell me about what I want to know,” before I begin the arduous work of analysis (p. 180). Consequently, I arrived at another methodological juncture. I was answering a question that I thought I had already dismissed.

It would seem apparent that I began my analysis with the transcripts, but I did not. Analysis began with my thoughts, my remembrances, and my instinctive knowledge of the participants. I did not immediately begin transcribing; instead, I played the tapes repeatedly in my office at home and as I drove to and from Athens. At one point, I became so engrossed in a tape that I ran out of gas on a country road after having my taxes done in a city 50 miles away from home. Listening to the tapes helped me visualize and conceptualize ideas and thoughts instead of words and utterances.

I listened to each of these tapes at least three times in their entirety. This helped me get a feel for recurring themes and events the speaker seemed to revisit often in the course of the interview. Just in listening to the interviews, I discovered that Stephanie would go to her sisters and their issues with weight, then she would return to the 1997 shooting. She might talk about the African boy in her elementary school class in Germany, and then return to the shooting. When I sent Chapter 4 to the participants for member check and feedback, Stephanie was the only one who responded. Her short response again mentioned the effect of the shooting on her subjective development.

Amari circulated his conversations around race. He might talk about school for a few minutes then focus on the job he had at the time in a retail department store and how his white supervisors tried to take advantage of him. Amari spoke of Jim Crow as if he were there. He obviously had spent many hours trying to analyze the genesis of racism given his reference to Freud cited in Chapter 4. Amari also circulated his interview around friendships. Friendships were very important to Amari. This was evident in his heroic actions during the 2003 shooting; in the way he refers to his peers and teammates, and the way that he always recalled who was with him when an event occurred.

Michelle circulated her interview around her family. Michelle made myriad references to her mother and her brothers. As the reader will notice in Chapter 4, the first thing she said after realizing the extent of her injury on the track field was that she wanted to talk to her mother. In addition, when Michelle began to have trouble with her academics, she consulted her mother and they communally decide how to deal with the problems. Michelle's two older brothers were also prominent, especially in

motivating her to become involved in athletics and in her training for a potential Olympic spot.

Michelle's oldest brother is married to a Caucasian woman and they have several children. Michelle cited her brother's marriage for helping her deal with the 1997 shooting—for admitting that the shooting was racially motivated, yet not essentializing all white people because of the actions of a few.

### Listen, then Write

Kvale (1996) warns researchers against using transcripts to represent interviews. Indeed, Kvale states that “the transcript is a bastard, it is a hybrid between an oral discourse unfolding over time, face to face, in a lived situation—where what is said is addressed to a specific listener present—and a written text created for a general, distant, public” (p. 182). With this warning in mind, I sought to hear the speakers in these interviews first. I sought to reenter the intersubjective space at the time when we exchanged and negotiated meaning during the interview.

One way that I was able to revisit this intersubjective space was to listen to the taped interviews several times before I transcribed them. After I listened to each tape several times, I began transcription. I transcribed specially selected portions of my interview with Dr. Grantham and the interview with Carolyn. My interview transcript was over 20 pages long and Carolyn's was about 30 pages. I transcribed the three participants' interviews in the entirety. These three tapes produced about 130 pages of transcripts. Generally, it took one day (12-15 hours) to transcribe one interview. Even though transcribing these interviews was the most time-consuming task, it was not the most difficult. What was most difficult was developing codes, themes, and analysis.

Richard Boyatzia (1998) defines coding as “the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way” (p. 63). Boyatzia carefully differentiates between the unit of coding and what he calls “the unit of analysis” (p. 62). Implicitly a unit of coding must be equal to or smaller than the unit of analysis. The example Boyatzia gives is a study of the organizational climate in which a questionnaire is used. For a moment, I will dismiss with the debate about whether a questionnaire is qualitative data, and focus on what type of unit the questionnaire defines.

Let us assume that instead of questionnaires the researchers used interviews, the unit of coding (the unit I will code) is the interview. The unit of analysis in this example would be the organization. Likewise, in my case the unit of analysis was the group of participants.

Boyatzia (1998) also states that the unit of coding must have a theoretical justification. In my case, I justified the coding by revisiting the methodology, effective history, and the open-ended structure of the interviews. Since the term “event” is open-ended and highly interpretive, I over-coded each interview in the beginning, added codes as I read the transcripts, and waited until I had placed all the data in one or more codes before I proceeded with developing themes and analysis.

After hitting and missing several times while developing a code list, I finally decided on a method that I would use (whether or not it was the best or easiest). First, I brainstormed a list of codes based on my knowledge of the interviews. The codes I listed without consulting the transcripts included family, violence, community, resistance, account of the event, and attitude towards white people. I designated a color for each code, then went to the interview transcripts and color-coded a copy of it based on this list. As I read the transcripts and discovered codes I had left off my initial list, I designated colors for those codes. I then added them to the list and began to use it to code the data. I had done the traditional numbering of lines on the interview transcript, but ultimately, I did not find this useful in developing codes and themes.

The final list of codes included:

- |                             |           |
|-----------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Awareness of blackness   | red       |
| 2. Raced                    | blue      |
| 3. Sibling influence        | green     |
| 4. Sports                   | yellow    |
| 5. Violence                 | purple    |
| 6. Account of the event     | teal      |
| 7. Attitudes towards whites | lavender  |
| 8. Parents                  | orange    |
| 9. Physical pain            | maroon    |
| 10. Resistance              | gray      |
| 11. Other events            | pink      |
| 12. Community               | turquoise |
| 13. School                  | peach     |



- |                     |             |
|---------------------|-------------|
| 14. The body        | dark yellow |
| 15. Othering others | pale blue   |

I carefully read each interview transcript and coded each piece of data by cutting and pasting it into a page designated for that particular code. Once I had coded each transcript, I read them in the coded format. This allowed me to determine what I needed to quote explicitly in the participants' words, and what I could summarize. I established themes by developing issues that one participant addressed at length or all participants discussed during their interviews.

I used two conditions in determining what comprised a theme and if either of these two conditions were met, I considered the event as a theme. The first was frequency of occurrence, and the second was sustained concern in any one interview. By frequency of occurrence, I refer to codes that appeared in more than one interview. The obvious example is the 1997 shooting event. By sustained concern, I refer to codes that one person discusses frequently or at length in the interview. In addition, sustained concern occurred when a participant explicitly stated that something is important in the effective history.

The themes common to more than one participant included family as a support system, the nature of collegiate sports, issues of racing (as done to others and as others race the participants), violence, and academics. Some issues were singularly important; but in an effective history analysis, I believe these themes were equally significant. These themes included friendship (Amari), being accepted by other black people (Stephanie), and the status of athletes (Michelle).

Once I had determined themes and placed parts of interviews into one or more themes, I began the effective history analysis. First, I culled events from the coded data. Then, I examined what effects these events had on the person(s) who experienced it. Finally, I examined how they resisted the events' effects (or failed to do so).

I deleted some of what I initially considered events from the data story in Chapter 4, because although they were issues in the lives of participants, no *event* marked their emergence. An example of

this was Stephanie's issues with weight and her concerns about her two younger sisters. Stephanie's youngest sister was only eight-years-old and according to Stephanie already exhibited signs of an eating disorder. The other sister was about twelve-years-old and ate compulsively. Stephanie and I talked about this at length, but throughout our talk, there was no singular event that precipitates these problems. Therefore, I cannot call the body image and weight issue an *event*.

#### Events for Stephanie, Amari, and Michelle

The events in this effective history are as follows: the 1997 shooting for all participants; Stephanie's movement to an all-black middle school; the 2003 shooting for Amari; Amari's conflict with his mother, Carolyn, and the fallout from it; the first time Amari shot a gun; Michelle's sports injury; and Stephanie and Michelle's problems with university professors, advisors, and other personnel. The final event I analyzed described how one participant decided to buy a gun. As I explain in Chapter 4, although I chose not to identify this participant, this event was significant and I believe the reasoning the participant uses in justifying the decision to buy a gun reflects discourses circulated throughout this nation as rationalization for the purchase of firearms.

Following effective history, as I believe it should apply to methodology, I followed each event with an analysis of effects and resistances. Once I identified effects and resistances I conducted an analysis of the discourses used as resistance. Although these participants employ myriad discourses as resistances, I based my study on the assumption that two types of discourses would be more frequent than others: Eurocentric and Africanist discourses.

It was not my intention to oppose Eurocentric and Africanist discourses; instead, I hoped to demonstrate ways in which participants used these discourses and what these discourses did once employed by participants. Not only did I analyze the discourses participants used them, I also looked at my own discourses, that of the hotel employees, and that of educators at Murphey East High School.

Subjectivity, the Vortex of White Supremacist and Africanist Thought

I wrote this methodology with some trepidation and awareness of how very important the idea of subjectivity was in this study. Subjectivity was critical in this study because not only was I the researcher, I was also a major player in the Event that prompted this study. As Britzman (2000) states, "There is a belief and expectation that the ethnographer is capable of producing truth from the experience of being there and that the reader is receptive to the truth of the text" (p. 28). I questioned my own ability to produce truth because participant's accounts of the same events that I thought I understood have already revealed how little I really knew about what was going on.

Likewise, I was still involved in the lives of my participants, even though they graduated from high school three or four years ago. Laurel Richardson (2000) posits that, "[p]ostmodernism suspects all truth claims of masking and serving particular interest in local, cultural, and political struggles. But it does not automatically reject conventional methods of knowing and telling as false or archaic" (p. 928). Consequently, the type of subjective analysis that conducted will, "not allow researchers to split methodology from epistemology. Second, this framework allows us to theorize different levels of participation in research and research process and therefore build different forms of reflexivity directly into the research process" (p. 928).

Perhaps Britzman (2000) offers help in troubling of traditional ethnography within the postmodern frame. Britzman states that "[t]he ground upon which ethnography is built turns out to be a contested and fictive geography. Those who populate and imagine it (every participant, including the author and the reader) are, in essence, textualized identities. Their voices create a cacophony and dialogic display of contradictory desires, fears, and literary tropes that, if carefully 'read,' suggest just how slippery speaking, writing, reading, and desiring subjectivity really are" (p 28). My subjectivity was more slippery than most. I needed to deconstruct it in order to operate reflexively and listen attentively.

My doctoral committee suggested that I needed to inquire into my feelings about the Event and my participants prior to beginning data collection. Actually, this is somewhat misleading, because the

analysis of my subjectivity is itself data. Dr. Tarek Grantham, who was not only one of my committee members but also a professor from whom I learned the rudiments of data collection, compassionately listened as I told my representation of the Event and tried to deconstruct why, even four years afterwards, its effects still plagued me. Tarek was the first African-American male professor I had ever taken a college course from. I was enrolled in a qualitative research course with Tarek during my last year as a high school literacy teacher—a period during which students spewed racial epithets at me on a regular basis. Tarek encouraged me to continue my goal of obtaining the PhD even when others said I was crazy. Tarek and I were not alike, but Tarek understood me, we trusted each other, and I knew that he would handle issues involving my subjectivity with caution. I believe any member of my doctoral committee could have done this interview, but Tarek stepped up and accepted this challenge.

Dr. Grantham was one of the first in the university with whom I shared the shooting Event. Because he was an African-American man who had been subjected to racialized events, he had a deep and abiding compassion for my participants and me. Tarek was a thirty-something assistant professor in the Educational Psychology department. His focus is on gifted education. This interview occurred on October 13, 2003. I drove from my home in the city identified as Yargary to my university, approximately 70 miles north of my home. Upon arriving at the university, I discovered that the place we had arranged to meet was closed. I called Tarek on his cell phone and we agreed to meet at the International House of Pancakes. The interview began at approximately 10:30 and ended about 1:30. My first field interview was approximately one month later.

During the first part of this interview, we discussed my own schooling thirty years ago—schooling that occurred in the same town but at a different high school. I then explained my theory of how the school my participants attended came to be known as “the black school” in the town of Murphy. This part of the interview was revelatory because it gave a sense of the ethnic grounding and acculturation this predominately African-American community provided for its young people. It was especially important in analyzing how one does not become racially self-conscious a therefore, is not aware of being

disciplined when outside the cocoon of the majority-black neighborhood. The idea of racial self-consciousness that I will discuss later was a key element in how the participants rationalize the Event.

I explained to my professor that this campus generally operated on what black folks call the “old school” principle. I have found that the “old school” was what works best for my personality and was most nurturing and productive for the students I taught at Murphey East. He asked me to explain what “old school” means to me. I answer that:

Violet: The classic example is I have this coworker (who is African-American); she’s retired now, one of the most respected educators in the county. One day at lunch I was walking down the hall ... she was on duty. She was standing at one end of the hallway, and there was this kid at the other end of the hallway. And you know he’s not supposed to be in the hallway because it’s lunch. She had called him several times and he wouldn’t answer her.

So finally she said (and I forget the kid’s name) she said “so and so, get your ass down here!”

I almost fell out. Because this woman, she is an English teacher. She was definitely from the old school. Prim and proper. Prim and proper. They had a joke about her, she could make the paint peel off the walls or some mess like that.

Because she was always pretty, always dressed to the nines, in the junior league the whole nine yards.

And it was like she’s cussing all the way down the hallway. I mean you could hear her from one end to the other.

And the kids was like, “Oh man Miss \_\_\_\_\_. She gonna’ kill me.” But it wasn’t like “You cussed me”. It wasn’t that. It was like, “I got caught.” So you know ... it was funny ... and again, with love.

T – They obviously had a certain amount of respect for her

V – Respect, that's right. And he knew he was wrong because she had called him two or three times, and he was trying to sneak. Trying to sneak to the gym or somewhere like that. And he was ignoring her. And I think she was embarrassed herself because that's so unlike her.

Now me? That would be a different story.

But for her, she did all her cussin' in private.. That's another old school thing. We do all our cussin' in private.

But, we do things that might stretch the law a little bit. We talk to kids about things like birth control. We talk to kids about AIDS. I talk to them from the perspective of saving [their] lives. I don't preach about any particular philosophy. I just talk about self-respect. And if a kid don't have a place to stay, one of us gon' take him home with us. If the kids need anything ... if we know the child ain't gone have no dinner when they get home one of us is gon' take them to Krystal, or somewhere, Burger King or somewhere. We just do.

Another aspect of my subjectivity that my professor felt was important was the relationship between my team members and me. He asked me to describe the dynamics of our relationship. I described them thusly:

V – [My relationship to the members of the team was] stronger, much stronger. Because for them—for them to spend the night at my house was nothing when we had to get up at four in the morning and go to a tournament the next day. I've always felt this way about parents because one of the things that happens with black people and with Hispanic people who are ethnically on the outside is that those who teach them assume the parents don't care. You hear that parents don't care. And I don't believe that. I think it's a lot of hype. I mean what parent doesn't care about their kid? Some don't, but it's not necessarily bound by race as to who those parents are. But anyway, so I always, I call

parents, I talk to them, I get them involved in what I am doing. So these parents I really talked to them a lot about what was going on with their kids. I was very involved with those kids. If they acted up in a class they knew it was going to get back to me and I was going to get on them. I would deal with the whole student, not just the quiz bowl commodity, which is the traditional sort of way. And you know the other thing is that I didn't just choose gifted students, or those who were at the top of their class. I chose students who I felt, you know some kids just have the ability to remember things or they know lots of trivia. Those kids are the kids I chose.

One particular example points to the sense of community, again a carryover of Africanist ways that I applied when working with the team:

Now see I had two groups of kids. I had the first group that went to nationals. And that's an interesting story because one of them, he ended up being like my godson too. He's Pakistani, and his ancestors were indentured servants in Guyana or somewhere and then they moved to the United States. And they moved to the projects because his mom and dad had liked six kids. And I remember Ramadan. I remember Ramadan we had a tournament in Sandpiper. And [his] mom and dad did not want to let him go because Ramadan started that Friday and we were leaving that Friday. And he calls me thinking he's gone manipulate me into convincing his momma and daddy to let him go to this tournament. And I told him, "Muhammad, that's none of my business." I said "I'm sorry, I hate to not have you," because he was the number one player. "But that's your parents' decision to make. What I will do is I'll assure them that I will afford you any facilities or whatever you need to stick with your Ramadan schedule." Because you know they had fasting and stuff, "But I'm not going to try to convince your mom to let you because your mother has a lot of respect for me and that's wrong to put undue pressure on her." Somehow, he fussed and complained enough that his mother called me and said,

“Well, Miss Jones, if you will promise me that Muhammad will stick to his fasting schedule and you’ll give him a place to pray” and I said, “yes, I’ll do that.” So we went to Sandpiper. And he did break his fast when he was supposed to break the fast. And at some point in the evening we were practicing and I know it was hard for him because he’s so into competition. And he said, “Miss Jones, can I go in your room by myself for a little bit.” And I gave him my key ... let him do what he had to do. And that worked out really great. But the whole point is, when he calls, when this boy calls my house, my husband says, "your son's on the phone." Thank God I'm married to the man I am. He doesn't resent that.

This data regarding my subjectivity demonstrates the way that I operate within Africanist paradigms. In this paradigm, all members of the community are like an extended family. Nobles (1978) cites this idea as a major attribute in examining and studying black families in the United States. Indeed, Nobles stresses that “for the African individual, the family constituted the reference point wherein one’s existence was perceived as being interconnected to the existence of everything else” (p. 684). While leading this team as well as operating as a classroom practitioner I have consistently employed an Africanist worldview even when I did not know that I was.

Africanist worldview and discourses are not the only discourses that I employed in the classroom. Indeed, I believe that part of my guilt about how I handled the Event and its aftermath stems from the way I implicitly employed Eurocentric discourse in the disciplining of my students. Within a Eurocentric mindset, “Autonomy has become a championed and revered individualism. Authority is lifted up to a romantic heroism waged against a raw, half-savage natural and mental landscape” (Miles, 2003, p. 12). I have identified certain disciplinary devices and methods that went beyond the necessity of teaching students to engage in the dominant discourse (Delpit, 1995; Gee, 1999).

Although I admit that it is important to teach young people how to function in the discourse of the dominant society, it is equally important to balance this engagement with a reification of the import of



their native discourses and ways of being (Daniel & Smitherman, 1976; Smitherman, 1995). The danger inherent in not supporting the discourse and culture of students is that we risk creating a generation of people who, after having successfully negotiated the territory of the dominant group, no longer consider their native discourses and community values to have import. Therefore, the talented who were able to make it decide to leave and engage in a community other than the one that nurtured them. This fractures the community by robbing it of the talent and human resources necessary for leadership and survival.

When I began teaching at this majority-African-American school, I knew how discourses operated and was aware that I should not marginalize Africanist discourse or ways of being. Even though I knew this on a cognitive level, something about having lived in dominant discourse communities since graduating from high school permeated much of what I said and did when engaging with these students. Oppression and subjugation do not necessarily imply intent. In my case, I intended to help students appreciate their own uniqueness. What I did was another matter entirely.

Toni Morrison (1992) critiques the problem of the white gaze on the black imagination. As for its application in literature, she describes the intentional erasure of race in literature as “pouring rhetorical acid on the fingers of black hands” (p. 46). Morrison believes that many black writers write with a white audience in mind. In other words, one could say that those people of color who operate with a constant white consciousness are themselves acting out of a white supremacist discourse. I feel that I have been guilty of this in many of my dealings with students. Morrison suggests that “[m]aybe I’m wrong in my feelings about the impact of the white gaze on African-American[s] ... but I know that eliminating it from my imagination was an important thing” (as cited in McHenry, 2003, p. 28-32).

As I seek to identify how the white gaze affects the way I deal with black students, some things I have done come immediately to mind. I have a deep understanding of what causes one to be raced black since I was produced by majority-white schools from fifth-grade through this doctoral program. First, many black people have strong, resonant voices; so I constantly told my team members not to be loud in public. Blacks, especially those of the hip-hop generation are raced because they wear baggy pants and

large oversized shirts. Consequently, I did not allow my team members to dress in this fashion when we went to tournaments. Ironically, we often saw white students from other schools who were loud and wore baggy clothing at these tournaments. Nevertheless, I felt it was *different* when my students did these things. I would look askance at any of my students who wore excessive or what I thought was gaudy jewelry. If I felt their appearance was *different* enough to draw attention to them, I required them to remove the violating adornments. The requisite “yes ma’am” or “yes sir” was not a big issue since most of these students were taught to address elders in this way by their parents and others in the community.

I felt that I had to watch my students constantly, especially when we were in public businesses. I would not tell them that they could not go into the gas stations or upscale mall stores when we traveled. I simply watched where they went, and as we traveled through small southern towns, I was careful to linger inconspicuously about as they did their shopping. I felt I had to do this because of the white gaze directed at young black people who attempt to shop in stores. I placed *my gaze* on my students in the hopes of preventing some white person from accusing them of stealing or committing some other inappropriate act.

What I did to and with my students was shameful, but necessary in certain instances. I was not conscious of racing my own students—of standing as proxy for the white supremacists. Nevertheless, my continual monitoring of their dress, speech, and behavior affected the way these young people negotiated the Event. My subjective impact became clear once I realized that these students agreed among themselves not to tell me about the shooting because they were afraid that I would be angry with them. In addition, they agreed that they would not tell anyone at Murphey East about the incident even after it became public. I have to take responsibility for my role in making young people feel embarrassed by a situation in which they held no culpability. The Eurocentrist attitude of the guard caused the shooting Event; but the white supremacist operating on my imagination affected their reactions and resistances to it.

## Conclusion

This research project has taken me to places I did not intend to go. The knowledge continues to cut discourses in new and sometimes painful ways. The way that I endeavored to gain entrée and consent attests to my desire to foreground Africanist ways in this study. Contrarily, an analysis of my subjectivity demonstrates how intent and actions sometimes act counter-intuitively against one another. I will revisit both Africanist ways and Eurocentric discourse as I explain and analyze the data presented to me by my participants.

## CHAPTER 4

*NOMMO*<sup>6</sup>

## Introduction

In Chapter 2, I tied racial discourse to both Africanist and Eurocentric discourses. The problem is that these discourses are of little importance if they do nothing. One thing these discourses do is inform ideology and ideology informs actions (Asante, 1998; Bakhtin, 1975/1998). Not only does discourse inform ideology and lead to action, these actions precipitate events, effects, and resistances. The events, effects, and resistances I address include the 1997 shooting, the ways participants explained its causes, and their resistances to the Event's fallout. I also discuss ways in which the hotel employees, specifically the security guard who shot at these students, used the discourse of white supremacy to inform his actions and to explain to me why he felt his actions were justified. In examining other events in the lives of these three young people, I focus on Stephanie's move to the South after matriculating in integrated schools on military bases for the seven years prior to entering predominately African-American schools. This particular event demonstrates ways in which students used Africanist discourse as a disciplinary device to force normalization and assimilation of a black person into an Africanist community. Additionally, Michelle articulated a major event in her life in which her hopes for a spot in the 2004 Olympic were dashed because of an injury she sustained while practicing the shot put at the university she attended. Like the 1997 shooting, Michelle was able to articulate being raced after her university peers, teachers, and administrators no longer considered her an athlete. Michelle also effectively resisted what she perceived as efforts to undermine her academic endeavors. I elaborate the methods Michelle used as resistance as well.

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"*Nommo* to the Dogon people of Mali, West Africa means the magic power of the word. Words turned into moving images have a tremendous influence in the shaping of reality" (<http://www.blackfilmmakers.net/about.html>).

One of my reviewers expressed concern that I was too hard in my analysis of Amari. Primarily this seemed true because even though Amari was the most avowedly Africanist in his lifestyle, he used the discourse of rationalism to deconstruct many events and resistances in his life. Amari suggested several events that have shaped his subjectivity. One was the clash with his mother because he did not want to move with her and her spouse (his stepfather) to Sandpiper (a coastal city about 170 miles from Murphey). Amari resisted his mother by using Eurocentric discourse, particularly rationalism. He also explained how he could not have relationships with women who were not on his cognitive level. Again, Amari justified his beliefs using rationalism. In spite of my analysis of Amari as strongly influenced by Eurocentric discourse, when he encountered another shooting event, he responded heroically and placed community ahead of his individual survival.

In Chapter 1, I promised to conduct this study by using three theoretical appeals. The first was Foucault's effective history (1977), the second was Africanist epistemology (Dillard, 2000; Mbiti, 1990; Wiredu, 1996), and the third is Eurocentric discourse (Asante, 1998; Foucault, 1997/2003; Giroux & McLaren, 1994). Before I analyze the Event, I will explain how I deconstruct the Event and other events using Foucault's effective history. I will then describe how I will utilize effective history alongside Africanist and Eurocentric thought.

Regarding effective history as a tool for analyzing events, Foucault (1977) states that this type of historicizing must:

[C]ultivate the details and accidents that accompany every beginning; it will be scrupulously attentive to their petty malice; it will await their emergence, once unmasked, as the face of the other. Wherever it is made to go, it will not be reticent in 'excavating the depths,' in allowing time for these elements to escape from a labyrinth where no truth had ever detained them. (p. 144)

Key to my reading of Foucault is his focus on details, accidents, scrupulous attention, emergences, and excavation. Consequently, I analyzed events in these terms. In this analysis I equated

emergence with resistance, an idea that Foucault frequently employs (Foucault, 1972, 1976/1990).

According to Foucault (1976/1990) resistances are “possible, necessary, improbably; others ... are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant, or violent; still others ... are quick to compromise, interested, or sacrificial; by definition, [and] they can only exist in the strategic field of power relations.” Also, these resistances “spread over time and space at varying densities, at times mobilizing groups of individuals in a definitive way, inflaming certain points of the body, certain moments of life, certain types of behavior” (p. 96). Using resistance in this way allowed me to focus on action as well as reaction, disciplines designed to regulate bodies, the thought as well as the unthought, and actions that are at times progressive, at other times digressive, sometimes static, sometimes viscously eruptive, and at other times mercurial.

#### Denying the Privilege of Africanist Discourse

Moreover, I used Africanist and Eurocentric discourses in the broad sense of each term. Although one might assume that Africanist epistemology speaks only to and about people of African descent, within the hybridized discourses of the United States, those who are not of African origin also utilize these ideas. In spite of the fact that people of many ethnicities use these discourses in conjunction with other discourses, I attempted to distinguish the Africanness of these elements because of their discursive employment in Africanist communities. Another assumption may be that participants and others mentioned in this study used Africanist discourse in ways that are liberatory and non-hegemonic. Based on my analysis of Stephanie’s first experience in an all-black environment, this assumption is false. In other words, Africanist discourse can be as oppressive as any other discourse.

Paradoxically, my participants, who are all of African origin, intentionally or not employed Eurocentric discourse. Not only did they use the Eurocentric discourse of reason, they also used Eurocentric discourses to resist and prevent hegemony in their lives. At other times, I did not couch my analysis within either of these two traditions either because the discourse is highly hybridized or because I cannot definitively place it in either discursive formation.

Methodological Focus in Data Stories

Harry Wolcott (1990) suggests that the term “analysis” is not the all-encompassing process that many researchers envision it to be. Instead, Wolcott states that the term that best describes what we do is “transformation.” Three methods exist for documenting this transformation: description, analysis, and interpretation. Although interpretation cannot (nor should it) be avoided, in this transformation of interview data, I focused more on what Wolcott calls description and analysis. Description was necessary for this or any data representation because it tied the cacophony of participants’ spoken words into a symphony—an opera with many acts. Analysis applied theory to descriptions and interpretations. It filled the gaps caused by different voices, speech styles, and impressions of the same or similar phenomena. My view of analysis is that it is a speculative function because even if my participants agreed with my analysis, the psychic distance between their subjectivities in 1997, who they are now, and their never perfect efforts to remember probably affected the way they presented feelings and beliefs. Similarly, this psychic distance influenced my interpretation of the data participants provided.

Finally, as a poststructural analyst, I focused on what words do. With this in mind, this section contains extensive citation of participants’ spoken words and less paraphrasing of what they say. As a conscientious researcher I have heeded the warnings of Alcoff (1991), Britzman (2000), and others who implore us to use care in how we (re)present our participants and their lived existence. I strongly believe that the three young adults whose words follow were articulate and that they expressed themselves quite well with little help from this researcher. Consequently, I ask the reader to hear them as they speak their impressionist truths, and hear me as a narrator, not an omniscient scientist.

As I stated in Chapter 3, I used a different method to code data and identify themes because my study only comprised four people, the three young adults and me. Accordingly, a theme might be something elaborated at length by all three, two of the three, or only one of them. The conditions that delineated a theme in this study deal with the time and emphasis the speaker placed on the event. Upon

reading the speakers' accounts of what I have identified as important data, the reader will likely see why I gave thematic analysis to an issue even though it only emerged in one or two interviews.

#### A Note about Words

I have chosen to write the words of these participants as closely as possible to the way they said it. This includes the dropping of end sounds that carries their words away from what is called "standard" American Vernacular English (Baugh, 1983). I was aware of the political ramifications of my decision as well as the way I negotiated power in making this choice. I made this choice for two reasons. The first reason was aesthetic. In other words, I believed the vernacular captured the skill and beauty with which African-Americans transform language. When one hears the words as they flow together into thoughts, a degree of verisimilitude become clear. Secondly, I am not convinced that using the vernacular objectifies the speaker by casting him or her as less educated or unable to articulate in the so-called "dominant discourse" (Delpit, 1995; Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996). In the case of these young people, I believe using a particular discourse is a choice they made knowing that they can (and do) move easily from vernacular to "standard." Consequently, allowing them to speak in their hybrid discourses showed our acknowledgement that their discourse legitimate.

#### Discourse of Bitterness

As I represented my participants' spoken words, I heeded Cornel West's (Gates & West, 1996) warning that, "[t]he most effective and enduring responses to invisibility and namelessness are ... prophetic thought and action: bold, fearless, courageous attempts to tell the truth about and bear witness to black suffering" (p. 90). This mandate caused me to think about the issue of subjective representation. I have constantly striven to avoid the portrayal of these participants as nameless, disembodied specters—to represent them in ways that show their humanity as well as the human responses and effects of the shooting. Since providing their identities would be unethical, I have chosen to represent these three young adults with pseudonyms. I make this choice because I want the reader to see them as people, gendered, raced, abled, people. In one instance, a statement one participant made about buying a gun, I



felt it might genuinely harm the participant had I used any type of identifier pseudonym or not.

Consequently, I chose not to identify a speaker with this statement. Nevertheless, it is important that readers hear speakers' voices in this representation—that they create a mental pictures and images of the speakers' realities.

### The Guard, the Clerk, and “Petty Malice”

I first conducted a microanalysis of the Event as each participant recalled it. One of the problems with this analysis was that it was difficult to extricate the guard who fired upon the participants as a key figure in this narrative. The guard was a young man of European descent who appeared to be in his early twenties. One of the facts that make his assault of these young people particularly pernicious is that earlier that same November day, he and the white desk clerk saw the three young women in our rooms before he chased them around the building later that same evening. Both Michelle and Stephanie remembered the guard and the white desk clerk visiting our room earlier on that November day:

Stephanie: We wanted the iron. The guy came with the iron—the guy that shot at us. And he had all this stuff around his belt. I said, ‘you have a lot of stuff on your belt.’ And he looked at me ... and he was like, ‘yes ma’am’. And I was like, ‘can I hold your Billy club?’

Michelle also reminded the guard of their earlier visit. After he subdued Stephanie and Michelle, she told him, “you just brought us a clock radio and a pillow up to our room.” Important in understanding the intentionality of the guard's actions is the fact that he continued to detain and harass them even after the women brought their identity to his attention.

### Running Nomads

Stephanie was the only one who recognized the guard when he approached the group outside. As the group saw him approach stealthily, Stephanie remarked:

He kept walking and my first reaction when he got close enough and I saw the belt that he had on [was], ‘oh, that’s the security guard.’ I didn’t even finish. Next thing I know, I hear, ‘freeze.’ So everybody looks like ... Everybody took off.

Michelle echoed Stephanie’s recollection:

Stephanie, Josh, myself, and Amari and Roseanna were standing outside the door in the light because the lobby was too crowded. And we were just talking. Next thing we see [the guard] and were like ‘darn, I could have sworn I saw somebody,’ coming towards us. And this white guy dressed in all black clothes starts running towards us. [The guard says] ‘Stop. Freeze!’ And we’re like ‘what?’ Our first instinct of course is to run. So we started running. Everybody ran in front then it was Roseanna, myself, and Stephanie in the back.

Since Amari was not present when the guard delivered the iron to our room, he had no idea who the guard was. Additionally, when the guard approached the students outside the building, Amari initially did not see him. According to Amari:

A guy came ‘round the corner. I had my back to him, so I didn’t know. Everybody started moving away and say ‘who is that?’ I look back, and the guy started runnin’ towards us. So we started runnin’. Then he may’ve said, ‘Stop!’ or something. But we wa’n paying him no attention.

As I interviewed the two women, one question I posed was why they ran if they recognized the guard. Stephanie responded that:

I don’t know if he was hidin.’ But the way he was walkin’ was kinda’ suspect—like, ‘why don’t he just walk straight?’ But he was going in between the cars. Everybody was kind of alarmed about it. I mean we’re just standing outside talkin’. So, I don’t know why we we’re scared. But it was nighttime and we didn’t know who he was. So I guess that’s why.

Michelle answered this same question thusly:

He started reachin' for a gun. And we were like 'what 's he reaching for?' He's yelling at us 'stop!' And he's not identifying himself. And we're like 'hold on! Let's run!'

The women who earlier recognized the guard seemed concerned not with whether he was the security guard, but *who* the guard was in terms of his *humanness*, what his *motives* were, and why he was acting strangely. The guard's approach was, by his own admission, designed to catch them doing something illegal. His stealthiness instilled fear in the students, even the ones who recognized him. Consequently, all five students ran. *Running* constitutes the *resistance* in this micro-event.

#### Savage Firepower

This section comprises Stephanie, Amari, and Michelle's descriptions of their reaction to the guard's use of a firearm:

Stephanie: He shot the first time. He shot when we were not quite to the pool area. We were closer then. When he shot, everybody started runnin'. But when he shot, the boys ran faster. Roseanna ran faster. We all ran faster. It took all of 10 seconds. We had been runnin' maybe 20 seconds when he shot. 'Bout 20, maybe 25. I didn't see it (the gun). I tried to say, 'that's the security guard' or whatever. He said 'freeze!' I looked in Josh's face. He looked at me. Next thing I know, we were runnin'.

Vj So you didn't see the gun but somebody saw the gun.

Stephanie: Probably. It was just time to go.

Vj Was it dark where you were standing?

Stephanie: No.

Vj So he could see you?

Stephanie: Uh huh. He shot twice. He shot when we first started runnin', and then some people ran faster.

Michelle recalls the actual shooting in terms of her emotional reaction to it:

Michelle: After he had already shot at us. I was like, 'oh my goodness!' I just didn't want to believe it.

Vj - How many shots did he fire?

Michelle: It was like three.

Vj - After you started runnin'?

Michelle: Once we started runnin'.

Notice Amari's references to the group as a collective during this Event:

Amari: It was a door right by the elevator. I think there were some snack machines or something there. And we just stood outside that door right around the corner from the pool. So we ran 'round the corner. We heard 'bout two or three shots while we were runnin' 'round the corner. We just kept runnin'. You know all those doors back there were locked. You had to use your key to get inside. 'Cause it was a door right by the pool. So we ran all the way around to the front, and went in through the lobby and went upstairs.

After the guard shot at the five students, three (Amari, Josh, and Roseanne) escaped into the hotel, leaving Michelle and Stephanie to deal with the guard:

Stephanie: We (Stephanie and Michelle) couldn't run as fast as everyone else.

Vj 'Cause you had your bedroom shoes on, right.

Stephanie: Right. We didn't have time (to use the key to get in). We couldn't stop runnin'. We ran around the building. Michelle was in front of me. Her shoe fell off. She went back to get it. You know she's hoppin', trying to get her shoe. And I got in front of her. I stopped, tried to turn back to get her. At that time, he's right up on our tail. So I'm like, 'oh my God!' We're runnin', runnin', runnin'. I remember we turned that corner. We were right on the corner. By the time we turned the corner I saw Josh do this [makes the motion of shedding the jacket]. He was out of his jacket. He was gone. I think it was

Josh. Josh then Amari. Cause we were runnin' [behind] and we were watching the whole thing. It was like Josh, Amari, Josh, Amari. Here comes Roseanna out of nowhere.

Meanwhile Michelle and I are in the back. So we runnin' and I'm lookin' back. I see him [the guard] runnin' and I'm like, 'oh my goodness!' By this time I'm like [she positions me] ... You Michelle, right. By this time, he's like no further than those light switches [about eight feet]. So I'm like, 'ok, this is it.' But we keep runnin'.

These accounts demonstrate the trauma that the use of firearms against young people can cause. First, Amari immediately moved into defensive athlete mode when he realized that someone (whom he does not recognize) is attacking his group. One interesting aspect of Amari's account is that he speaks as if the entire group were together during the ordeal and does not seem to realize that they have left Stephanie and Michelle behind. In my interview with Amari, I did not ask them whether they realized they had left the women behind or why they did so. This oversight on my part supports Dr. Grantham's suggestion that I privilege the men over the women.

The fact that Amari, Josh, and Roseanne left Michelle and Stephanie behind also demonstrates actions counterintuitive to Africanist views about community survival. When the entire group meets later in our room, Ms. Chastain is quick to chastise Amari and Josh for deserting the women. While she chastises them, I try to ameliorate their actions by pleading in their favor.

In the final analysis of their actions, I realized that sometimes any ethical choice one makes may damn the chooser, especially if the chooser is a young black man. Amari and Josh were young black men. Although this does not excuse their actions, those of us in their community were constantly reminding them that they were being watched, that by their very survival, much less their success as black men they represented a threat to the established order. We reminded them that they were being profiled and they saw frequently in the media what happens to black men who are caught on the wrong side of the cultural border.

In reminding both our young men and women of the fact that they were monitored, we failed to teach them ways to resist these disciplinary efforts. I believe Stephanie and Michelle's behavior and response during this Event were remarkable. They did not attempt to physically resist the guard, even though they would have been fully justified in doing so since his actions were unlawful. They supported each other emotionally and were quick to use whatever discourse they thought would work to reach and reason with the guard. In survival mode, they used their minds instead of their bodies to resist the guard's actions.

#### Premeditation in Sites of Supremacy

As the women stated, the guard, along with the young white desk clerk delivered an iron to our room earlier in the day. In delivering the iron, the guard and the desk clerk were in the uncomfortable position of performing service to black people, most of whom were younger than they were. Also, our assumption that we could move freely about this high-priced hotel in this affluent neighborhood needed checking from a white supremacist standpoint. I believe that the students would have suffered no harm had they stayed out of sight (and therefore, out of mind). But once they assumed the natural freedom of walking about, laughing, talking, and playing in view of the other hotel patrons, they had to be disciplined. In other words, *these niggers had to be put in their place*.

The way both these men acted when I approached the desk gave me the impression that they planned this Event. I believe they intended to teach these high-minded *niggers* a lesson. I believe they planned this for several reasons. First, when I approached the desk, they exchanged knowing glances and communally responded with justification for what the guard had done. Second, they could not respond to my reminder that they had seen us earlier when both of them brought the iron to our room. Also, the fact that they paraded the two women through the lobby and left the handcuffs on even after they identified them as hotel guest suggests that they had another agenda in continuing this humiliation and not removing the handcuffs. The fact that they removed the handcuffs just prior to my arrival suggests that they knew

they were wrong. Finally, neither showed concern for the psychological damage they had done to these young people.

This became more evident when Mrs. Chastain, the Midtown coach, and I approached the hotel desk and formally protested the shooting and detention of our students. As the reader may recall, Mrs. Chastain is the mother of Amari, one of the young men on whom the guard shot. When we approached the desk, Mrs. Chastain mentioned that one of the students was her son. The guard responded by saying that he wished he *had* shot her son. Mrs. Chastain was about to lunge at the guard when I held her and told her we were going to fry this fish another way.

Also, the fact that the guard absconded after the black hotel clerk summoned the police (ostensibly to control us) led me to believe that the guard knew he had committed a crime. The police arrived, apologized for the guard's actions, and took statements from Michelle and Stephanie. They advised us that the guard would be charged with illegal discharge of a firearm (not with committing a hate crime) (1999; Gates, 1994; Quarterly, 2004). The fact that the guard claimed he fired blanks was immaterial, because the force of any projectile fired from a handgun can inflict deadly harm if they hit the right spot on one's body.

Before this Event, I would have disagreed with Akintunde's (1999) assertion that "[r]acism is a systematic, societal, institutional, omnipresent, and epistemologically embedded phenomenon that pervades every vestige of our reality" (p. 2). Sadly, this statement rings true. I believe that the guard's actions were systematic and epistemologically embedded. His actions were systematic in that he expressed no surprise or discomfort in his actions, thereby leading me to surmise that he cultivated thoughts of doing such acts. His actions were epistemologically embedded because his comments during and after the Event suggested that he believed in his inherent right to use force against black people whom he believed were not "in their place."

### White Supremacist Discourse in Place and Race

In “Free Spaces, Collective Identity, and the Persistence of U.S. White Power Activism” (1989), the authors conducted participant observations and interviews to determine the role of geography in enabling the operation of white power activism. One type of site Futrell and Simi discuss is the “indigenous-prefigurative” spaces, “small locally-bound, interpersonal networks where members engage in political socialization” (p. 17). Futrell and Simi also describe “trans-movement-prefigurative spaces” where “otherwise unconnected local networks ... [become] broader webs of white power culture” (p. 17). The latter group includes music festivals and cyberspace where participants link with each other virtually and reinforce their prefigured activities.

Based on Futrell and Simi’s (2004) and Allport’s (1954) theories about organized white supremacist activities, I believe that these two young men were a part of some informal (local) or formal (national) network that imbued them with the righteousness of actions like the ones they committed. If nothing else, their communal response to my objections suggests that at least two people had agreed to complicity in this crime. Obviously, this was not the accepted juridical practice in this area because the police officers (one black, one white) vehemently apologized and asked us not to judge the city based on the actions of these two young men. As I talked to these two police officers, I also began to feel that they had to issue these types of apologies often in this city. I have frequently visited this city prior to and since the 1997 shooting, and I believe the racial tension is palpable. I have driven its streets in search of some semblance of non-racialized communities and have found that this large southern city still has the proverbial “tracks” that divide black and white residential areas. Since I am usually working with white people when I visit this city, I have observed few African-American customers in the places where we ate and the businesses we frequented.

In order to demonstrate my last assertion, I must remind the readers that over one thousand years of knowledge constructed in Europe and North America has established and reified the idea of inherent or



natural slavery, first through Aristotle and Aquinas. Later Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, and others expounded racializing discourse by suggesting that Africans and people of African descent were ahistorical and subhuman. These theorists take us from Ancient Greek to modern thought, and promote ideas postmodernism challenges as dominant realities in the lives of all people. Hence, “postmodernism may be defined as a movement that seeks to repudiate Western epistemology and its related ontologies and axiologies as the sole basis for humanity, human understanding, and human experience” (Akintunde, 1999, p. 5).

As I noted in Chapter 2, Foucault (1997/2003) deconstructed the emergence of race in Europe, America, as well as the colonies these nations subdued in the Americas, Asia, and Africa. Foucault says that discourses reifying race and subjugation come from “below” (p. 54). He continues by explaining that:

‘below’ is not necessarily what is clearest and simplest. Explaining them from below also means explaining them in terms of what is most confused, most obscure, most disorderly and most subject to chance, because what is being put forward as a principle for interpretation of society and its visible order is the confusion of violence, passions, hatreds, rages, resentments, and bitterness; and it is the obscurity of contingencies and all the minor incidents that bring about defeats and ensure victories. (p. 54)

Foucault partially credits this discourse to a “declining aristocracy,” an aristocracy with “great mythical impulses, and with the ardor of the revenge of the people” (p. 57). The people of whom Foucault speaks practice, in this case, white supremacy. White supremacy and Eurocentrism are not synonymous because even though white supremacy is a type of Eurocentrism, not all who practice Eurocentrism in discourse and action practice white supremacy.

### Eurocentrists in Blackface

Hence, the black hotel manager who failed to take action when he saw the two young women handcuffed outside the hotel and after the guard brought them inside was acting according to a Eurocentric discourse. Perhaps, like one of the participants stated, he felt that the students “*must* have

done *something* wrong. This same manager threatened to call the police when Mrs. Chastain, the Midtown coach, and I demanded an explanation of what had occurred.

In some ways, this manager is like the white supremacist who I try to extricate from my subjectivity. As I stated in Chapter 3, when I approached the hotel desk and saw Stephanie and Michelle's bewildered countenance, I also thought that the two young women had done something wrong. The difference is that I knew they would never break the law. Instead, I thought they were perhaps being too loud or disruptive in some way. The manager had inside knowledge that I did not. He knew the security guard had unlawfully detained and handcuffed them, and that the guard had also illegally search their possessions. Yet, he did not take the ethical and pragmatic (from a legal perspective) course of stopping these two out-of-control vigilantes from getting their one-uppance on these black young people.

#### White Spaces

E. Jeffrey Popke (2003) suggests that within poststructuralism “we activate a form of responsibility to those with whom we have no direct social interaction, to challenge the ‘out of sight, out of mind’ mentality” (p. 300). An example of Popke's point is the similarity between Stephanie and Michelle's view that they looked like they had done something wrong during and immediately after the Event and the way that this view simulates that of the two young white men. The participants fell into this incident because they forgot they were nomads in a strange land. Their assumption that they were safe to explore the out-of-doors at night gives evidence to this fact.

Someone my age or Carolyn's age—who grew up during the movement from sanctioned Apartheid in the United States to the dangerous period of compulsory desegregation—would have thought twice before wandering outside in an environment where we observed few who looked like us (Feagin, 1991). The problem with these young black people rests with their indoctrination and upbringing in an almost totally Africanist environment, an environment where they were the norm and the space was safe. Consequently, all of these actors reinforce Popke's (2003) assertion that “the subject of *modern ethics* is a subject fundamentally constituted through the maintenance of boundaries” (p. 302,

emphasis added). Both the guards and the participants failed to acknowledge the boundaries of the Other. In this case, the Other is anyone who does not *belong* to the community they inhabit because of their color, ethnicity, or assumed socio-economic level. The problem is that many times Eurocentric notions normalize those of European descent in most environments while it others African-Americans and other non-Europeans when they transgress the boundaries of their communities.

Foucault (1997/2003), Fanon (1967), Allen (1994), Baldwin (1963/1993, 1986), and others have indicated that white identity as Americans perceive it is predicated on the existence of black Americans. In other words, the type of racializing we practice in the United States is a symbiotic relationship where black people reify whiteness. Perhaps if we brought a white person from Iceland we would see this phenomenon in action and be able to test its veracity. In the meantime, this theory helps us understand why these black participants never had to confront such racializing violence until the 1997 Event.<sup>7</sup> It also helps us understand how the students' blackness mobilized the white supremacist tendencies of the two hotel employees.

#### Concerted Africanness

One element of Africanist epistemology that the response to the shooting reveals is the students' coalescing and identification of themselves as a community. These young black people identify as one—one consciousness, one victimized, and one collective spirit. This reference to the many as one exemplifies the way Africanists consider themselves a part of the community, communally interdependent and interconnected (Delpit & White-Bradley, 2003; Mbiti, 1990). Again, Michelle speaks of the collective in describing their capture:

Michelle:       And that's when the guy caught up with us. And he was like, 'stop! Freeze! Get down!' And I was like, 'oh my goodness!' So we threw down our stuff and ran.

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<sup>7</sup> This is not to suggest that they had never been cognizant of being raced. But the participants admit that this was the first time they had been subjected to violence because of their race.

Vj - What'd you throw down?

Michelle: Our jackets.

Vj - So Roseanna got away. The boys got away.

Michelle: Then there's me and Stephanie. He handcuffed us and walked us 'round back behind the back of the hotel. He put the handcuffs on so tight. My wrist was hurting. Everything was hurting.

Vj - Were you crying?

Michelle: Uh huh. I was like 'please take these handcuffs off?'

Vj - What did he say when you told him that?

Michelle: He was like, 'So, I still don't know who you are.

Ya'll could be black drug dealers standing outside the hotel.' We were in the Middle of the parking lot in the water on our knees. We went and picked up my jacket and Josh's jacket. We walked around the back of the hotel and got our stuff and he sat us down in the back lobby once we got around there. He gave our jackets to the person who was working behind the desk and told him to search our jackets.

Vj - Did anybody ask him what ya'll had done?

Michelle: Yeah. I said, 'what did we do?' He was like, 'you all were loitering. And I had to make sure you all weren't drug dealers.' Stephanie was like 'well you brought the clock radio up.' And I was like, 'I already told him he brought the clock radio up' And Stephanie started crying. And I was like, 'well, call our chaperones.' He was like, 'no, I'm not gonna' do that.' He was like, 'what room are you in?' Then he went and sat our jackets back on the counter and that's when ya'll came down. He had already taken us out [of] the handcuffs. We walked off and tried to walk back and stand and tried to listen for a minute.

Stephanie remembers in terms of their relationship to the surroundings:

Stephanie: Michelle and I ran closer to the bushes. The guys and Roseanna ran closer to the building itself and we were behind. We runnin', they runnin'. It was well lit. This is when Amari couldn't get inside the building. They gone. They gone. They gone. He gets up on us and I'm like, 'Ok. Michelle. We got to stop.' So we slow down. He kinda', you know, grabs us, you know like firm grip. He didn't like punch us or anything like that. So he took us over there and we're just now under that lit carport thing or whatever. And he walking and I'm thinking. So he walks us around the corner and he tells us to kneel down. So I think Michelle said, 'I'm not bout to kneel down there. It's water down there!' So he knelt me down on that. He just pushed me by my shoulders and he was like, 'no. Yes you are.' He's like 'do ya'll ... are ya'll guest at this hotel?' We was like, 'yes.' He said, 'I need to see your ID.' We're like, 'we don't have any ID. We just came outside to talk.' He was like, 'who are you here with?' We told him. I was like, 'are you gonna arrest us?' He was like, 'I need to know that you all are [hotel guests] here.' So he stood us up. Course we were already at the front of the hotel. Come to find out later that the hotel manager drove by in his Towncar. Black guy ... Big black guy. He drove by and looked at us. And we looked at him. And we're like ... you know (makes a gesture of questioning with her face). Turned around and let him see the look on my face so he would be like, 'what's going on?' He never came. We get up and we're still handcuffed. He's holding them [the handcuffs]. And I remember Michelle asked him not to put it so tight 'cause she had that problem with her wrist. And he didn't listen. He squeezed them tighter. I thought that was really mean. I was thinking, 'this guy crazy!' We were down. I think I said something like, 'are you gon' put those on us?' He was like, 'don't act like you not used to wearing them.' He said it like in a joking manner. You know what I'm sayin'? I look at Michelle, and she look at me. It was kinda' like his mood fluctuated. It was weird. So he walked us back the way we ran. We had to pick up all the

stuff people dropped. I remember. I think Michelle picked up Josh's letter jacket by the door. He walked us all the way back the way through when we first saw him walking through the cars. Instead of walking us between the cars, he walked us along the sidewalk. Meanwhile, people getting out of their cars. People looking at us like we crazy. And we handcuffed.

Vj      You were right by the entrance to the hotel when he caught you?

Stephanie:      He took us back through the parking lot, like a display basically. Like we were his booty of war, I guess. He takes us to the main gate to the main door. As a matter of fact, we stood there for a second like he expected us to open it [the door]. He was like ... you know [questioning expression].

Vj      Were your hands in front?

Stephanie:      No. They were behind us. So he stood there lookin' at us like, 'why aren't ya'll going in?' Then he was like, 'oh.' [The guard] opened the door and let us in and he went up ahead of us and opened up the second door. And he told us to sit down in front of the desk ... kind of off in a corner.

Vj      Was the black guy there?

Stephanie:      Uh huh. He had just got in.

Vj      What about the other desk clerk, the white clerk?

Stephanie:      The white guy was already there. When we walked in, we saw the black guy that we has saw in the car. He didn't say anything to us. I guess you could tell he was trying to get himself situated. And the white man he took ... I think our keys and something else ... our key cards to get into the hotel and he took Josh's jacket. And he took them behind the counter. And he was talking to the white (clerk). We embarrassed, you know. We try to sit on our hands. Michelle's like, 'my wrist hurts.' I was like, 'well don't sit on them. Don't press back on them.' So she kind of adjusted them or whatever.

He said, 'who ya'll here with?' We said, 'we're here with our academic team.' He was like, 'well, whose ... well what's your last name?' We told him. And we were like, 'no. The rooms aren't in our names. Check under Carolyn Chastain.' He checked, and we said, 'check under Violet Jones.'

### Mobilization of Secrecy

My initial drive in conducting this study was entirely selfish. My biggest concern was what I did to engender silence in these participants and how my silence after we returned home affected their ability to resist the Events effects. Later, I realized that my quest(ion) held important implications for all educators. Consequently, I guide the interview more when Michelle, Stephanie, and Amari talk of their intention to keep the shooting a secret.

Vj      Why didn't you give him my name first?

Stephanie:      Because we were like, 'uh uh. No ma'am.' Because we didn't want to get into trouble. And we were like, 'the other people probably made it safe upstairs. Nobody knows what's goin' on. We didn't want to get everybody in trouble ... Have you mad at us while we were on this away trip. Because it was like competitive to go. And we were selected to go. And we didn't want to mess it up. So I said, 'check under Jones.' And he said, 'there are like eight Joneses.' And we said, 'Violet Jones.' He called the room.

Michelle also expresses the concern they felt about getting into trouble:

Michelle:      He still didn't tell you anything [after Mrs. Jones arrived at the desk]. When we went up to the room, we were like 'don't say anything.' We were tellin' everybody not to say anything. 'Cause we thought we were gonna get in more trouble than anything.

Vj -      Why did you think I would get mad at you?

Michelle: Because we just looked like we were in the wrong. Stephanie and I were like, 'Ms. Jones gonna' be mad at us and we didn't even do anything wrong.' And then finally once we had said we weren't going to say anything, I was like, 'I don't care ya'll. We gotta tell somebody. This man just shootin' at us.' So that was when we were like 'we gon' tell.' So Josh and Amari went and took showers and everything. They were ready for bed. Roseanna was sitting in the bathtub in our room crying. She was sitting their fully clothed crying. We did not know how to take it. All of us grabbed the bible and sat in the bathroom and started reading bible scriptures. We didn't know what to do. We went up to the boys' room.

Stephanie also reiterates the importance of not getting into trouble:

Stephanie: And so you came down. The guy had just finished taking off (the handcuffs). He took mine off first 'cause Michelle asked him to take hers off. So instead of taking hers off, he came to me first and took them off. He had just put the handcuffs back in his belt when you got off the elevator. 'Cause he was still putting the keys in his pocket.

Vj Do you know what happened to make him take the cuff off?

Stephanie: No. I was just so concerned about you coming down that elevator, and Michelle was over there, and I don't know. The whole situation was weird. It was just like awkward.

This is one of many points during the interview when Stephanie digresses about her feelings between the point at which they started running and the point when the guard takes them into the lobby. This type of digression was typical of my interview with Stephanie. As I said in my explanation of thematic development, the fact that she mentions something often signals a theme. Since Stephanie mentions the period after the guard catches her and Michelle often, I consider this an important micro-event in the 1997 shooting Event. Even though Stephanie spoke the words below directly after the preceding section, I



broke her narrative here to emphasize the digressive nature of her interview and the way in which she continues to revisit her feelings while she was in captivity:

Stephanie: Cause like when he had the gun at my head. And I was just thinking about ... you know, just thinking about, 'are they gonna' take me to the hospital? If I died, what's gonna' happen to my family ... to my sisters?' You know. And it was just kinda' weird. But meanwhile, I was still talkin' to Michelle. My mind was going one way and I was still talkin' to Michelle. I guess it was like a safety mechanism tryin' to talk ... try to just ... whatever. He just kept the gun on us. And I turned around and I looked at the gun. And I could see. I said, 'is that a real gun?' And I told Michelle, 'I don't think that's a real gun.'

Again, I take Stephanie back to the issue of not telling Carolyn and me about the shooting because this issue is pivotal in understanding how students perceive me as teacher, coach, and mentor.

Vj - What made you guys think that I was going to be angry with you?

Michelle: Because we knew we did something wrong, but it wasn't what they accused us of. We went outside after you guys told us not to go outside. So we knew you were gonna be mad from that point on. But you weren't. So we were really relieved that you didn't get mad at us. That's when you guys went down to talk to the people. Once you all left to go downstairs and called the police that's when we knew it was more serious than we were not supposed to go out that door. We were like 'oh my God! What did we get ourselves into?'

Vj - Did you think you had done something wrong and that's why the police were coming?

Michelle: No. It was just, why did we have to disobey? We were being more hard on ourselves than anything. Because we were like, 'why did we have to go outside?'

Vj - So you didn't even think about the fact that it was his fault.

Michelle: We didn't think about that until after me and Stephanie sat down there and we started talking to the police. And once he [the police officer] started putting everything into perspective, that's when we started realizing. I was like 'I can't believe it!'

Amari speaks of his feeling during the shooting thusly:

Vj - How did you feel?

Amari: Scared. Scared. Just in a state of panic. I wasn't really thinkin' about it, just runnin'. Tryin' to get away.

Vj - Have you ever felt that way before?

Amari: I can't ... I can't remember ever feeling that way.

Vj - Really? Did you feel like your life was in jeopardy?

Amari: When I heard the gunshots, I did. He was a long ways away. I knew he wasn't gon' catch us.

Vj - But the gunshots could catch you.

Amari: Yeah.

Vj - How does that state of fear compare to anything in your life. When had you been afraid before that happened?

Amari: I don't think I was afraid of anything before that happened. I mean its some stuff dangerous, you know. But nothing that level, where I just be scared. It's total shock. I don't know. Mind went blank ... heart beating fast. Like your heart take over instead of your mind. Just try to get away.

Vj - Was it not supposed to happen to you?

Amari: I guess just because it had never happened, and I had never thought of it happening. Just seemed like something off TV.

### Cutting Assumptions

I constantly feel this pull to explain why the participants ran from the guard even though they had committed no wrong. Again, defending their response to the guard's suspicious behavior speaks from the white supremacist that I am constantly trying to extricate from my conscious. The issue of defending the victimized has really touched my life these past few months as I have sought a job within academia. At one university the department chair, an African-American male, questioned my ability to teach white students given this Event. When this individual called me to advise me that I was not selected (that no one was selected), I asked him about these concerns. I explained to him that questioning my effectiveness in such a way without any reason to believe that it would affect me was like asking if a female rape victim who conducted doctoral research about rape was capable of being fair to men. When I met with the deans at another institution, they questioned the validity of my research since I was so heavily involved with the participants. I explained the intense work we had done to deconstruct my subjectivity prior to the commencement of this project. Another institution's provost asked me if the guard really meant to shoot the students before I had the chance to explain the entire incident. In all cases, I challenged this line of questioning. Only in the one case did the speaker acknowledge the insensitive nature of the question. I was not offered employment at the former two institutions, and I was at the latter.

I divert my discussion here to remind the reader that Wade Nobles (1978) warns those studying African-Americans of committing what he calls "transubstantiation" or "conceptual incarceration" (p. 682). Nobles defines "transubstantiation" as "a process wherein the substance of one culture is transformed into the substance of another culture" (p. 682). In dealing with transubstantiation, Nobles warns that "if the social scientist or researcher does not respect the integrity of a people's 'cultural perspective,' he/she is prone to fall victim to ... 'transubstantiation'" (p. 683). Nobles also posits that "the potential for committing the transubstantive error is *decreased* as one *increases* the understanding of the cultural substance of a particular people" (p. 683).

Similarly, Nobles (1978) explains that “black social scientists have been trapped in the conceptual assumptions associated with [white psychocultural reality]. This we have defined as ‘conceptual incarceration’” (p. 683). Conceptual incarceration “inhibits blacks from asking the right questions. Hence, we are limited in what we can know about black social reality by what we think we know about the dynamics of social reality in general (which more accurately should be called white social reality)” (p. 683). I am keenly aware of the potential for my committing these fallacies as I analyze the subjectivities of these young people. Yet, this awareness only serves the overall purpose of writing qualitative research if the reader is likewise aware of the social dissonance between her/himself and the reality of the participants.

Summarily, I may make assumptions about the young people from an Africanist perspective that may not resonate with the readers’ versions’ of reality. My hope is that if the reader is not familiar with Africanist ways, they would not jump to judgment about my assertions. Instead, the reader should store what is evidenced but not resonant in these analyses somewhere in their minds and remain open to further discussions about Africanist ways.

### *Ese Ne Tekrema*<sup>8</sup>

One of the primary examples of Africanist ways exhibited in the responses to the Event is the reference to this group of five in communal terms. If the reader returns to the transcript portions cited above, he or she will notice the word “we” used over 80 times by the interviewees. This word is not just used in the obvious sense, “we wanted the iron,” or “we’re standing outside the door.” Michelle, Stephanie, and Amari also use it to express the unspoken collective thoughts: “and we’re like, ‘what is he reaching for;’” decisions: “and we’re like, ‘hold on. Let’s run;” feelings: “We’re embarrassed, you know;” predictions: “we were like, ‘uh, uh. No ma’am. Because we didn’t want to get into trouble;”

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<sup>8</sup> *Ese Ne Tekrema* is an Ankindra term that literally means “the teeth and the tongue.” It represents friendship and interdependence.

resistances: “We didn’t know what to do. We went to the boys’ room first;” and decisions: “so that’s when we were like, we’re gon’ tell.”

This choral or community representation of the Event during these interviews reiterates the centrality of choral and community discourse and action in Africanist perspectives (Asante & Welsh-Asante, 1985; Carter, 2003; Daniel & Smitherman, 1976; Davidson, 1970; Delpit & White-Bradley, 2003; Dillard, 2000; Hull et al., 1982; Mbiti, 1990). For instance, Daniel and Smitherman (1976) emphasize that “there *is* a traditional African World View,” a world view that “is pervasive in secular dimensions of Black culture and communication and that is revealed not simply a surface difference between white and Black Americans, but a more profound ‘deep structure’ difference” (p. 28). Hence, “A traditional African community is itself a rhythm based on the synergic functioning of ‘I’ and ‘We’” (p. 31). In this tradition, the individual posits his or her existence based on the group’s existence. Consequently, the rhythm of the community “survives on the rhythm that ‘I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore, I am’” (p. 32).

The theory of Africanist community and discourse exemplified above is equally evident in participants’ use of the collective plural pronoun. When they speak of an action, event, or decision that effects them all, they never say “I decided to run,” or “I decided to tell Mrs. Jones.” Evidence of Africanist communal interdependency becomes a primal reaction when these African-American young people confront this crisis. My theory will become apparent as I examine events in the lives of individual participants and the different ways they articulate them in comparison to the shooting Event.

As the subject of their own thoughts, feelings, and resistances, the participants express ownership of their effort to secret the shooting from Carolyn and me. In other words, they made an immature, but understandable decision. Initially, the decision to keep the shooting a secret is also a form of resistance against their perceived ramifications once Carolyn and I know their secret. It is conceived from both the shame caused by the guard’s actions and their determination that they had done something wrong. As

they analyzed this decision in 1997 and during these interviews, they acknowledged the fallacy of their initial decision to keep this secret.

*Nsoromma*<sup>9</sup>

Even though the participants acknowledged the fallacy of secretiveness in this situation, I must try to analyze discursive operators in their subjectivities, my role as teacher/coach, and Carolyn's role as parent/chaperone in their initial decision to keep this secret. It is difficult to extract each player and analyze them separately given what I have already submitted as Africanist beliefs about community. Consequently, I will focus on how we all perceive each other and the impact of those perceptions on the students' decision.

Initially the students use Africanist epistemology to resist by coalescing into a community. After they discuss the Event, they also apply this discourse in choosing to seek the help of their elders, Carolyn and me. They realized that the guard had violated them, but the confusion between internalized Eurocentrism and the Africanist ideas their parents taught them caused them to initially secret the Event from Carolyn and me.

Another reason I believe they thought of keeping this secret is because they did not want Carolyn or me to think badly of them. The fact that we hold them in high esteem was initially favored over their quest for justice. Also, they had earned the privilege of this trip by competing with teammates the week prior to the tournament. They believed that if I discovered their disobedience in leaving the hotel building, they would have to return to Murphey East in shame and probably not be allowed to travel on another overnight trip with the academic team. In this case, I believe that Africanist beliefs empowered them in some ways, while their respect and fear of Carolyn and me as the elders could potentially have harmed them.

This idea of the elder in the community translates to specific behaviors in African-American communities in the southern United States. Teachers, whether African-American or not, are considered

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<sup>9</sup> *Nsoromma* is an Adinkra term that literally translates, "child of the heavens." It represents guardianship.

elders in the communities where they show a genuine concern and respect for their students. Because of these conditions, some African-American students address teachers as elders in spite of their age and experience. Likewise, many students address members of other ethnic groups as elders because these teachers become intimately involved in helping students and their families. For those who are not African-American, the respect for community and concern for students translates to performativity of Africanist beliefs even if the teacher is not of African descent.

As far as community members are concerned, parents like Carolyn earn elder status because they involve themselves with young people in the community beyond the normative expectations of the Americanized family. For instance, the same year the shooting occurred, Carolyn and her husband took in a homeless student. At the time the Carolyn took this young man into her home, I advised her that she needed to be careful because I had observed this student at school and felt he might cause trouble for her family. Carolyn's response was that she would not have made it were it not for a kind neighbor who took her and her brother in when their drug and alcohol addicted mother did not come home for days at a time. Consequently, she willingly assumed this risk in the hope that it would turn this young man's life around. There are myriad instances when Carolyn has parented someone else's child. These instances qualify her as an elder in the eyes of the participants.

Since these students consider both Carolyn and I as elders, they naturally wish to please us. Additionally, they are aware that even if they have done nothing to deserve the guard's actions, they did leave the hotel building after I told them not to leave. What I actually told them was not to leave the *hotel*, not that they could not leave the *building*. After my initial visit to the desk, during which I told the girls to go to their rooms without letting them explain what had occurred, I returned to my room to discover all of the students talking with Carolyn. This was the point at which I learned of the shooting. When I entered the room, Carolyn was chastising the students for leaving the building. She was particularly hard on the young men for deserting the women. I told Carolyn that *technically*, the students did not violate my rule since they did not leave the property. Carolyn was unconcerned about the *letter* of my instructions and

more concerned with the students' violation of its *spirit*. My guilt at not listening to Michelle and Stephanie in the lobby, and my regret that any young person had to endure this experience while under my watch caused me to be more compassionate towards the students than they were on themselves.

The students' analyses of the event exhibit a mature level of reflexivity. Perhaps, they even exhibit an extreme level of reflexivity. For instance, the statement that "we just looked like we were wrong" shows that this participant turned the objectifying eye on herself and her fellow team members. Likewise, the concern that my anger at them was more important than the injustice they had endured implicates all adults who had a role in training these students to navigate the dominant discourse. I believe that many times we gave assimilation priority over justice, thereby causing students to feel that it was more important that they be good than it was that others be good to them.

*Nyansapo*<sup>10</sup>

Before I leave the Event, I will allow the participants to reflect on how it affected their attitude towards white people:

Vj - What kind of things did you feel and do different when you got back home.

Michelle: Well I grew up playing softball with all white people. I no longer wanted to play softball with the people who I grew up with because I had resentment for all white people. I didn't have respect for white people as much as I did for elders. I respected everybody before, but I was like 'how could one race do this to another race and think nothing of it?' Another thing there was a black guy at the hotel. I was just like, 'there are certain people in our race who try to hold back other people.' I was like 'why would you want to hold back young black people? Why would he [the black manager] allow something like this to happen?'

Vj - Did you have any white friends?

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<sup>10</sup> *Nyansapo* is the Andinkra word meaning "wisdom." I use this title here because most of the participants used wisdom as opposed to hatred to resolve racial feelings precipitated by the Event.



Michelle: Yeah. I (became) very distant with them too. And then finally I realized that its not every white person that has that attitude, It's just a few just like it's not every black person who is racist against white people, its just a few. I can't hold what happened to me against the whole race. My brother's marriage (to a woman of European descent) is what really brought me to the idea that you can't hold this against every white person. They got married in my eleventh-grade year.

Vj - I think that was around the time that you said you were going to go to Gulf State and date a white guy. I just want to know did you do it?

Michelle: No. But I had a very close white friend. He was a cute white guy too.

Vj - So why didn't you date him, girl?

Michelle: Cause he ... (laughs) ... he likes black girls. That's the only thing he dated. And I told him I was going to date him. But me and him became too close as friends to date each other.

Stephanie also resolved her initial resentment towards white people.

Vj How did it effect your attitude towards white people?

Stephanie: Immediately following that, I was rather distant toward ... you know ... people. 'Cause at the time my best friend was white. And you know she was fine. I never told her what happened. But her sister goes to Midtown and was on the team. And I know she told her.

Vj: Had you planned on going to a historically black college before the shooting?

Stephanie: No. I had planned on going to either Mercer or Converse. And as a matter of fact, I went up there (Converse) and I interviewed. They gave me 10,000 dollars to come and offered to help take care of my out-of-state fees. And I applied to Cameron [the HBCU Stephanie now attends] because I wasn't being attentive in Ms. Cherry's

class. She had college catalogs in the back of her class. And I reached back there and said, 'um. Let me fill this out.' And [Cameron] gave me a full scholarship.

Vj Did the event influence your decision?

Stephanie: Yes. And when I told the white guidance counselor, she was like, 'no. No. No. You need to go somewhere like Mercer or Wesleyan.' It was her and one other lady in there. The lady who used to be the registrar. She was so nice to me. And she was like, 'no. No. You need to apply here.' So they gave me two applications on the spot. I remember one of them. It was pretty and it had leaves all over the page. And she was like, 'you need to go to a' ... What'd she say ... 'a mixed school.'

Vj -Did you get the message that you shouldn't go to a black school?

Stephanie: Yeah. Definitely.

Vj -Did you detect what was going on [with the counselor]?

Stephanie: Uh huh.

Amari has resolved his issues to his satisfaction; but I believe that his thinking mirrors Eurocentric discourse.

Vj - And what about your attitude towards white people?

Amari: I don't know. I read a quote by Sigmund Freud. It was something along the lines of the way people feel by a certain age, they'll never change. They can only like repress it, and it'll be in their subconscious. And it'll subtly manifest itself. So I feel like, I might see a white person 50, they fifty years old. So, I think they were alive back in the 60's. He racist even though he might not show it. He still racist. [Freud] says it's in you subconscious, so even though you can repress it the majority of the time it'll manifest itself. And like the [guard] coming 'round the corner, he might repress it most of the time, but when he see a group of young black people, that's when it manifest itself. 'Oh. They some drug dealers.' So, then he chased and shot at us.

Vj - So how does that effect how you feel about white people.

Amari: I'm on guard. If I'm round a group of black people like some thugs or something, I know I need to be on guard then. But that's because of the violent way they were brought up. But I mean white people, I would say their violent because they scared of black people now. But yet still the things they do, kinda' sneaky. You know racism not just as overt as it used to be. For instance, I'm working at [a large department store].

They have me all the time working like six to two. Now they know I'm in school. I told them I could work from like one to close. So now, they always trying to give me I'd say about four days out the week. I'll probably work Monday, Tuesday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, from six to two, you know all the hours no one else wants to work. Now its Christmas time. They done hired a bunch of new people. Now they just put me on the schedule one day, Saturday, from six to two. You know they just put me in the hours nobody don't want to work, and I'm the only black guy in that section. So they just try to give me all the trash hours.

Vj - So how do you resist that?

Amari: Make them mad. They might have me to work. I might call in and ... last minute I'll call in and say 'well I got a big test tomorrow. I got to study for it.' Or like last week the only day they had me working was Saturday from six to two, and they had me on schedule for this week and some more weeks. So I just didn't go. And they called me and I said, 'we're on Christmas break. The dorms closed. I can't come in.' And they said 'were you gonna' tell me.' I said we told [the supervisor] that when we first started working that we weren't going to be able to work holidays. Just to aggravate him make him mad. Ain't nothin' he can say 'bout it.

Vj - What is the purpose of them aggravating you like giving you bad hours?

Amari: They racist.

Vj - What does that mean? I can't figure out what you mean when you say that.

Amari: They give the white people the good stuff and the black people the bad stuff. Like back in the 50's and 60's, the black people had a little raggedy school with the hand me down books and the white people had all the first rate things.

Vj - Do you feel that's still true today?

Amari: Still the same thing. Just in a lesser degree.

Vj - So would you ever attend a white college?

Amari: No. I wouldn't want to be around people like that.

Vj - Well how you gonna' work when you graduate?

Amari: Same way I avoid it now. If I go to the [National Football] league, 80 percent of the team black.

Vj - What was your relationship like with white people at the other places you worked?

Amari: Most of them were white people who went to private schools. Cause they hadn't ever been around black people. [When they made comments] I just make them feel small. Just like I'm smarter than them. I feel like I'm smarter than most white people. Just like they might make a comment like black people ain't that smart or something. I be like I'm smarter than you. I ask them bout their SAT scores they might have made a thousand or something. I'll say well I made a 1250. And they don't believe me. They start asking me questions. Like 'so who wrote *Gone With The Wind*?' I say Margaret Mitchell. Then they might ask me another one. Then I ask them one and they don't know the answer. But I get all mine.

Vj - Do you believe that they genuinely believe that you cannot be as smart as they are?

Amari: The only black person they might be around is the one running back at their school, the token black guy.

Vj - Do you think outwitting the white kids makes a long term impression on them?

Amari: Well they never questioned my intelligence again. They'd look at me sideways, but they never questioned me again. I don't know if they thought I was like the needle in a haystack. I told them, 'you're never around black people. You go to a school with all white people. I go to a school with all black people. And the white people in my school are at the bottom of the barrel. But I don't use that to measure all white people and say all ya'll dumb. When you talking to people not that smart, it's hard to get your facts across. You can put the facts out there but still they're going to close their mind to it.

Although the two women have worked through their animosity, Amari has handled it differently. Both females were angry towards white people for a short time after the Event, but eventually came to understand that not all white people were like the ones who criminalized them in Brownsboro. Amari on the other hand, has decided that he has no use for white people in his life now or in the future. Amari resisted the efforts of his white coworkers to subjugate him by using reason. He resists the efforts of his supervisors to subjugate him by using reciprocation.

Amari's situation and his rationalization of race is an example of a black person "using the master's tools"(Lorde, 1984). Lorde suggests that this strategy is ineffective, but I believe Amari would disagree. The reason Amari would disagree is that his epistemological feet are firmly planted in Eurocentric discourse even though he is avowedly Africanist. Amari's discursive practices are an exercise in paradoxes. Amari masters black hip-hop discourse, all of his friends are black, and he said he wishes to work in predominately African-American environments. Yet, his strategy for deconstructing racism and resisting subjugation are firmly Eurocentric. For example, Amari describes an incident when he felt his mother was trying to subjugate him thusly:

Vj - Can you remember any times when someone tried to oppress you or put you in a place you didn't want to be and how did you resist it.

Amari: My first time was when my Ma got ready to move to Sandpiper. Well first, she told me ... this what she said, 'if you keep doing good in school, I'm gonna' stay here with you until you graduate.' So I Made all A's even though I was playing football. At the beginning of the next semester, spring semester, she said she getting ready to move to Sandpiper. I said, 'you just told me you was gon' stay with me if I did good.' She said, 'I just changed my mind.' Then I just felt like things just gradually getting worse. She just arguing with me all the time. And I just stayed in my room and she'd just come in and start fussing about stupid stuff. *I guess that's when I started feeling like my thinking ability was superior to other people. My ability to reason.* I could see things but other people can't see it. I mean like when she just come in and start arguing about stuff, I'd have to be the bigger person. I'd have to say 'Ma, I don't feel like arguing.' And the last time, this was just before she kicked me out, she told me to take the trash out. And we were about to take some stuff to Goodwill. And I had to get dressed to go to Goodwill with her. So I forgot to [take the trash out] and we got in the car. And she just started fussing. She fussed all the way to Goodwill. We had just got downtown, right in front of that Goodyear [tire] store. And I hadn't been saying anything. And I told her she was ignorant. 'Cause I felt her ability to think was below mine. I didn't say it like that but I told her she was ignorant. She kicked me out.

On many occasions before and since Amari move in with my spouse and me, we have had this discussion about what I perceived as his disrespect towards his mother. The way he ended the one mentioned above is similar to the way we always end this talk. Amari reasons that his mother is ignorant. Ignorant to him rest on two cognitive axes, intelligence and the ability to reason. Amari also told me that he ended a relationship with a young woman because, as a second-year college student, she was unable to

master the rudiments of basic chemistry. Amari is an enigma. I know that he received an Africanist upbringing because I know his parents. I know that he embraces Africanist culture because he speaks the vernacular, participates in black-oriented cultural activities, and prefers the company of young black people. Yet, his reasoning is solidly Eurocentric.

I will attempt to explain Amari's behavior by referring to his schooling. Although Amari has always attended black schools, he has also always been at the top of his class. In order for Amari to excel academically in most environments he must master the "master's tools"(Lorde, 1984). Many black collegians will attest to the fact that a black education is not necessarily more Afrocentric in terms of curricula. In other words, what makes a black education unique and more supportive for African-Americans is not necessarily the curriculum. Instead, it is the relationship between faculty and students and the unique way we communicate and support each other within Africanist communities.

Since Amari's mastery of European knowledge equated to excellence among his peers, he might consider that knowledge as superior to the cultural knowledge he learned on the spiritual knees of his parents and black teachers like me. During my interview with Amari, I often lapsed into arguments with him (not unusual for our conversations). I tried to get at this conflict between his cultural values and his epistemological grounding. Unfortunately, I was unsuccessful.

I must mention one other irony in my interview with Amari. As he states above, Amari prefers the company of black people. Also, Amari appreciates Africanist culture and generally applies norms based on Africanist value systems. At the end of our interview, Amari and I were discussing what pseudonym I would give him for this study. I decided to give this one last effort and asked Amari who his favorite rapper was. When he responded Eminem (a white rapper) I got a headache. I did not want to go there, so I did not. I finally decided to use Amari (a transliteration of Amiri) as a pseudonym because a former professor had occasion to meet the famous black poet Amari Baraka. This professor mentioned that Mr. Baraka would probably not share the stage with poets like Nikki Giovanni and Audre Lorde because he was avowedly heterosexists. Also, Amari Baraka sees himself as embodying black resistance

at its apex; yet his views about certain issues, homosexuality being one example, show his Eurocentric and patriarchal leaning.

### Inflaming Bodies

Each participant identified at least one other event that contributed to their subjective formation. For Michelle, it was a sports injury and its effects on her ideas about race. Stephanie spoke of entering an all-black school for the first time and not feeling she was “black enough.” Amari was shot twice during a college outing. Even though this incident did not involve race, it affected Amari’s subjectivity and the ways he resolved to resist subjugation.

Michelle was the one participant who chose to attend a predominately-white university. She was at the university for less than a year when this event occurred:

Michelle: When I was in college, I broke my entire leg. Now that was painful. Because I had to go through a lot of treatments, like shock treatments. They had put this metal brace around my foot to try to get me to be able to flex and that type of thing. I started [becoming interested in biomechanics] ‘cause nothing was helping me or helping my foot or the rest of my leg. It was always my point to be interested in what could help me get better. To make me be able to run and be more comfortable with it.

Vj - So it was never a choice of ‘I want to just stop playing?’

Michelle: No. That was not gon’ happen. I attended Gulf State and, we had just started training for the outdoor season. So we were warming up on the field. About two weeks before we had just had our first outdoor track meet, my kneecap just began slipping out of place. And my knee would just lock up on me.

Vj - Were you were doing the discus?

Michelle: Uh huh.

Vj - Does the discus involve a lot of turning?



Michelle: Yeah, a lot of rotation. I couldn't really throw the discus well 'cause my knee was locking up. I went to the doctor and they put me on a leg brace for about two weeks. I didn't know what was going on. Because I had been injury free for the longest. And then this happened. The first day of practice, I was warming up. I tried to throw the discus and my foot got caught in the edge of the circle. I broke my whole leg from foot always up to the knee.

Vj - Your foot got caught, but your body kept moving. So you twisted your body around.

Michelle: And then all my momentum was still turning. I was at the end of my throw. I was still turning and my foot got caught at the edge of the circle.

Vj - What's at the edge of the circle?

Michelle: The circle was like all cement. But it was like the boundaries of the discus circle was declined. It's actually a barrier. It's like cement. And then it goes strait. And so all I did was fell strait to the ground. At first I was like 'darn, man! I twisted my ankle' I did not realize what had happened until I tried to get up and I said 'whoa. I did more than twist my ankle.' I looked at my leg and my face was down in the ground, and the rest of my leg was the other way. I was like 'oh, my God!', and that's when I started crying because I was shocked. It was like I knew something was going on more than what I thought because I heard my ankle pop. Then I heard my knee cap pop. And then everybody on the track just froze. Then I looked down at my leg and everybody was like 'call the ambulance! Call the ambulance!' I was just so scared. I did not know what to do. I told everybody to just move away from me. I said 'call my momma.' And my coach got on the phone and he called my momma. He knew I was not playing. And he was so cool. Once he got on the phone with her, I calmed down. So he was like, 'Ms. Mincey, we have a little problem. Michelle twisted her ankle.' I was like 'would you stop lying to

my momma and tell her what's really going on. She was like, 'you can't be calling me for a twisted ankle. What's really going on?' I was like, 'momma, I broke my leg! I broke my leg!' And she was like 'tell her I said she'll be all right. I'll be down there Friday.' So they put me in the ambulance, they took me to the hospital. It happened about 4:30 in the afternoon. I had to have emergency surgery about 1:30 in the morning. It terrified me. It really did. I didn't cry too long. I was sitting there thinking "this my first year in college, my first year competing. And I'm doing so well in indoor. The spring of my freshman year. I was like 'I haven't been able to really show my talents on the discus.' The only thing that gave me a good feeling about what happened was that I made sure once they gave me my scholarship, that they could not take it away [if] I got injured. So I knew I had my scholarship. But I was really worried about whether I'd be able to do track. My coach stayed with me the whole time. And that made me feel a lot better. Once I came out of surgery, they told me what they did to me. They told me that they had to put a metal plate that runs up and down my leg, and seven screws that are over a half an inch long. After that surgery, I stayed in the hospital for three days. I had to go and have another surgery [because] all the bones that were broken, all the crushed bones, gathered at my Achilles tendon started scraping at my Achilles tendon. They had to go and remove that. Then I had to have another surgery on it—three surgeries within a six month period. And they had to take, what they call a mouse, it's a large piece of bone, it was lodged in between my maleosis joint where you'd be able to flex up and down on your ankle. So I had three surgeries within six months. I didn't walk for seven months. I spent six weeks in a bed. I couldn't go anywhere. Spring of 2001 was when I broke my leg and I didn't come home because they said I needed to be there for rehab.

Vj - What'd you do?

Michelle: I had rehab for six hours every day. I'm talking about where they had heat packs down to 140 degrees on my ankle. Then they'd pull me right out of there and put me in an ice bath. Then they'd put electric stimulus pads on me like they do Russian stems. That's the same thing Bruce Lee uses to make his muscles big. Rehab, it's the worst pain. They turn it up so high, it makes all the muscles in your leg contract.

Vj - So when you finish that everyday, you're tired.

Michelle: I just went to rehab. My roommate stayed there with me also. She threw the discus and shot put as well. And she stayed with me through the summer because she wanted to see me through rehab. So I had a good support group right there in the apartment for me. And I had no rotation on the outside, and I can't bend it over this way. Only thing I can do is dorsal and dorsal flex.

Vj - You can't pronate it or supinate it out or in?

Michelle: Yes. Because the whole foot was broken into small fractures. It was broke in pieces and they had to put the metal plate in.

Vj - But you still think what they (the doctors) did was the best thing to do?

Michelle: Yes. We went through treatments as far as getting experimental injections. You puncture directly at the place you want to strengthen and it's supposed to strengthen your cartilage. You do a series of like 14 shots for a week. But I didn't want to put myself through that. I did one for a couple of days then I didn't want to go through that.

Vj - It was right into the cartilage?

Michelle: Uh huh. And it was right into the bone. It was painful.

Michelle resisted the initial event by seeking the support of her mother. Furthermore, she resisted the damage to her body by participating in rehabilitation and refusing to allow her coaches to abuse her body (Burke, 2001). This resistance may not seem like much, but, according to Burke, "sport provides the

coach with almost unquestioned authority over the athlete. The coach enjoys several sources of personal power: reward power, traditional power, charismatic power, expert power, coercive power, and social power related to ages, sex, and race” (p. 229). Given the power of coaches in collegiate athletics, it would have been easier, though not healthier, for Michelle to submit to the injections and other physical demands her coaches made. Michelle’s resistances in this case show the maturation of her ability to formulate and use strategic resistance.

Also, Michelle made sure that she would have a scholarship even if she was injured. The athletic department at the NCAA Division I university she attended eventually undermined this assurance; yet she resisted in the best way she knew how. Finally, Michelle is seeking to make an impact on the lives of those who have biomechanical devices in their bodies by obtaining a graduate degree in biomechanics.

#### Commodified Bodies as Capital

Unfortunately, Michelle’s assurance that she would have a place at Gulf State even if she was injured was not fulfilled. Soon after the doctors told her that she could never return to the track, Michelle realized that she was no longer an athlete, she was a black student. Not only that, she also realized the taken-for-granted privilege colleges like Gulf State gave to athletes. According to Michelle, Gulf State was willing to go to extreme, expensive, and experimental medical measures to get her back on the field. They even proposed daily painful injections of chemicals directly into her knee and anklebones to allow her to compete:

Vj -     So they were doing this because?

Michelle:       Because I’m money. It was not really out of concern for what I wanted to do. It was out of concern for what can I do for Gulf State, what kind of money can I bring into Gulf State. At first, I did not want to believe it. At first, you know everybody was telling me how the system works. Because you had, for instance our football players. I was like, that might be how it works for the football players, but it ain’t going to be like that for the track team. They were like, ‘believe me, the athletic department runs this

school.' I was like, 'I don't believe that.' Finally, I saw it. The athletic department has all the pull over everything that works in the school because the athletic department brings in all the money. Me being a black athlete at Gulf State, a predominately-white school, started to be really really hard. Once I was no longer seen as a factor, a true asset to the track team, I was treated more as this little black athlete from Murphy.

'She really can't do nothing for us, but she getting our money.' So I was just ... that's why I left Gulf State. I left Gulf State because once they told me I couldn't do track and I told my coaches it was a big battle, a big argument at the beginning of the spring semester of 2002. Doctors and my coaches had a big battle. They were like 'we're gonna' put her back out there on the track anyway.' That's when I finally said 'no, I'm not gonna'' do it.' Because they told me if I twisted my ankle any kind of way again, my whole ankle would be shattered and we'd have to do something else. And I didn't want to go through that anymore.

Vj - How did the injury effect you?

Michelle: That was the most traumatic thing that has ever happened to me. I felt like that was the end of my world. It was like four different races at Gulf State, it was the black students, the white students, the international students, and the athletes. We were not treated like black students, white students, or international student. We were treated like athletes. 'These are our pride.' We had our own restaurant. We had two restaurants, one at the top of the stadium and one at the bottom of the stadium. We had a whole building just for the athletes. One part of the stadium was called the University Center, it was open to all students, but the rest was just open to athletes. Once I got hurt, all the athletes still considered me to be an athlete, but all the people, all the adults were like 'well, she's a black student now.'

Vj - How do you know that?

Michelle: Because they used to go out of their way to make sure that I had everything [like] books.

Michelle noticed that her change in status regarding athletics also affected her academic standing:

Michelle: They had [a tutor] come to the house. I was living in campus apartments. That's where all the athletes stayed, female athletes mainly. They just came to the apartment and tutored me. I had to finish the spring. So my teachers they worked with me really well in order to help me finish. I hate to say it, but they only worked with me because my coaches told them I was going to be effective for the track team. That's it. It was not something that they just do. If it had happened to anybody else, they'd just say 'well, we'll just drop them from class.' And so [in the fall] I attended class everyday. One day my mom called, and she's like, 'I got these letters in the mail saying you haven't been attending classes.' And I was like, 'I attend classes.' So she said, 'you need to go to the registrar's office and let them know you attend classes.' So I went to the registrar's office and they were like 'well you have to get a letter from all your teachers saying that you've been attending class.' and I was like, 'ok.' So I went and I did everything. I got a letter from all my teachers. I even got a copy of my grades so I could turn it in to the registrar's office. Then progress reports come out for the athletes. So my advisor's like, 'you have all F's.' And I was like, 'no, I don't.' I said I just got an "A" on my history paper. She said 'no, you got all F's.' So, I was like, 'ok. I'm not going to panic.' I went to my teachers ... and my parents ... my mom she keeps in touch with my teachers so she can know my progress as well. They send us progress reports home, and they send progress reports to our parents as well. So they can know the status of our grades. So my teachers had been keeping in touch with my mom. My mom was like, 'ok. You doing good. You got an "A" in this.' I wasn't flunkin' any classes. Finally, two weeks before finals, they tell me I've been dropped from all of my classes. I'm trying to figure out

what's been going on. Everything it comes down to leads back to the athletic department. Well, if I flunk all my classes and I flunk out of school, then they won't have to give me my scholarship. I had copies of all my grades once all this started happening, I kept copies of all my grades all my papers everything. Anything that had a grade, anything I could prove attendance with, I had a copy of it. My advisor was like, 'that's not gonna' mean anything.' The athletic department has their own advisors. An athlete can't be advised by anyone except the athletic department. So my advisor was like 'well, you flunked, and you don't even need to take your finals.' So I was like, 'I'm not gonna let this happen.' I went to the athletic director and I told him what was going on. And he was like, 'if she says you're not going to class and your progress reports says you have F's, then we're not protesting and you're on academic probation.' So I was like. 'Ok. I don't know what to do.' So I talked to my mom, I told her what had happened, and she was like 'well Michelle I just don't believe that's gonna happen.' She didn't believe it. I was like 'momma can I please leave this school? Something's just not right. Since I was not able to do track, my coaches don't even talk to me. They won't say a word to me.' The only people who talk to me associated with the athletic department were my trainers. Everybody else would not talk to me. So I was like, 'I can't be in a place like this, where they're trying to force me out. Let me leave before I have bad grades on my record.' So I went to summer school and they paid for summer school. I said 'I'ma try to come back.' I talked to my coaches and I said that if the doctors will let me do some more rehab [I would] try to come back.' [I] did really well ... made two A's and two B's in summer school. Then they were like 'ok.' I went out to practice the first week. My trainers came out and told me I could not be out there. The doctor did not release me through the school to be out there. My coach found out I could not be at practice, everything started going right back downhill. I just finally said at the end of that semester, 'I'm not going back.'

I'm not putting myself through this again.' I was dropped from all my classes because me and my advisor had gotten into it and she said she was going to see to it that I had F's in everyone of my classes. Because if I had w/F's on my record they would count as F's. So I went ahead and withdrew before I gave them the chance to do anything like that.

This data shows Michelle's change and maturity since the 1997 Event. Even though she was the only participant to attend a predominately-white university, she was not aware of racializing at that university until she was no longer a member of the elite *athlete* class. After Michelle realized that she was just another black student, she began to resist the efforts of the university's athletic apparatus to subjugate her.

By Michelle's own account, she realized that she was a commodity to the university. Once she was injured and the doctors determined that she could no longer return to the field, she believed the athletic department actively sought to have her dismissed from school due to academic failure. The problem for the university was that Michelle was not your average black athlete in a predominately-white university. Michelle excelled academically in high school and took her academics as seriously as she did her athletics. She also excelled in her college coursework. Even though the accident dashed Michelle's hopes for a spot in the 2004 Olympics, she chose not to render her academic success as well. Michelle resisted by confronting authorities including the university's athletic director.

After Michelle realized the school was corporately sabotaging her academic efforts, she also resisted by documenting her attendance and grades to prevent athletic department's advisor from proving that she was academically marginal. Michelle asserted her subjectivity by confronting authorities, documenting everything, and when she realized she could not be productive in that environment, she withdrew before the university could construct her as an academic problem.

#### Resistance at the HBCU

Stephanie also expressed situations when she resisted the university personnel's attempts to subjugate her. Stephanie attended an HBCU in our state on a full scholarship. She characterizes the problems she encounters thusly:



Vj      How were you treated by other students when you attended a historically black college?

Stephanie:      I guess it wasn't a problem because a lot of students were like me. I fit right in. It was never like, 'oh she's white,' or 'she acts white.' It was just, 'hey that's Stephanie.'

Vj      Have you experienced any social problems in college?

Stephanie:      Not with students, but with faculty and staff. Like at our business office from day one their mentality was, 'who is this child coming in here thinking she's gon' ask me how come I put this on her bill?' 'Cause you know that's just the way I was brought up. If you have a question, you ask. Guess they just weren't used to that. I had been having a problem with this one lady for about three years. I finally had to sit down this semester and write a letter to the director of the business office about her. He said he had been getting complaints about her, but no one had ever written a letter.

Vj      What about faculty?

Stephanie:      Some teachers don't understand students challenging them. It's like, 'ok, you gave me a "B" on this paper. But why? And I thought this was "A" work. I worked very hard on it. Can you explain why?' Some teachers really don't appreciate it.

Vj      Are these black teachers?

Stephanie:      No. different backgrounds.

Vj      Do you think students are treated differently by white teachers than they are by black teachers at your college?

Stephanie:      Yes. And not only by white teachers, but by others. They think we are lazy. Not just the white teachers, but others, other than black. They think we are lazy. They think we are looking for a handout. They don't think we are very intelligent. I'll go and I'll talk to the dean of students. I'll go and I'll talk to the dean of academic affairs.

And I'll be like, 'we do these evaluations every semester.' Teachers had been suspended because they can't teach. Enough students got together, had to involve their parents, had them suspended. They would bring them back. I don't think that would go on at a white school. If a teacher wasn't up to par, the white people wouldn't let their kids be taught by somebody who they thought wasn't trained to teach. Who may have had a degree in English, a degree in biology, a degree in whatever, but they don't know how to teach. But they're cheap. That's what I've been told. They don't have to pay top dollar for them. So it's like ultimately we're paying the price for that.

Vj      Is there any specific group of teachers who think this way?

Stephanie:      Indians. Indians and whites. That's basically what we have. We have a few whites and they're in the humanities. [The college has] one white Biology professor. His name is Dr. Simpson. He's full time. He looks out for black people when we don't look out for ourselves. I think he should be the president of the school one day. White teachers here and there in history. But it's basically black and the Indians. We have maybe six or seven Asians (other than Indians).

Stephanie also mentioned, "I'm in SGA and I'm active in some other groups." Stephanie's activity in student government, her willingness to confront authority, and her response to the different ways students are treated by faculty are her tools of resistance in the university setting.

Stephanie has not always been aware of her blackness. By her own recollection, she was not raised in Afrocentric ways. She became keenly aware of how different she was from other black children when her parents retired from the military and moved to a suburb of Murphey. While Stephanie's parent built their new home, she lived with her aunt, in the nearby small town called Chanceville. It was at the predominately-black middle school in Chanceville that Stephanie began to reckon with race issues:

Stephanie:      I went to live with my aunt Cecilia in Chanceville for a year. That was one of my favorite school years. My aunt loved me, but she hadn't had children in her

house for a while. You know she had grandkids. They were young. [She's] my mother's sister. I'm the only one on either side my age so when I did [move in with my aunt] it was different. I was not used to her rules. I'm not gon' say I disrespected her, but it was a big transition just living with her and goin' to school. I enjoyed it, though. My parents were in Buttesboro getting everything ready to move into the house in Taylor. They came like maybe halfway through the school year and we all lived in her house from the end of my seventh grade [year] to the beginning of my eighth grade year. Two or three weeks into my eighth grade year, we actually moved into the house.

Stephanie: I went to Chanceville Middle School. It was a very different experience.

Vj How was it different?

Stephanie: I guess race wasn't an issue [at her prior schools]. Everybody was everybody. I guess it really didn't matter. Seventh grade at Chanceville Middle was my first time being around 98 percent black students. and teachers. I was in culture shock. I was excited to be honest. I was excited and a little ... I did feel a little scared. It was different going into a different situation.

Vj Did you feel accepted?

Stephanie: No, not at first. The moment I opened my mouth they laughed at me. They called me 'white girl.' I didn't know how to change it. So I guess, survival of the fittest, you adapt. Seventh grade year was a true learning experience for me. I had never had knowledge that I was in the classroom with people who couldn't read or write. I was so ... I'm not gon' say dumb ... but I was so naïve. There was a guy, Roderick. He used to ask me to cheat off my paper. 'Course I used to be one of the smartest students in the class. I wanted him to be my friend, you know. I would always ask him, 'why don't you do your own work? Why don't you read the paragraph and do your own work?'

Everybody told me he couldn't read. But he didn't say anything. At the end of the year, I

found out he was in different classes because he couldn't read or write. He was the cutest boy. All the girls loved him. He was a very very handsome young man. It was a lot of things goin' on, things I'd never experienced. Nothing could have prepared me for that. They were like, 'say something.' I say like, 'hello.' They go like, 'say a curse word.' and I'd be like, 'for what?' They'd be like 'you just sound so funny.' They told me I was too proper. Cause they'd say, instead of saying 'potato chips,' ... they'd say, 'it's not potato chips, its 'tayta chips.' Cause that was their whole thing.

Aloujah Tore was a young African boy who was in Stephanie's elementary school class in Germany. Stephanie recalls othering Aloujah because he was different from the other classmates even though their mostly military-dependent class was multicultural and multiethnic:

Stephanie: As a matter of fact, Ms. Jones, there was a boy named Aloujua and he was African in the third grade. Ms. Fincher's class. I still remember it. And he was dark-dark-black dark. He had a very thick accent. He didn't dress the way we dressed. Even his clothes were kind of dated, so to speak. He was very smart, but he wasn't *it*. And this was a class [where] we had Oriental, Asian people. One guy was Korean. One girl ... I can't remember her name ... she was from the Philippines. We had black people, white people, a couple of Europeans. They actually had people come in and teach us German ... Deutsch. We had an array of people. We used to light into that boy. We used to dog him out. I thought about it a couple of years later. And I was like, 'Lord, please forgive me.' He was just too different and we would make fun of how dark he was, his accent. 'You look funny, you talk funny, you walk funny.' No matter what he did, he could never be good enough. I remember one time we used to have a little dance after school. You had to pay three dollars or something to get in. My mother let me stay. We in the classroom after school. We were just waiting on the party, helping the teacher out. He was like, 'are you going to the party?' I was like, 'yes.' [Aloujua said], 'well, can I dance

with you?’ I was like, ‘yes, you can dance with me.’ Everybody was like, ‘oh, no. She’s gon’ dance with him.’ I thought, ‘I can’t dance with him, cause everybody’s gon’ think I’m crazy now.’ So we got to the dance, and he wanted to dance. I pushed him into the bleachers and walked off. In Chanceville, I became Aloujah Tore. It was just like the roles were reversed. I was on the other end. I wasn’t part of the majority and people looked at me like I was crazy. They picked fun at me. I guess it was like, it was kinda’ like a love-hate relationship. But like I said, I learned a lot of things there. The shoe was definitely on the other foot.

Stephanie demonstrates many changes in her subjectivity through these passages. First, she realized that her military schooling did not prepare her for emersion into an all-black environment. She also sees how different ethnicities are othered by Americans in an environment where we are the majority. In this vignette, the African boy became the other, while the other children, even the black ones, were normalized. Astutely, Stephanie sees the similarity between the way she and the other children treat Aloujah and the way she has been raced in her own life. One of the effects of other racializing events since elementary school is that it sensitized Stephanie to marginalization. Another is that she regretted past events when she participated in these types of events. Even though Stephanie was othered by the students in both middle schools, she realized the joys of black community. When she speaks of “tayta chips,” the joy and fun in her voice resonates. She indicates that most of the comments she received at Chanceville were in love.

During one of my follow-up interviews with Stephanie, I remembered that she had traveled to South Africa the summer after her junior year in college to teach civics to a group of children. I asked Stephanie if she remembered the African boy from her third grade class when she went there. Stephanie said that although she did not remember Aloujua when she went to South Africa, it “reminded [her] of the seventh grade.” The reason it reminded her of the seventh grade was that although she, “looked like everybody else there, when [she] opened [her] mouth everybody knew [she] was different.” Stephanie

said that she wanted to go back to South Africa because when she was there, she was aware that she was in the Motherland and she connected with the natural environment of the land.

Another major event during Stephanie's travels to South Africa was her visit to Robbin Island, where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for many years:

Stephanie: We were given the tour by the [former] prisoners. I thought, 'man, I actually have the privilege of going as a free person where Nelson Mandela spent his life.' The prisoners told us how they had treated them. Their food was rationed, and they were only allowed meat once a week. They punished them by decreasing their rations. They had to use the bathroom in a kind of bucket. The guy said it was hot in the cells and the guards wouldn't let them empty their buckets. I was thankful that I never had to go to jail.

#### Digressive History: Resistance Is Buying a Gun

I am sad to say that the assessments of the postmoderns was true in one way that I wish it weren't. Postmodernism posits a history that is not always progressive (1996). Although the evidence provided by these participants proves this theory to be false for the most part, one key issue absolutely proves it truth.

One of my participants resisted the effects of the events by buying a gun. As we speak together of this issue the participant is nonplussed by my arguments about the likelihood of the owner shooting themselves or some innocent person. The owner provides this rationalization for the decision:

Vj - Were you exposed to gangs when you were in school?

Participant: Yeah. But they never really had guns.

Vj - Had you ever shot a gun?

Participant: Yeah. It was in the ninth grade the first time I shot a gun.

Vj: Tell me what the circumstances were.

Participant: Judah [participant's parent] used to leave his gun in the top of the closet. I never knew it was up there. [One of the participant's siblings] used to always get it and play with it. But we didn't never know where he got it from. It'd be me and my cousin and we'd be running from him. He finally told me where it was (located) one time. He'd just come in the room with a gun and we'd take off running. And so he told me one day. So I just went in there. I just felt like shooting it. I just went outside.

Vj - What type of gun was it?

Participant: It was a Glock 40.

Vj - No! A handgun? O lord Jesus have mercy!

Participant: Then Nick heard me shooting and he came up there with his gun. He had a little 25. And we started shooting. So that was my first time shooting. It was warm outside. It was either fall or spring. I'd say it was before (the Event)

Vj - So how did it feel shooting a gun?

Participant: Scared me.

Vj - Because it kicks?

Participant: Yeah. I didn't expect it to do that. I kinda' held it sideways you know. Real cool.. I almost hit myself in the face. Couldn't hear out one ear. I said, 'let me put this thing up.'

Vj - So it was loaded?

Participant: No it wasn't loaded.

Vj - How did you figure out how to load it?

Participant: *From TV*. You just pop it in.

Vj - So you have never handled a gun in your life. You loaded a Glock, and then you fired it.

Participant: I had kinda' *just played with it* a few times before. Before I just put the clip in. It just kind of led up to me shooting it.

Vj - So that was the only time you shot a gun.

Participant: That was the first time. A few months ago, I had just bought a pistol. I had to make sure it worked. I figured I need one. It's a 380 and we just went to the park. Me, Travis, and Shauna was shooting it. It was really loud. And me and Travis took it to the woods and we just unloaded it and *I ain't afraid of it anymore*.

Vj - So you bought a gun after this last incident ostensibly to protect yourself. But if you have to have a gun is that the kind of place you should be?

Participant: Everyplace you go you gotta have a gun.

Vj - Why?

Participant: 'Cause people crazy. I wouldn't think I'd have to have a gun at no hotel standing out by the pool, but ... road rage. Kill a lot of people every day. Need one in the car. Need one at home.

Vj - Why do I need one at home?

Participant: Somebody try to come in and get you.

Vj - The chance that I might shoot someone accidentally outweighs the benefits.

Vj - How has your attitude about guns and about violence in general changed since 1997?

Participant: It can happen to anybody. That's the way I feel now. Everybody needs protection. *Either they need to get guns off the street or everybody need to have one*. I don't think there should be an age limit. I'm out living on my own. I don't think you should be able to tell me I can't have a gun. They can shoot me, can't they?



## Conclusion

As the reader sees, the events, effects, and responses of participants is a varied as the participants' personalities. The 1997 shooting Event was analyzed as microevents in order to deconstruct the guard's role, the students' resistance, the role of the elders, and the collective Africanist spirit of the students. Also, the students' perceived attitudes towards white people were quite varied. In their analysis of white people some learned to forgive, while one learned to objectify. Students also captured events in their subjective lives that they felt affected their subjectivities. These events range from sports injuries, immersion in an all-black learning environment, conflicts with parents, to being shot. In each instance a visible effect and resistances to these effects is apparent. Finally, the suggestion of poststructuralists that history is not always progressive is supported by the fact that some of the resistances participants used were not constructive.

## Chapter 5

*Sesa Woruban*<sup>11</sup>

## Revisiting the Quest(ions)

The journey never ends. In the beginning of this attempt to document and analyze the effective histories of these three young people, I knew that I could not capture all that there is that informed their subjectivities (or mine). Consequently, I found a tool that captured some of those elements while employing forms of analysis that are developing and to which I had no precursor. In other words, researchers have documented the ways Eurocentric discourse works in peoples lived experiences. They have also discussed how Africanist epistemology and discourse works. Yet, I have found no postmodern research studies that employ effective history and examine how Africanist and Eurocentric discourses and epistemologies work in the lives or participants.

The Vision of this Work

I envisioned what had only been described theoretically, yet had never been executed qualitatively. This envisioning began as I formulated the problem and research questions. In the problem I said that I would conduct an interview study that analyzed the effective histories of three young adults and me, their former teacher, who were involved in a racialized shooting event that occurred in November 1997. Again, not having a template to formulate questions that indicate employment of effective history, I used poststructuralism and postmodernism with their focus on the decentered subject, discourses as forms of power, and the disavowal of grand narratives to formulate interrogatives. These interrogatives circulate around three elements that I wished to investigate. One of these interrogatives assumed that the shooting was an event in the effective histories of these young people based on my impressionistic experiences with them during and after the 1997 Event. Another interrogative assumed that other events

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<sup>11</sup> *Sesa Woruban* is an Andinkra term that literally translates, “I change or transform my life.” It is synonymous with transformation, which I believe is the process describing my participants’ journey.

had occurred in their lives prior to and after the 1997 Event, and that they resisted, capitulated, or found some middle ground in order to negotiate efforts the participants perceived as subjugating. The final question interrogates the discourses these participants employed to resist the potential for subjugation. As I stated earlier, we use a plethora of discourses in our lives, but since we are Africanist and Americans, I assumed that the most utilized discourse would be Africanist and Eurocentric.

After forming interrogatives I realized that I had to design a template for discourses that I could use to theorize the ways these participants resisted as well as the discourses I used as a teacher and mentor to help them navigate the Event as well as other events in their lives. Discourses are formed at the nexus of history, culture, power, perceptions, experience, and the many apparatuses that circulate around us. Trying to name these discourses is a necessarily reductive and sometimes totalizing process that belies the postmodern critique. Nevertheless, I attempted to do it while troubling it by using the Africanist and Eurocentric discourses as my tools for analysis.

The problem with using these discourses as tools of analysis is that readers might perceive them as oppositional, exclusive, or all encompassing. In other words, I needed to forefront the fact that in the discursive circles in which my participants and I work, Africanist and Eurocentric discourses are hybridized at the most intricate levels of our lived experiences.

As I revisited my review of these two discourses/epistemologies, the data stories, and my analyses, I realized the problems in my analysis due to several exigencies. First, my participants and I use many other discourses as resistances in our lives. These include the discourses of academia, family, hip-hop and college culture, collegiate athletics, military, and black high schools. There is also a discourse unique to the quiz bowl circuit, to each unique college campus for students, to doctoral students, and specifically to the black doctoral students in education at my university. There are discourses unique to black people operating in predominately white circles that may be different from that employed by non-black students in the same environment; discourses unique to football players that is specific and not a part of the overall athletic discourse, and discourses unique to middle class black students in a

predominately black educational environment. These discourses and others and how they are used as forms of resistance require study beyond the scope of this dissertation.

### Africanist Epistemology and Eurocentric Discourse as Resistance

In Chapter 2, I examined what discourse is and how it leads to ideology. I then discussed what Africanist and Eurocentric discourses do. In my analysis of Africanist epistemology and discourse I critiqued the tenets of Negritude and the characterization of Africanist philosophy as “ethnophilosophy”. I explained how these characterizations bracketed philosophy produced by Africans on the continent and throughout the Diaspora while they privileged European philosophy.

I then examined Africanist epistemology as elaborated in the theories of Diop (1989), Mbiti (1990), Anderson (1995), Hudson-Weems (1995), Asante (1998), Collins (2000), Dillard (2000), Gordon (2000), and others. I highlighted spirituality because the theorists I mentioned above foreground this element of Africanist community. I also discussed kinship in general and matriarchy in particular as early Africans practiced them and theorized possible carryovers into Africanist communities today. I connected Africanist epistemology and kinship practices to the relationship among my participants by highlighting Mbiti’s assertion that once a person enters an Africanist community lines of relation are determined. Once the relationship is determined, this person always remains a member of the community either by biological or adopted kinship. Likewise, Africanist perspectives on kinship focus as much on informal functions of community members as they do on strict biological relationships. Consequently, Mbiti explains how one has many mothers, father, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Mbiti also explains how those who have left the flesh as well as the unborn are important members in the Africanist community.

The final aspect of Africanist community that I discussed is the interdependency of community members. I highlighted the saliency of this feature in the way these participants negotiated the 1997 shooting Event. According to Mbiti, there is no individual existence without a corporate existence. In other words, in Africanist epistemology “I am because we are.”

After elaborating tenets of Africanist epistemology and discourses, I employed effective history to examine how Eurocentric discourses enable racing and the discourse of race. I used Foucault and Spivak's discussions of the ways race was discursively constructed from the Enlightenment through the current period. Conterminously, I also discussed Spivak's critique of the ways in which rationalists like Descartes, Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche promoted Eurocentric discourses based on the primacy of race, the casting of others as "barbarians," and her analysis of how the Other must use the discourse of the colonizer in order to critique these apparatuses. Finally, I incorporated Victor Anderson's (1995) analysis of the way African-Americans enabled Eurocentric discourse through what he calls *Ontological Blackness*. I examined Anderson's proposal that we move from the use of ontological blackness to what he calls "postmodern blackness." According to Anderson, postmodern blackness, "recognizes that black identities are continually being reconstituted as African-Americans (and I would add others of the Diaspora and the African continent) inhabit widely differentiated social spaces and communities of moral discourse" (p. 11). Anderson and bell hooks capture the ways in which I have striven to represent my participants.

#### Documenting Postmodern Blackness

Following the literature review in Chapter 2, I explained how I actualized effective history methodologically. In this space, I also discussed several types of data and how I used them in this study. I first discussed reflexive ethnography and its focus on culture and the use of cultural knowledge to look at self-other interactions within the study. I then trouble the idea of interviews

#### Justifying Africanist Ways

As I have presented this study to members of my committee, other colleagues, and scholars, I realized that we had an intersubjective gap between how I perceived my employment of Africanist discourse and their perceptions of this analysis. In other words, many scholars have critiqued my analysis when it couches participants' actions as Africanists, because they believe these attributes are common to people in general, to young people specifically, or to southerners.

When I received this feedback, I first felt the need to defend the actions and discourses I highlight as Africanist ways. My response rested on the citations of those who are experts in the field of African-American and African cultural studies. My second reaction was that in posing these two types of discourses (Africanist and Eurocentric) I automatically precipitated an adversarial position that posited the lack of uniqueness of what I call Africanist discourses in my analysis. My response to this critique was that Africanisms need not be unique to Africanist people, they simply have to be present within Africanist discourse. Again, both the consumer of this research and I must remember that within the postmodern critique we are not primarily concerned with singular origins. Finally, I realized that this may not necessarily indicate a problem with my analysis and theorizing; instead, it may speak to assumptions we carry into the reading these data stories.

Speaking as the Other I understood how so-called “mainstream” consumers of qualitative research might recoil from my analysis. I believed that some liberal Americans of all ethnicities, especially those of us who are cognizant of how America was under racial Apartheid prior to the Civil Rights movement, sincerely want all Americans to seem more alike than we are different. Consequently, we have had trouble with difference and sameness when it involved those who we have sincerely striven to think of as just like us. Likewise, if one thinks that difference inherently implied center/margin or hierarchy, my suggestion of difference might make one uncomfortable.

The reality is that none of us is really just like others, even others within our same subject-position. I am not like my participants, and they are not like each other. Stephanie comes from a military background that positioned her to think of all American students as being the same. Yet, when her parents retired and returned to the segregated South, she discovered that this assumption did not work in the exclusive black environment of the middle and high schools she attended. She discovered that she had to learn to say “tayta chips” in order to obtain the inclusion she so desperately sought.

I can compare Stephanie’s resistance through learning the Africanist discourse of the southern predominately African-American schools to my movement from a military environment to the black high

school. The difference between Stephanie's response to this change and mine are manifold. First, because of power dynamics, I did not perceive a strong mandate to re-assimilate after my return to the South. Therefore, I had the privilege of choosing whether to re-embrace southern Africanist discourse. Secondly, my mastery of the dominant discourse was an asset because my peers, superiors, and students expected me to have mastery of it and to use in my daily endeavors as a literacy instructor. Finally, my intentional choice to use southern Africanist discourse has hindered me on many occasions, while it has empowered Stephanie.

Also, as I state in Chapter 3, my failure to recognize what Eurocentric discourse, specifically what I call the discourse of white supremacy, did to these young people when they were in crisis shows how educators can unwittingly damage students through their words and attitudes. On the other hand, when I moved from the all-black high school that my participants attended to a majority-white suburban school, students, peers, and superiors often dismissed me because of my unabashed use of Africanist discourse and my introduction of my Africanist perspectives into our studies.

#### The Quest(ion) for Effective History

As stated earlier, effective history provided me with an innovative method to examine my participants' subjectivities while not circulating their lives around their race. My quest was to show how race is a verb, an act that does things to people, not a state of being. *One does not have a race, one is raced.* Participants demonstrate this in their accounts of the 1997 shooting Event. Specifically, when I asked them if they thought that the guard shot at them because they were black, both Stephanie and Michelle explicitly state that they did not think about it until someone else suggested it hours after the shooting.

The use of effective history in this quest has allowed my participants and me to identify how they analyzed other events in their lives in terms of being raced. Stephanie, in particular, also identifies events in which other African-Americans raced her when she entered the all-black school environment. Effective history also showed other events in their lives which they resisted including conflicts

surrounding collegiate athletics, college academics, clash with parents, and the ubiquitous “black-on-black” crime. Finally, this types of analysis revealed how the lives of these participants did not always circulate around race, but once they became aware of being raced, they were more sensitive to the way race operated during subsequent events in their lives as well as in events prior to the 1997 shooting.

#### Reflexive *Bricolage*, Quilt-making, Gossip, and Other Sources of Data

After reflecting on the application of effective history as methodology, I examined the types of data I use in this study. First, I posed three figurations that I believe fitted this interview study: the *bricoleur*, the quilt-maker , and the gardener. I reflected on ways in which *bricoleurs* and quilt-makers used similar tools as well as how those tools fitted the collection of data. I then discussed Kvale’s silhouettes and the vase he used to describe the interlocutors and the intersubjective space of the interview. Finally, I compared interviewing to two people gardening, harvesting, and creating food from that harvest.

I also discussed reflective ethnography and how it meets the needs of insider researchers by allowing them to use their knowledge of the culture to turn back on the interview process and reflect on self-other interactions. Following the analysis of the intersubjective nature of the interview, I discussed how the product of the interview produces new knowledge in a new space, data that I call “intra-views” because they are within the intersubjective space where the interlocutors’ exchange occurs. I explained why I also used gossip data as explored in Chapter 3 and exemplified in Chapter 4. Additionally, I revisited the “testimonio” and critiqued its useful and inappropriate aspects with regards to postmodern qualitative research.

I provided an extensive analysis of my conscious effort to conduct a *Decolonizing Methodology* (Smith, 2002) by being aware of Spivak’s warning against the colonial tendency to write the world of our participants around ourselves. With these goals in mind, I addressed issues of sample selection criteria, specific areas of participants’ lives that I felt were either inappropriate to explore or inconsequential to this study. I explained why two of the young adults present during the 1997 shooting were not included



in this study, and why I felt that seeking to interview the guard was not within the parameters of this study.

I described the way that I see the panopticon operating in the Event and other events in the lives of the participants as well as how I as their teacher and coach often placed the gaze on them when they participated in academic competition. I discussed the research, specifically legal issues that were resolved, sample selection criteria, and obtaining consent from participants and their families. I troubled and introduced sites, both psychic and physical. The physical sites included the town of Murphey, Murphey East High School, Brownsboro (where the 1997 shooting occurred), Sandpiper (city where Carolyn resides), and Yargary (my home where most of the interviews were conducted). Psychic sites included the athletic field, the classroom, and the college campus in general. Within the research schedule, I also explained the 2003 incident during which Amari was shot twice and how this event was pivotal in my decision to conduct this study.

Chapter 3 ends with a discussion of the interview Dr. Tarek Grantham conducted to help me work through my own subjectivity prior to beginning the interviews with the participants. I focused primarily on issues Dr. Grantham cited as emergent during this interview including my privileging of the male students in my discourse, the possibility of discussing the lawsuit during this study, and my guilt about not discussing the 1997 shooting with the participants before this point.

In Chapter 4, I provided participants' impressionistic accounts of events they see as significant. These included the 1997 shooting event, Stephanie's move from military schools to all-black schools in the south. Michelle highlighted her sports injury and the way the university treated her differently once she determined that she was no longer an asset on the track field. Amari identified the clash with his mother when he resisted moving to Sandpiper and the 2003 shooting during which he was shot twice. I highlighted effects and resistances in each of these instances, and culminated this study with the account one of my participants provided as to what they decided to purchase a handgun.

### Areas for Further Study

This study has taken my participants and me on a rhizomatic journey . Their agreement to give of their memories was what Friere calls “an act of love” (p. 50). We have laughed and cried together and lone as we revisited some of the most painful events of our pasts. We journeyed through canals that continually took us to new places, and we revisited ruptures in our lives, ruptures that were the sites of new beginnings borne of the struggles to resist and emerge. As we emerged from one event and began its deconstruction, new sites of struggle erupted along with that emergence. These sites suggested areas that required further study.

The first issue that I believe deserves further study is how Eurocentric, Africanist, and other discourses impact our lived existences. We should ask questions like: “What are the discourses of Mexican-Americans, Puerto Rican, Native American, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Hawaiian, Cuban, Haitian, Jamaican, and other ethnic/cultural groups, and how do these discourses effect the way those groups negotiate this land and these people;” “How do we negotiate discourses so that we communicate without assimilating;” and, “What are our everyday habits, especially within the education, that Other people.”

I stress these questions because my participants detail ways in which they are othered even within the environment of the HBCU as well as in majority-white institutions. I also ask it because I am the product of years of white education. In those years, professors and other students have asked or said things that were not only insensitive, but which I know they would never consider saying to a white student. Participants generalized that white professors and other university personnel consider them lazy, dumb, and “looking for a handout.” As I enter academia, I need to believe that most of these insensitive comments come from the ignorance of the speaker, not their racist agenda or insensitivity to those who are different.

I do not know exactly what my participants’ professors and instructors said to them that caused them to feel that they were not being treated fairly, but I do know what has been said to me. Since I am a

middle-aged woman with some education, I assume that those in authority would take greater liberty with younger students than they would with someone like me. We need to practice *parrhesia* in this regard.

All of us need to police our prejudices. Perhaps if we studied this area more, those of us who make statements and do things that are oppressive would receive a kind reminder before a student resist through rage because of our insensitive behavior.

### Athletics

Although black athletes generate millions of dollars in Division 1 universities, they continue to be objectified in terms of their abilities and not respected as legitimate scholars. This area deserves further study, especially as it links academic success with perceived images of black athletes. According to Harry Edwards (2000), “the dynamics of black sports involvement, and the blind faith of black youths and their families in sport as a prime vehicle of self-realization and social-economic advancement, have combined to generate a complex of critical problems for black society” (p. 9). Perhaps more qualitative study into the role of the family, the school, and athletic staff members in decisions and success of black youth in colleges would highlight resistances communities and families should use to prevent a situation like the one Michelle described from occurring.

Similarly, Michelle’s interview suggests ethical questions regarding the abuse of authority vested in athletic personnel. At one point, this participant would probably have reentered the discus arena and probably permanently debilitated her ankle had it not been for the doctor’s intervention. Even a seemingly full-proof scholarship package and stellar academic performance were unable to keep Michelle from being ostracized and targeted for academic failure in the Division 1 school she attended.

The last issue that I believe deserves study is the possession and use of firearms by young adults. Although this area is documented extensively in popular media, few studies show the link between the exposure to firearms as a child and the use of them as adults. In addition, few studies explore the effects of firearms in vehicles, having one in the home, or carrying a sidearm and the whether these types of firearm employments protect the owner from violence. When the participant described in Chapter 4 told

me about purchasing a firearm, I instinctively knew it was a mistake, but I had no data to support my theory. The only data I had was my life and the fact that my spouse and I have been married for over 20 years; we have never owned a firearm; and we have never been subjected to violence in which the use of deadly force would have been appropriate.

The perception of firearms as easily deployed and effective in crime prevention and the reality of this belief needs to be examined. Likewise, the role of media, video games, and other elements of our culture in perpetrating an armed generation needs study.

#### Transformation through the Journey

My nomads are “getting through,” they are “getting the victory back.” They are transforming their lives through ethical existence and, by doing better when they know better. These young adults have endured racialized violence; severe physical pain; challenges to their confidence ; black-on-black violence; and other events that could have launched them into self-hate and nihilism. Even though I critique the resistance of one of the participants because his reason is couched in rationalist thinking, he continues to strive, to learn, and to grow from the lessons of the past. The fact that when he was shot during a fraternity party and, in the confusion of those moments acted as a heroic subject, attest to this fact.

These participants have also learned resistance. They are sophisticated in using documentation, confrontation, political involvement, and community to resist subjugation. In the first instance, the Event, the participants initially choose to keep secrets, thereby disallowing their elders to fight for them. Later as college students, they learn to enlist the help of elders and other members of the community to help them fight subjugation.

Often the researcher finishes studies like this one with a feeling of utter doom. Often when one conducts research, especially qualitative research, about crises in people’s lives, one leaves the participants feeling as if nothing has been accomplished except the notch that researcher obtains by

gaining entrée into a place where she observes the secret shames of people's lives. Often, the researcher is unable to make a difference because the crisis is simply overwhelming.

Although I am not leaving this study or these participants, I am pleased that I could demonstrate the tiny acts of resistance that pervert the potentialities of life crises. Our job as researchers in the human sciences is not finished as far as my subjects and those highlighted in this study are concerned.

#### Point of Departure

This is not an ending; it is a point of departure along this discursive, rhizomatic journey. In Chapter 1, I begged the readers' patience as my participants and I traveled. As I stated this journey would cut knowledge and discourses. As we continued the journey, we first cut Afrocentric discourse and its accompanying spiritual and communal practices. We then cut Eurocentric discourse and its offspring, white supremacy. In Chapter 2, I suggested that discourses cause ideology; and that this ideology translates into action. I demonstrated the veracity of my argument as I deconstructed Eurocentric discourse as it related to actions on the part of the guards, the students, and me. Likewise, Afrocentric discourse envelopes us like Grandma's blanket, providing a schema for survival of crises. During crises, we resort to communal survival as the students did during the shooting, and as Amari did when he was shot at the fraternity party. Afrocentric discourse as members of my participants' community practice it provides a spiritual bridge between the Motherland and us.

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