

Women and Migration

Responses in Art and History



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Cover image: Sama Alshaibi, *Sabkhat al-Milḥ* (Salt Flats) 2014, from the '*Silsila*' series, Chromogenic print mounted on Diasac, 47" diameter. © Sama Alshaibi and Ayyam Gallery. Cover design: Anna Gatti.

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discourses.²³ The recuperation of the term 'Black' as Hall outlines, was an attempt to establish a cultural politics that indicated a shift in the way former colonial subjects were represented in music, fashion, literature, visual arts and cinema. Hall focused on cinematic manifestations of the Black image in Britain in the 1980s, which transgressed the old mimetic conflict over the rights of authorship to produce more agnostic images that opened up a space to critique 'the essentially good Black subject.'²⁴

Hall's commentary on cinema helps us think about the historical position of the Black image in film (such as in *Imitation of Life*), as well as the potential for cinema as a site for new representations. Hall emphasizes that Blacks in Hollywood cinema had typically been objects in the space of cinema, but rarely subjects. 'The struggle to come into representation' as Hall asserts, was primarily grounded in a critique of 'the degree of fetishization, objectification and negative figuration, which are so much a feature of the representation of the Black subject.'²⁵ This was a concern that went beyond the absence or marginality of the Black experience in cinema to specific contestation with its simplification and stereotypical character.

Hall wrote that the cultural politics that developed around the critique of Black representation in cinema had two principle objects:

First, the question of access to the rights to representation by Black artists and Black cultural workers. Second, the contestation of the marginality, the stereotypical quality and the fetishized nature of images of blacks, by the counter-position of a 'positive' black imagery. These strategies were principally addressed to changing what I would call the 'relations of representation'.²⁶

These 'relations', Hall argues, are grounded in a mimetic theory, and are unproblematic because they do not challenge the basic structure of knowledge by which the idea of the 'Black' came into being — keeping it a rather static form of representation. The 'positive' character of the mimetic Black image is unproductive because the moralist approach also limits the discursive capacity of the subject. Simple transference of the image from 'bad' to 'good' still works to conceal the unstable grounds

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid., p. 444.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

by which racial categorization was built. For Hall, cultural politics had to get beyond the moralist approach in order to confront the complexity of subjectivities (many of which are held in conflict) within a particular racial group. He identifies this field of complexity within representation as the discursive sphere. It was a new phase in cultural politics that was no longer mimetic. The discursive emphasized how the processes of representation were constructed within meaning, and as such opened the space for a kind of othering (what I call productive) that embraced difference rather than rejected it.

The Tertiary Experience

Within the British context, the discursive aspect of the politics of representation marked the end of the essential (or mimetic) Black subject. Hall writes:

The question of the Black subject cannot be represented without reference to the dimensions of class, gender, sexuality and ethnicity.²⁷

This is precisely the question Wong addresses in his remix, *Life of Imitation*. The video challenges the cinematic legacy of the essential subject as it pertains to race and gender. You will recall that he explodes the image of the Black subject and the oriental by inserting into the scene men dressed as women who represent the three main ethnic groups in Singapore. The dimension of class as it intersects with gender is readymade within the narrative, so Wong does not need to alter the scenario of the live-in domestic, and her daughter who seeks to gain fame, independence and a new identity as a dancer in the entertainment industry.

We can use Hall's remarks to better understand the politics of representation at play in the final scene between mother and daughter in *Imitation of Life*. The original script, which Wong's actors recite, was indicative of the mimetic phase of representation. It was the archetypical Black/white dichotomy in which the individual performs the image-type that precedes her. The mother, Annie, does this with great success as the maid of soon-to-be wealthy Lora. Sarah Jane, on the other hand rejects her prescribed Blackness mainly thanks to her lighter skin color,

²⁷ Ibid., p. 444.

which allows her passage into a white identity. This is not a welcome transition however, within the mimetic phase of representation in which the politics of race are deeply entrenched and racial categories are strictly upheld in spite of corporeal ambiguity.

The audience of *Imitation of Life* witness Sarah Jane's fleeting desire, but are unable to sympathize with her conflict. She is scripted as the antagonist — the villainous ingrate who is unable to return the affections of her Black mother and is envious of the white family who sheltered her. The original script did not problematize race, the conditions that gave rise to the event of racial passing, or the ill-fated social effects of the broken home. Instead, it reinscribed racial categories by portraying the antagonist as a failed anti-heroine — unsuccessful at every attempt she makes toward her goal. Hall goes on:

Just as masculinity always constructs femininity as double [...] so racism constructs the Black subject: noble savage and violent avenger. And in the doubling, fear and desire double for one another and play across the structures of otherness.²⁸

In the above passage Hall points us to a site of critical intervention in the process of *othering*. The double becomes a motif to be exploited, challenged and pulled asunder — not in the affirmation of the status quo, but in the generation of multiples that unveil the instability of the essential image. Wong complicates the recitation of the original script by doubling the screens in his installation. The two monitors play simultaneously, one version in English with Malay subtitles and the other in Malay with English subtitles. The sound echoes from the two-channel video installation as double, and mother and daughter are doubled by the actors switching between roles on both screens. The discursive politics of representation in Wong's video mesh the questions of racism inextricably with questions of gender. As a cinematic remake it includes the narrative of race, but it is also, and most distinctively, intermixed with the dimensions of class, ethnicity and gender that are inseparable from cinematic representation of the Black subject.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 445.

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PART SEVEN

THE WORLD IS OURS, TOO

31. The Roots of Black American Women's Internationalism: Migrations of the Spirit and the Heart

Francille Rusan Wilson

Black American women's intentional travels began in the late eighteenth century as migrants fleeing slavery and racism in the US, alone or with their families, escaping in visible numbers to Canada, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Trinidad and Mexico. Information from and about these woman migrants, fugitives and travelers circulated through letters, newspaper articles and petitions to Congress but some women emigrants returned to the United States to tell their stories. In one such case, Eliza Bowers (1824–1878) returned to Baltimore from Trinidad in the mid 1840s having moved there — in her words she was 'deported to Trinidad'¹ — with other free Black families as a youngster at the start of the third significant migration of Black Americans to the island. Back

1 Nathan Francis Mossell, unpublished autobiography, 1–2 in the University of Pennsylvania Archives, http://www.archives.upenn.edu/primdocs/upf/upf1_9ar/mossell_nf/mossell_nf_autobio.pdf. Nathan Mossell wrote that his mother told them 'exciting stories of her deportation, when a child [...] about 1838'; it is more likely that her family was part of several hundred free Black people from Baltimore who voluntarily emigrated to Trinidad from 1839–1841. See Christopher Phillips, *Freedom's Port: The African American Community of Baltimore 1790–1860* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), pp. 215–21.

in Baltimore, Eliza married Aaron Mossell, a free Black brick maker, and began a family. But as the political situation for free people of color deteriorated, the family of four fled Maryland moving first to Hamilton, Ontario in 1853 and later returning to the US as a family of eight after the Civil War, settling in upstate New York.



Fig. 31.1 The Mossell family, group portrait, ca. 1875. Photographer unknown. Eliza Bowers Mossell, 3rd from right; Aaron Mossell Jr. (Sadie's father) standing 2nd from right. University Archives and Records Center, University of Pennsylvania.

One hundred years after Eliza's return to Baltimore, her granddaughter, Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander (1898–1989) supported petitions to the newly formed United Nations for safeguarding the rights of Black Americans, and launched her own campaign to persuade the US to ratify UN conventions on genocide, forced labor, and the political rights of women and children. Was Sadie Alexander influenced by stories of her grandmother Eliza's relentless quest for freedom? How did Black American women develop a commitment to international human rights and forge links with women activists, especially other 'women of the darker races' across time and class?



Fig. 31.2 Sadie T. M. Alexander (1898–1989), ca. 1948. Portrait photograph by Wilson G. Marshall. University Archives and Records Center, University of Pennsylvania.

Black American women were an active part of a centuries-long circulation of ideas concerning human rights causes and concerns, serving as speakers, travelers, missionaries, and migrants. Historians Robert Harris and Robin Kelley remind us that Black peoples on both sides of the Atlantic became interested in the possibilities and penalties of international law, foreign policy and the status of other peoples of color as a result of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the Haitian revolution, abolitionist and emancipation movements in the Caribbean and South America. The scramble for Africa, the question of emigration to Liberia and Sierra Leone, and the racial dimension of the Spanish American War were frequent topics in the Black press, pulpits, and among political organizations.² A small cadre of Black American women were

2 Robert L. Harris, Jr., 'Racial Equality and the United Nations Charter', in Armstead L. Robinson and Patricia Sullivan (eds.), *New Directions in Civil Rights Studies* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), pp. 126–48; Robin Kelley,

also international travelers as representatives of religious bodies and women's clubs.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME, f. 1816) offered gendered positions of authority and international contacts for women. After the end of slavery African Methodists established district offices, schools, missions, and congregations in west and southern Africa and the Caribbean. Women were in charge of the AME's foreign missionary societies and raised funds to send missionaries and build schools abroad. By the 1880s AME women had established missions in Haiti, San Domingo, Trinidad, St. Thomas, and Sierra Leone, providing a constant flow of information about economic and political conditions in the Caribbean and Africa to churchwomen throughout the United States. In 1888 Fannie Jackson Coppin (1837–1913), president of the Women's Home and Foreign Missionary Society, was the denomination's delegate to the Centenary Conference of Protestant Missions held in London. Coppin was a former slave, school principal, and, as a graduate of Oberlin College, one of the most educated women of any color in the United States. Her address to the section on Women's Missions to Women focused on women's rights and she admonished men for failing to realize that there was not a shred of scriptural basis for denying women an active role in church matters.³ In 1900, she moved to Cape Town, South Africa after her husband, the Reverend Levi Jenkins Coppin, was elected the thirtieth AME Bishop. Her account of her work and travels in South Africa stressed the similarities of the oppression experienced by native Africans, Cape Coloreds, and Muslims. 'Perhaps one of the things that has caused Mohammedans to step over the religious barriers that have kept the dark races apart in Africa, is the fact that, when the lines of proscription are drawn — and this is becoming more and more so — the Malay, the Indian-East Indian — the native and the "coloured" are all treated alike in matters social.'⁴

Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination (New York: Beacon Press, 2002), chs. 3 and 5.

3 James Johnson (ed.), *Report of the Centenary Conference of Protestant Missions to the World, Held in Exeter Hall, London (June 9–19)*, vol. 1 (London: James Nisbet, 1888), pp. 412–14.

4 Fannie Jackson-Coppin, *Reminiscences of School Life and Hints on Teaching* (Philadelphia: AME Book Concern, 1913), pp. 122–33, quote on p. 132. Lawrence S. Little, in *Disciples of Liberty: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the Age of Imperialism, 1884–1916* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), pp. 41–43,



Fig. 31.3 Fannie Jackson Coppin, 1865. Photographer unknown. Photo courtesy of the Oberlin College Archives.

Coppin offered a model of religious and educational activism that stressed women's equality and critiqued imperialism, while three slightly younger women from Sadie Alexander's mother, Mary Tanner Mossell's generation continued to travel abroad on behalf of religious, racial and gender projects and received extensive coverage and favorable comment in the Black press. Ida B. Wells (1862–1931) made two trips to England in 1893 and 1894 to garner support for her anti-lynching campaign. Mary Church Terrell (1863–1954) gave speeches calling for racial and gender equality at international women's conferences in 1904, 1919 and 1937. Addie Hunton lived and studied in Europe, aided Black soldiers in France in 1918–19, and became an important activist in the Pan-African Movement.

Sadie Alexander was six years old in 1904 when Mary Church Terrell spoke at the International Conference of Women (ICW) in Berlin.

argues that the success of the Church Review under Levi Coppin was due to Fannie Coppin's skill as an editor.

Terrell, an Oberlin graduate and founding member of the National Association of Colored Women, received many favorable comments from her hosts as the only American delegate to give her address in German. Terrell quickly felt that she 'represented not only the colored women of my country' but as the only person of African descent at the conference, 'I represented the whole African continent as well.' After the ICW conference, Terrell stopped in Paris to see Henry O. Tanner's prizewinning 'Raising of Lazarus.' She gained a personal viewing at the Louvre after explaining that she knew the Tanner family in the US, 'his father, his mother, his sisters, his brothers,' and declaring that if she did not see the painting, 'I could not return to my country without my head erect.'⁵ The expatriate artist was Sadie Tanner Mossell's uncle and young Sadie met the Black intelligentsia, including Terrell, at the Philadelphia home of her grandfather, AME Bishop and influential editor Benjamin Tucker Tanner.



Fig. 31.4 Mary Church Terrell, ca. 1890, three quarter length portrait, seated, facing front. Photographer unknown. Library of Congress. Public domain.

5 Mary Church Terrell, *A Colored Woman in a White World* (Washington, D.C.: Ransdell, 1940), pp. 204, 197–208. The painting is now in the Musée d'Orsay, Paris.



Fig. 31.5 Tanner family, group portrait, 1890. Photographer unknown, Mary Tanner Mossell (Sadie's mother) seated far right; Henry O. Tanner standing left. University Archives and Records Center, University of Pennsylvania.

In 1919, Terrell, a charter member of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, was selected by the Women's Peace Party as one of thirty American delegates to the meeting of the International Congress of Women. Terrell was thus able to evade the concerted efforts of the State and War Departments to prevent African Americans from attending the Paris peace conference by denying them passage to Europe. Terrell soon observed that she was the only delegate that was not white, 'it finally dawned upon me that I was representing the women of all the non-white countries in the world.' In that spirit, Terrell introduced a resolution on behalf of the US delegation calling for the end to discrimination in education or employment based upon race, color, or religion. She also criticized the Versailles Peace Conference for its poor treatment of Japan and failure to condemn racial discrimination and called for 'justice and fair play for all the dark races of the world.'⁶

⁶ Terrell, pp. 333, 335, 329–47.

Dubbed the 'genteel militant' by historian Sharon Harley, Mary Church Terrell became even more militant if ever genteel near the end of her productive life at age ninety in 1952, when she both signed the radical *We Charge Genocide* petition to the UN by the Civil Rights Congress and wore a hat and gloves when picketing a segregated restaurant in Washington, D.C.⁷

Addie W. Hunton's life also brings together multiple sources of foreign policy ideas that had critical intergenerational implications for Sadie Alexander and the women of her generation: the Black women's club movement, women's peace movements, the 'Y' movement, and Pan-African conferences. Hunton (1866–1943) and her husband William Hunton created YWCA and YMCA branches at Negro colleges. Both 'Y' organizations had regular unsegregated international conferences that created opportunities for young Black Americans living under Jim Crow to meet their counterparts from around the globe.⁸ Addie Hunton and her children moved to Europe while she studied foreign languages for several years before the First World War. When the US entered the First World War, a newly widowed Hunton and two other intrepid Black women traveled to France with the American Expeditionary Forces joining eighty Black male social workers assigned to serve the 150,000 Black soldiers serving in segregated units. Her eyewitness account detailed her growing disillusionment as a result of the US military's discriminatory practices.⁹ At the war's end Hunton attended the 1919 Pan-African Congress in Paris led by W. E. B. Du Bois, a long time

7 Sharon Harley, 'Mary Church Terrell: Genteel Militant', in Leon Litwak and August Meier (eds.), *Black Leaders of the Nineteenth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), pp. 291–307. William Patterson (ed.), *We Charge Genocide: The Crime of Government Against the Negro People* (New York: International Publishers, [1951] 1970), pp. xvii–xviii.

8 Francille Rusan Wilson, *The Segregated Scholars: Black Social Scientists and the Creation of Black Labor Studies, 1890–1950* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2006), pp. 62–64, 200–01. Johanna Selles, 'Women and Historical Pan-Africanism: The Hunton Family Narrative of Faith Through Generations', *Pan-African News Wire*, 19 November 2006, http://panafricannews.blogspot.com/2006/11/women-and-historical-pan-africanism_19.html

9 Addie W. Hunton and Kathryn M. Johnson, *Two Colored Women with the American Expeditionary Forces* (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Eagle Press, 1920), pp. 22–40; Susan Kerr Chandler, "'That Biting, Stinging Thing Which Ever Shadows Us': African American Social Workers in France During World War I', *Social Services Review* (September 1995), 498–514. Nikki Brown, *Private Politics & Public Voices: Black Women's Activism from World War I to the New Deal* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2006), pp. 84–107.

friend and neighbor. In 1920 Hunton and Terrell helped the National Association of Colored Women launch the International Council of Women of the Darker Races, an indication of Black clubwomen's increasing interest in forging ties with women across continents.

In 1923 Sadie Alexander, newly married, was struggling to find meaningful employment despite having earned a PhD from the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School, while Hunton and a small group of Black women 'who believe in the universality of the race problem' started the Circle for Peace and Foreign Relations.¹⁰

Hutton and the Circle raised funds for Du Bois to attend the 1923 Pan-African Congress held in London and Lisbon, and they organized the fourth conference with over two hundred delegates that was held in New York City in 1927. That same year, Sadie T. M. Alexander added a law degree to her growing educational accomplishments: she already was one of the first three Black women to earn a PhD, and the first Black American with a doctorate in economics. Although she went to law school because of limited opportunities to work as an economist, Alexander became the first Black woman to earn a law degree from the University of Pennsylvania, and first to pass the state bar exam. She joined her husband Raymond Pace Alexander's law firm in Philadelphia and they practiced law together for over thirty years.¹¹

Sadie T. M. Alexander's long standing emphasis in her public life was to use her own privileged status as a 'true daughter' within the AME church and her growing influence in numerous local and national civic organizations to call for women's political and economic empowerment. Her parallel participation in Black women's organizations that had focused international policy agendas drew her into the foreign affairs

10 Brenda Gayle Plummer, 'Evolution of the Black Foreign Policy Constituency', *TransAfrica Forum*, 6 (Spring/Summer 1989), 66–81; Christine Lutz, 'Addie Hunton: Crusader for Pan Africanism and Peace', in Nina Mjagkij (ed.), *Portraits of African American Life Since 1865* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), 109–27, quote at p. 116; Penny M. Von Eschen, in *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937–1957* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), pp. 58–59, maintains that Hunton got a degree in linguistics from the Sorbonne, but other sources say she studied at the University of Heidelberg.

11 Francille Rusan Wilson, "'All of the Glory... Faded... Quickly": Sadie T. M. Alexander and Black Professional Women, 1920–1950', in Sharon Harley and the Black Women and Work Collective (eds.), *Sister Circle: Black Women and Work* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), pp. 164–83.

arena by the late 1930s.¹² One of the first institutions that Alexander sought to directly influence on international issues was her own AME Church, but she did not initially show the same concerns for international peace and solidarity as Mary Church Terrell or Addie Hunton who together had helped the denomination formulate clear positions on international affairs that decried colonial practices in the 1930s. Alexander's public opinion of whether Blacks had a vital interest in fighting fascism evolved between 1935–40 from the isolationism favored by Republicans, albeit inflected with a racial critique, to fervent support of the Double V concept of victory abroad over fascism, and victory at home over white supremacy. During the 1930s Alexander also began to travel more outside the United States, going to Europe and Russia with her husband and began a long association with Haitian lawyers who made her an honorary member of their bar association.

In October 1935, Alexander gave a speech promoting neutrality to women gathered at Bethel AME church in Baltimore. Black people, she argued, were disproportionately affected by international wars since they were already the lowest paid and most vulnerable. 'We were urged to join in making the world safe for democracy when we ourselves never enjoyed the true benefits of democracy.'¹³ Rather than falling for this argument again as war enveloped Europe, Black American women should try to affect public opinion at home by urging neutrality and should take up the plea, 'War Must Cease'.¹⁴ However, once the United States entered the war, Alexander pivoted, having also switched political parties from Republican to Democrat and advised Black churchwomen to continue to fight for gender as well as racial equality by embracing Roosevelt's Four Freedoms. Her subsequent speeches depicted the Second World War as an

12 Francille Rusan Wilson, 'Sadie T. M. Alexander: A "True Daughter" of the AME Church', *A.M.E. Church Review*, 119: 391 (2003), 40–46; Sadie Alexander to Rev. Edward E. Taylor, 26 August 1942, in Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander (hereafter STMA) Papers, University of Pennsylvania Archives, Box 55 ff 18. Francille Rusan Wilson, 'Becoming "Woman of the Year": Sadie Alexander's Construction of a Public Persona as a Black Professional Woman, 1920–1950', *Black Women, Gender, & Families*, 2:2 (2008), 1–30. Alexander considered herself a 'true daughter' because her maternal grandfather Benjamin T. Tanner (1835–1923) and paternal uncle Charles W. Mossell (1849–1915) were prominent AME ministers and other relatives were lay leaders and missionaries.

13 Sadie T. M. Alexander, 'The Role of the Negro Woman in the Postwar South', unpublished speech, ca. 1945, STMA papers 71/80.

14 'War Must Cease', STMA papers 7/49.

opportunity for women's advancement arguing, 'the war [is] using a new reservoir of Woman Power and Negro women along with all other American women are entering every activity of the nation's life including the armed forces,'¹⁵ foreshadowing her role in the successful campaign in 1947 to desegregate the armed forces. Sadie Alexander now also helped to focus both the AME church and Black women's organizations postwar visions in a more activist manner as they firmly linked colonization with segregation and called for an end to both. National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) President Mary McLeod Bethune asked Alexander to help plan a panel on 'racial policies as the basis for permanent peace' for their 1942 annual meeting. Alexander asked Bethune, a college president and New Deal official, to invite other women of color from 'China, India, Haiti, South America and Mexico as well as representatives of minority groups in the United States' to participate.¹⁶ Alexander had now fully embraced the international solidarity with women of color on political, economic, and gender issues long advocated by Mary Church Terrell and Addie Hunton.

In 1946 Alexander was one of two women and two African Americans appointed by President Truman to a fifteen-member committee to recommend changes in the country's civil rights policies.¹⁷ Alexander's talking points to build public support for the President's Committee on Civil Rights 1947 Report, *To Secure These Rights*, stressed the linkage between US civil rights practices and US foreign policy, charging that the gap between US beliefs and US practices was creating a 'moral dry rot.' She attacked the House Un-American Activities Committee in public speeches linking it to Nazi policies, saying that after the investigations and witch hunts, 'we will have purges, Gestapos and concentration camps.' Ever the economist, Alexander warned that full postwar employment should be the goal rather than job discrimination which might harm the ability of postwar America to feed itself and Europe: 'Firing a Mexican, a Jew, a Negro or any other worker because of his race or religion creates

15 Sadie T. M. Alexander, 'The Role of the Negro Woman in the Postwar South', unpublished speech, ca. 1945, STMA papers 71/80.

16 'Program of Annual Conference of National Council of Negro Women, Inc. Oct 16-18 1941.' STMA to MMB 8/12/42 both in STMA Papers 57/9.

17 The committee had twelve prominent white men, one white woman — Mrs. M. E. Tilley a Methodist churchwoman, and a Black man — Channing Tobias of the Phelps Stokes Fund and Alexander.

a vicious economic circle.¹⁸ The Truman Administration was sensitive to the potential effect of Jim Crow on US foreign policy, and the State and Justice Departments began the unprecedented step of supporting selected lawsuits aimed at dismantling formal segregation. Alexander made this point when she argued that, 'our security is tied to that of the people of all other countries. What happens to the American Indian, to the Mexican, to the Oriental, to the Negro in New York or in Georgia is taken as evidence of our attitude toward millions of people abroad of the same races as these victims of our un-democratic practices at home. Our enemies abroad hold up these incidents as proof that democracy in America is a fraud, and proclaim their system of government the only true road to freedom.'¹⁹ The gruesome murders of Black veterans, bombings of civil rights activists, capricious and harsh sentences for minorities while known white killers walked free all received unfavorable international coverage, as Alexander predicted. Alexander was an officer or on the board of several Black American organizations that successfully petitioned the United Nations for observer status including the NCNW and National Bar Association.²⁰

Sadie Alexander and other Black lawyers in the city were not invited to join the Philadelphia Bar Association (PBA) until 1952, twenty-five years after she had passed the state Bar. The same year Alexander traveled to India and Israel and she visited many other countries as a delegate to conferences and as a private citizen in the years that followed. Not content to rest on her considerable laurels, Alexander began to gather materials on the UN's human rights conventions including the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948) and those having to do with the political rights of women and children, opposing slavery and forced labor. Despite the Holocaust, the US would not ratify the Genocide Convention for fear racial minorities would invoke the 'and

18 'Americans are Called Mentally Ill Because of Fear and Hate in Nation', *New York Times*, 8 October 1948 describes Alexander's address at a forum sponsored by twenty-nine organizations in New York at 60th Street and Park Avenue on 'Proposals for A Better World'. 'Why We Must Act Now To Secure the Recommendations of President Truman's Committee on Civil Rights', 3 pages typed, no author, STMA Papers, Box 40/5. 'Why We Must Act' contains the same phrases Alexander is quoted saying in the *New York Times* article.

19 Ibid.

20 'Resolutions to be presented to the Legal Committee of the General Assembly of the United Nations Conference', STMA 50/30.



Fig. 31.6 Sadie T. M. Alexander holding *To Secure these Rights*, ca. 1947.
Photographer unknown. University Archives and Records Center,
University of Pennsylvania.

punishment' section from the title to use international law to force the end of segregation and racial discrimination, and it was indifferent to the other human rights conventions. By 1965 Alexander had become the chair of the PBA's subcommittee on human rights treaties and conventions. Her subcommittee began a two-year effort — ultimately fruitless — to get their organization to recommend that the American Bar Association change its position and support the ratification of the conventions on genocide and on practices akin to slavery, forced labor, and the political rights of women. Alexander keenly remembered her efforts to link segregation, women's rights, and international atrocities some twenty years earlier, but she found her colleagues in the PBA less interested in condemning genocide. Three of the five-person subcommittee voted in favor of ratification of the treaties (with one no vote and one abstention). In what must have been a bid to have some success with the full body, the committee voted to send the recommendation to ratify all the conventions

forward but to have a separate vote on the Genocide Convention. Despite the successes of the Civil Rights Movement in 1965–66, Alexander might have thought time was going backward rather than forward in terms of human rights issues. At the same time, Sadie Alexander was working to persuade the Philadelphia Bar to reject genocide, Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton set out in Oakland California to write the platform of their new organization, the Black Panther Party.²¹ The Panthers' critique of western hypocrisy and their desire to use the UN to obtain Black peoples' human rights was not very different from the postwar petitions to the UN of the Civil Rights Congress or the National Bar Association that Alexander had supported.

The United States did not ratify the Genocide Convention until 1988 under President Jimmy Carter, forty years after it was adopted by the United Nations. Alexander died one year later at age ninety-one. Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander was not a radical by any conventional definition, but her insistence that American democracy should exhibit the same core principals in foreign and domestic policy was grounded in a centuries-long Black oppositional critique that called on the US to protect the human rights of all persons.

This chapter has used a grandmother and granddaughter who never met to chart the enduring legacy of Black women activists, migrants, and travelers who used their voices, writings, and their church to call for human rights. These women's prophetic visions of their place and space in the world stretched from the determined search for freedom over decades and thousands of miles by Eliza Bowers Mossell to her granddaughter Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander's urgent public voice in twentieth-century debates over race, gender, economic opportunity, and foreign policy. Alexander continued a long tradition of Black American women intellectuals' advocacy for the rights of women, and their opposition to racism and imperialism in all its forms — at home and abroad. Her life provides a window onto the multi-generational nature of African-American women's repeated attempts to bring their country and their world's crimes against people of color to an international stage and to forge solidarities with like-minded women of all nations and creeds.

21 'October 1966 Black Panther Party Platform and Program', in *The Sixties Project* http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Resources/Primary/Manifestos/Panther_platform.html

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32. ‘The World is Ours, Too’: Millennial Women and the New Black Travel Movement

Tiffany M. Gill

After you’ve been perusing black-related websites for a while, you notice something: A lot of them are created, written and run by women. Many are travelogues, recounting journeys taken all over the world, but a growing number also are travel businesses catering directly — and in many instances, exclusively — to women.¹

In a bustling city of eight million people, New York City’s Penn Station on a fall afternoon feels like the town square. If you spend enough time there, you are bound to run into someone you know, or at the very least someone you recognize. On a beautiful fall afternoon in 2016, after spending the day at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture examining the archival record left by Black international travelers, I had the rare luxury of a few spare minutes before I boarded Amtrak’s Keystoner home to Philadelphia. Thirsty and battling mid-afternoon fatigue, I stopped into Pret a Manger to buy an iced green tea to keep me awake on the ride home. As I stepped into the line, I noticed

1 ‘SISTERS Are TRAVELING for Themselves’, *I’m Black and I Travel!*, 24 January 2010.

a young Black woman standing in front of me. Well, actually, I noticed her bag — an exquisite satchel with a bold yet tasteful print. To my untrained eye, the pattern looked South African and the woman carrying it exuded an air of effortless cosmopolitanism. Just as I was prepared to compliment her on the bag and give her some ‘game recognizes game’ Black girl love, I noticed that she looked tired and did not seem to be in the mood to engage a stranger. As I approached her, I realized that she looked familiar and within a few seconds, I let out an audible gasp of disbelief. I had realized that the woman with the exquisite bag was none other than Evita Robinson, the founder and creator of the Nomadness Travel Tribe, an award-winning travel group representing young adult travelers of color. As a historian of Black leisure and international travel, I had been watching Robinson’s meteoric rise as a travel entrepreneur since she came on the scene in 2011. I recognized Robinson because she was an integral part of the Nomadness brand; her innovative use of social and digital media made her instantly recognizable. As we chatted, I was impressed not only with her style, but her calm yet piercing manner and hands-on approach to running ‘the Tribe’ as Nomadness is called.

This essay examines the ways that Black millennial women travel entrepreneurs and influencers, like Evita Robinson, use social and digital media to launch and sustain what has been called the New Black Travel Movement. Despite an overall downward trend in international travel expenditures for Americans more generally, African Americans have experienced a dramatic increase in their international travel since 2013. While only three per cent of African Americans intended to travel abroad in 2013, the number doubled to six per cent in 2014, and by 2016 the number exploded to 37 per cent.² Most of this growth is occurring among Black women between the ages of 18 and 35.

The new Black Travel Movement of the early twenty-first century was born from a generation of young women who inherited an economic downturn and an unstable job market, and were forced to reconcile the dissonance of celebrating America’s first Black president in an era of intensifying anti-Black violence. Robinson and the cadre of Black women travel influencers who emerged in this era saw themselves as providing opportunities for millennials of color to escape, albeit temporarily,

2 Phoebe Parke, ‘Why the Black Travel Movement Has Taken off’, *CNN*, 15 June 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/06/15/africa/black-travel-discriminatory/index.html>

the trauma of being Black in the US. In so doing, they join in a much longer historical tradition of African Americans employing mobility as a mechanism of freedom. Whether enslaved runaways fleeing plantations, Black abolitionists traveling to Europe to expose the evils of slavery, southerners desiring to escape Jim Crow by migrating to northern and midwestern cities, or the descendants of those southern migrants returning to the south in search of economic opportunities, African Americans have often used travel as a liberation strategy. This essay interrogates the ways that Black women travel influencers in the era of digital media link their global travels to their desire to reclaim the dignity and pleasures they are often denied within the United States. However, as they seek to provide Black women with opportunities to see the world, they contend with the notion that promoting international leisure travel is nothing more than elitist escapism. As such, they are rooting their travel ventures in more noble goals — breaking down global anti-Black stereotypes, building community, and linking to social justice movements.

Black Travel Movements: A Historical Perspective

Major media outlets including CNN, the *New York Times*, MSNBC, and the *Huffington Post* as well as those focusing on the African-American market like *Essence* and *Ebony* have tried to make sense of the New Black Travel Movement.³ Much of the coverage marvels in disbelief at what they perceive as the novelty of Black folks unapologetically embracing their right to travel the globe.⁴ Indeed, despite substantial archival

3 For just a sampling of coverage see: Parke, 'Why the Black Travel Movement Has Taken Off'; Ashley Southall, 'Black Travel Groups Find Kindred Spirits on Social Networks', *The New York Times*, 23 July 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/26/travel/black-travel-noire-nomadness.html>; 'What Does It Mean to be African American Abroad', *Melissa Harris Perry Show*, MSNBC, 2 August 2015, <http://www.msnbc.com/melissa-harris-perry/watch/what-it-means-to-be-african-american-abroad-498925635550>; Zoe Donaldson, 'This Blogger's Mission Is to Show that Travel Is for Everyone', *Huffington Post*, 4 April 2017, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/this-bloggers-mission-is-to-show-that-travel-is-for-everyone_us_58dab2b3e4b01ca7b4276df4; 'INTERNATIONAL PLAYER: Evita Robinson, the Nomad Diva', *Ebony*, 19 July 2012, <http://www.ebony.com/life/evita-robinson-the-nomad-diva#axzz4YNM3iuFX>

4 See Charlise Ferguson, '"We out Here": Inside the New Black Travel Movement', *The Daily Beast*, 4 January 2015, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/01/04/we-out-here-inside-the-new-black-travel-movement.html>;

evidence to the contrary, there are still doubts as to whether African Americans have engaged in international leisure travel in significant ways. For example, in the only essay addressing African Americans in the *Cambridge Companion to American Travel Writing*, Virginia Whatley Smith found it necessary to pose the question: 'Do African Americans ever travel as leisure class tourists?' Smith found that while the archival record demonstrates that Africans Americans have traveled internationally for various purposes, the scholarly record highlights travel for political purposes and virtually ignores leisure travel.⁵

In fact, African Americans have unabashedly promoted international leisure travel and developed entrepreneurial infrastructures to make the dream of traveling abroad a reality since the dawn of the twentieth century. In other words, they did many of the things now celebrated in the 'new Black travel movement,' revealing that while this twenty-first century iteration may be innovative, it is not unprecedented. Earlier travel movements emerged in times of class anxiety as a result of a rapid growth in the Black middle class, as evidenced in the years after the Second World War, or when a social or political movement opened up new possibilities and expectations of leisure, as in the decades after the civil rights movement. In other words, the 'new Black travel movement' is part of a much longer history of Black travelers and travel entrepreneurs embracing the globe as a way to express their desires to be free.⁶ However, the contemporary Black travel movement is the first to emerge within the era of digital media, and Black women entrepreneurs have used the tools at their disposal to create vibrant counter-narratives

Rahel Gebreyes, 'Growing Black Travel Movement Challenges Perceptions of the Typical Globetrotter', *Huffington Post*, 28 January 2015, sec. Black Voices, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/01/28/black-travel-movement_n_6558930.html

- 5 Virginia Whatley Smith, 'African American Travel Literature', in Alfred Bendixen and Judith Hamera (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to American Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 197–213 (p. 212).
- 6 Most of the scholarship on Black leisure travel has been focused on domestic travel during the Jim Crow period and the indignities experienced by Black travelers; see Andrew W. Kahrl, "'The Slightest Semblance of Unruliness': Steamboat Excursions, Pleasure Resorts, and the Emergence of Segregation Culture on the Potomac River', *Journal of American History*, 94 (March 2008), 1108–36; Mark S. Foster, 'In the Face of "Jim Crow": Prosperous Blacks and Vacations, Travel and Outdoor Leisure, 1890–1945', *Journal of Negro History*, 84 (Spring 1999), 130–49; Cotton Seiler, "'So That We as a Race Might Have Something Authentic to Travel By": African American Automobility and Cold War Liberalism', *American Quarterly*, 58 (2006), 1091–117.

about Black women's place in the world.⁷ Among the most important innovators in this movement is Evita Robinson, whom I ran into on that auspicious fall afternoon in Penn Station.

The Tribe That Evie Built

The Nomadness Travel Tribe began just as Evita Turquoise Robinson (called Evie by her close friends) embarked on the excitement and uncertainty of adulthood. In the summer after her 2006 graduation from Iona College where she majored in Film and Television, the upstate-New-York-born Robinson traveled to Europe. In a moment that sounds like a scene from a movie, she describes sitting on the Grand Lawn in Paris staring at the Eiffel Tower and coming to the realization that her life's trajectory would be different than many of her peers. 'I had graduated college less than three months prior and as everyone else was looking for a job, I looked for the world.'⁸ After living and traveling throughout Europe and Asia on her own for almost four years, she decided to combine her background in communication and her love of travel by creating a blog and web series. At the time, she was living and teaching English in Nigata, Japan, feeling isolated and longing to see more people who looked like her as she traversed Asia. She also wanted to demystify travel for her friends and family back home who she realized were never coming to visit her.⁹

The web series gained a small but strong following early on and gained the attention of a producer of a web-based reality show called *Jet Set Zero* who invited Robinson to join the cast. The premise of the show was simple — invite three strangers on a trip to Thailand and record their experiences. In many ways, the show suited Robinson well. Her larger-than-life personality and natural comfort in front of the camera had her on track to become a breakout star in the series.

7 For more on Black counterpublics in the blogosphere see Catherine Knight Steele, 'Black Bloggers and Their Varied Publics: The Everyday Politics of Black Discourse Online', *Television and New Media*, 19:2 (May 2017), 1–16.

8 'International Player: Evita Robinson, The Nomad Diva', *Ebony*, 19 July 2012, <https://www.ebony.com/life/evita-robinson-the-nomad-diva/>

9 Reagan Jackson, 'Nomadness: The New Tribe Changing the Face of Travel', *The Seattle Globalist*, 4 December 2014, <http://www.seattleglobalist.com/2014/12/04/nomadness-travel-tribe-young-black-women-with-passports/31311>

However, a bout of Dengue fever forced her leave the show and return home to the US to recuperate. Shortly after settling back home for what she thought would be a short respite, one of her close friends was killed in an accident. As she processed her grief, Robinson realized that as much as she loved exploring the world on her own, she missed being a part of a community — a community even larger than the one that was forced on her by *Jet Set Zero*. This desire is what ultimately led to the creation of the Nomadness Travel Tribe in 2011, a community for ‘the edgy, world-educated, under-represented demographic’ who want to see the world in a group of what Robinson likes to call ‘chosen family’ or ‘tribe.’¹⁰

The process to join the tribe is relatively simple. Members must have at least one passport stamp, watch a short video that describes the mission of Nomadness, and then pass a ten-question Newbie Bootcamp Quiz based on what they watched. In an attempt to mitigate against criticisms that the passport stamp requirement is elitist, Nomadness added NMDN Black Box, a six month online course designed to help potential tribe members navigate the psychological, physical, or economic barriers to travel.¹¹ Membership of the Tribe allows you access to a closed Facebook group where you can connect with members around the globe, be the first to hear about airline fare glitches for inexpensive travel, and learn about trips and events planned by Nomadness. While the Facebook group is robust and active, the trips and events are where the community that Robinson was craving when she created the group comes to fruition. In the six years since Nomadness began, Robinson has sponsored and led over thirty international group trips, three major conferences and BBQs, and multiple global meetups everywhere from Dubai to Johannesburg.

However, Robinson is quick to remind people that she is not a travel agent. Instead, she considers herself a curator of international experiences for an underserved travel market. Despite all the changes in the travel industry, namely the role of the travel agent in the internet age, as well as in Black life, one thing has remained — the role of women as leaders in the Black travel industry as well the dominance of Black

10 ‘The Movement’, <https://www.nomadnesstv.com/>

11 ‘NMDN Black Box | Our Mission: To Eradicate Any Barriers of Entry You Have into the World of Travel. (seriously.)’, <http://nmdnblackbox.com/>



Fig. 32.1 Evita Robinson, founder of Nomadness Travel Tribe. Used with permission from Evita Robinson.

women as travelers. Nomadness, estimates that 85% of their Tribe members are Black women.¹²

As Evita Robinson was filming *Jet Set Zero* in Thailand, Zim Ugochukwu was a college student traveling through India. While in Delhi, she saw an advertisement for a skin lightener. 'As the woman's skin got lighter,' Ugochukwu explained, 'her smile got wider. It seemed to say that being as dark as I am is something to be ashamed of.'¹³ Not only did this trip open Zim's eyes to the global dimensions of anti-Blackness, but it caused her to think more deeply about her own experience as a Minnesota-born woman of Nigerian descent traveling abroad. She realized that she never saw images of people who looked like her in depictions of travelers. 'If you skim through the travel section at Barnes & Noble, you'll find blonde women gallivanting across Iceland or Italy, but that's not me. I set out to

12 'The Movement', <https://www.nomadnesstv.com/>

13 Donaldson, 'This Blogger's Mission'.

change that narrative.’¹⁴ She created Travel Noire in 2013 in an attempt to not only change the public discourse about who travels, but to provide young Black globetrotters like herself with resources on how to navigate the world, and like Nomadness cultivate a global family by choice.



Fig. 32.2 Frazer Harrison, Zim Ugochukwu at AirBnB Open Los Angeles. Getty Images.

Unlike Robinson who sees herself as a creative before an entrepreneur, Ugochukwu approaches Travel Noire first and foremost as a business. She used the money she saved working in the biotech industry to launch Travel Noire first as a digital platform with instructional and user-generated content. After building an audience over eighteen months, Travel Noire began offering trips and bringing groups of strangers together on excursions. Unlike the Nomadness model where one must first become a member of the Tribe before joining any international trips, anyone with a passport, and \$2000-\$4000 (the average price for an excursion) can participate. While the ticket price is more expensive than the itineraries offered by Nomadness, Ugochukwu contends that the added perks are well worth the cost. Every Travel Noire trip includes airfare, accommodation, meals, personal tour guides, and most activities.

One of the amenities that sets Travel Noire apart is the professional photographer that accompanies every group trip. While the capturing and curation of images has been central to the experience of the modern

14 Ibid.

traveler for well over half a century, the ubiquity of smartphones in the last decade empowers amateurs and professionals alike to capture memorable images, while social media provides a global canvas on which to exhibit them. The increasingly popular video- and photo-sharing site Instagram, established in 2010, was acquired by social media giant Facebook in 2012, just as Nomadness and Travel Noire came on the scene. By 2017, Instagram had over 800 million users and a devoted following in the Black travel world.¹⁵ While Nomadness' Instagram feed shows a preference for a more vernacular photographic style, the images circulated on Travel Noire's Instagram account are usually polished, staged, and sophisticated, with carefully adorned Black bodies flanked by breathtaking landscapes and architecture.¹⁶ The stunning images, which amalgamate the exoticism of *National Geographic* with the fashion sensibilities of *Vogue*, have drawn almost a half a billion followers to Travel Noire's Instagram page.



Fig. 32.3 Nomadness Travel Tribe, Pamplona, Spain. Image courtesy of Sheila Brown, CC BY 4.0.

- 15 For the history of Instagram, see Ben Woods, 'Instagram: A Brief History', *Magazine*, 21 June 2013, <https://thenextweb.com/magazine/2013/06/21/instagram-a-brief-history/>
- 16 For more on the evolving role of travel photography, see Deepthi Ruth Azariah, *Tourism, Travel, and Blogging: A Discursive Analysis of Online Travel Narratives* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2016).



Fig. 32.4 'In the Hasaan II Mosque,' *Travel Noire* Instagram page. Image courtesy of Abena Bempah, CC BY 4.0.

While the twenty-first-century Black press is a shadow of its former glory, visual social media outlets like Instagram have in many ways taken on its role in allowing Black traveling millennials to self-represent. For Zim Ugochukwu, the visual representations of Black travelers is not superfluous, but critical to *Travel Noire*'s overall mission: 'if you see somebody who looks like you in a certain destination, on a billboard doing things you never thought you could do, then that thing becomes a possibility.'¹⁷ Robinson concurs and highlights the ways that social media has enabled Black millennials, 'to own our own narrative and create platforms where we can showcase ourselves.'¹⁸ *Ebony* writer

17 Southall, 'Black Travel Groups Find Kindred Spirits on Social Networks'.

18 Mary Cass, 'Q&A: Evita Robinson, founder, Nomadness', *J. Walter Thompson Intelligence*, 17 January 2017, <https://www.jwtintelligence.com/2017/01/evita-robinson-founder-nomadness/>

Tracey Coleman explained that for Black travelers of her generation, there is a deeper meaning to these visual self-performances than merely showing off. She explains, 'when we post that selfie in front of the Eiffel Tower or at the peak of Mt. Kilimanjaro, we make a statement far more powerful than the photo caption. Our collective journey has been a long one, and those photos are badges of pride that carry more weight than we realize.'¹⁹ Writing for the popular digital platform Blavity, an author identified only as HeyitsKarla went a step further, inviting Black travelers to flood their social media timelines 'with pics and videos of Black individuals and Black women who travel, so much to the point where it isn't something we view as extraordinarily unimaginable.'²⁰ In other words, these images are not simply about showcasing beautiful locales or projecting an idealized self. Instead they become a vehicle for promoting 'the idea that the world is ours, too,' according to millennial travel writer Kyla McMillan.²¹ For many young Black Americans, consuming and curating these photographs is a radical act of self-discovery and a political declaration.

However, not everyone is convinced that these travel groups should be celebrated. Some writers and bloggers have questioned what they consider the elitism and 'divisive snobbery of wanderlust,' promoted by Travel Noire and Nomadness. An article on *Ebony* went so far as to ask if 'passport stamps are the new paper bag test,' likening the desire among millennials to see the world to those institutions and organizations in the early twentieth century that excluded people based on color and status. 'One look at the Travel Noire Instagram account,' the article continued, 'could have you all up in your feelings wondering why you're not on a camel in some desert you can't pronounce.'²² In response to such criticisms, Nomadness and Travel Noire prefer to highlight the ways they save travelers money. In recent years, both organizations have been focusing less on extravagant group trips and more on helping to connect their members through global meetups, BBQs in cities like Philadelphia

19 Tracey Coleman, 'Are Passport Stamps the New Paper Bag Test?', *Ebony*, 2 February 2015, <http://www.ebony.com/life/are-passport-stamps-the-new-paper-bag-test-999>

20 heyitskarla, 'Why Traveling While Black Is A Form of Resistance', *Blavity*, <https://blavity.com/why-traveling-while-black-is-a-form-of-resistance>

21 Kyla McMillan, 'Why the Black Travel Movement Is Necessary', *JetMag*, 26 September 2016, <https://www.jetmag.com/talk-back-2/black-travel-movement/>

22 Coleman, 'Are Passport Stamps the New Paper Bag Test?'

and Detroit, and helping them to find and book significantly discounted tickets through airline computer glitches. For example, early in the morning on Christmas Day in 2015, Eithad Airlines had a fare glitch that lowered prices to places like Abu Dhabi and Johannesburg to as low as \$250 round trip. So many Travel Noire and Nomadness Tribe members, 1000 and 400 respectively bought tickets under the hashtag #bookdatish, that it caught the attention of Eithad Airlines as well as AirBnB, which began offering discount codes and seeking partnerships with both groups.

After years of failed attempts to expand the travel market, airline companies and travel-based corporations are also noticing the power of what Robinson and Ugochukwu have built. In an interview, Zim Ugochukwu explained that ‘brands have been struggling to figure out how to reach Black travelers in ways that are authentic and inoffensive,’ and are turning to her for help. She continued, ‘this isn’t a trend, it’s something that’s here to stay. And brands are realizing that if they don’t jump in on that, then they will lose out.’²³ When reflecting on the role of Nomadness in spearheading the new Black travel movement, Robinson declared, ‘for years, we were ahead of our time. I think the industry thought it was a fad or something that was going to subside with time. But we’re still here and kicking, and now that the movement itself has grown, they’re finally paying attention.’²⁴ For good or ill, the innovative use of digital and social media by Black millennial women has now placed Black international travelers on the radar not only of the media, but of travel-related companies.

Increased corporate attention, however, has not simplified the complications of traveling Black while carrying the blue US passport. For example, travelers in these organizations have extensive online discussions about the ways their presence as Black Americans abroad impacts the power dynamics around race and racism in the places where they travel. Online forums warn travelers about the perils of turning other people’s misery into our fun. They also help one another navigate the complex reality of feeling liberated from American racial constraints while traveling abroad, but also encountering the global circulation of damaging stereotypes about Black Americans that have

23 Southall, ‘Black Travel Groups Find Kindred Spirits on Social Networks’.

24 Cass, ‘Q&A: Evita Robinson, founder, Nomadness’.

reached the most remote places of the world. Evita Robinson explained the uncertainty of being a Black international traveler in an article in 2015: 'three years and over twenty Nomadness trips later, the truth is, I never know how we are going to be received when we walk through the door. I'd be lying if I didn't say that some countries worry me more than others. There are nuances to being a Black traveler.'²⁵ The challenges are especially acute for Black women. They mention being denied reservations with home share companies based on their profile pictures, having cops called by neighbors who did not think they belonged in the neighborhoods where they rented apartments and homes, as well as the pressure to alter their behavior so as not to fuel narratives about loud Black women in public spaces.²⁶

Furthermore, the intersectional political economy of race, gender, and sexuality is such that African-American women are often mistaken for sex workers abroad and receive aggressive and unwanted attention. Popular travel blogger Oneika Raymond recounted a harrowing experience while in Ireland: 'I was accosted by some Irish men as I walked down the street — they heckled me and told me that I had a big, fat ass, and could I wiggle it even more as I walked, telling me as well to "show them what I was working with."'²⁷ On the other hand, many Black millennial women described the joy of feeling more beautiful and desired when traveling outside of the US. Tyra Seldon, a self-described writer and motivational speaker, explained, 'I used to tell my girlfriends that if they ever needed a self-esteem pick-me-up then to go to Italy or Southern France. Black women of all hues, sizes, and

25 Evita Robinson, 'From India to Augill Castle: How Nomadness is Changing Perceptions of Black travel', *Mashable UK*, 23 July 2015, <https://mashable.com/2015/07/22/nomadness-travel/?europa=true#RnFUaFuKQiq6>

26 For recent examples see Doug Cris and Amir Vera, 'Three Black People Checked Out of their AirBnB Rental. Then Someone Called the Cops on Them', *CNN*, 10 May 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/05/07/us/airbnb-police-called-trnd/index.html>; Tiffany Fitzgerald, '"These are the White Stairs": The Enduring Insults of Golfing While Black', *The Guardian*, 25 April 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2018/apr/25/black-female-golfers-police-called>; Katie Rogers, '#LaughingWhileBlack Wine Train Lawsuit is Settled', *New York Times*, 20 April 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/21/us/women-settle-11-million-lawsuit-with-napa-valley-wine-train.html>

27 Oneika Raymond, 'Currently in Ireland and Onward to Scotland Tomorrow...', *Oneika the Traveller*, 11 July 2009, <http://www.oneikathetraveller.com/currently-in-ireland-and-onward-to-scotland-tomorrow.html>

shapes are considered *muy bella*.²⁸ As both of these examples elucidate, Black women's bodies and perceived sexual availability have an impact on their experiences abroad, either affirming ideas about their alleged promiscuity or subverting notions of beauty that often render them undesirable in the US.

Despite the uncertainties, many are willing to take on the risks associated with international travel, because as African-American women they recognized that their lives were often devalued back home. Blogging under the group name, 'Las Morenas of Espana,' an author who decided to expatriate after years of traveling abroad writes:

*I've come to the conclusion that the United States of America wants me to die; or at the very least, is indifferent to my survival. Now, don't get me wrong, I love the US. I love my country. It's where I was born, it's where I grew up. It gave me Jazz, southern BBQ, Sam Cooke and New York City. What I am saying is, the US just doesn't love me back. If it did, it would try harder to keep me alive.*²⁹

As the assault on Black life was becoming more and more evident to her and her millennial peers, Evita Robinson explained, 'many of our Black American travelers are more comfortable (and statistically speaking, safer) in countries other than our own at the moment. It's a reality we bear, take with us, and try to seek refuge from anytime we can.'³⁰ Indeed, the Black travel movement was maturing alongside another social movement—the Black Lives Matter movement. In the same article, Robinson spoke eloquently of the pain she felt returning from traveling abroad only to be welcomed home with news of another killing of an African American at the hands of police:

In 2015, every single time I left the United States, I came back to news of a black killing or unlawful arrest of some kind. Landing home from a personal getaway to Honduras, I was greeted with the tragic story of Tony Terrell Robinson's killing. Completion of my birthday trip to South Africa left me inundated with unavoidable playback footage of the Walter Scott shooting.

28 Tyra Seldon, '3 Powerful Things That Traveling the Globe Taught Me', *Shoppe Black*, 24 April 2017, <https://shoppeblack.us/2017/04/traveling-globe/>

29 Leslie Hatcher, '5 Things I've Learned about the US Since I've Left the US', *Las Morenas de España*, 10 June 2016, <http://www.lasmorenasdeespana.com/blog/5-things-ive-learned-about-the-us>. Emphasis in the original.

30 Robinson, 'From India to Augill Castle'.

A week later was Freddie Gray.

It seems endless. I am more frequently left questioning myself: Are these shootings happening more often? Or, are we just more aware because of social media? Who knows? The one thing I can answer is that it's made the Nomadness Travel Tribe's mission all the more evident: We need a balance to how Black Americans are represented to the rest of the world.³¹

Robinson soon realized that Nomadness not only had an obligation to help Black Americans travel globally, something she hoped would change perceptions of Black people abroad, but that they needed to take a more visible role to advocating for Black life at home in the US. As such, the Nomadness social media team created the slogan 'We Travel and We Care about Home.'³²

More than just a branding technique, the slogan was designed to highlight that many of the Tribe members, including those on the High Council, the organization's leadership team, were already involved in the Black Lives Matter movement. The Nomadness Tribe's second annual travel conference in New York in Fall 2016 featured a panel with BLM activists who were also Tribe members. In addition to encouraging other Tribe members to become involved in the struggle for Black life in their communities, they discussed the problem with normalizing Black Death on social media where videos of Black people being killed and assaulted by the police are in constant rotation. International travel, the panelists contend, is a way celebrate joy in the midst of pain, a powerful form of self-care as well as a politicized act of resistance.

A writer on the website Blavity proclaimed that 'Traveling as a black woman is resistance [...] It's a clear message to young boys and girls & anyone of color, telling them that they can take up as much space as they want to in this world because the world is just as much theirs as it is anyone else's.'³³ Black women travelers and travel entrepreneurs in the twenty-first century are claiming their place in the world without apology by expanding the contours and geography of freedom movements through their creative use of visual and digital media. While they are certainly not the first African Americans to create a travel movement, they are among the youngest and the boldest.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 heyitsKarla, 'Why Traveling While Black Is a Form of Resistance'.

More importantly, they are unapologetic in their insistence that young African-American women have the right to claim the world on their own terms. While it is still too soon to judge their full impact, their role in transforming the international travel industry and promoting the complexities of Black pleasure and pain is undeniable.

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33. Performing a Life: Mattie Allen McAdoo's Odyssey from Ohio to South Africa, Australia and Beyond, 1890–1900

Paulette Young

Introduction

A well-dressed attractive African-American young woman poses for her portrait at the Richmond Studio. She wears a fitted jacket with large lapels and brocade trim, her starched winged-collar shirt adorned with a ribbon bow tie, paired over a long, richly draped skirt finished with a tightly cinched front-laced corset at her waist. She holds the brim of a beaver cap against her thigh and displays a tennis racket prominently across her body like a baby. Her hair is pulled away from her face with soft curls at front calling attention to her thick eyebrows and large, dark piercing eyes. She gazes directly into the camera's lens, spellbound by the experience of capturing this moment in time — or perhaps she is transfixing the viewer with her determined gaze. She stands within a carefully placed arrangement of ferns and other plants. The photo studio's painted background has a blurred tree and a winding stream with flowers and other plants, projecting a sense of otherworldliness (see Fig. 33.1). The hand-scripted notation on the upper right of the

reverse side of this cabinet card photograph identifies the sitter as 'Martha McAdoo', photographed by Houghton and George at The Richmond Studio, 38 Richmond Hill, Port Elizabeth. Charles Henry George and A. T. Houghton operated their studio at this address in Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa in 1892.



Fig. 33.1 Mattie A. McAdoo with tennis racquet. Photo by The Richmond Studio (ca. 1890–91), Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. Image courtesy of Young Robertson Gallery Collection, New York. All rights reserved.

This image presents a first-person perspective, by a Black woman, on life in South Africa during the late 1800s through a moment caught in the camera's lens. It is an important archival text and visual language documenting a glimpse into the life of an African-American woman living and working abroad.¹ For example, the tennis racquet in this photographic portrait is a thoughtful commentary on the determination

1 During the nineteenth and early twentieth century, prominent African Americans understood and fully embraced the power of the photograph to influence public perceptions concerning race and class and adopted this new medium in their struggle for social, economic and political justice. African-American intellectuals like Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth, among others, believed that the photographic image had the potential to communicate ideals beyond words from a first-person perspective and promote social, political and cultural progress for Blacks and Americans in general. See Maurice O. Wallace and Shawn Michelle

of this Black woman to obtain full inclusion in the cultural norms of the day. The tennis racquet is not a simple prop but likely deliberately selected to represent a cosmopolitan awareness of contemporary life. The oldest tennis club in South Africa was the Richmond Tennis Club, established in 1877. By 1881, tennis had become a major feature of colonial life in Durban and Pietermaritzburg.² However, Blacks were largely restricted from participation in this highly popular cultural phenomenon in Africa and the US.

Who Was Martha Allan McAdoo?

Background

Before she was Martha McAdoo, Martha Eliza Allan, known as 'Mattie' to her family and friends, was born on 27 January 1868 in Columbus, Ohio where she studied singing and attended public schools (see Figs. 33.2 and 33.3). Mattie was a talented contralto who received critical praise in the local press. Commenting on her strong voice, a critic noted, 'To hear her sing, and not seeing the singer, one would judge at once it was a male tenor.'³ After graduating from the Columbus Normal High School, Mattie taught for two years in Ohio and Washington, D.C. Restless and tired of teaching, she responded to an advertisement by Mr Orpheus Myron McAdoo for singers interested in performing abroad (see Figs. 33.4 and 33.5).

Smith (eds.), *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African American Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

- 2 The period between 1775 and 1885 marked the rise of sports as leisure activity in post-industrial England and the introduction of sports, including tennis, to South Africa. While tennis served as an important part of the assimilation and mobilization of the new South African elites, Black Africans were segregated from these institutions. However, by the end of the 1880s, Blacks had formed their own tennis clubs in several towns. Djata notes, 'South African Black elites used sports as a measure of social status.' The 'imperial' sports were significant for the African elite to 'establish their "civilized credentials" in the Black community and in the eyes of whites.' Sundiata A. Djata, *Blacks at the Net: Black Achievement in the History of Tennis, Volume II* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008), p. 53.
- 3 'A Phenomenal Vocalist', *Cleveland Gazette*, 4 July 1891.



Fig. 33.2 (left) Marta 'Mattie' Eliza Allan, contralto calling card. Photo by Urlin & Pfeifer Studio, Columbus, Ohio, ca. 1884. Image courtesy of Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Public Domain.

Fig. 33.3 (right) Martha 'Mattie' Eliza Allan's high school graduation portrait. Photo by Urlin Studio, Columbus, Ohio, ca. 1885. Image courtesy of Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Public Domain.

Young Mr. McAdoo had great experience as a traveling performer. While a student at the Hampton Institute in Virginia (now Hampton University), he was a founding member of the Hampton Student Quartette.⁴ Orpheus had also been leading baritone for the Fisk Jubilee Singers, a company originally formed in 1873 by Fisk University students to raise funds for their school, an education center for Blacks, located in Nashville, Tennessee. The group's performance of Negro spirituals was well received; by 1875, they earned close to \$100,000 which enabled them to complete Jubilee Hall. Their rich success inspired the formation of similar groups of Jubilee Singers in other Black colleges including Hampton, Tuskegee and Wilberforce, to name a few. In 1886, Orpheus

4 Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff, *Out of Sight: The Rise of African American Popular Music 1889–1895* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), p. 120.

and the troupe, under the direction of Frederick J. Loudin, commenced a worldwide tour that included England, Australia, India, Japan and Burma. Three years later, McAdoo built on his experience with the Fisk Jubilee Singers to form his own company.⁵ Trusting Mr McAdoo's success and experience in the international performing arena, Mattie signed a contract as soloist with *Orpheus Myron McAdoo's Virginia Concert Company and Jubilee Singers* for a three-year tour including Great Britain, Glasgow, India and the West Indies.



Fig. 33.4 (left) Orpheus Myron McAdoo, formal portrait. Photo by Melba Studio, Melbourne, Australia, ca. 1892. Image courtesy of Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Public Domain.

Fig. 33.5 (right) Orpheus Myron McAdoo, formal portrait, 'Orpheus M. McAdoo, Sole Proprietor and Director of the Original Jubilee Singers'. Photo by Talma Studio, Melbourne and Sydney, Australia, ca. 1892. Image courtesy of Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Public Domain.

What would drive a twenty-two-year-old, educated and gainfully employed Negro woman in 1890 to leave her familiar life behind and migrate to faraway lands?

⁵ Ibid.

Life in Ohio and Beyond

Mattie Allan was born during the Civil War era, a period of great tumult that probably influenced her decision to migrate abroad. Although Ohio outlawed slavery in 1802 and played a major role in the abolitionist movement and the Underground Railroad, discrimination on public transportation, in theaters, restaurants and jobs persisted. African-American women's employment choices were generally limited to teaching, midwifery, and housekeeping, including working as a maid, cook or laundress.⁶ Mattie, however, was aware of her well-received singing and performance talents and her inner drive to be a success. She saw the opportunity to escape the bonds of racism and sexism and realize her dream to be an international star.

Mattie's home state's newspaper, the *Cleveland Gazette*, a Black-owned weekly dedicated to examining issues impacting the African-American community, describes her as 'well educated, having the advantage of being schooled along with white pupils in the mixed schools of Columbus.' 'Tall and stately looking, very fair, could easily pass for white, did she desire.' Commenting on her impending foray abroad, the paper noted, 'To many a young woman, the idea of such a trip, far away from home, amidst strangers would have caused them to recoil, but Miss Allen is quite masculine in her will, and nothing ever daunts her. The circumscribed limit of the school room was always an undesirable restraint to her. She was restless and like a caged bird longed for freedom, for the possibilities and probabilities of the great world. As she often said, 'I want to do something and be something, I want to make a name!''⁷

Orpheus McAdoo understood the potential for his group in South Africa and Australia. During his previous tours with the Fisk Jubilee singers, he witnessed the transformative power of music on both white and Black audiences. He believed that a group of talented, cultivated representatives of the Black race would challenge the stereotypes held by local whites and would have a profound effect on African Blacks. Dress, style and manner were key components of the group's acceptance by the South African and Australian communities.⁸

6 'African Americans in Ohio', *Ohio Memory*, <https://www.ohiomemory.org>

7 'A Phenomenal Vocalist.' In 1891-93, Cleveland's [African-American] *Gazette* reported regularly on the activities of the Jubilee Singers.

8 Information compiled from various materials from the archives of Yale University underscore the enormous success of McAdoo's singers in South Africa. Orpheus M.

Dress and Presentation through Photographs

Orpheus and Mattie carefully chose the style of dress in which the group would present themselves to the public. They understood the powerful role of clothing and style in presenting a sophisticated and professional aura. Mattie's style and confidence did not go unnoticed by the press (see Fig. 33.6).



Fig. 33.6 Studio portrait of Mattie and Orpheus McAdoo in stylish dress. Photo by Alba Studio, Sydney, Australia, ca. 1892. Image courtesy of Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Public Domain.

McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Presenting themselves as talented, cultivated representatives of their race debunked many of the negative stereotypes held by the white colonists, while delighting the educated South African Blacks (Abbott and Seroff, *Out of Sight*, p. 121).

Campbell notes, 'The McAdoo Singers' visit touched South Africans across boundaries of race and class, but it had its most galvanic effect on educated African Christians. To "progressive" Africans, caught in the ebb tide of nineteenth-century liberalism, the Singers offered a testament of hope, a confirmation not only of prevailing beliefs about African-American progress and attainment but of their own imagined future. The Singers' dress was dapper, their demeanour urbane. They spoke English fluently, a hallmark of elite status in South Africa. While separated from slavery by just a generation, they moved easily through South African society as honorary whites, performing for mixed audiences and earning the plaudits of white society.' James Campbell, 'Models and Metaphors: Industrial Education in the United States and South Africa', in Ran Greenstein (ed.), *Comparative Perspectives on South Africa* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc. 1998), pp. 90–134 (p. 109).

The most superb dress seen for a long time on the stage here was worn Tuesday night by Madame Mattie Allan McAdoo. It was a delicate sea-green floral silk, with a short train. The V-shaped apron was embroidered in crimson true lovers' knots, two rows of crimson made the hem, and small crimson bows were on the short sleeves, also exquisite lace a diamond necklace, brooch and bracelets, and enormous pearls finishing off the most elaborate dress worn here by any singer for a long time. Mrs. McAdoo is a graceful woman.⁹

Madame Mattie Allen McAdoo is a chic dresser. Her pink brocade with frills and lace jacket was a whiff from Paris, I'm sure. But her putty colored cloth great coat, vandyked on the hem, with a trained skirt trailing underneath, topped by a violet hat, is charming. Now what other woman would be daring enough to wear a violet hat, with violet tulle veil, ending in immense loops and ends of tulle waving under the left ear? Not many...¹⁰



Fig. 33.7 Mattie A. McAdoo as a soloist. Image courtesy of Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Public Domain.

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- 9 Yale University, Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers. Australian newspaper clipping, Scrapbooks 1886–95.
- 10 Yale University, Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers, Scrapbooks 1886–95.



Fig. 33.8 Mattie A. McAdoo (2nd from left) with her quartet. Image courtesy of Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Public Domain.

Mattie and Orpheus also understood the power of the photograph to create perceptions around race, class and gender and called upon it as a way to promote their musical genius and also speak for social justice. Their studio portraits were a contrast to servile stereotypical images of the time. Carefully constructed studio portraits in Victorian formal attire with proper accoutrements, including hair and accessories, highlight the importance of the presentation of the self to counteract common beliefs and negative stereotypes of Negroes of the period (see Figs. 33.4–9).

These photographs show bold figures possessed of great character, as displayed through their posture and comportment. They also highlight a sense of cosmopolitan life. These images present a first-person perspective, from a Black woman, of life in South Africa, Australia and America at the time through a moment caught in the camera's lens. It is an important archival text documenting a period (1890 to the early 1900s) in the life of a Black family living and working abroad.

On to South Africa and Beyond

On 21 June 1890, The Virginia Concert Company and Jubilee Singers opened at Cape Town, South Africa to a large audience. 'On Saturday evening, the hall was packed from floor to ceiling with a most enthusiastic audience, who testified by their rapturous applause that they heartily enjoyed the various efforts of the singers and the fine programme presented.'¹¹

Orpheus McAdoo used creative strategies to navigate race including singing 'quaint, melodious and charming singing' of traditional gospel songs designed to highlight racial uplift.¹² Educated Black South Africans also embraced the company and felt proud of their accomplishments.

The company was highly successful, performing in large cities and small towns from 1890–92. Their singing and performance style had a profound effect on both white and Black African audiences. Many listeners found the spiritual songs of slavery inspiring. Scholars credit McAdoo's tour as a defining moment in the development of South African choral music, pointing to the rise of the 'African Jubilee Singers' as a by-product of the Virginia Jubilee Singer's tour.¹³ Bloemfontein has quite taken to the Jubilee Singers, and considering the admirable manner in which the arrangements are carried out, and the decided talent of the performers, to say nothing of the unique character of the entertainment provided, it is no wonder that they have been received in our midst in the most enthusiastic manner. Since their first appearance on Friday evening, which was under the distinguished patronage of Mrs. Reitz and a large party from the Presidency, they have been rewarded with

11 Yale University, Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers, Scrapbooks 1886–95.

12 Chinua Akimaro Thelwell discusses McAdoo's specific application of racial uplift politics as a strategy to counter the commonplace notions of Black regressive behavior. He highlights McAdoo's canny ability to merge Black civility and refinement and minstrelsy on the stage to promote a new racial narrative. Chinua Akimaro Thelwell, "'Modernizing' Hybridity: McAdoo's Jubilee Singers, McAdoo's Minstrels, and Racial Uplift Politics in South Africa, 1890–1898', *The Journal of South African and American Studies*, 15:1 (2014), 3–28, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17533171.2013.864169>.

13 For a detailed examination of the historical impact of McAdoo's spiritual songs of slavery on Black South African choral practices, see Veit Erlmann, *Music, Modernity, and the Global Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) and Idem, *African Stars: Studies in Black South African Performance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

crowded houses, such as have never been witnessed in the Town Hall for the purpose of hearing any professional performance, in the history of our City. Mr. McAdoo is a genuine type of the man of the world. He has travelled all over the civilized globe, and is a keen observer of human nature, and a man with whom the most learned can spend an hour's profitable conversation.'¹⁴

Mattie Allan was especially favored. Local newspapers noted, 'Miss Allan has a genuine Tenor voice, which she manipulates artistically and charms her audience greatly.'¹⁵ 'Miss Mattie Allan, the lady tenor, created a perfect furore, [sic] and received the honor of a double encore, the audience being particularly delighted with her charming jodeling [sic].'¹⁶ 'Miss Mattie Allen was encored over and over again, her singularly beautiful voice being thoroughly appreciated.'¹⁷ However, while the company's musical talent was appreciated, their stay in South Africa was not without incident.

Race and Performance in South Africa

While viewed as 'Negro' in the United States, the company was reclassified in different terms, including 'Colored' in South Africa.¹⁸ A newspaper article reflects the confusion regarding the troupe's racial identities. Under the heading, 'Arrivals' the article states, 'The Jubilee Singers arrived yesterday and created quite a commotion at the Grand Hotel, where they are staying, it being somewhat unusual to see such a large number of creoles, quadroons, and West Indian natives gathered together at one dinner table. The gentlemen of the company are all fine-looking fellows, and there is always a fascination about the large dark eyes of a creole or quadroon lady, so that altogether it will be easily understood that the arrival of the singers attracted considerable attention.'¹⁹

14 Yale University, Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers.

15 'The Jubilee Singers,' *The Wynberg Times*, 13 July 1895.

16 'Amusements. Jubilee Singers,' *The Friend of the Free State and Bloemfontein Gazette*, 28 January 1896.

17 'The Jubilee Singers,' *The Teadock Register*, 17 April 1896.

18 Thewell asserts that McAdoo strategically used South Africa's three-tiered racial classification system to his advantage by claiming to be a 'Coloured' American, to gain social and cultural entrée. Thewell, "'Modernizing" Hybridity'.

19 Yale University, Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers, Scrapbooks 1886-95.

The troupe was given status as 'honorary white,' which was bestowed upon all Blacks as non-African visitors.²⁰ They could travel over all regions in South Africa, including the mines and after sunset.²¹ However, to be sure, not everyone was enamored with the idea of Blacks representing American ideals. In an interview with *The Australian Christian World*, McAdoo related the group's encounter with the 'colour line' in South Africa. When the singers were invited by the American Consul to a 4th of July celebration in Cape Town, McAdoo revealed that the consul received a letter denouncing the invitation of 'niggers' to a public dinner. The writer was a Georgian from America who stated he had never sat at the same table as a Black man and never would. The Counsel published the letter verbatim to the consternation of the Jubilee Singers' supporters who demanded the Georgian show his face.²² While this led to great advertising for the company, all was not well.

While preparing to leave Cape Town for the interior, the company was reminded of the strong racial prejudice, particularly in Transvaal and the Orange Free State, where there was a 9pm curfew for Blacks. Native-born Black Africans were required to have passes for travel in the country and could not own a business. While the company did secure a special proclamation written in Dutch and English that allowed the group free movement and safe passage, McAdoo and his members were uneasy with this prejudicial treatment, specifically the Pass System.²³ In a letter to his mentor, General S. C. Armstrong, founder and president of Hampton Institute, he wrote: 'There is no country in the world where prejudice is so strong as here in Africa. The native here is treated as badly as ever the slave was treated in Georgia. Here in Africa the native laws are most unjust; such as any Christian person would be ashamed of. Do you credit a law in a civilized community compelling every man of dark skin, even though he is a

20 Campbell, 'Models and Metaphors', p. 109.

21 The New Jagersfontein Mining & Exploration Company, Limited presented a pass to 'Mr. McAdoo & Party of 8 to visit the Company's Compounds and works within the Mining Area June 1896, after Sunset'. (Yale University, Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers.) Black South Africans were generally only given restricted access in daytime during working hours.

22 'The Jubilee Singers,' *The Australian Christian World*, 30 June 1892, p. 5.

23 Ibid.

citizen of another country, to be in his house by 9 o'clock at night, or he be arrested? [...] Black people who are seen out after 9 o'clock must have passes from their masters. Indeed, it is so strict that natives have to get passes for day travel.'²⁴

Upon reaching Durban, McAdoo recalled that the company settled into their rooms booked three months prior, but they were asked to leave. The landlady informed them that because they were Black, she would lose her borders and be ruined and pleaded, 'for the sake of my dear daughters, you must go.' Orpheus McAdoo assured the woman that 'I have six ladies upstairs, who have fair, white souls, even though their skins are dark [...] I'll get all my young men to sign an agreement not to make love to your daughters, so you'll be safe on that score.' But to no avail. New accommodation had to be found in the pouring rain and it was close to midnight before they were resettled. It so happened that the racist Georgian from Cape Town was courting one of the landlady's daughters and browbeat the woman with warnings of miscegenation until she relented. McAdoo related the incident to the audience from the stage after a thrilling and well-received performance. As fate would have it, the daughters were in the audience along with the racist Georgian suitor, who was accosted and badly beaten by his fellow concert goers.²⁵

In late January 1892, the company embarked on a tour of Australia and New Zealand. But before leaving South Africa, Orpheus and Mattie married in a noon ceremony at the residence of Mr And Mrs William Bunton, followed by a reception at the Grand Hotel, Port Elizabeth, Cape Colony, South Africa. The African-American weekly, *The Cleveland Gazette*, which closely documented the concert company with a special emphasis and pride in their native daughter Mattie, highlighted a 'Wedding in the Transvaal' noting that 'Exceptionally fine invitations announcing the marriage, January 27th [1891] at Port Elizabeth, Cape Colony, South Africa, of Miss Mattie E. Allen of Columbus, Ohio, and

24 'A Letter from South Africa: Black Laws in the Orange Free State in Africa,' [n.d.], published in *Southern Workman*, 19 November 1890: 120, reprinted in Josephine Wright, 'Orpheus Myron McAdoo — Singer, Impresario', *The Black Perspective in Music* 4:3 (1976), 320–27 (p. 322).

25 'The Jubilee Singers,' *The Australian Christian World*, 30 June 1892, p. 5. Also, 'The Jubilee Singers. Orpheus is interviewed,' *The Star*, 17 September 1891.

Orpheus Myron McAdoo have reached many of their friends in this country'²⁶ (see Fig. 33.9). It is important to note that the Marriage Justice considered not marrying Mattie and Orpheus given that the bride had 'extremely fair skin, whose father is white' which would violate cross-racial marriages in South Africa. Despite her appearance to many as 'white', Mattie never chose to adopt a white identity and instead she strongly embraced her African heritage. She proudly identified herself as 'Negro' and the marriage proceeded.

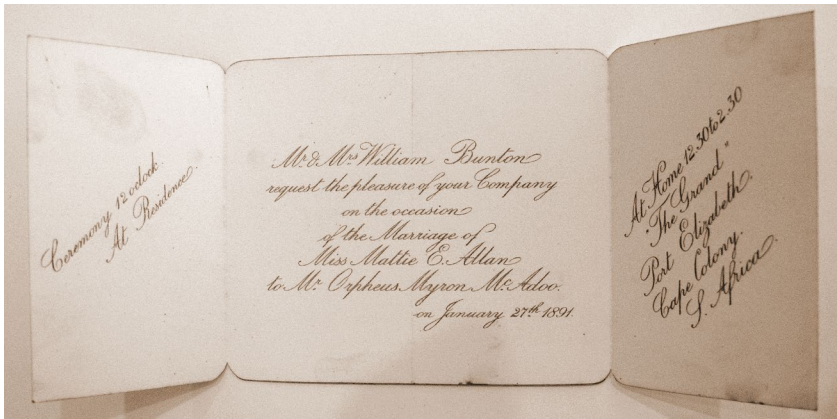


Fig. 33.9 Invitation to the marriage of Miss Mattie E. Allan to Mr. Orpheus Myron McAdoo, Port Elizabeth, Cape Colony, South Africa, 1892. Image courtesy of Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Public Domain.

While touring in Tasmania, Mattie gave birth to Master Myron Holder Ward McAdoo. 'Master Myron Ward McAdoo "The Jubilee Baby" arrived in Hobart Tasmania, Thursday afternoon, February 9, 1893 at 4:20 o'clock. Master Myron presents his love and compliments' (see Fig. 33.10).

26 'A Wedding in Transvaal,' *Cleveland Gazette*, 10 January 1891.

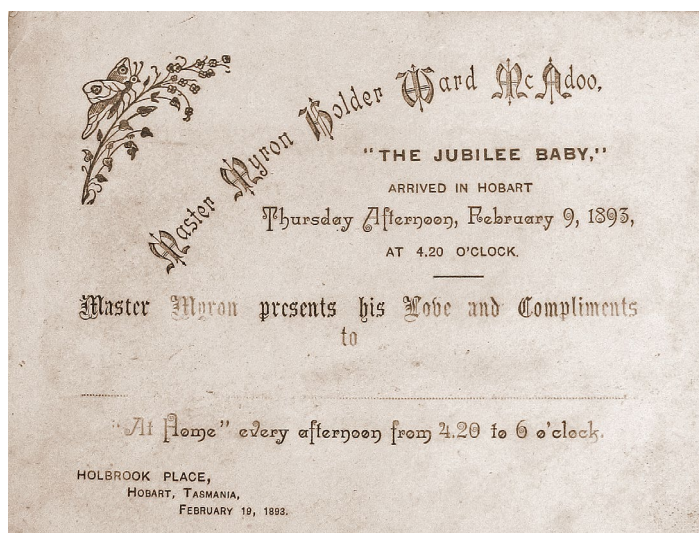


Fig. 33.10 Birth announcement for Master Myron Holder Ward McAdoo, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia, 9 February 1893. Image courtesy of Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Public Domain.



Fig. 33.11 Baby Myron McAdoo with puppy. Photo by W. Laws Caney Studio, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, ca. 1895–96. Image courtesy of Young Robertson Gallery Collection, New York. All rights reserved.



Fig. 33.12 Baby Myron McAdoo with rocking horse. Photo by W. Laws Caney Studio, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, ca. 1895–96. Image courtesy of Young Robertson Gallery Collection, New York. All rights reserved.

The company left Australia and New Zealand returned to South Africa in 1895 for a second tour. This time, responding to changes in musical tastes, the company broadened its repertoire to include comedy and ministry. The group's name was changed from *the Virginia Concert Company and Jubilee Singers* and renamed *McAdoo's Minstrel and Vaudeville Company* and included a variety of singers and performers²⁷ (see Figs. 33.13 and 33.14).



Fig. 33.13 Jubilee Singers as vaudeville concert singers. Note little Myron McAdoo at bottom right, ca. 1898. Image courtesy of Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Public Domain.

27 Abbott and Seroff, *Out of Sight*, p. 127.



Fig. 33.14 McAdoo Company performers. Image courtesy of Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Public Domain.

McAdoo's company left South Africa and went back to Australia in 1898 and, while touring there, Orpheus returned to the US to assemble a modern African-American minstrel troupe²⁸ named *The Georgia Minstrels and Alabama Cakewalkers*. Mattie was left in charge of the Jubilee Singers in his stead and the company continued to flourish.²⁹ McAdoo's

28 Whiteoak notes that Black American 'blackface' artists entered the minstrel field after the Civil War, noting that, 'to be successful, they had to adopt and adapt the demeaning blackface stereotyping and comic distortion of themselves and their culture. [...] While white minstrels in burnt-cork make-up were respected for cleverness of their parody [...] African-American minstrels were often perceived by colonial Australians as just playing their African-American selves — mildly exotic and inherently amusing live exhibits.' John Whiteoak, 'A Good Black Music Story?: Black American Stars in Australian Musical Entertainment Before "Jazz"', in Stephen Loy, Julie Rickwood and Samantha Bennett (eds.), *Popular Music, Stars and Stardom* (Acton: Australian National University Press, 2018), pp. 37–54, <http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/n4313/pdf/ch03.pdf>. To combat this misinterpretation of African-American performance styles, McAdoo's Georgia Minstrels and Alabama Cakewalkers introduced the new 'ragtime' and cakewalk-style minstrelsy to Australia. See John Whiteoak, *Playing Ad Lib: Improvisatory Music in Australia, 1836–1970* (Sydney: Currency Press, 1999), pp. 116–34.

29 'Orpheus and His Lyre, On a Big Tour. Interview with Mr. McAdoo', *Weekly Edition*, 14 November 1896. It is important to note the great success of the group at this

Minstrels knew their audience and were praised for the 'freshness and originality' of their show, which included a magnificent performance of 'the Cake Walk'. The ability to reinvent the group served McAdoo well. He noted, 'I have met with financial success far and away beyond my wildest dreams and anticipations. In all my travels, I have met with the most flattering receptions, and the press generally have been unanimous in their kind expressions of praise.' He continued, 'Future Hopes. When I have finished with my present line of business, my crowning ambition is to open a first-class Coloured Opera Company in Great Britain, return to South Africa, and my *ultima thule* is Australia, and home to Virginia.'³⁰ This was not to be. Six weeks after the end of the Australia tour, on 17 July 1900, Orpheus McAdoo took ill and died at the age of forty-two.³¹ He is buried in Waverly Cemetery, Sydney Australia (see Fig. 33.12).

A Return to the US

After her husband's death and funeral, Mattie returned to the US with her son Myron, initially living in Cleveland. She later moved to Boston where she educated Myron and finally settled in Washington, D.C. where she spent the remainder of her life.

Meanwhile, McAdoo's Jubilee Company rebranded itself as, 'McAdoo's Fisk Jubilee Singers'. They performed in Australia and New Zealand for the next three years. Some members broke away from the company and formed their own performing groups. Orpheus's brother Eugene created a troupe and travelled to England with much success. Eventually McAdoo's Jubilee Company became integrated with white Australians and continued performing in the country into the early 1930's.³²

Back in the US, Mattie continued performing, forming a new group, this time with her sister Lula Allen and her brother Robert Allen (see Fig. 33. 15). She also performed as a soloist and with a quartette (see Figs. 33.7 and 33.8). Mattie became a highly successful businesswoman in her own right, no doubt building on her experiences abroad to co-manage

point. In this interview, McAdoo notes that the company had given 726 concerts in South Africa and over 3,000 in Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand.

30 'The Jubilee Singers. Orpheus is interviewed,' *The Star*, 17 September 1891.

31 Abbott and Seroff, *Out of Sight*, pp. 139–40.

32 *Ibid.*, pp. 140–43.



Fig. 33.15 Broadside advertisement for Opera House performance by Mattie McAdoo and her brother Robert Allen and sister Lula Allen. Note the surname has changed from Allan to Allen. Image courtesy of Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Public Domain.

the concert company while adjusting to changing cultural norms and new personalities. Her estate notes an exchange receipt (dated 10 April 1901) from the London, Paris & American Bank for \$27,622.60 (close to approx. \$700,000 today). She owned many rental properties in Boston and Cambridge, Massachusetts, invested in several commercial interests including an Australian gold dredging company in New South Wales, insurance companies and land, while providing loans to friends and community members (at times, holding stock share certificates as collateral).³³

Mattie was publically identified as a 'race woman' due to her focused efforts to identify and support causes that presented clear and immediate benefits to African Americans. As a woman, she believed that she could play a significant role in improving the lives of African Americans. She was well aware of the negative impact of racism and sexism yet she was

³³ Yale University, Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers, Diaries, Mattie McAdoo, 1915, box 3, folder 38. This area of McAdoo's life is the subject of my further research.

not held hostage by these factors. She consciously accepted her role as a leader in her family and the international community at large.

Mattie's diaries and day planners indicate that she maintained an active community, political and social life and further support her identity as a 'race woman':³⁴

- 4 January 1915 she marks 'My Sweetheart's birthday' [fifteen years after his death];
- 9 February 1915 she notes, 'My son's birthday. I feel very joyous for some reason, been singing + dancing all morn[ing]...'
- On Sunday, 14 March 1915 she attended a meeting at the Tremont Theatre, Boston by the Boston Equal Suffrage Association for Good Government; speakers included Mr Butler R. Wilson, director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People;
- she notes the 18 April 1915 protests supported by more than 3,000 African Americans led by African American publisher, William Monroe Trotter against the white supremacist propagandist film, 'Birth of a Nation';
- Sunday, 25 April 1915, 'Dr. Crothers had a meeting at his church', [where he spoke on 'The Need of a Better Understanding of the Negro Problem in the North.'];
- Sunday, 30 May 1915, 'I went to hear Dr. DuBois. He was simply splendid as he is always. Faneuil Hall was crowded...'

The Boston Record noted, 'Mrs. Mattie McAdoo, one of the best known colored educators, and reputed to be the wealthiest woman of her race in this country, has started on her seventh trip round the world. Ten years ago she came from far-off Antipodes to educate her son in this city. He has completed his studies, and with his mother will tour the world. They will go to Sydney, Australia, via Vancouver, and thence round the world.'³⁵ Her phonebook contained the numbers for Dorothy Porter, scholar and longtime librarian of Howard University; the artist and Howard University scholar and professor Dr. James Porter; pioneering

34 Yale University, Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers, Diaries, Mattie McAdoo, 1915, box 3, folder 38.

35 Yale University, Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers.

biochemist, Dr. Herbert Scurlock, and the Scurlock Photography Studio, owned and operated by his brother Addison N. Scurlock.³⁶

Mattie worked tirelessly to help to improve the quality of life of her fellow African Americans. She became an advocate for educational, economic, social and political reforms. She supported causes centering on racial equality and progress (see Fig. 33.16). Towards the end of her life, Mattie was the General Secretary for the Phyllis Wheatley Young Women's Christian Association of Washington, D.C. from 1921 until her death on 7 August 1936.³⁷ The Phyllis Wheatley YWCA was started by forward-thinking African-American women to provide a space for 'colored' women and girls for housing, training, and self-improvement. It was named after Phyllis Wheatley (1753–84), who was one of the first professional poets and writers in the US.



Fig. 33.16 National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Conference Committee Chairmen. Mattie A. McAdoo, second row, second from left. Image courtesy of Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Public Domain.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Yale University, Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers, Phyllis Wheatley YMCA contract, box 3, folder 42.

McAdoo's obituary identifies her as a 'Race Woman,' noting, 'Mrs. McAdoo was well known as a fighter for the Negro's rights. She was a member of the Interracial Committee of the Federal Council of Churches, a member of the Executive and Race Relations Committees of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and an active worker in the Community Chest (an important local charity providing relief to less fortunate residents of Washington, D.C.)'³⁸ (see Fig. 33.16.)

At her funeral, Rev Halley B. Taylor described Mattie as, 'never too busy to aid the race'.³⁹ Those honoring her life were varied: 'Persons from all walks of life, colored and white [...] fellow YWCA workers, school teachers, lawyers, physicians, an ex-Judge, laymen and young women, who had been schooled in the Young Women's Christian Association under her, present.'⁴⁰ Howard University professor and visual artist, Dr. James Porter was a pallbearer.

The experiences of Mattie Allen McAdoo, a woman of African descent, highlight her contribution as an active participant and cultural producer in the transnational history and development of African diaspora culture. Her story enriches the scholarly as well as conventional understandings of the public contributions of women of African descent to the history of travel and migration, performance, and activism in the diaspora. Mattie successfully navigated her roles as wife, mother, performer and African-American woman during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. During her migration from a student and musical prodigy in Ohio and a teacher in Washington, DC, to her travels as an international performer and to her return to the US as 'race woman', she did something, became something and she made a name!

38 Yale University, Orpheus M. McAdoo and Mattie Allen McAdoo Papers, Clippings related to death of Mattie McAdoo, ca. 1936, box 3, folder 41, '[Mrs. McAdoo] Served Here as Executive: Traveled as Jubilee Singer; Leaves Son and Two Sisters'.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

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34. ‘I Don’t Pay Those Borders No Mind At All’: Audley E. Moore (‘Queen Mother’ Moore) — Grassroots Global Traveler and Activist

Sharon Harley

In this chapter I shall explore the Pan-Africanist work in the US and abroad of leftist, working-class African American activist Audley ‘Queen Mother’ Moore. I first met Moore at the 1970 ‘Atlanta Black Power Conference’. I knew little about her at the time, except as an iconic Black Power and Nationalist leader of the Black Reparations movement. In later years, guided by a desire to explore multiple migration frames and to move beyond the small circle of college-educated middle-class US Pan-Africanists previously studied, I enlarged my migration/diaspora focus to incorporate the thinking, activism and travels of prominent working-class activist Queen Mother Moore.¹ How, for example, did

1 See, for instance, Sharon Harley, ‘Mary Church Terrell: Genteel Militant’ in Leon F. Litwack and August Meier (eds.), *Black Leaders of the Nineteenth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), pp. 307–21 and Sharon Harley, ‘Anna J. Cooper: A Voice for Black Women’, in Sharon Harley and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn (eds.), *The Afro-American Woman: Struggles and Images* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1978; reprint Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1997), pp. 87–96.

Moore discuss class (one's education, occupation, family background, status, and income) and its impact on the global travel, political thinking, and cultural engagements of US-based twentieth-century Pan-Africanist women, and, in turn, how did her ideas and movements effect our understanding of Pan-Africanism and Black women's global migration?² How did Moore's work and interests connect with the long-established Black US nationalist traditions?³

In his impressive biography of another member of this group, Shirley Graham Du Bois,⁴ entitled *Race Woman: The Lives of Shirley Graham Du Bois*, historian Gerald Horne offers a rich account of Du Bois' leftist, Pan-Africanist, and Communist leanings and travels that are nearly comparable to Audley Moore — however, he, like a number of scholars writing on this topic, makes no mention of Moore.⁵

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- 2 Anna Julia Cooper, part of an earlier generation of Pan-African intellectuals along with fellow Oberlin College graduates Mary Church Terrell and Ida Alexander Gibbs Hunt, had attended and occasionally delivered talks at Pan-African meetings in Europe in the early twentieth century, at the invitation of fellow US Pan-Africanist W. E. B. Du Bois. In 1900, Cooper traveled to London to deliver a speech entitled 'The Negro Problem in America,' at the first Pan-African Conference and was elected a member of its Executive Committee. Hunt attended and served in an official capacity at the meetings of the First African Congress in Paris in 1919, and, the second conference, also in Paris, in 1921. At the London meeting of the Congress, in 1923, she delivered a paper titled 'The Coloured Races and the League of Nations.'
 - 3 See Sharon Harley, 'Race Women: Cultural Productions and Radical Labor Politics', in Sharon Harley (ed.), *Women's Labor in the Global Economy: Speaking in Multiple Voices* (Piscataway: Rutgers University Press, 2007), pp. 9–27.
 - 4 Biographies of these women appear in *Dictionary of American Negro Biography*, edited by Rayford W. Logan and Michael R. Winston (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982) but few leftist or working class Pan-Africanist Black women, like Shirley Graham Du Bois and Audley Moore, appear. A biographical sketch of one leftist global traveler who served as a Russian resident-in-exile Eslanda Cardozo Goode Robeson, appears; her prominent family background may have contributed to her inclusion. Moreover, the multi-lingual and global traveler Terrell, unlike Robinson, Graham Du Bois and Moore, also attended and delivered speeches at predominantly white women's domestic and international meetings including the International Congress of Women and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. See Stephanie Y. Evans, 'African American Women Scholars and International Research: Dr. Anna Julia Cooper's Legacy of Study Abroad', *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 18 (2009), 77–100.
 - 5 ⁵ Thanks to the recent work of Ula Y. Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey: The Life & Times of Amy Jacques Garvey* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 2002); Carole Boyce Davies' *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Erik McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham: Duke

Until recently, there were far fewer written accounts of working-class female activism and global travels, and fewer autobiographical texts written by the less socially prominent women activists compared to those by and about educated middle-class women. Yet working-class women were there, working diligently for racial and social justice in the world — traveling across the US and the Atlantic Ocean to deliver talks, attend meetings, and promote woman's causes in Africa, Europe, and, occasionally, in Asia. One such figure was Audley Moore, the focus of this essay. In keeping with the African and the diasporan cultural linkages and philosophies she espoused, Moore urged people to fight and pray for 'the freedom of Africans everywhere at home and abroad.'⁶ She attended Kwame Nkrumah's memorial services in Guinea and Ghana, in 1972, respectively. While in Ghana, the Ashanti people honored her with the title by which she would become known: 'Queen Mother.'

In this essay I will explore how class influenced the political vision, global travels, cultural imaginings, and representations of a Black woman. Many scholars who write about the complex nexus of these

University Press, 2011) and especially historian Ashley Farmer and McDuffie, we know far more about Audley Moore's life-long dedication to Pan-Africanist/Black nationalist liberation struggle and her radical diaspora philosophy. See Farmer's *Remaking Black Power: How Black Women Transformed an Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017) and her 'Mothers of Pan-Africanism: Audley Moore and Dara Abubakari,' in the special issue of *Women, Gender, and Families of Color*, 4 (Fall 2016), 274–95; also Farmer, 'Reframing African American Women's Grassroots Organizing: Audley Moore and the Universal Association of Ethiopian Women, 1957–1963,' *The Journal of African American History*, 101:1–2 (Winter-Spring 2016), 69–96; and McDuffie, "'I Wanted a Communist Philosophy, But I Wanted Us to Have a Chance to Organize our People': The Diasporic Radicalism of Queen Mother Audley Moore and the Origins of Black Power', *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal*, 3 (2010), 181–95 (p. 183). As these scholars and others document, Moore was not alone as a left-leaning grassroots Pan Africanist whose global travel and political/cultural engagements extended from Harlem and elsewhere in the US to the Soviet Union, China, Africa, and back. See for instance, Mark Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity: Communism and African Americans, 1919–1936* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998) and Keisha Blain, *To Set the World on Fire: Black Nationalist Women and the Global Struggle for Freedom* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018). The recent work of Claudrena Harold has exposed the failure of radical leftists during the 1920s and 1930s and contemporary scholars to acknowledge the political and intellectual sophistication of working class — see her *The Rise and Fall of the Garvey Movement in the Urban South, 1918–1942* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

6 See Farmer, 'Reframing African American Woman's Grassroots Organizing,' p. 93.



Fig. 34.1 Audley Moore. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

experiences and perspectives, as related to the Black global and US woman's experiences in the twentieth century, make no mention of Moore. This essay explores the strategies and intellectual frameworks she employed in her Pan-Africanist thinking and activism. In doing so, I seek to broaden the understanding of her work in particular, and Black women's class- and identity-related engagements with global, political and cultural work more generally. This project exposes the tremendous loss to Pan-African historical and cultural narratives due to the historical obfuscation of women, particularly working-class Black women, from the work of global and migration scholars. This essay seeks to offer a critical account of how gender and class influenced Black women's physical, political, and ideological travels in the US and abroad. Fortunately, there are a series of oral interviews and media appearances

with Audley Moore, in which she recounts her life experiences, political experiences and global travels.⁷

Born on 27 July 1898 in New Iberia, Louisiana, Audley Eloise Moore experienced the personal pain and humiliation of life in Jim Crow Louisiana at an early age. Exacerbated by knowing that one of her grandfathers had been lynched and a great-grandmother raped, the death of her father when she was in elementary school was a blow that might have fostered Moore's resolve to create a strong independent life. Her mother had died when Audley was born, so she was orphaned early. Alone, Audley assumed financial and parental responsibility for her two younger sisters, requiring her to end her education at the fourth grade level. It was wartime, so she relocated with her siblings to New Orleans in search of employment. She worked as a hairdresser after graduating from the Poro hairdressing program, and as domestic service worker. Like so many Black people across the US, during the First World War and especially during the inter-war 1920s and 1930s, she was drawn to the Black Nationalist movement, African and diaspora liberation, and the self-determinist ideology of Black Jamaican Marcus Garvey, under the aegis of his Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) established in 1914. While in New Orleans, Moore became active in the local UNIA chapter, organized in 1920 by a small group of local women. Its membership was mostly made up of working-class women and men. It grew exponentially, with reportedly more than 2,000 members six months after its founding. In response to Louisiana's long and infamous history of racial segregation and trauma, a record number of chapters blossomed in the state. Moore and her sisters relocated to California and Illinois before eventually settling in Harlem, New York City, in the 1920s — the epicenter of the Garvey movement and the new home of Black US, African and Caribbean diasporan populations.

In an interview published in a 1973 issue of the *Black Scholar*, Moore reflected on Garvey's visual, spiritual, and political lure to her and other

7 See transcript of Cheryl Townsend Gilkes interview with Moore for the Black Women Oral History (BWOH) Project at the Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University's Schlesinger Library; 'Queen Mother Moore,' *The Black Scholar* 4:6/7 (March-April 1973), 47–55 (p. 51); a 1981 interview in the Oral History of the American Left: Racial Histories Collection at the Tamiment Library at NYU; Audley, 'Queen Mother' Moore Interview (1985), posted by AfroMarxist, 29 April 2018, <https://youtu.be/AQHixAltclg>

Louisiana Blacks, proclaiming: 'He brought something very beautiful to us — Africa for the Africans. That was our inheritance. Africa for the Africans at home and abroad. That we were somebody. [...] That we had a right to be restored to our proper selves.'⁸ Noting peripherally a socioeconomic dimension to her recollections of her struggles and early motivation to become a political activist, Moore announced before an admiring audience at the 1980 Wayne State University symposium, 'Tribute to the Revolutionary Legacy of African Women': 'It was not abject poverty that drove [her] to the struggle, but a burning desire for freedom' on the US and world stages. This 'burning desire' would continue lifelong as a driving force for Moore's involvement with new Black nationalist/Pan-Africanist arenas and movements.⁹

The UNIA experience was a microcosm of what women encountered as they joined, led, and worked within national organizations that aimed to achieve racial and social justice in the US and internationally. Historian Ula Taylor and others have documented that while in separate entities within the male-led UNIA organization, women conspicuously served in key leadership positions (albeit not with the same level of influence and power) in this Black-Nationalist-based global organization. There were female presidents and vice-presidents of the women's division and heads of the Black Cross Nurses in the US and the Caribbean. Undeniably, migration and movement were key elements of the UNIA and Black liberation organizations, including the Universal African Black Cross Nurses auxiliary. Founded in 1921 by UNIA Vice President Henrietta Vinton Davis, this Black diaspora women's grassroots organization provided healthcare services and nursing training for Blacks in Harlem and other US cities as well as to members in Belize, Nova Scotia, Panama, and Trinidad and Tobago. While compartmentalized and not necessarily progressive, Black women's global activism, community engagement, and leadership within the UNIA was not lost on Moore or other Black US UNIA women activists. She asserted that the UNIA 'always had a Lady President along with our President General, and everybody looked up to the women that Garvey celebrated with deepest respect.'¹⁰

8 'Queen Mother Moore', p. 51.

9 See transcript of Cheryl Townsend Gilkes interview with Moore for the Black Women Oral History (BWOH) Project at the Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University's Schlesinger Library.

10 Taylor, *The Veiled Garvey*; see transcript of Cheryl Townsend Gilkes interview with Moore for the Black Women Oral History (BWOH) Project at the Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University's Schlesinger Library.

Over time, Moore's global interests extended beyond the UNIA to other international political movements, including the Communist Party of the USA (CP), and she was not alone. Other Black political activists were drawn to both the CP and UNIA, despite their opposing ideological positions on race and culture. In the 1930s and 1940s many Black people across the world were discouraged by the dire economic situation created by the Great Depression and the Second World War. In the US, as the Garvey movement waned and anti-Black groups were growing, the CP attracted more and more working-class US Garveyites, Africans and diasporan peoples globally into its international orbit. A plethora of Black women activists, writers, poets and playwrights, including Shirley Graham and W. E. B. Du Bois, traveled to the Soviet Union. A few permanently moved and became resident there.

In her diaspora engagements, first as a Garveyite; then in the 1930s and the 1940s, as a member of the International Labor Defense and the Communist Party, USA; and much later, in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, as she traveled across the US and to various African nations as an independent woman; Moore denounced anti-Black racism and colonial domination. In the 1930s, Moore's communist affiliation overlapped with her grassroots campaigns for domestic workers' and renters' rights in New York City, and for African liberation (most notably, in opposition to Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia). Her outlook was based upon her public declaration that 'the Communists were the only ones interested in my revolutionary rights.' Most of the activists Moore traveled with made short-term visits abroad to attend and participate in Pan-African conferences and congresses. They appear not to have been as profoundly influenced by their subsequent political or cultural engagements with African liberation and Pan-African causes in the US and abroad as Moore, who maintained the strong ideological and activist principles she had begun to develop as a young woman in Louisiana.

Working-class and poor Black women who may not have always possessed the financial means to travel globally, nor the social connections with prominent Pan-Africanist male leaders that would enable them to receive invitations to speak at pre-1950s Pan-African conventions, nonetheless, fully embraced and understood their diaspora activism on a global scale. Moore's example demonstrates that awareness. When she left the Communist Party, Moore moved back to New Orleans and, in 1950, she joined the Sons and Daughters of Ethiopia. Seven years later, she co-founded and served as president (occasionally noted in

the organization's literature as 'Committee Chair') of the Universal Association of Ethiopian Women, a small local organization that fought against the unjust execution of Black men who had been falsely charged with raping white women; it was also devoted to welfare rights and community assistance.

The peripatetic Moore traveled across the US, maintaining a global Pan-Africanist mindset all the while. When she returned to Harlem in 1964, she became president of The World Federation of African People; its goal was to establish a Black nation in the US that, according to Moore, would be 'the only place in the US where Americans of African descent will be really free.'¹¹ Surprisingly, the place Moore selected as the site of the Federation's separate and safe haven for Black folks was none other than the Catskill Mountains, in the southeastern region of the state of New York. She purchased land there to build an all-Black town that she envisioned would attract Black folks from around the globe.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Moore attended and spoke at numerous Black Power and African liberation meetings. In March 1968 she helped to form the all-Black Republic of New Africa, and became more fully engaged in the reparations movement. Having brought the reparations issue before the United Nations and other international human rights organizations in 1957 and again in 1959, Moore and others sought to draw broad-based attention to African and African-descended peoples' demands for economic compensation and public reprimands for the involuntary migration, enslavement, and physical and sexual violations of Black bodies. The Reparations movement, as historian Martha Bondi rightfully proclaims, helped to 'revive Black-led global anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist projects, and [...] radically intervene[d] in the discourse of globalization.'¹² Rather than a revival, at least for Moore, however, it was part and parcel of a decades-long and continuous global African liberation engagement and philosophy.

Over her long life as an Black Nationalist activist and thinker, Moore's solutions to centuries of Black enslavement and oppression

11 See Audley A. Moore, *Why Reparations? Reparations is the Battle Cry for the Economic and Social Freedom of More than 25 Million Descendants of American Slaves* (Los Angeles: Reparations Committee Inc. 1963), 'Queen Mother Moore', p. 51. Martha Bondi's quote appears in her essay 'The Rise of the Reparations Movement', *Radical History Review*, 87 (Fall 2003), 5–18.

12 Ibid.

ranged from the formation of independent all-Black country in the US to demands for reparations (in the amount of 200 billion dollars) for centuries of economic, political and human oppression. In 1963, she helped to establish the Reparations Committee of Descendants of US Slaves, calling for repayment of earned wages and benefits from the current American government to the subsequent generations of living Black people whose ancestors had been enslaved in the US. Recognizing the desire on the part of some African Americans to move to Africa, the Reparations Committee also demanded compensation for them as well as for those who wished to remain in the US. She advocated for prisoners' rights and racial justice as part of her Ethiopian Women's Association platform in the late 1950s; the organization continued in the 1960s and 1970s. Moore's dedicated attention to the criminal justice system was not lost on Black prison populations and others who admired her for her struggles 'all around the Black world.' In 1973, she was invited to give a speech at the New York's Greenhaven Correctional Facility.¹³

Throughout out her political activist life, Moore viewed segregation and anti-Black racism in the US, and global colonial denomination in Africa and the Caribbean, as intertwining sites of oppression, indeed, as two sides of the same coin. In keeping with their Pan-African sentiments a number of African Americans were influenced by her, and decided to relocate to the continent of Africa — but not Moore. She moved to Philadelphia, where she enlarged her reparations movement by calling not for a 'Back to Africa' movement but rather for the United States to be divided into 'separate Euro-American and African-descendent states' and for the United States government to pay 'reparations to the African-descendent government in the amount of five hundred trillion dollars.'¹⁴

No longer in the Catskills, Moore and her cohort of other Black nationalists worked to establish the 'New Republic of Afrika,' a separate nation of Black citizens that would be comprised of five Southern states: Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Georgia. The newly formed nation would be supported by reparations money. As a nod to her global vision and travels, Moore was appointed

13 'Queen Mother Moore', p. 51.

14 See Cheryl Gilkes interview with Audley (Queen Mother) Moore, BWOH, Schlesinger Library.

the New Republic's Minister of Foreign Relations and Culture. At its 1969 meeting in Detroit, she became the organization's vice president.¹⁵

Although it never materialized, the New Republic of Afrika reflected Moore's deeply held and persistent global Pan-Africanist thinking and activism, resulting in her becoming an iconic Pan-Africanist global citizen in the US and in Africa in the 1960s and early 1970s. I was among her admirers and was honored to meet her for the first time at the Black Power Conference hosted in Atlanta, Georgia in 1970, and attended by Amiri Baraka, Louis Farrakhan and Julian Bond along with hundreds of other civil rights movement activists.

While never a major figure in feminist organizations as such, with the exception of the short-lived Sojourners for Truth and Justice, Moore lived her life as a self-determined feminist and activist within largely Black male patriarchal spaces and movements. In them, she inextricably linked Black feminism and Black liberation struggles. Clearly serving as an example that women should no longer be confined to supporter roles or to that of the occasional speaker in public or private political or leadership activities, Moore averred that Black women, whether born in the US, on the African continent, or elsewhere in its diaspora, were essential to the development of a Pan-African Alliance and to women's global unity. Within intellectual and political contexts Moore was greatly admired, both as emblematic of Black women's grassroots activism and in her constant movement and engagement as a 'life-long activist' and champion for global citizenship at home (US) and abroad in Africa or its diaspora. She often accepted invitations to be among the featured speakers at African and African-American political gatherings (some of these were women's gatherings, but they were predominantly male), including the 1995 Million Man March.¹⁶

15 Ibid.

16 In his study of the 'Sojourners for Truth and Justice,' a progressive Black feminists' organization that was formed in 1951 with a social justice agenda, historian Erik McDuffie says the Sojourners fully recognized 'the intersectional, systemic nature of African American women's oppression and understood their struggle for dignity and freedom in global terms.' See McDuffie, 'A "New Freedom Movement of Negro Women": Sojourning for Truth, Justice, and Human Rights during the Early Cold War,' *Radical History Review*, 101 (2008), 82. Also consult McDuffie *Sojourning for Freedom*. Moore was not alone; as McDuffie, Carole Boyce Davies and a few other scholars have documented, there were other Black women activists whose global travel and political/cultural engagements extended from Harlem and elsewhere

Some contemporary feminists have questioned Moore's feminist credentials, based upon her appearance at the Million Man March and her failure to publically critique and criticize Black patriarchy. This evaluation has been made despite the fact that Moore for decades brought not only the 'Woman's Question,' but female engagement to diasporic groups through her life-long activism and speeches. There was little doubt that she clearly believed women should and did play critical roles in Black nation-building and Black Nationalist struggles. In addition to attending ceremonies and delivering speeches at women's meetings in various West African nations, a consistent part of Moore's long history of global vision and activism was her renewed attempts to establish an all-Black homeland in the US, a nation in which she would be one of many Black women (and men) leaders.

Audley E. Moore, Queen Mother Moore, a woman who migrated around the world, taking her Pan-Africanist and activist engagement across the US and back and forth across the Atlantic Ocean, was greatly admired for her courage, dedication, and commitment to African liberation and Black Nationalist causes. For that, she deserves serious scholarly attention. I join Ashley Farmer, Erik McDuffie, Carole Boyce Davies, Keisha Blain and others, all speaking out against the historical erasure of Moore. There are so many other activist women in the fine scholarship that focuses on Pan-Africanism, leftist internationalism, and migration studies; Moore belongs among that group. The New York University's Florence workshop in 2017, from which this volume grew, provided a much-needed counter-narrative to the body of dominant male-centered movement and immigration histories and visual representations, locally and globally. This essay, like the organizers of and participants at the Florence meeting, aligns with Moore's assertion that we, like her, 'don't pay those borders no mind at all' when framing our visions of who can serve as examples for activism and political engagement.

in the US to the Soviet Union, China, Africa and back. See, for instance, Davies, *Left of Karl Marx*; and Mark Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity: Communism and African Americans, 1919–1936* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998).

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35. L^öis Mailou Jones in the World

Cheryl Finley

My essay concerns the work of the African-American painter, designer, and educator L^öis Mailou Jones, and how travel and migration influenced her life as an artist, including her aesthetic choices, formal practice, theoretical understanding and pedagogical philosophy. Jones was a lifelong educator and her travel, indeed her *migration* to France and later to Haiti was essential to her worldview and aesthetic practice. She had studios in each of those countries, which she visited frequently for long periods, in addition to her studios in Washington, D.C. and on the island of Martha's Vineyard in Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts. In addition to Europe and the Caribbean, Africa was a central focus of Jones' oeuvre, figuring in her pattern of travel and migration as well as in her paintings from the early 1970s onwards. The essay that follows will be framed by the artist's use of the mask as a visual and symbolic trope to connect with Africa and her African roots, and then to Haiti and a larger African diaspora. This chapter stems from an earlier essay, 'The Mask as Muse: the Influence of African Art on the Life and Career of L^öis Mailou Jones,' written for the 2009 retrospective exhibition *L^öis Mailou Jones: A Life in Vibrant Color*, curated by Carla M. Hanzal for the Mint Museum of Art in Charlotte, North Carolina.¹

1 Cheryl Finley, 'The Mask as Muse: The Influence of African Art on the Life and Career of L^öis Mailou Jones,' in Carla M. Hanzal (ed.), *L^öis Mailou Jones: A Life in*

A 1983 photograph of Loïs Mailou Jones taken in her studio by the famed Scurlock brothers of Washington, D.C. shows the artist in her element, surrounded by images, objects and pieces of history that fueled the fire of her creative energy. Masks peer out from nearly every corner of the room, in animal form, in African ceremonial art, and in framed paintings and reproductions of her own work. A glimpse of her vast library of art books is visible on the right side of the photograph, along with some paintbrushes, pencils, a wooden anatomical model and a poster for the documentary 'Fifty Years of My Art' about Jones's half-century of painting. A photograph of her late husband, the Haitian graphic designer Louis Verginaud Pierre-Noel, peeks out from behind a sconce on the adjacent wall just below a large cow's skull. Reminders of her training in Paris and subsequent frequent sojourns there include a postcard of the tourist icon Sacre Coeur in front of the bookshelf among her paint brushes, a poster for her critically acclaimed solo show at the Galerie Soulanges in Paris in 1966, and her 1938 oil painting *Le Model* on the back wall. Behind her, a formal black and white portrait from the 1950s projects the same energy and *joie de vivre* as Jones as she smiles proudly for the camera. With three paintbrushes in hand, the artist seems eager to paint another boldly colored work filled with African-inspired masks and repeating design motifs.

Two of Jones's vibrant works in colorful acrylic from her *Africa Series* are prominently displayed in the Scurlock photograph: *Damballah* (1980) is on the easel behind her and *Symbols d'Afrique* (1980) is to her left.² Both paintings are tightly designed using a linear grid in which recurring African masks, icons and patterns are systematically placed. In a 1984 interview with artist and critic Evangeline J. Montgomery, Jones described the direction of her work: 'I am pushing, more or less in

Vibrant Color (Charlotte: Mint Museum of Art, 2009), pp. 5–73. The exhibition was on view at the Mint Museum of Art in Charlotte, North Carolina from November 14, 2009 through February 27, 2010 and traveled to the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C. from October 9, 2010 through January 9, 2011, among other venues.

2 The vast majority of the works from Jones's *Africa Series* were painted in Haiti and inspired by her trips to Africa in 1970, 1972 and 1976, or observations of African cultural and religious practices in Haiti. A handwritten index card from the artist's archive lists twenty-one paintings belonging to her *Africa Series*, beginning with *Les Fétiches* (1937) and ending with *Surinamia* (1982). LMJP/MSRC, box 215–18, folder 52, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C.

the direction of symbolism, African symbolism and Haitian symbolism, color and design.³ In *Damballah*, named after the Haitian Vodun god of creation, a large Afikpo Ibo mask is clipped by a brightly colored panel of Haitian street vendors marching with wares for sale atop headburdens. To the left, a richly patterned Kakilamba snake in green, blue, black and orange provides a visual reference to Damballah, also known as the serpent god. Jones chose to show Damballah during a spiritual possession, as he is slithering on the ground and revealing his serpentine tongue. *Symbols d'Afrique* is richly patterned with a mixture of alternating masks, textile designs and Adinkra symbols of West African Ashanti origin.⁴ As Jones once explained, 'Oftimes I combine motifs from various regions in Africa, which result in a composition which tends to unify Africa.'⁵ Both paintings show Jones's longstanding commitment to working with the mask. They also illustrate her strong afrocentric leaning at this late stage in her career, with the repeated use of African symbols and choice of bold colors and patterning. But this was not a recent innovation in her practice. Rather, it was present in her work from the very beginning.

The Early Years

Early in her training at the High School of Practical Arts in Boston (1919–23), Jones was 'introduced to Africa through creating the masks with Ripley Studios.'⁶ This apprenticeship enabled the young artist to apply her budding knowledge of design to the performing arts,

3 Evangeline J. Montgomery interview with Löis Mailou Jones, 4 April 1984, p. 31. LMJP/MSRC, box 215–19, folder 15.

4 West African symbols known as Adinkra are of Ashanti origin dating back to the seventeenth century and can be found printed on cloth, pottery, walls and popular logos in Ghana, Ivory Coast and Togo. Originally developed as decorative motifs for fabrics worn in ceremonies honoring the dead, the meaning of the word Adinkra is 'goodbye' and the symbols printed on mourners' clothing would have expressed the qualities of the deceased. Each Adinkra symbol has a unique name and meaning derived either from a proverb, a historical event, human attitude, animal behavior, plant life, forms and shapes of inanimate and man-made objects.

5 Writings by Löis Mailou Jones, speeches on note cards, 1960s–1970s, LMJP/MSRC, box 215–18, folder 52.

6 Tritobia Hayes Benjamin, *The Life and Art of Löis Mailou Jones* (San Francisco: Pomegranate Artbooks, 1994), p. 6. Grace Ripley, a professor at the Rhode Island School of Design, was a renowned New England costume designer.

specifically dance, when she was asked to assist with fashioning masks and costumes for the Ted Shawn School of Dance.⁷ Always a thorough and inquisitive researcher, Jones went back to the original sources and studied traditional mask forms from Africa. This experience would influence the way Jones approached many of the innovative endeavors she embarked upon in the coming decades, including teaching the creative application of design as well as styling the look of her own canvases.

The mask as a sculptural form added volume and three-dimensionality to the way in which Jones saw the world, not to mention how she approached portraiture. The charcoal drawing *Negro Youth* (1929) depicts a pensive young man in profile. His thoughtful gaze is accentuated by the artist's clever use of light and shading, giving a sculptural appearance to the young man's chiseled profile. Light washes his face, while his ear and neck are left in shadow projecting depth and contemplation. As the artist Faith Ringgold once said, *Negro Youth* 'expressed Lois's talent for portraiture and forecasts her feeling for the mask, which would become a major force in her art from the sixties on.'⁸ This soft and engaging portrait of one of her students at Palmer Memorial Institute in Sedalia, NC, where she taught from 1928 to 1930, won an Honorable Mention at the Harmon Foundation exhibition in New York in 1930. Jones joined the art department at Howard University in 1930, where she would work for nearly fifty years as an artist, educator and mentor with a career spanning the New Negro Arts Movement of the 1920s and 1930s and the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

In another early, notable work, *The Ascent of Ethiopia* (1932), the profile is again utilized by Jones to depict the central figure of Ethiopia (Ancient Africa) in the bold, richly hued mask of an Egyptian pharaoh in full headdress. Smaller, almost flat figures ascending the staircase of

7 Ibid., p. 6. Ted Shawn (1891–1972) was a pioneering choreographer of early American modern dance. He is known for establishing the Denishawn School of Dance in Los Angeles in 1914 (with Ruth St. Denis, his wife and dance partner of many years), where he devised a popular technique of music visualization for modern dance and trained, among others, Martha Graham. Shawn is also credited with organizing the Ted Shawn and His Men Dancers after separating from his wife in 1930, and launching Jacob's Pillow, a popular dance school, theatre and retreat in Becket, New York.

8 Faith Ringgold, untitled essay honoring Lois Mailou Jones's fifty years in art, 23 September 1985, p. 3, LMJP/MSRC, box 215–19, folder 14.

a burgeoning 'New Negro' consciousness, indeed of culture itself — of 'art, drama and music' — also appear in profile, as do two stylized African masks representing the yin and the yang of theatre arts. This much-discussed work owes a stylistic debt to the New Negro Arts Movement muralist Aaron Douglas, known for his flat 'Africanized' profiles and radiating radio waves, as well as the sculptor Meta Warrick Fuller, to whose bronze *Ethiopia Awakening* (1914) Jones's work pays homage. *The Ascent of Ethiopia*, which was shown at the culminating Harmon Foundation exhibition in New York in 1933, celebrated the racial pride and artistic flourishing of the Harlem Renaissance.

In 1934, Jones spent the summer at Columbia University in New York, where she studied 'masks from non-Western cultures, including Native American, Eskimo, and African ethnic groups,' according to her first biographer Tritobia Hayes Benjamin.⁹ It was also there that she first met the Haitian graphic designer Louis Verginaud Pierre-Noel, who would become her husband nearly twenty years later. Just up the street in Harlem, Aaron Douglas was working on his renowned series of murals *Aspects of Negro Life* (1934) for the Countee Cullen Branch of the New York Public Library at 135th Street and Lenox Avenue (now the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture), where regular art exhibitions, dramatic performances and cultural events were held. There, among other Black intellectuals, she would meet the renowned bibliophile Arthur Schomburg with whom she would later work on the *Bulletin of Negro History*.

Not too far from the library at 306 West 141st Street, an artists' salon called the 306 Group had emerged the year before at the studio of Charles Alston. The salon included sculptor Augusta Savage, painters Aaron Douglas, Romare Bearden and Jacob Lawrence, among others. Savage, who had returned to New York after studying in Paris on a Julius Rosenwald Fellowship, ran the Savage Studio of Arts and Crafts, which would become the influential Harlem Community Arts Center in 1935 under the Federal Art Project. The city was abuzz with the visual and performing arts and Jones would harness the fruits of her studies at Columbia and her interactions with artists and educators to participate in this creative moment.

9 Benjamin, *The Life and Art of Lōis Mailou Jones*, p. 125.

While there, she worked with Asadata Dafora, the celebrated choreographer, drummer, composer and performance artist from Sierra Leone, who was stirring up the modern dance world by introducing a ground-breaking performance style that blended traditional African dance with drumming and theatre.¹⁰ Dafora's most notable work was a dance opera called *Kykunkor* (or *Witch Woman*), to which Jones contributed her design expertise. According to Maureen Needham, *Kykunkor* was 'the first opera presented in the United States with authentic African dances and music, performed in an African tongue by a mainly African-born cast.'¹¹ Jones played an instrumental role in creating the ceremonial look of the performance when she designed the dancers' headdresses and assisted with the costuming. The mask as a moving form — *as danced* — or, to borrow a phrase from art historian Robert Farris Thompson, as 'African art in motion,' came to life for Jones in the revolutionary choreography and percussive drumming of Dafora's 'dance drama.' The popularity of his particular brand of modern African performance art was carried on the coattails of vaudeville, European Modernism, jazz and the New Negro Arts Movement, and paved the way for exquisite new styles in modern American dance pioneered by choreographers Katherine Dunham and Pearl Primus. Jones's time in New York that summer shaped the dramatic ways she portrayed the mask, beginning with her most well-known painting, *Les Fétiches* (1938).

Paris

A 1938 photograph of Jones in her skylit Paris studio shows the artist at work before an easel surrounded by paintings she made while studying at the Académie Julian. Pictured among them is *Les Fetiches*, displayed

10 Benjamin, *The Life and Art of Lois Mailou Jones*, p. 125. Born in Freetown, Sierra Leone, Asadata Dafora (1890–1965) immigrated to New York in 1929 after living in Europe for nearly twenty years. After receiving critical acclaim for *Kykunkor*, Dafora's Shogola Oloba group of African performers became the African Dance Troupe of the Federal Theatre Project in Harlem in 1935. See <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/freetodance/biographies/dafora.html>

11 Maureen Needham, 'Kykunkor, or the Witch Woman: An African Opera in America, 1934' in Thomas F. DeFrantz (ed.), *Dancing Many Drums: Excavations in African American Dance* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), pp. 233–66 (p. 233).

on the right. Painted in a post-Cubist, post-Primitivist manner, that work shows five highly stylized African masks in frenzied movement, as if part of a ceremonial masquerade. Dramatically placed before a black backdrop, the masks converge and overlap at different angles, creating a sense of depth and excitement. While in Paris, Jones frequented the Musée d'Homme and other museums, galleries and marketplaces, where she studied the substantial collections of African and ethnographic art on display, and later was inspired to paint *Les Fétiches*.¹²

The masks in *Les Fétiches* reference specific examples from different cultural groups in Africa. The striped mask is styled after a Songye Kifwebe mask from Central Africa. The large mask in the center with raffia pieces is drawn from a Guru Dan mask from West Africa. The impact of her earlier design work in dance and theatre for Shawn and Dafora was synthesized in this powerful painting.

Upon her return from Paris in the fall of 1938, Jones resumed her teaching position at Howard University, where New Negro Arts Movement theorist Alain Locke urged her to consider themes of African heritage, social injustice and race pride in her painting. But this idea was already fresh in her mind. As Kinshasha Holman Conwill has remarked on the significance of Jones's first year Paris, 'Her realization of French admiration for African art, and her increased understanding of African sculpture's significance in the development of modern art, boosted her pride in her African heritage.'¹³

The Children's Page

From 1937 to 1942, Jones was on the editorial board of the *Negro History Bulletin*, published by Carter G. Woodson's Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in Washington, D.C.¹⁴ Founded in 1930, the

12 Charles H. Rowell, 'An Interview with L \ddot{o} is Mailou Jones,' *Callaloo*, 12:2 (1989), 357–78, <http://kathmanduk2.wordpress.com/2008/04/18/from-the-archives-an-interview-with-lois-mailou-jones/>

13 Kinshasha Holman Conwill, *Explorations in the City of Light: African American Artists in the City of Light* (New York: Studio Museum in Harlem, 1996), p. 47.

14 Dr Carter G. Woodson's Associated Publishers, founded in Washington, D.C., in 1921, were responsible for the publication and distribution of books on Black topics that were passed over by mainstream publishers. Woodson also pioneered Negro History Week in 1926 (now Black History Month). See Benjamin, *The Life and Art of L \ddot{o} is Mailou Jones*, p. 45.

bulletin's purpose was 'to inculcate an appreciation of the past of the Negro' for a general audience and school-aged children. Each volume featured a special theme, such as the 'Negro in Foreign Lands,' whose 1940–41 topic was intended 'to broaden the scope of the usual treatment of the Negro in the schools' to include the treatment of race in Africa, Asia, Europe, the West Indies, Latin America, Canada, and Australia.¹⁵ Jones introduced the Children's Page in the November 1940 issue, an activity page where schoolchildren were encouraged to color an illustration or design she had drawn or to engage in a constructive art-making project aimed at teaching Black history creatively.¹⁶ The first Children's Page was undoubtedly inspired by her lifelong study of African ceremonial arts and classical sculpture, particularly the mask. Jones also designed 'a Picture to Color,' depicting various scenes from Black life, including *An African Village*, or important historical figures like *Toussaint L'Overture*.¹⁷

Haiti

Without a doubt, Jones's 1953 marriage to Louis Verginaud Pierre-Noel transformed both her life and her art, producing a clear change in the style of her painting and choice of subject matter. Jones first traveled to Haiti in 1954 at the invitation of President Paul E. Magliore, who commissioned her to produce a series of paintings depicting Haiti's people and landscape. During this first trip, she stayed for several months and taught at the Centre d'Art while its founder DeWitt Peters was on leave, and at the Foyer des Arts Plastiques. According to Jones, 'The teaching experience at the Centre d'Art put me in touch with the leading artists in Haiti, and I was able to work with them. I found, however, that they were not interested in any training at all. They did not want to know anything about drawing from a model or about structure, or color theory. They were interested in meeting me as a person, a fellow artist, and in watching me as I taught the younger group of Haitians.'¹⁸ At the culmination of her first visit to Haiti, she exhibited forty-two paintings

15 *The Negro History Bulletin*, 4:1 (1940), p. 2.

16 *The Negro History Bulletin*, 4:2 (1940), p. 34.

17 See, for example, *ibid.*, pp. 36, 86.

18 Benjamin, *The Life and Art of Loïs Mailou Jones*, p. 77.

created in Paris and in Port-au-Prince called *Oeuvres de L^{ois} Mailou Jones Pierre-Noel*, at the behest of the first lady of Haiti, Madame Magliore. Her first paintings in Haiti still showed signs of her European training and included street scenes and images of neighborhoods and the docks in a soft palette.

Over the next thirty years, Jones frequently lectured, taught and painted in Haiti, where her palette had changed by the 1960s, quickly soaking up the rays of bright sunshine and the vibrant presence of African culture in the marketplace, in the faces of people, and in the spirituality of their religious practices and rituals. Paintings produced there were more geometrical, almost cubist, yet abstract with flat, hard edges and hot colors that boldly claimed the proud history of Haiti as the first independent African nation in the West. Jones found a spiritual home in Haiti, where she felt close to Africa. As she once remarked, 'The art of Africa is lived in the daily life of the people of Haiti.'¹⁹ Many of her works painted there in the 1960s shared a sense of movement with African dance, religious processions and ritual practices.

Symbols such as the ideographic writing of the ceremonial rites of Vodun and related masking traditions made their way into some of the more abstract paintings that Jones created in Haiti, like *V^{ev} Voudou II* (1962) and *V^{ev} Voudou III* (1963). A critic writing in the *Washington Post* observed, 'Lois Mailou Jones is moving from an impressionist technique to one with strongly accented patterns [...] "Voudou" is an oil collage in a sophisticated cubist manner.'²⁰ Jones's background in design, combined with her innate sensibility for the texture and weight of fabric, produced such rhythmic and colorful paintings as *Les Vendeuses de Tissus* (1961) and *Street Vendors, Haiti* (1978). Both works project the perpetual motion of commerce through the draping of fabric, the movement of vendors, and the balancing of head burdens. Jones's first Haitian paintings received rave reviews in her 1966 solo exhibition at Galerie Soulanges in Paris, where they were noted for their verve, abundance of color and cubist style.²¹

19 Lois Mailou Jones, 'The African Influence on Afro-American Art,' unpublished lecture given at the International Culture and Development Colloquium on the occasion of President Leopold Sedar Senghor's 70th Birthday in Dakar, Senegal, October 1976, p. 15, LMJP/MSRC, box 215-18, folder 46.

20 Leslie Judd Portner, *The Washington Post*, 1968.

21 Jacques Michel, *Le Monde*, 11 February 1966.

Pedagogy

During the Black Arts Movement, as art historian Richard J. Powell has observed, 'Many artists whose careers extended back to the 1930s and 1940s resurfaced with a renewed sense of racial solidarity and political insurgency. Painters Lois Mailou Jones and John Biggers, and sculptor and printmaker Elizabeth Catlett all aligned themselves with the younger generation of Black artists, creating works that underscored their shared interest in African design sensibilities, the Black figure, and the continuing struggle for civil rights.'²²

Jones believed that teaching the visual arts and design was an 'interdisciplinary' affair well before that phrase came into popular parlance in the academy. She was at the forefront of designing and implementing Black Studies curricula in the visual arts. In a paper titled, 'The Correlation of Visual Arts and Design with Music and Drama,' she urged other Black educators:

The rising importance of Black Studies in American education offers a challenge to the Black Visual Arts and Design, Black Music and Black Drama to serve as a correlated cultural focal point in the planning of a new curriculum. The three areas should strive together in developing an understanding of the Arts and emotional growth in our Black students.²³

She argued that the 'traditional African forms of art, which have always incorporated drama, music and a form of design' could be harnessed to draw upon Black heritage 'in creating projects and "happenings"' that 'not only tend to humanize the environment, but result in establishing the Black man's identity which is so firmly established in the roots of his ancestors.'²⁴ With this statement she effectively married traditional African plastic and performing arts with one of the popular performance art forms of the day, 'happenings,' to suggest an art practice with the social agenda of the Black Arts Movement: strengthening Black identity.

22 Richard J. Powell, 'Black Arts Movement, Abstraction and Beyond' in Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Kwame Anthony Appiah (eds.), *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience*, 2nd edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

23 Lois Jones Pierre-Noel, 'The Correlation of Visual Arts and Design with Music and Drama,' in *Black Arts in Today's Curriculum* (Greensboro: Six Institutions' Consortium, 1971), pp. 9–13 (p. 9). LMJP/MSRC, box 215–18, folder 36.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

She further asserted that the planned spontaneity that made happenings all the rage in the contemporary art world of the 1960s and 1970s had been an important element in African performance arts all along.

The Black Arts Movement

When the Black Arts Movement began in earnest in the mid-1960s with 'Black Pride,' 'Black is Beautiful,' and 'Black Power' as popular slogans, Jones, along with her students and other professors at Howard University, didn't miss a beat. As she stated in her class notes now on file at the Moorland Spingarn Research Center at Howard University,

The Black Arts Movement was realized by members of the art faculty at H.U. Prof. James Wells, James Porter and I. We were pioneers in introducing the movement among our students, Elizabeth Catlett, Malkia, Delilah Pierce and others. With the assassination of Martin Luther King the Black Arts Movement launched on an intensified momentum, which resulted in nationwide presentations of 'Black Art Shows.' Black artists were determined to establish their identity and to offer to the black community an art which reflected customs, traditions and the beauty of black people. Black owned galleries throughout the nation were established, galleries which offered the black artist exposure and a market for his work. As a result of this intensified movement, black businesses emerged as patrons of the arts.²⁵

Jones's special contribution to the Black Arts Movement was her longstanding dedication to the art of classical and contemporary Africa and its diaspora, particularly in Haiti and the United States. Seizing the vibrant moment of heightened Black consciousness, Jones designed an extensive three-part research project in 1968 called 'The Black Visual Arts' to document the contemporary African diaspora art of Haiti, Africa and the United States in interviews, photographs and slides. Funded by Howard University, Jones traveled to Haiti in 1968; eleven African nations in 1970; and nine African nations in 1972. She amassed a collection of more than 1,000 slides and scores of hours of interviews with contemporary artists. As she explained, 'The slides will be used for

25 Class notes on the Black Arts Movement, pp. 11 and 12, Lois Mailou Jones, [n.d.] LMJP/MSRC, illustrated in Thomas C. Battle and Donna M. Wells, *Legacy: Treasures of Black History, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2005), p. 191.

lectures, to show the students, the faculties, the community and anyone in the United States [...] what is really being done by Black artists all over the world.'²⁶ Jones was impressed with the art schools that she visited, including the School of Fine and Applied Arts in Khartoum, Sudan, the artists of the Oshogbo School in the Yoruba region of Nigeria and the Manufacture Nationale de Tapisserie in Thiès, Senegal. As an African-American cultural ambassador in Africa, Jones thrived on artistic exchange and arranged to lecture on the simmering Black Arts Movement and the history of African-American art in many of the countries she visited. She believed that, 'there should be an exchange of works between African artists and Afro-American artists [...] and vice-versa.'²⁷ Upon her return to the United States, she shared the fruits of her research by organizing exhibitions, lecturing, teaching new techniques, and by making the research materials she amassed available to her students and others. And here, I'd like to acknowledge for anyone interested in further reading on this period the excellent essay by Lindsay Twa, 'Developing Diasporic Dialogues: James A. Porter and Loïs Mailou Jones Pierre-Noël, and the writing of Haitian Art History,' published in the January 2015 issue of *Gradhiva*, which discusses the significance of the pioneering research programs of Jones and Porter in thinking about a genealogy of Haitian art history.²⁸

It was the fusion of experiences that Jones gained as an artist/educator during the Black Arts Movement and as an artist/researcher in Haiti and Africa that produced the new and dynamic look of her canvases from the 1970s onward. 'Many of my works with an African theme and African motifs were actually created in Haiti. Some of my most creative compositions, for which I researched African icons, patterns, masks and sculptures were actually done in my Haitian studio.'²⁹ Jones painted *Haiti Demain* in response to the social, economic and political strife following the failed Duvalier regime. The painting indicts the government and references the mass exodus of Haitian migrants on

26 Loïs Mailou Jones quoted in Cecilia Oyekola, 'Art is Her Life,' *Interlink* (Lagos, Nigeria: Nusa Publishers, October-December 1970), 28. LMJP/MSRC, box 215-19, folder 6.

27 Ibid.

28 Lindsay Twa, 'Developing Diasporic Dialogues: James A. Porter, Loïs Mailou Jones Pierre-Noël and the Writing of Haitian Art History,' *Gradhiva*, 21 (2015), 48-75, <https://journals.openedition.org/gradhiva/2933>

29 Loïs Mailou Jones, LMJP/MSRC, box 215-18, folder 46.

unstable boats and the greed and corruption of the government. But her practical training as a designer and her belief in the mask's expressive qualities remained foundational to the new look she crafted. She drew upon these experiences to write an important position paper titled 'The African Influence on Afro-American Art,' which she presented at the International Culture and Development Colloquium held in Dakar, Senegal on the occasion of the seventieth birthday of President Leopold Senghor in October 1976. In that address, she declared,

The influence of African Art permeates the entire contemporary Black art scene [...] In art, in music, in literature, Black Americans are returning to their African roots and utilizing this heritage as the basis for their artistic and political expression in the United States.³⁰

At that meeting, she presented President Senghor with her painting, *Hommage au Pr \acute{e} sident Leopold Sedar Senghor*, commissioned by Howard University President James Cheek. Notable in that work, tightly designed to include a collage of classical African motifs, historical images and a photo-realist portrait of Senghor, was a small illustration of a preeminent *lieux de memoire* in African American culture: the 'door of no return' at the *Maison des Esclaves* at Gor \acute{e} e Island in Senegal.³¹ She declared, 'The major influence of my current work is still African in origin and I am certain that this trip will renew and enrich my inspiration.'³²

Africa and the World

Jones's trips to Africa in 1970 and 1972 'provided opportunity to get a clearer picture of the various ways in which African art has influenced the works of the Afro-American artists.' She recalled, 'In Africa, I was able to see examples of the ancestral arts in their original settings and in the museums and galleries [...]. It was a rich experience that I will never forget.'³³ The subsequent paintings that Jones produced upon her return from Africa had a distinct and innovative look. She adopted a

30 Idem, 'The African Influence on Afro-American Art,' p. 2, LMJP/MSRC, box 215–18, folder 46.

31 See Cheryl Finley, 'The Door of (No) Return,' *Common-Place*, 1:4 (2001), [n.p.], <http://www.common-place.org/vol-01/no-04/finley>

32 L \ddot{o} is Mailou Jones, 'The African Influence on Afro-American Art,' p. 4, LMJP/MSRC, box 215–18, folder 46.

33 Ibid., p. 12.

new approach to figuration, often incorporating photo-realist portraits with stylized African masks, sculptural icons and Adinkra symbols. As the artist explained, 'Each time I made a study of African design, I found the imagery and motifs so inspiring that I've had to utilize them in a sort of combination in creating a work.'³⁴ In *Homage to Dahomey* (1971), Jones drew stylized profiles of repeating Antelope or Chiwara masks along with other design motifs, animals and the supreme Adinkra symbol pictured in the form of a bulls-eye — Adinkrahene, meaning greatness, charisma and leadership. Bright colors of orange and gold separated by bold black diagonal lines and bright blue accents set off the dramatic canvas to recall the appliqué tradition of Dahomean wall hangings dating from the seventeenth century.

Ubi Girl from Tai Region (1972) shows the head of a young female initiate painted with white and red markings symbolizing protection, superimposed on the huge profile of a heddle pulley from the Ivory Coast and repeating outlines of masks and designs from Zaire. Similarly, the acrylic collage *Moon Masque* (1971), which was exhibited at FESTAC in Nigeria in 1977, has at its center a white-faced Kwele mask from Zaire flanked by the profiles of two young men and textile designs from Ethiopia. Jones's use of design elements from different African regions was no mistake. Rather, this innovative choice showed the artist exercising a form of aesthetic interdisciplinarity that united seemingly disparate aspects of the composition. Each of these works hints at Jones's understanding of the psychological meaning of the mask. As she once said, 'The mask, in fact, dominates the Afro-American interest in African art. This is not surprising since the nature of the mask is so well adapted to artistic development.'³⁵ Other African-American artists during this period, including Romare Bearden, Jeff Donaldson, Faith Ringgold, Elizabeth Catlett, Ed Love and Napoleon Henderson, among others, showed a fascination with the African mask. Bearden often incorporated snippets of African masks from magazines in his

34 Lois Mailou Jones quoted in Mary C. Butler, 'American Artist Develops New Technique Using African Designs,' *Africa Feature* (US Information Service, February 1973), p. 2. LMJP/MSRC, box 215–19, folder 2. Jones's pencil and ink drawings of Adinkra symbols, African masks, portraits and performances are in her archive at the Moorland Spingarn Research Center, LMJP/MSRC, box 215–15, folder 10.

35 Lois Mailou Jones, 'The African Influence on Afro-American Art,' p. 9. LMJP/MSRC, box 215–18, folder 46.

signature collages of the 1960s and 1970s, such as *Village of Yo* (1964). Even Ringgold's soft sculptures like *Faith and the Brown Children* (1968) referenced the African mask in motion.

Conclusion

It was the mask that drew L \ddot{o} is Mailou Jones more than anything to create works that envisioned a multiplicity of Black experiences. Nowhere was this more pronounced than in the *Africa Series*, her last significant body of work produced in Haiti and Washington in the 1970s and 1980s. Around the same time that the Scurlock studio portrait was taken, Jones made a list of twenty-one works in her *Africa Series*. A careful perusal of that list, handwritten on an index card, reveals the depth of her longing for Africa and how she catalogued her work towards the end of her career.

At the top of the chronological list is *Les Fetiches*, painted from her study of African masks in Paris galleries and museums in 1937–38. The paintings completed in 1971 and 1972 respectively were inspired by her first two trips to Africa in 1970 and 1972 under the auspices of her Black Visual Arts grant from Howard University. Works like *Congo Dance Mask* (1972) and *Guli Mask* (1972) reference specific ceremonial masks, while *Magic of Nigeria* (1971) is a fanciful combination of masks of her own creation. *Homage to Oshogbo* (1971) and *Ode to Kinshasha* (1972) employ mixed media collage to place flat abstract masks within geometric patterns. Paintings completed later reference subsequent trips to Africa in 1976 and 1977, as well as regular sojourns to Haiti and research trips in the Caribbean and Suriname around the same time.

Travel to Haiti and Africa no doubt had a major impact on Jones's content and method. One can easily observe how her paintings from the 1970s onward bring back into play her early direction as a textile designer. Many of these vibrantly colored works rely on carefully positioned symbols, masks, animals or portraits that repeat at a syncopated rate to form polyrhythmic compositions. Others, however, take on a more conceptual appearance like *Symbols du Suriname* (1982). The paintings of her *Africa Series*, with their high gloss and dramatic color arrangements, challenged popular Western notions of contemporary art, including abstraction, Minimalism and Pop. To be sure, she was influenced by Jeff

Donaldson's Afri-Cobra Group, a collective of artists founded in 1968 who advocated the use of highly polished reflective surfaces and bright bold colors that projected the beauty of Black people. But other influences included the popularity of psychedelic, metallic and fluorescent colors of the space age made available to artists through the novelty of acrylic paint and polymer paint, which, according to art historian Kellie Jones, not only dried faster but offered new color possibilities.³⁶

The Scurlock studio portrait, moreover, provides a visual dimension to the handwritten list, becoming a photographic document of her *Africa Series*. The image shows *Damballah* and *Symbols d'Afrique* (discussed earlier) prominently displayed, while a small reproduction of her celebrated *Moon Masque* (1971) is visible on the easel behind her. Africa was a lifelong source of inspiration and pride for Lōis Mailou Jones. Historians like Woodson and Schomburg, intellectuals like Du Bois and Locke, dancers like Dafora and Primus, and artists like Fuller and Donaldson reinforced her unwavering commitment to Africa, its art and its heritage. She dedicated her life to raising the visibility of Black artists in America, Africa and Haiti, and did so despite barriers that she often faced as a woman artist of color. With a career buttressed by the two major movements in African American art of the twentieth century — the New Negro Arts Movement and the Black Arts Movement — Jones's unique Black perspective was often viewed through the mask, a symbol of classical African art and a signifier of Black identity.

36 Kellie Jones, *Energy/Experimentation: Black Artists and Abstraction, 1964–1980* (New York: Studio Museum in Harlem, 2006), p. 15.

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PART EIGHT

EMOTIONAL CARTOGRAPHY: TRACING THE PERSONAL

36. The Ones Who Leave... the Ones Who Are Left: Guyanese Migration Story

Grace Aneiza Ali

There are two spectrums of the migration arc: *the ones who leave and the ones who are left*. The act of migration is an act of reciprocity — to leave a place we recognise that we must leave others behind. Too often though, those who are leaving eclipse the narratives of the ones who are left behind. I find myself often caught in this liminal space between those who leave and those who (must) remain because for many years this was my story, and for many years before that, it was my mother's story.

In 1995, my family migrated from Guyana to the United States. We became part of what seemed like a mythical diaspora. Over one million Guyanese citizens now live in global metropolises like New York City (where they are the fifth largest immigrant group),¹ London, and Toronto, while the country itself has a population of around 760,000. In other words, my homeland is one where more people live outside its borders than within it. In 2015, Guyana celebrated its 50th anniversary of independence from the British. The last five decades, however, have

¹ Arun Peter Lobo and Joseph J. Salvo, *The Newest New Yorker, 2013 Edition: Characteristics of the City's Foreign-Born Population* (New York: New York City Department of City Planning, 2013), p. 20.

been defined by an extraordinary exodus of its citizens. In fact, this small country has one of the world's highest out-migration rates.²

Making the journey with us when we left were a handful of photographs chronicling our life. Owning photographs was an act of privilege; they stood among our most valuable possessions. There were no negatives, no jpegs, no double copies, just the originals. Decades later, these photographs serve as a tangible connection to a homeland left behind. Many of them are taken at Guyana's airport during the 1980s and 1990s when we often bade farewell to yet another family member leaving. Movement and transition were the constants in our lives. Airports became sites for family reunions. Before I nervously boarded my first plane at fourteen years old, a one-way flight bound for New York's JFK airport, I had long resented planes as the violent machines that fragmented families. Before my mother boarded that same flight at thirty-nine years old with her three children in tow, she had in the years prior, witnessed her brothers and sisters all leave Guyana one by one. By nineteen years old, a cycle of poverty and the final straw, the loss of both of her parents within a few short years of each other, ushered in a series of constant departures. Beginning in the 1970s, her six siblings joined the mass exodus of Guyanese leaving Guyana. They first left for neighboring Caribbean islands, then later Canada and the United States, through student visas, work visas, marriage visas — whatever it took. During the three decades that my mother spent waiting for our family's visas and papers to be vetted by two governments, Guyana and the United States, she watched the ones she loved the most leave her country and leave her, multiple times over.

Migration is *the defining movement of our time* — for both the ones who leave and the ones who are left. Few of us remain untouched by its sweeping narrative. Guyanese people have long known this as it has been the single most important narrative of our country. A perfect storm of post-colonial crises — entrenched poverty, political corruption, repressive government regimes, racial violence, lack of education, unemployment, economic depression, and worse of them

2 Guyana's emigration rate is among the highest in the world; more than 55% of its citizens reside abroad.
Central Intelligence Agency, *The CIA World Factbook 2017* (Cia.gov, 2017), <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gy.html>



Fig. 36.1 My mother Ingrid (third row, center) poses with her siblings and extended family at Timehri International Airport, Guyana in the mid-1970s, as she bade farewell to a sister who was leaving for Barbados. © Ali-Persaud family collection. Courtesy of Grace Aneiza Ali, CC BY 4.0.

all, a withering away of hope for our country — are among the reasons why we leave Guyana.

The BBC Radio series ‘Neither Here Nor There’ dedicated one of its episodes to the presence of the Guyanese community in the United States, examining how their American experience has impacted their identities.³ Sharing that more Guyanese now live in the Tri-State Area (New York City, New Jersey, and Connecticut) than in Guyana itself, host David Dabydeen, the Guyanese-born writer who also left his homeland, remarked that Guyana ‘is a disappearing nation’ that has ‘to an unrivalled degree, exported its people’ over the last five decades. Dominique Hunter, an emerging artist living in and working in Guyana, echoes a similar sentiment, sharing with me that from a very young age the Guyanese citizen is indoctrinated with an urgent call for departure. ‘Our greatest aspiration should be to leave,’ she

3 ‘A Disappearing Nation’, *Neither There Nor Here*, BBC Radio 4, 28 February 2017, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08gmtx1>

says, 'There is an expectation once you have reached a certain age: pack what you can and leave'.⁴ What a spectacular thing for any citizen of any place to grapple with — to be, from birth, dispossessed of one's own land.

Perhaps if there is a bright side to this culture of departure is the centrality of women. The red thread woven throughout Guyana's migration stories is the driving force of Guyanese women. Prior to the 1960s, it was traditionally men from the Anglophone Caribbean who were the first in their families to migrate. In 1960, that dominance began to shift as the United States, United Kingdom and Canada looked to the Caribbean as a source for blue collar, healthcare and domestic workers. Since that time, it has been Caribbean women who have led the movement from their homeland to new lands. In her essay, 'Of Islands and Other Mothers,' examining the emergence of Guyanese as the fifth largest immigrant group in New York City, Guyanese-American writer Gaiutra Bahadur centers women:

Caribbean women participate in the labor force at higher rates than women from other [immigrant] groups. On average, they earn less than their countrymen and they may be less visible, because they work inside homes, as nannies or housekeepers or health care aides. For many [Caribbean] countries, the migration out was led by women, who then sponsored family members, including husbands and sons, to come to America.⁵

This dominance is certainly the case in New York where Guyanese women outnumber men — the male/female ratio is 79 per 100 among Guyanese immigrants.⁶ Caribbean women's migration also opened up a new kind of agency for women that had been previously held by men. Beginning in the 1960s, Caribbean women were increasingly regarded as 'principal aliens' — granting them the ability to begin the application process to sponsor their family members. In tandem, Guyanese women,

4 Artist statement submitted by Dominique Hunter for her digital collage work, *We Meet Here, I to XII* (2017) featured in the group exhibition 'Liminal Space' curated by Grace Aneiza Ali, at the Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute (CCCADI), New York, on view 17 June 2017 to 30 November 2017.

5 Gaiutra Bahadur, 'Of Islands and Other Mothers', in Rebecca Solnit and Joshua Jelly-Shapiro (eds.), *Nonstop Metropolis: A New York City Atlas* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), pp. 77–85 (p. 81).

6 Arun Peter Lobo and Joseph J. Salvo, *The Newest New Yorker, 2013 Edition*, p. 20.

after becoming legal residents or naturalized citizens, aggressively took on the charge of sponsoring their family members to join them in their new countries.⁷

The photographic medium has historically played a critical, and often problematic, role in how as a society we *see* and *do not see* the Black and brown bodies that cross international borders. That precious 1970s photograph of my young mother flanked by her family at Guyana's airport became an important catalyst for my curatorial practice as I have focused on the relationship and responsibility that photography bears in representing our migration narratives. Each day, more women than ever from all over this world get on planes and boats and ships and makeshift rafts, while many simply walk, to cross borders.⁸ Are they merely fleeing? Or are they embarking on an incredibly brave and heroic journey to be in charge of their own destiny, to believe in the notion that they are free to move about the world? That 1970s photograph is a reminder for me of the grit it took for my mother to enact her own agency.

My investment in the multiple and complicated stories embedded in that one image has led me to the brilliant work of the following four women of Guyanese heritage with whom I have had the privilege to collaborate in the exhibitions I have curated — Keisha Scarville, Christie Neptune, Erika DeFreitas, and Khadija Benn. Their work has moved me in deeply personal ways for its intimate and thoughtful use of photography as a medium to tell Guyanese women's stories. These four artists utilize portraiture in their artistic practices as medium, object, archival language and documentary reporting, to explore the nuanced migration experiences of Guyanese women. To further deepen this

7 In New York City, in particular, it is the Guyanese community, more than any other immigrant group, that utilizes family sponsorship visas to bring to the United States other members of their family. However, a 2017 *New York Times* article reported that they 'could lose the most from a new federal effort to cut legal immigration in half'. See Vivian Wang, 'In Little Guyana, Proposed Cuts to Family Immigration Weigh Heavily', *New York Times*, 11 August 2017.

8 The World Economic Forum reported that by 2016, 'Women will comprise more than half the world's 232 million migrants for the first time. A growing proportion of these women will migrate independently and as breadwinners for their families', See Khalid Koser, '10 Migration Trends to Look out for in 2016', *World Economic Forum*, 18 December 2015, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/12/10-migration-trends-to-look-out-for-in-2016/>

relationship between photography and migration, these four artists embed in their practices innovative use of archival images, mine their family albums, and explicate private letters from their personal archives. The journeys of these treasured objects across the Atlantic Ocean leads us to meditate on what shifts occur in the migration narrative when photographs and family archives transcend geographic borders. Through their engagement with these images, the artists unpack global realities of migration, tease out symbols of decay and loss, and avoid trappings of nostalgia by envisioning avenues out of displacement and dislocation. And equally compellingly, their work speaks to who and what gets left, what survives and what is mourned, both the tangible and intangible things, in acts of migration.

Scarville, DeFreitas, Neptune and Benn are part of a younger generation of women of Guyanese heritage who reflect the contemporary reality of the Guyanese citizen — women living in Guyana, as well as those living in the country's largest diasporic nodes, New York City and Toronto. Some of them return to Guyana often, and some rarely. Yet, being the daughters of Guyanese mothers remains at the core of their identities. In an essay on the literature of Caribbean women writers Paule Marshall and Jamaica Kincaid, literary scholar Kattian Barnwell threads the connection between the phrases 'motherlands' and 'otherlands'. She writes:

Motherland may be variously defined as place of birth, 'land' or home of the mother, the site of the self. Conversely, *other-land* refers to the site where each character experiences alienation and 'othering,' the place of exile.⁹

Scarville, DeFreitas, and Neptune directly invoke the relationship between mothers and daughters in their work. They engage the tensions between the place of birth and the space of othering through the voyages undertaken by their mothers who were born in Guyana, and themselves as daughters, who were born in the United States and Canada. Benn, who is based in Guyana, occupies the opposite end of the migration arc, documenting the Amerindian mothers and grandmothers living in Guyana, who after witnessing their families fractured by migration,

9 Kattian Barnwell, 'Motherlands and Other Lands: Home and Exile in Jamaica Kincaid's "Lucy" and Paule Marshall's "Praisesong for the Widow"', *Caribbean Studies*, 27 (1994), 451–54 (p. 452).

bear the burden to keep those fragile bonds connected. What these four artists have in common is that in turning to portraiture to tell the narratives of Guyanese women's migration, they each explore the issue I am deeply concerned with — the toll migration enacts on our families.

Keisha Scarville



Fig. 36.2 Keisha Scarville, 'Untitled #1', from the series 'Mama's Clothes', 2015.
© Keisha Scarville, CC BY 4.0.

Born in New York to a Guyanese father and mother, the artist Keisha Scarville spent her childhood raised in a Brooklyn community where her parents migrated and settled. In the 1960s, during a notorious politically volatile decade that saw Guyana gain its independence from the British, Scarville's mother found her way to New York where she took on new roles: an immigrant in the United States, a young Black woman witnessing America's civil rights era, a wife and mother. Essentially, she left one volatile country for another. In those early years, she returned to Guyana often, taking a young Scarville back with her. However, as time passed, those visits became less frequent and Guyana lived mostly as a mythical motherland for the artist. Scarville writes about the dissonance

her Guyanese-born mother experienced as she tried to reconcile life as an immigrant in the United States:

Though my mother chose to migrate to the United States, she maintained a connection to the land of her birth, firmly planting one foot under a tamarind tree in Buxton and the other, rooted on the rooftop of an apartment building in Flatbush, Brooklyn. In recounting her experiences when she arrived in the United States, she often discussed the first sensation of real cold, the strange taste of American chicken, and overcoming the embedded alienation of this place.¹⁰

In 2015, the artist's mother passed away. Scarville became a daughter who had not only lost a mother, but also her deepest and most tangible connection to her mother's homeland and her ancestral home. While grappling with this loss, the artist began to work on 'Mama's Clothes' (2015), a collection of self-portraits photographed in her mother's place of birth, Buxton (Guyana) and her neighborhood in Flatbush, Brooklyn (Guyana). Scarville says:

The death of my mother left me with a sense of displacement and an internal fracturing. I started to realize that an element I regarded as home — my mother's body — was now missing. In her place were all that she accumulated as an American. My mother's closets overflowed with bright colors, strong prints, and long flowing fabrics. When I was a little girl, I would often play dress up in my mother's clothes and imagine the day I would fill her dresses and assert my body as a woman.¹¹

Scarville drapes and layers her body in her mother's clothing, as well as fashioning masks and veils out of them to cover her face and head. It is a face often obscured. In submerging her body within her mother's clothes, Scarville marries both time and space — two generations, two homelands, and the complexities in between.

The insertion of her body in the photograph simultaneously speaks to Scarville's role as both subject and performer. Dressed in her 'mama's clothes' her body roams between the lush, organic landscapes of Buxton and Brooklyn, symbolically performing the act of migration her

10 Artist statement submitted by Keisha Scarville for her portraiture series 'Mama's Clothes' (2015) featured in the group exhibition 'Liminal Space' curated by Grace Aneiza Ali, at the Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute (CCCCI), New York, on view 17 June 2017 to 30 November 2017.

11 Ibid.



Fig. 36.3 Keisha Scarville, 'Untitled #5', from the series 'Mama's Clothes', 2016.
© Keisha Scarville, CC BY 4.0.

mother once embarked on. In 'Mama's Clothes', migration and death are inextricably linked. Scarville notes: 'I wanted to ease the anxiety of separation by conjuring her presence within the photographic realm. I allowed the assemblage of clothes to drip off my body as though it were a residual, surrogate skin'.¹²

Erika DeFreitas

While Scarville mines the relationship with her mother, the artist Erika DeFreitas weaves together the relationships between her grandmother to her mother to herself. The practice of the Toronto-based artist is steeped in process, gesture, performance, and documentation. DeFreitas's grandmother sold cakes out of a humble home in Newton, British Guiana in the late 1950s. She also taught classes in cake décor to neighborhood women, reflecting the craft as one of building community. DeFreitas's grandmother never left Guyana, but her creative practice as a baker transcended its borders. She passed down the practice to

12 Ibid.



Fig. 36.4 Erika DeFreitas's grandmother Angela DeFreitas pictured in British Guiana with a wedding cake she made and decorated, ca. late 1960s.
© DeFreitas Family Collection, Courtesy of Erika DeFreitas, CC BY 4.0.

DeFreitas's mother who migrated to Canada in 1970, and in turn, taught the Canadian-born artist the intricacies of icing cakes. It is this sacred act of passing on a closely held family craft through three generations of DeFreitas women, and across two continents, which forms DeFreitas's portraiture series titled 'The Impossible Speech Act' (2007).

In this work (Fig. 5), rooted in maternal histories, DeFreitas's mother is both subject and collaborator (the artist's mother is pictured on the left, the artist is on the right). To produce 'The Impossible Speech Act', DeFreitas generously mined her family archives — albums and letters written between Guyana and Canada — and drew on the oral teachings of her grandmother. Together, mother and daughter took turns in a series of documented performative actions, both poetic and playful, to hand-fashion face masks out of green, yellow, and purple icing. From start to finish, the photographic series slowly unveils the meticulous detail, labor, time, and artistry embedded in the process of masking a bare face with these sculptural objects of flowers and leaves. The diptych featured here is the final portrait in the process.



Fig. 36.5 Erika DeFreitas, 'The Impossible Speech Act', 2007. © Erika DeFreitas, CC BY 4.0.

The artist's use of icing as material and process is symbolic. She notes, 'historically icing was created with two purposes: to be decorative and to preserve'.¹³ However, DeFreitas's chosen symbol of preservation becomes one of irony. Like the masks made of her mother's clothing in Scarville's 'Mama's Clothes', the icing masks in DeFreitas's work inevitably lead to an absence of the faces, their complete erasure. And, as the fragile material that it is, the icing itself disappears. 'The masks did not become a substitute object in each of our image,' says DeFreitas, 'they melted from the heat emitted from our bodies, the flowers and leaves eroding, sliding slowly down our faces [...] a reminder of the persistence of impermanence.'¹⁴ The work leaves us to ponder the question: Even when we commit to preserving a homeland's memories, rites and traditions, how do we navigate the inevitable loss that pervades? DeFreitas's 'The Impossible Speech Act' and Scarville's 'Mama's Clothes' are poignant examples of how, as daughters of Guyana, we constantly reach to our mothers and grandmothers as collaborators in our art — as we do in our lives.

13 Artist statement submitted by Erika DeFreitas for her portraiture series 'The Impossible Speech Act' (2007) featured in the group exhibition 'Un |Fixed Homeland' curated by Grace Aneiza Ali, at Aljira, a Center for Contemporary Art, Newark, New Jersey, on view 17 July 2016 to 23 September 2016.

14 Ibid.

Christie Neptune

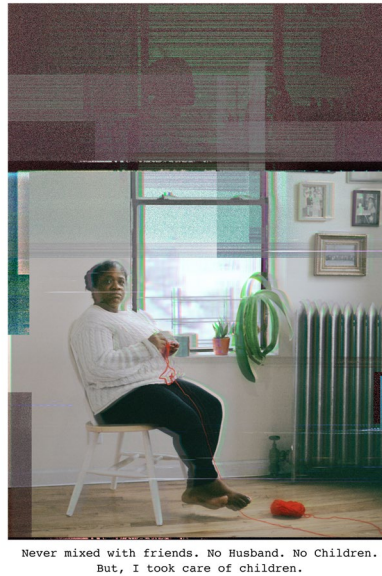


Fig. 36.6 Christie Neptune, *Memories from Yonder* (2015). © Christie Neptune, CC BY 4.0.

In this deeply personal and autobiographical work, American-born artist Christie Neptune mines childhood memories of her mother, a Guyanese immigrant in New York, and her love of crocheting — a craft popular among Guyanese women and passed down through generations. Like DeFreitas's sacred act of passing on a closely held family craft between generations of Guyanese women, so too does Neptune. She notes the cultural importance of the craft:

The art of crocheting is a popular recreational activity amongst Guyanese women. The act serves as a prophetic mode of maintaining home and family. On the eve of new life, the women crochet blankets for the burgeoning mother; pillows and table runners for wives to be; and hats, scarves and socks for the winter. For most, crocheting is a way of life; an intergenerational activity woven into a myriad of traditions. My great grandmother taught the art of crocheting to her daughters; and my grandmother taught it to my mother.¹⁵

15 Artist statement submitted by Christie Neptune for her mixed-media installation, *Memories from Yonder* (2015) featured in the group exhibition 'Liminal Space'

For Neptune, the art of crocheting becomes a metaphor for the necessary acts of unfurling a life in a past land to construct a new life in a new land. Invoking her own subjectivity as a first-generation Guyanese-American, Neptune presents visual and textual narratives from a conversation with Ehora Calder (b. 1925, Georgetown, Guyana), a Guyanese immigrant and elder, who like the artist's mother, migrated to New York in the late 1950s. Calder represents a generation of Guyanese women who in the past sixty years have been part of the mass migration from Guyana to New York City. In the 1950s and into the early 1970s, Guyanese began migrating to America in greater numbers than ever before. At the same time the United States was in the midst of a nursing shortage. This need for nurses and other roles in the health care industry, one traditionally dominated by women, propelled more Guyanese women to migrate to the United States to take on those jobs. Underpaid or often paid under the table, Guyanese women were also often steeped in an invisible workforce as private household workers — nannies, housekeepers, and home care aides.¹⁶ This is Ehora Calder's story, a woman who upon arriving in New York, worked as a home care aide until her retirement.



Fig. 36.7 Christie Neptune, video stills from *Memories from Yonder* (2015).
© Christie Neptune, CC BY 4.0.

curated by Grace Aneiza Ali, at the Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute (CCCADI), New York, on view 17 June 2017 to 30 November 2017.

16 Bahadur, 'Of Islands and Other Mothers', p. 81.

In the diptych and video still pictured in Figures 6 and 7 respectively, Neptune relies on two portrait photographs of Calder, taken in the Brooklyn Gardens Senior Center, where she now lives. The images have been rendered distorted, obscured, and mirrored with text captioning Calder's words transcribed in both American English and Guyanese Patois. In both photograph and video, Calder is depicted in the slow, methodical, rhythmic act of crocheting a red bundle of yarn. The amorphous object she is making is unknown. 'The gesture serves as a symbolic weaving of the two cultural spheres,' states Neptune, 'to reconcile the surmounting pressures of maintaining tradition whilst immersed in an Americanized culture'.¹⁷

Khadija Benn

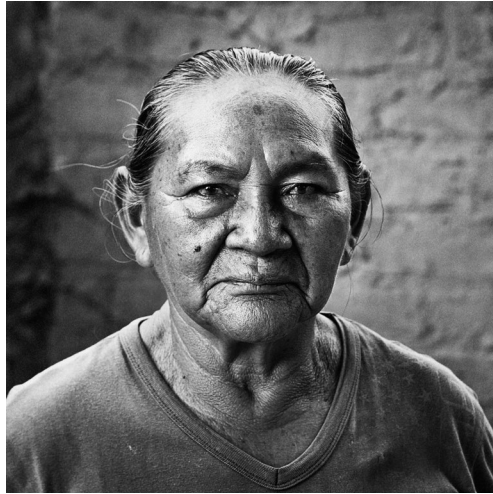


Fig. 36.8 Anastacia Winters (b. 1947), lives in Lethem, Upper Takutu-Upper Essequibo (Region Nine), Guyana. Khadija Benn, *Anastacia Winters* from the series 'Those Who Remain: Portraits of Amerindian Women', 2017. © Khadija Benn, CC BY 4.0.

Based in Guyana, Khadija Benn's training as a cartographer and her work as a geospatial analyst producing maps for the country's remote

17 Artist statement submitted by Christie Neptune for her mixed-media installation, *Memories from Yonder* (2015) featured in the group exhibition 'Liminal Space' curated by Grace Aneiza Ali, at the Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute (CCCCDI), New York, on view 17 June 2017 to 30 November 2017.

Amazon regions, informs much of her photography practice and leads her across the country to places where most Guyanese rarely have access to or ever see in their lifetimes. Guyana's first peoples, the Amerindians, have called these regions home since the eighteenth century. In tandem, Benn's photography practice confronts the underlying histories that have created these complex spaces and aims to counter the contemporary framing of them as exotic. Relying on her intimate knowledge of these regions and the relationships she's nurtured over the years with the families who live there, Benn's documentary portraiture series, 'Those Who Remain: Portraits of Amerindian Women' (2017) features stunning black and white portraits of elder Amerindian women who have called these communities home since the 1930s. These are the faces of Amerindian women the world rarely sees. Benn notes:

The narratives of those who choose *not* to migrate are seldom explored. This rings especially true for Guyana's indigenous peoples. Many have witnessed their loved ones, particularly their children and grandchildren, leave for neighboring Venezuela and Brazil, or the Caribbean islands, the United States and Canada. Yet, they often remain.¹⁸



Fig. 36.9 Mickilina Simon (b. 1938), Tabatinga, Lethem, Upper Takutu-Upper Essequibo (Region Nine), Guyana. Khadija Benn, *Mickilina Simon* from the series 'Those Who Remain: Portraits of Amerindian Women', 2017.

© Khadija Benn, CC BY 4.0.

18 Artist statement submitted by Khadija Benn for the portraiture series, 'Those Who Remain: Portraits of Amerindian Women' (2017). Unpublished statement: received in correspondence with the artist.

However, as Benn's lens reveal, these are not portraits of invisibility. These elder women have witnessed Guyana evolve from a colonized British territory, to an independent state, to a nation struggling to carve out its identity on the world stage, to a country now drained by its citizens departing. They have also been the ones most impacted by serious economic downturns over the past decades where the decline of bauxite mining coupled with little access to education beyond primary school and lack of employment have left these communities with few or no choices to thrive. And so, many do the only thing they can do — they leave. Benn writes:

As I spoke with these women, they affectionately recalled family members long gone abroad. Our conversations revealed their unique perceptions of time and space — the length of time gone by since their loved ones migrated was immaterial. Many also did not perceive relatives living in the neighboring countries, such as Brazil and Venezuela, as having settled 'abroad.' Amerindians have traditionally considered these international borders as fluid.¹⁹

While migration swirls around them, while their children go back and forth between Guyana and their newfound lands, many of these women have never left Guyana, some have never left the villages they were born in, and some have no desire to leave.

For the millions of us who have left one country for another fueled by choice or trauma, sustaining those fragile threads to a homeland is a process at once fraught, disruptive, and ever evolving. We also know that when we have left others behind in places that are beautiful, yet materially impoverished like my Guyana, we have a tremendous responsibility to the ones who are left. These four artists remind us how critical it is that we hear their stories.

19 Ibid.

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