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The Quest of African American Modern Culture

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Dedication

To all of my friends.

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Special thanks to my supervisor, Miss. Houcine Aisha, for the valuable guidance, advice, insightful remarks and all the efforts she has done throughout my studies, from the time of high school. Thank you for your time and efforts.

Abstract

The Black culture created hope to determine their personal freedom, to escape the poor living conditions of Blacks, and to create their own identity. African Americans used their culture as a way to express their needs through their artistic works. This study focuses on the how African American culture has manifested itself in America, and how the Afro-Americans used their culture to express themselves, and fight for freedom to achieve the aims of the study, the descriptive, qualitative and analytical approaches are adopted. This research attempts to study the modern African American culture through their literature, music, language, and religion. The researchers saw the originality and the uniqueness use of culture in the fight for freedom in the Black culture in America, the integration of Black identity in their culture, and how Afro-American culture is a reflection of their lives in America. The study is structured, chronologically in three chapters, the first chapter attempts to answer the question if the African American claimed their freedom or it was given to them; it gives a historical background about how the African American freedom from slavery, the second chapter, however, illustrates the African American modern culture in four different cultural aspects; language, literature, music and religion, in the last chapter the study aims to cover and illustrate how the White Americans and the US government reacted to African American cultural quest.

Résumé

La population esclave a passé une tradition du patrimoine culturel aux Afro-Américains à travers l'art. La culture Noire a créé l'espoir pour déterminer sa liberté personnelle, échapper les mauvaises conditions de vie des Noirs et pour créer ses propres identités. Un moyen de libertés individuelles consistait à exprimer les besoins des Afro-Américains dans leur culture à travers leurs œuvres artistiques. Cette étude est portée sur la manière dont la culture afro-américaine s'est manifestée en Amérique et sur la manière utilisée par les Afro-américains pour s'exprimer et se battre pour la liberté. Pour atteindre les objectifs de ce travail, les approches descriptive, qualitative et analytique ont été adoptées. Cette étude traite la moderne culture afro-américaine à travers sa littérature, sa musique, sa langue et sa religion. L'auteur a constaté l'originalité et l'unicité dans la lutte pour la liberté dans la culture noire, l'intégration d'identité Noire dans leur culture et le fait que la culture afro-américaine était et restait le reflet des vies des Noirs en Amérique. L'étude est structurée chronologiquement en trois chapitres. Le premier chapitre traite la question si l'Afro-Américain a revendiqué sa liberté ou si elle lui a été donnée. Il donne un historique de la façon dont l'Afro-Américain se libère de l'esclavage. Le deuxième chapitre illustre La culture moderne américaine en quatre aspects culturels différents: langue, littérature, musique et religion. Dans le dernier chapitre, l'étude vise à couvrir et illustrer la réaction des Américains Blancs et du gouvernement américain réagit la quête culturelle des Afro-Américains.

ملخص

ورث العبيد السود في أمريكا تقليد التراث الثقافي من خلال الفنون إلى الأميركيين الأفارقة، خلقت الثقافة السوداء الأمل لتحديد حريتهم الشخصية، للهروب من الظروف المعيشية السيئة للسود، وخلق هويتهم الخاصة. إحدى طرق الحريات الشخصية هي التعبير عن احتياجات السود في ثقافتهم من خلال أعمالهم الفنية بتركز هذه الدراسة على كيفية تجسيد الثقافة الأمريكية الإفريقية في أمريكا، وكيف استخدم الأميركيون من أصل أفريقي ثقافتهم للتعبير عن أنفسهم، واستعمالها للنضال من أجل الحرية، لتحقيق أهداف هذه الدراسة استخدم المنهج الوصفي والنوعي والتحليلي. يحاول هذا البحث دراسة الثقافة الأمريكية الإفريقية الحديثة من خلال أدبهم وموسيقاهم ولغتهم ودينهم. رأى الباحثان الأصالة والاستخدام الفريد للثقافة في الكفاح من أجل الحرية في الثقافة السوداء، وإدماج الهوية السوداء في ثقافتهم، وكيف كانت الثقافة الأمريكية الإفريقية و مازالت انعكاس الحياة السود في أمريكا. هذه الدراسة مقسمة زمنيا في ثلاثة فصول، الفصل الأول يحاول الإجابة على السؤال عما إذا كان الأميركيون من أصل أفريقي قد طالبوا بحريتهم أم أنها أعطيت لهم، وتعطي خلفية تاريخية عن كيفية تحررهم من العبودية، الفصل الثاني يوضح الثقافة الأمريكية الإفريقية الحديثة من أربع جوانب مختلفة هي اللغة و الأدب والموسيقى والدين، الفصل الأخير يهدف إلى تغطية و توضيح كيفية تفاعل الأميركيين البيض وحكومة الولايات المتحدة مع السعي الثقافي الأمريكي الأفريقي.

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General Introduction

When slaves are carried to a new country, their motherland's lifestyle vanishes hard. This has been the case with most Africans who were taken to the New World. Actually, they have brought with them their cultural heritage, the language, the traditions, the artistic manifestations, ethics and religious doctrines across the Atlantic. These cultural characteristics have been unconditionally remodeled by the firsthand representativeness of Americans, merged with European imperial involvement and have resulted in an ethnically diverse population - the African Americans.

African- American culture, or merely Black culture, has been through a lot of struggle; it has been changed over time. Black culture originates back to the early times of slavery when African slaves came to America and brought their own culture with them from their motherlands, which were rich in tradition and spirituality. Eventually, Black culture was mixed with their needs as slaves in literature, music, and arts; they were always seeking freedom and equality.

The Black struggle is manifested clearly in their culture. Literature was used to show the Whites and the whole world how Black people suffered in America; racism instigated African American writers and musicians to employ their talents to create art. The depressing reality of the Blacks was transferred to be integrated into their culture, showing salvation of a categorical ethnic identity seeking contribution to a lifestyle change in a country like America that carries the banners of peace, liberty and freedom.

Hence, the aim of this study is to critically investigate how African American culture has manifested itself in America and how it was monopolized to be the way it is today; it also aims at analyzing the extent to which it reflects the life of the African American.

It is motivating to explore the African Americans' culture in modern America and how they have been fighting for freedom. Blacks have a special and interesting culture, in a multicultural country, which has been migrated from Africa to America, and has gone through many developments to become what it is today: a unique and fascinating way of life and expression.

Accordingly, this research raises this fundamental question and put it for further investigation: why is the quest of African American culture in modern America a critical issue? In order to investigate this central research question, the following questions are raised:

Was the freedom of African Americans claimed by them or given to them? Why were the African Americans culturally distinct from White Americans? How did ~~the~~ White Americans and the U.S government react to the Black culture?

Black slaves resisted and fought back the White racism in America from the beginning of the slave trade, through many different ways. Forced migration from Africa to America affected their culture: a culture that was mixed with their struggle; as reflection of how they lived in America. They used it as a tool to fight racism and gain back self-esteem from their oppressors. Ultimately, Whites did not accept such culture at the beginning, and did not recognize it as artistic or aesthetic. The U.S government saw the Black writers, singers and artists as revolutionaries; but, that situation has changed over the years and this culture has become widely normalized in contemporary America.

In order to examine the questions, the qualitative, descriptive, and the analytical research approaches are adopted in this study. They focus on the Black culture specifically and how it was a reflection of how African Americans have lived in America taking into account that the quest of African Americans' modern culture has started from the early

times of slavery. They have always wanted to show their real identity in their writings, songs and arts. Many Black writers have won Nobel Prizes and other awards for their unique ways of using literature, and for their talents, not only writers, musicians and artists too.

The study, then, consists of three chapters, chronologically ordered. The first chapter illustrates the historical background of the Blacks in America, and their struggle to fight for freedom as well as basic human rights. The second chapter points out the identity of the Black culture, and how Black culture is affected by the living conditions of the Blacks in the U.S., and their cultural contributions to the U.S. through the four main pillars of Black culture which are literature, language, religion and music. The third chapter demonstrates the critical views on the manifestation of this culture as to how White Americans have interfaced with this distinct change and how the American government has reacted. It also points out the repercussions of the African Americans' culture on the American society

Chapter One
For the Sake of His Future: A Change from
the Ground up of a Slave in America

Introduction

The foundation of the 13 colonies in North East America; was ultimately for exploiting the new fertile lands, so plantation work was the most lucrative business throughout this land specifically cotton and tobacco to take back to Europe. At the time of founding the new British colonies, the settlers were using salary-based workers to tend and cultivate the farms who were mostly Europeans looking for opportunity in the new world or convicts looking for a fresh start, these people were called Indenture Servants brought by the Virginia Company of Plymouth which was a colonial company empowered by the royalties in Britain to help settle the eastern sides of the New World. In the early 17th century, European settlers were not content with Indenture servitude due to the costly wages of the workers and any profit made from the plantations did not meet the high expectations of the settlers, so they sought an alternative that was both cheaper in terms of salary and more profitable in terms of workforce and the best solution was slavery.

1.1 Dawn of Slavery

Slavery in history was widespread in Africa, as Africans were enslaving each other, although not in the sense of chattel slavery that was known in other parts of the world like Europe, Asia, and The Middle-East and later in America. In Africa, slavery had many forms and was not necessarily considered chattel slavery, but military slavery, debt Slavery and other forms of slavery. (Forner 18)

African states and communities fought each other constantly for various reasons and in many of these battles there were captives of war that become slaves for the winning side and later on traded for different goods from European, Asian and Arab traders. The first slaves that entered the New World were 20 and a few black men on a Spanish ship that was captured by British privateers and returned back to Jamestown in August 1609 (Wood). The settlers immediately put the Africans to work for small wages and some food and shelter, this as Peter H. Wood stated was not practically slavery yet, given that these Africans were compensated for their work; quickly; however, the majority of the Pilgrim settlers witnessed the amazing results the Africans produced, and had realized that they were given a divine relief and omnipotent intervention to further improve their position in the New World. After this incident the settlers decided to partake in the Atlantic Slave Trade, a series of trade routes and naval exploration that was initiated by the Iberians during the late 16th century and later on other European nationalities took part of it, to trade slaves for various European goods, and the hot trading point was along the coast of West Africa. Thousands of European ships ventured back and forth from The West African coastline to the New World. (Klein 103-139)

For long periods of time spanning as long as a year, African prisoners of war and other unfortunate Africans waited in the dungeons of the slave prisons scattered along the coast of West Africa. They came from different parts of Africa to either meet a sudden end in the middle of the way or be lucky enough to reach their destination safe just to be sold to the Europeans as slaves again. (Klein 103-139)

1.2 Hellish Voyages

Out of the estimated 20 million who were taken from their homes and sold into slavery, half didn't finish the journey that starts from different parts of the continent to the

western coast. The captive Africans were about to embark on a journey called the Middle Passage; it was the middle part of a three-part voyage, a voyage that began and ended in Europe (Cohn). The first leg of the voyage carried a cargo including iron, cloth, brandy, firearms, and gunpowder heading towards the western African coast. Upon landing on Africa's "slave coast" the cargo was exchanged for Africans. After that, the second leg starts (Middle Passage). Fully loaded with its human cargo, the ships set sail for the Americas, where the slaves were exchanged for sugar, tobacco, or some other product. The final leg was the route back to Europe. African slaves boarding the ships had no idea what the future had for them. The first Africans who had made the Middle Passage to the plantations of the New World did not return to their homeland to tell the tales of what happened to those people who suddenly disappeared. The captured Africans were sometimes told by the white men on the ships that they were going to put them to work in the fields; yet, this was difficult to believe, since, from the African's experience, tending to crops was an easy task for them and they knew that such work did not require many people usually. More than a few thought that the Europeans were cannibals. (Page 393–404)

Branded with hot irons before boarding, slaves were restrained with shackles and were put at the bottom of the deck within the ship that often was no more than a meter and a half of height, and throughout a large portion of the deck, sleeping shelves cut this limited space of headroom in half. Lack of standing headroom was the least of the slaves' problems, though. With 300 to 400 people packed into a tiny area, an area with little ventilation and, in some cases, not even enough space to place buckets for human waste, diseases were very common among them (Anstey 5). According to Ouladah Equiano (1745 -1797), an African slave who later on wrote an autobiography called *The interesting*

narrative of Ouladah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa the African, describing his experience as a slave:

... The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us. This produced copious perspirations, so that the air soon became unfit for respiration, from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died... (51)

Faced with the nightmarish conditions of the voyage and the unknown future that lay beyond, many Africans preferred to die. But even the choice of suicide was taken away from these miserable people. From the captain's point of view, his human cargo was extremely valuable and had to be kept alive and, if possible, uninjured. A slave who tried to starve him or her was tortured. When torture did not work, the slave was fed forcibly with the help of a contraption called a "Speculum Orum".¹ Despite the captain's desire to keep as many slaves as possible alive, Middle Passage death rates were high. Although it is difficult to determine how many Africans died on route to the New World, it is now believed that between ten and twenty percent of those transported lost their lives.²

Upon reaching the Americas, the crew of slave ships prepared the Africans for sale immediately. They washed, shaved and rubbed them with palm oil to hide wounds and injuries caused by various conditions on board. The captains usually sold their captives directly to planters or specialized wholesalers by auction. African families who had managed to stay together along the journey so far were now often split up. Bonds formed during the voyage were also broken. Immediately after buying them, many owners and masters sought to obliterate the identities of their newly acquired slaves, to break their

¹ A contraption device that held the mouth forcibly open. (www.Merriam-Webster.com)

² According to Henry Louis Gates, Jr 12.5 million slaves were transported to the New World and 10.7 million made it alive. See <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/african-americans-many-rivers-to-cross/history/how-many-slaves-landed-in-the-us/>

wills and cut any ties they had in the past. They forced Africans to adapt to new working and living conditions, to learn a new language and adopt new customs and traditions. They called this process "Seasoning" and it could last for two or three long anguishing years. (Meltzer)

For the weakened Africans, the brutality of this process was overwhelming. Many died or committed suicide as Ouladah Equiano describes it in his autobiography "It is surprising that usage like this should drive the poor creatures to despair and make them seek a refuge in death from those evils" (139). Others resisted and were punished, the rest pretended to adapt which still somehow preserved their dignity in their perspective. (Cohn)

1.3 Life as Slaves in Foreign Lands

Africans brought to the Americas were traumatized by what they have seen in the recent past, especially during the voyage made them lose all hope and self-confidence and even willingness to live. Slaves responded to the circumstance of their capture and enslavement in a variety of ways, desperate attempts here and there to ease their pain and cling to what little life they had left. Some found it easier to try and adapt, or at least fake compliance with their master's will. Others sought to improve their conditions within the bounds of slavery, working to become overseers and managers,³ in order to gain some kind of power and an elevated position or status. Pretending to be ill was a subtle way for some slaves to skip duties, while field laborers on occasion purposefully sabotage the planter's goals by performing tasks slowly or carelessly. As the institution of American slavery grew increasingly forceful, the enslaved resisted its grip by appealing to the law, by escaping,

³ Slave overseers were slaves themselves, but with an advantage of representing their plantation master in the field of work. (www.Merriam-Webster.com)

and even by committing extreme acts like suicide and murder or in some cases, full out armed rebellions.

According to Cathrine Ancholou, associate professor of English literature in Awkwo University, Nigeria; slavery in America was not yet in full motion and did not mean only African slaves, it also included other races like native Indians and Mulattos, people who are born from white and black parents. The English colonists at the time did not call themselves slave-owners and did not see themselves as "Whites" either, they were only Christians or Englishmen, and considered their indentured servants as free people, they fed and housed them and gave them rights such as what were known as "freedom dues" which usually included a piece of land and supplies, including a gun. Black-skinned or white-skinned, they all were free. The English colonists only considered non-Christians as slaves, and everyone who accepted Christianity would soon become free. The passage below reveals how the government treated Africans in parallel to other races:

All servants imported and brought into the Country. . . who were not Christians in their native Country. . . shall be accounted and be slaves. All Negro, mulatto and Indian slaves within this dominion. . . shall be held to be real estate. If any slave resists his master. . . correcting such slave, and shall happen to be killed in such correction. . . the master shall be free of all punishment. . . as if such accident never happened. (Virginia General Assembly declaration)

One of the few recorded histories of an African in America that was seemingly "equal" to his white peers is Antonio the Negro (1600 - 1670) as he was named in the 1625 Virginia census. He was brought to the colony in 1621. At this time, English and Colonial law did not define racial slavery; the census didn't call him a slave but a "servant". Later, Antonio changed his name to Anthony Johnson, married an African American servant named Mary, and they had four children. Mary and Anthony also became free, and he soon

owned land and cattle and even indentured servants of his own. By 1650, Anthony was still one of only 400 Africans in the colony among nearly 19,000 settlers. In Johnson's own country, at least 20 African men and women were free, and 13 owned their own homes. In 1640, three servants fled a Virginian plantation were caught and returned to their owner, two of them had their servitude extended four years. However, the third, a black man named John Punch (1605 - x), was sentenced to "serve his master for the time of his natural life", in other words a slave. (Walsh 115)

Slavery was being established in colonial America gradually, indentured servitude slowly transformed into slavery over time, one person at a time, one law at a time and a colony after another. A prime example of this horrible transformation was Massachusetts, the first colony to legalize slavery, in 1641 (Body of Liberties, section 91). Other states, such as Virginia, followed later on. In 1662, Virginia decided that all children born in the colony to a slave mother would be enslaved. Slavery was not only a lifelong condition only, but now it could be passed, like skin color, from generation to generation. (Brendan and McCartney)

Slavery was rapidly becoming a casual institution in American society, but the bad part of it is that it took brutal force to impose this sort of mass exploitation upon once-free people. The more harshly whites enforced racial enslavement, the more they came to fear black uprisings. As they became more fearful, they responded by further tightening the shackles of oppression. Laws concerning slave cruelty were abundant, but not in favor of slaves of course. Mutilating, dismembering, torturing and even killing slaves was all legal if provided the right reason and these were often irrational and unjust. (Fields 95,118)

Fears of rebellion and outright defiance became true horror for the white slavers. On September 9th, 1739, an African man named Jemmy, thought to be of Angolan origin,

led a small group of black rebels from Stono near Charleston towards Florida and what he believed would be freed on Spanish territory. Other slaves joined Jemmy and their numbers grew to nearly 100. Jemmy and his companions killed dozens of whites on their way, in what became known as the Stono Rebellion. White colonists caught up with the rebels and executed those whom they managed to capture. The severed heads of the rebels were left on mile posts on the side of the road as a warning to others. (Berlin 73)

White fear of black's retribution has also appeared in New York City, which had a big number of slaves almost like that of Charleston. In 1741 the "Witch Hunt" as later called, fires was ignited all over New York, including one at the governor's mansion. In a cruel manner 160 blacks and at least a dozen working class whites were accused of conspiring against the City of New York. Thirty-one Africans were killed; 13 were burned at the stake. Four whites were hung. (Sutherland)

Some black men and women consorted to judicial systems to seek freedom as an alternative for the bloody rebellions by exploiting the laws and seizing times of unrest to their benefit. An example of authority gained freedom was the story of Mum Bett (1744 - 1829) who was later called Elizabeth Freeman (Wilds), she was of African Origin and be held as a slave in Massachusetts, she filed a lawsuit against her owners, driven by the inspiration of the declaration of independence. She was released of her enslavement as the state found her enslavement is contradicting with the new constitution that bluntly states "All men are born free and equal and have certain natural, essential and unalienable rights" (Declaration of the Rights of the Inhabitants of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Article 1) to become the first slave to gain freedom legally. In court Elizabeth Freeman's appeal contained:

Any time, any time while I was a slave, if one minute's freedom had been offered to me, and I had been told I must die at the end of that minute, I would have taken it, just to stand one minute on God's airth a free woman, I would. (Sedgwick 417-424)

Atrocities committed by the whites towards the slaves were spoken against and hated by some whites even though they were a minority. People like Francis Le Jau (1665-1717), an Anglican minister and contractor of church building, spoke against the cruelty of Carolina slavery, and Samuel Sewall (1652-1730), a Boston judge, who wrote a pamphlet called "The Selling of Joseph" criticizing slavery in New York. However, not all was lost to aspiring slaves who sought freedom because of one last hope they had which was Georgia, the remaining free colony in all the 13 British colonies. But alas, after 9 years of the "Witch Hunt" incident in New York, Georgia had finally joined the wave and legalized slavery in 1750. The conflict between those who supported racial enslavement and those who believed in freedom was only just beginning. (Marsh 104-115)

1.4 The Declaration of Independence and Slavery

The idea of freedom of the slaves officially started with the Declaration of Independence, Britain announced the independence of its American colonies on July 4th, 1776; since that date America was free from the rule of Great Britain, as a result, Americans proclaimed a list of human rights, including liberty, right of life equally, the pursuit of happiness and most importantly the right of the colonies to be self-government. Thomas Jefferson⁴ (1743-1826) included a passage about the slave trade in his Declaration of Independence draft at the time the states had more than 500,000 Black, Jefferson himself owned more than 100 Slaves, he said that the slave trade and slavery are against the human nature. Thomas Jefferson's draft of the Declaration of Independence was edited by the drafting committee and larger Continental Congress and they made several changes

⁴Thomas Jefferson (April 13, 1743– July 4, 1826): was the third president of the United States, for 8 years, ha were lawyer and architect. (Jefferson 7)

to it making sure to edit the slave trade passage and to be cut, South Carolina and Georgia delegates insisted on that. The slavery passage was removed from the final document and it was replaced by a more equivocal passage about King George's incitement of domestic insurrections among us, Years later Jefferson blamed South Carolina and Georgia delegates for the removal of the passage, the delegates who were at the time actively involved in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. (Hays 90)

The declaration never extended "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness" to African Americans, in fact, Thomas Jefferson was a lifelong slaveholder, Jefferson and other founders who opposed slavery did not insist on abolishing it. And the deleted passage never had been published in the final document. America's Founding Fathers⁵ established a nation based on the principles of freedom, they allowed slavery to continue. (Hays 92)

Years later representatives from all the colonies drafted America's new constitution, they created a Bill of Rights on December 15th, 1791 guaranteeing personal freedoms to every citizen including Blacks; it was the first 10 amendments. James Madison (1751 - 1836), known as the "Father of Constitution," designed the bill to win the support in both houses of Congress and the states; he focused on rights-related amendments and ignored suggestions that would structurally change the government. That was a step forwards the freedom of the Blacks. The Bill of Right did not bring ~~the~~ freedom to the Blacks, the Whites did not accept the idea of freeing Blacks especially farmers. Most farmers at the time slaved Africans and made them work the hard farming work, the Bill of Rights had the idea of all men are born free; yet, the farmers believed that Blacks were born slaves. (Constitutionfacts)

⁵America's Founding Fathers: six leaders; George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, James Madison, and John Jay, they united the thirteen colonies and took the independence from Great Britain. (Britanica)

1.5 Slavery Abolition in South and North

By the 1800s freedom of slaves escalated from disagreements into a large-scale war between American citizens, especially the southern and northern parts. The slave trade was abolished in the 1st of January 1808. Northern states abolished slavery, even before 1808, in 1804 the northern states voted to abolish the institution of slavery within their borders. The bishops argued that the Bible did not forbid slavery. On the other side southern slaveholders believed that slaves are property, they justified their actions and said that slavery is natural and it is a part of plantation life, their wealth and power was based on the plantation of cotton, they needed a large labor force to keep their wealth, the slaves remained working in the production of cotton. (Stein 47)

1.6 Civil War

The Civil War started in 1861 between the South and the North it ended in 1865, it was mainly about slavery and saving the Union. The southern state's economy was rapidly growing, modernized and diversified, industrialization had taken root there, agriculturally, it was based on small farms they used free slaves to work in farming. However, the southern economy was based on large farms, producing cotton, relied on slaves as a labor force. They invested their money on slavery and farming. John Brown (1800 - 1859), who was an American abolitionist at the time and other radical abolitionists wanted a war to free the slaves following that Thousands of abolitionists tried to show that slavery is the wrong thing and not nature to slave human who born free men. (Warren)

After the Emancipation Proclamation, African Americans were actively recruited into the army; the administration of the president wrestled with the idea of authorizing the recruitment of Black troops they thought that move will lead more states to secede, in 1862 South Carolina liberated African Americans and runaway slaves and permitted them to join

the military services. Over 179,000 African American men served in the civil war on both sides the Union and Confederate side in over 160 units, most of them were servicing in labor positions, other free Black men were in the navy with the Union forces, they were separated into their own regiments and often discriminated, they proved themselves and fought bravely, they changed the way Americans thought about them. (Emancipation Proclamation)

After four years of conflict, the North won the war and the war was ended on April 9th, 1865, by the end of the war around four million slaves were given their freedom. President Lincoln (1809 - 1865) urged the Congress to officially stop slavery in America by passing the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, unfortunately, after that, President Lincoln was assassinated at Ford's Theater in Washington, D.C in April 14th, 1865, and his death was a shock to Americans and former slaves who considered him their savior. After the assassination of Lincoln people tried to make the South without slavery, although southerners had lost their lands and their savings, they free labor from slaves during the war; they made new laws that guaranteed equal rights for all Americans including Blacks. (Emancipation Proclamation)

1.7 Martin Luther King, Jr, and the Civil Rights Movement

Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968) was one of the leaders of the boycott who rose out of the Montgomery Bus Boycott⁶ to lead the full-scale Civil Rights Movement. His strategy was of nonviolent protests, peaceful demonstrations, marches and boycotts, African American and White citizens banded together to join the protests, in 1963 more than 250,000 people marched peacefully on the nation's capital to support the protests,

⁶Montgomery Bus Boycott is when African Americans protested and refused to ride buses in Montgomery, Alabama, because the segregation of seats from December 5th, 1955, to December 20th, 1956. (Editors, History.com)

new civil rights bill stalled in the Congress, and it was the largest demonstration for human rights held in America. Martin Luther King delivered on August 28th, 1963, during the March on Washington, his most famous speech, "I Have a Dream." It was one of the most iconic speeches in American history, a call for equality and freedom, King referenced Abraham Lincoln and He then spoke about the Emancipation Proclamation, which helped in ending the long night of their slaves and gave some rights to the Blacks at the time. Protesters were beaten by the police forces and thrown in jail; some of the protesters were killed, Martin Luther King Jr. lived in constant threat, and he was assassinated on April 4th, 1968. His death sparked Black rebellions in many cities Public opinion strongly supported new civil rights laws. President Lyndon Baines Johnson supported the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the Voting Rights Act in 1965. These acts guaranteed some basic civil rights for African Americans, but it did not guarantee equal rights, most African American saw the new laws were not enough, they were angry and frustrated over poverty, housing, and unemployment that led the northern cities to massive riots in the 1960s demanding that African Americans establish their own place in society, using force if necessary. (Carson 74)

Although the Civil Rights Act in 1866 made Black American citizens legally and officially, the 14th amendment, July 9th, 1868, granted the citizenship for African Americans, and the 15th amendment, ratified in 1870, extended the right to vote to Black males. The dream of equality never been truly fulfilled, even nowadays African Americans are still fighting racism in everyday life. However, in 2008 Barack Obama (August 4th, 1961) was the 1st African American president who was nominated by the major party, the Democrats, President Obama believed in improving the lives of all Americans, African Americans too, by giving them equal opportunities, improving health care and educational systems, making sure that the criminal justice system is applied fairly to all citizens. In

March 2010 the unemployment rate for African Americans peaked at 16.8 percent, the real median income of Black households increased by 4.1 percent between 2014 and 2015, and the poverty rate for African Americans fell faster in 2015 than in any year since 1999. He had done more to African Americans in many different fields. (President Barack Obama)

1.8 Encountering Distant Voices: An Exploration of Identities, Beliefs, and Theories

8.1 Curse of Ham

Christians believed that Black people were the result of Noah's curse on his son, Ham. According to Christian books, the son of Noah sinned when he saw his father lying naked in his tent after he got drunk. Being a drunk or naked in your own house was not something to be ashamed of; yet, when Ham saw him, Noah was ashamed, Ham went to his brother to go and see their father naked. The two brothers respected their father and went in the tent and covered him not to be ashamed again, when Noah got over his drunkenness, he was aware of what Ham did and he cursed him, the curse was in Ham's son Canaan, the curse made sons of Canaan Black. The interpretation of this belief led Christians to consider that all Black people are cursed by Noah and they meant to be slaves; however, the Black Christians believed that they are born slaves and they are cursed. Christians now disagree with these translations. Ham was not cursed, but his son Canaan and the Black race were never mentioned in the biblical text. (Whitford 07)

8.2 Anglo-Saxons

From old times that span all the way back between the 2nd and 11th century, slavery was a normal part of society in Europe, especially under the Roman Empire. Britannia's inhabitants namely the Anglo-Saxons and the Irish practiced the system of Chattel Slavery

before and even after the fall of the Roman Empire. Anglo-Saxons used to enslave Norse prisoners and mostly small nomadic Irish tribes scattered across Britannia. From the 9th to the 12th centuries, Viking Dublin was a hot center of slave trading which led to an increase in slavery rates in the region. The Saxons issued a law called "law of Ine of Wessex" to restrict the selling of slaves across the seas, by applying a penalty to the master if the slave is a "Countrymen" meaning from anywhere from Britannia, whether the sold was bounded by a crime or free. After the Normans conquest of Britain in the 12th century, Chattel Slavery disappeared, at least for a time, any slave existed at the time became known as Serfs and not slaves. Accordingly, Americans, as descendants of the Anglo-Saxon Race believed that it was their responsibility to spread civilization and culture to the African, Asian and Latin American countries. (Kramer 1315-1319)

8.3 Manifest destiny

Americans believe that they are chosen by God to protect people, the Manifest Destiny is a phrase that expresses that Americans were given right to protect, civilize people, and to expand in their lands by the god of Christians. The origins of the phrase were coined by a newspaper editor named John O'Sullivan (1813 - 1895) in 1845. Americans justified their territorial expansions and slavery by this idea. The Bible helped the Americans to believe in the manifest destiny, as they believed that Blacks were born as slaves and they were encouraged to slave African people and bring them from their lands and families to use them as labor force, they even used them in wars. (Jeanne)

8.4 Social Gospel Movement

The Social Gospel Movement is a religious movement emerged in the mid-nineteenth century, it is a movement of laity and clergy emerged after the Civil War, the American society faced social instability at that time due to the trauma of the war and the

lost loss of people. Christians thought that people needed religion and salvation at those hard times; thus, they wanted all the people to live the life of Jesus Christ. In the sake of honoring God, people must help each other, especially the ones in need; they must share and do good things. After the Civil War ex-slaves relocated to the North in massive numbers, Christians who believed in the Social Gospel Movement helped the people who were arriving, and migrating from south to north; they helped them by building settlement houses to provide them with shelter, access to education and health care. (Social Gospel Movement)

8.5 Capitalism

Capitalism is an economic system based on individuals' ownership and non-governmental property. The history of capitalism in the United States roots back to the slavery era, businessmen needed workers for their farms they brought Blacks from Africa as slaves to work in the farms, the Blacks were hard workers due to their physical capabilities and most importantly to businessmen at that time is the quantity and the poor wages they pay to slaves. The Southern state's economy was based on slaves as farm workers. Slavery was a source of the cotton production that filled the Southern states banks and markets. (Britannica)

8.6 Republicanism

Republicanism is a representative form of governmental organization, it is a political ideology based on citizenship in a state organized as a republic. Republicanism has shaped America since the American Revolution, the Declaration of Independence 1776, and the American Constitution 1787 which was based on the idea of republicanism. One of the most important ideas of republicanism are liberty, civil rights, and power must always be given by the people, never inherited, yet that was not true in

the US because they slaved Africans, they were guilty of the crime of slavery, Americans were hypocrites they claim to enslave Africans and they haven't. ("Republicanism." www.wikipedia.com)

Conclusion

African Americans have gone through a lot of experiences and developments throughout the centuries, starting from mere slaves with no identity to a community with a force to be reckoned with. Although, these people have faced oppression in their early days in the New World; segregation and brutality during the revolution and the Civil War; racism and favoritism in the modern day; yet, they have endured and survived the test of time with a banquet of culture so diverse and complex, that thousands of books are not enough to document it.

Chapter Two
The Quest of African American Culture in
Modern America

Introduction

The quest of the African Americans culture begins with foreign people in a new world enslaved against their will. Africans had brought with them their own culture from their homes. In time and due to different experiences the blacks went through their culture was customized to match the Americans, slaves started to develop a new culture based on their habits and traditions. African American culture is characterized by the sadness that was the main theme of their writings, language, art, and music, and their struggle for freedom and equality.

2.1 African-American Language

Language of the African Americans does not consist simply of English and other original tongues from Africa, but it also mixes both into other forms and hybrids of languages. Since their forced departure from Africa, the blacks have tried to maintain their traditions and customs. In order to do that they had to preserve their languages, as various as they may be and pass them to generations to come. Over time slaves were obligated to learn English to communicate with their masters, this led to an unplanned development of languages among the Blacks to create new styles of speech called African American Vernacular English (AAVE) or simply "Ebonics" (Clegg 6). This style of speech may sometimes involve only a simplification of certain phonemes or in other cases ungrammatical "to be" within certain statements and may seem unintelligible and "dumb" to speakers of Standard English. However, many African-Americans take pride in using such dialects and styles of speech that reminds them of their origins and glorifies their ancestors, while other Americans, white and black, define it simply as bad English.

“Black” English, also known to linguists as AAVE and also popular as “Ebonics”, is of interest not only as a linguistic aspect of the U.S.’s Black minority, but also as an important element of the general culture that the United States presents to the rest of the world. (Blackshire-Belay 5-23)

During a period spanning over two centuries, captives speaking hundreds of West African languages were transported to the New world. It is supposed that these captives, in order to communicate with one another and with their masters, developed a pidgin combining elements of various West African languages. Pidgins are spontaneous linguistic systems that develop when speakers of diverse tongues find themselves in circumstances that require them to communicate with one another. Pidgins, which basically mix and simplify aspects derived from their component languages, are by definition transient languages.⁷ However, speakers of a pidgin may transmit it to their children, for whom the pidgin then becomes a native language. When this occurs, we say that the pidgin has become a Creole.⁸ Creoles may eventually acquire the socio-political status of languages, and in this way complete a sort of linguistic cycle. (Menken 769)

The slave population of the United States is thought to have created an African-based Creole, where slavery and racial segregation thrived. This Creole, conserving certain grammatical and phonological features common to West African languages, while at the same time adopting English lexicon, is said to represent the origin of African American Vernacular English. (Baugh)

⁷ Transient languages are temporary languages meant to be dropped and forgotten after serving their purpose. (www.britannica.com)

⁸ A Creole is a stable natural language that develops from the simplifying and mixing of different languages at a sudden point in time.(www.Merriam-Webster.com)

The African American's tongues used many forms of speeches representing diverse combinations of Standard English and black Creole. The Blacks typically assumed one set of speech habits when dealing with whites and another set when they were among their own people. Du Bois writes in his encyclopedia describing this phenomenon:

One of the constant and determinative qualities of Black Vernacular English, from the days of slavery to the present, is its oppositional nature. From the first, African Americans confronted the reality of white power and the need to avoid or subvert white domination. Slaveholders and other whites, constantly fearful of slave rebellions, maintained ongoing surveillance of the African American population, attempting to prevent unauthorized gatherings of blacks and listening in on slave conversations.

American society, during and after the slavery era, maintained to stereotyped characteristics about the character, speech, habits and abilities of the black man. It was convenient, for Blacks to behave according to such expectations. The Blacks would, in their dealings with the whites, consciously or unconsciously assume a “darky” mode of speech so to be original with their way of speech talking to white people. (Sweetland 514-536)

The term “Ebonics” was originally coined in 1973 by George Washington University Professor Robert Williams, it basically combines the words “ebony” and ”phonics” in an attempt to define African American speech (Landrum-Brown). Considering that Ebonics was a vernacular dialect many scholars and linguists of the 20th century refused the idea of calling Ebonics an inferior form of language to the standard English which was the popular belief at the time, because it basically was never recognized as a standard dialect. (Sweetland 514-536)

In 1974, the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) an education institute within the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) issued a resolution that gave students the right to own their language; it is as follows:

We affirm the students' right to their own patterns and varieties of language—the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style. Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers and immoral advice for humans. A nation proud of its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialects. We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language. (Smitherman 21-27)

On one side, the issue of AAVE concerns lower class Black children who grew up in African American communities, have their natural speech habits lead to difficulties in reading and writing at school and occasionally, discrimination in the social environment. On another side, it is about the free use of AAVE among themselves or Standard English as they see fit. This accumulation of AAVE, in order to reinforce feelings of social identity while communicating pride and defiance towards the larger society is an example of what linguists call hypercreolization⁹. For example, the lyrics of rap songs, which try to represent Black English to the society, use street argot, and slangs more than anything that could be called AAVE. (Menken 769)

1.1 Pronunciation

The AAVE have a unique set of rules in terms of pronunciation, although not everyone follows them, they are basically tendencies more than actual rules:

Most noticed tendency is the removal of consonant clusters. When two or more consonants occur after each other in a word, an AAVE speaker simplifies it by pronouncing only the first one. E.g., “children” becomes chil’un, “first” becomes firs or fir. Most likely the removal occurrence depends often on context. In addition many consonant clusters, and even individual consonants occurring at the ends of words may be omitted, so

⁹ A reaction by Creole speakers against the standard language of a community, motivated by a desire to protect and maintain their AAVE. (www.oxfordreference.com)

walk becomes wal or wa. Present continuous verb endings of “ing” are pronounced in. (African-American Vernacular English)

Another popular speech habit is the voiced "th" that changes to **v**, “brother” becoming **brover**, while the unvoiced sound of “th” occurring within a word is simplified to “f” so that “worth” becomes **worff**, and “nothing” becomes **nofin**. Voiced “th” occurring at the beginning of a word is pronounced “d”, “this” becoming dis, “that” becoming dat and “they” becoming dey. Unvoiced “th” as in “thing” may (rarely) become “t” as in ting. However, if this phoneme is followed by an “r” the speaker may pronounce it as “f” so that “three” becomes free. Words that in Standard English are stressed on final syllables may be stressed on the first syllable, police, and hotel, in Standard English become poe-lice, and hoe-tel in AAVE. “L” and “r”, when in the middle of a word, are vocalized, meaning they take on a sound like uh, it is easily noticed when the “l” or “r” come after a vowel. For example, “sister becomes sist’uh.

lastly, diphthongs are typically simplified, “my” is “ma” and “night” is “nat”. Nasals (like m and n) following a vowel are often omitted and the nasal sound is then attached to the vowel. For example, “man” becomes **mah**. (African American Vernacular English)

1.2 Grammar

Grammatically AAEV has a few elements that differ from standard English but nonetheless we mention some of them:

"Nobody can beat him" becomes, **Can't nobody beat him**. "There is nothing here" becomes, **Ain't nof'in here**. These changes happen when double negatives are mentioned in one sentence, the negative auxiliary is mentioned before the subject.

Omission of the conjugated “be” is common among AAEV users, particularly in compound verbal constructions, e.g.: **I gonna’ shoot em. He huntin. They all right.** However, Unconjugated “be” is used often to express the present continues of a situation, like: **They be family. He be com’in every day.** The past participle, “been” may be used in a similar way when the situation expressed has its origin in the past. For example: **He been singin the whole day.** (African-American Vernacular English)

1.3 Vocabulary

In terms of Vocabulary AAEV has a huge amount of words that may mislead non-vernacular acquaintances and sometimes even their speakers considering diverse black communities across America. A big chunk of these words and expressions have been passed to Standard English as slang terms, e.g.: “jazz”, “dig”, “jam”, “cool”, “bogus”, “rock and roll”, “right on”, “up tight”... etc. Black jazz artists of earlier eras, like their rap-singing descendants today, enjoyed coining slang words that expressed the black experience while implying criticism of white society. The spread of an “in” ending vocabulary reinforced feelings of community and togetherness among Blacks. Eventually, these slang words would be “raided”¹⁰ by whites and the process of linguistic creation would begin again. The maintenance of AAEV, as mentioned earlier, comes through its phonology and grammar rather than its vocabulary. (African-American Vernacular English)

¹⁰ Raided words by the whites are words that have been casualized among them and are used frequently so they are no longer limited to black people only. (www.oxfordreference.com)

2.2 Black Literature

2.1 Brief History of Black Literature

The origins of African American literature roots back to their history and traditions brought from Africa from the time of the early days of slavery in the 17th and 18th centuries, their literature was orally told as stories. The African American stories were fictional in an imaginative way about legends and super-powered heroes. African American adults memorize stories and they become good storytellers when they become animated in their quest to tell a good fable and folktales. African oral traditions in storytelling tend to explain and view the world around them, one type of folktales of African American stories is about explaining animals, raising questions about animals and giving the answer in a story such as why animal look or act the way they do, they often amusing and attempt to explain common animal behavior. Another type of African American stories is the “how-and-why” stories; this type of stories is full of hidden messages about the wisdom, morals and it often offers moral guidance, for instant the fable “Tappin, the Land Turtle”¹¹ give references about the brutality of slavery and tend to explain how storytelling and humor the circumstance more bearable. Folktales kept African American oral traditions alive; it enabled the preservation and dissemination of African culture, and it preserved African American literature in addition, oral traditions gave African American the sense of community, it was one of the few activities that were not controlled by their White owners. (Warren 25)

The fable and the folktales were the influence of the earliest African American writers; it was the core of African American literature. Before the civil war, African American literature was mainly about the issue of slavery and the struggle of everyday life

¹¹ "Tappin the Land Turtle" is an African-American fable about a story of a turtle whose family went through hard times. (www.indiana.com)

of slaves, such as slave narratives which were one of the most influential traditions in the American literature. *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa, The African* written by Olaudah Equiano (1745 - 1797) published in 1789 in London was the first slave narrative to become international best-selling work. *Up from Slavery* (1901) written by Booker T. Washington (1856 - 1915) was another best-selling slave narrative of the late 19th century considered to be a classic American success story. (Warren 26)

2.2 Harlem Renaissance

The Harlem Renaissance was a turning point in the African American culture; it was an intellectual, social and artistic explosion, particularly in the creative arts. The Harlem Renaissance or New Negro Movement dates back to the 1920s in Harlem, New York, it was a result of the great African American migration after gaining their freedom. The Harlem Renaissance was the most influential movement in Black literary and arts in the history of African Americans, it was a cultural awakening that characterized by overt racial pride and the fight for their identity, equality, civil rights, and cultural heritage in the production of a wide variety of cultural elements and styles in literature, art, and music. (Baker 32)

2.3 Contemporary African-American Literature

Contemporary African American literature is considered to be the weapon that fights for Black rights; Black writers used their talent and skills to express the life of the Blacks and their struggle in modern America, the exploration of Black identity as well as African culture and the condemnation of racism (Warren 81). Because of these themes, many literary works are about individuals struggling and the issues of freedom and

equality. African American literature tends to explore and show the experience of what is like to be Black in America in its own unique language that cannot be found in any other works; it is characterized by the oral component that comes from the tradition of slave spirituals and poetry. (Warren 90)

2.4 Contemporary African-American Literature and Politics

On the side of politics, the African American literature is influenced by issues such as slavery and social liberties. African American writers were fighting for their rights by writing and supporting twentieth-century civil rights movement. Maya Angelou (1928-2014) and Alice Walker (1944) were from the first writers to take an active part in the Civil Rights Movement. In 1983, Alice Walker won the National Book Award for Fiction and the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for her novel *The Color Purple* (1982), the novel is about the lives of women in the south of the United States. Maya Angelou is famous of her autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1983). Many African American writers tend to support the weak and countries in war Alice Walker is one of them, she supported the Palestinian, in 2009 Walker and other female activists from the anti-war group responded to Gaza war and they went there to give help and aid. (Walker 4)

2.5 Toni Morrison

Toni Morrison (February 18th, 1931) is an American novelist, essayist, editor, teacher and professor emeritus at Princeton University. Morrison is an icon in the African American literature known for her examination of Black experience, especially Black female: she won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1993 to become the first African American who won the Nobel Prize in Literature, she received the Pulitzer Prize and the American Book Award in 1988 for her novel *Beloved* (1987). Morrison was selected by

the National Endowment for the Humanities for the Jefferson Lecture, which is the highest honor for achievement in the humanities in 1996. Books are written by Black writers continually achieved best-selling and award-winning status and Black literature has come to be recognized worldwide. (Morrison 03-10)

2.3 Black Music

African culture is rich by poetry and narratives due to its oral traditions, Africans brought with them their music when they first came to America, the lyrics were passed from generation to another orally; slaves used to sing songs during work in farming most of these songs are about being a slave, literacy, life and property ownership, slaves used music as a type of freedom to sing what they want to, they use music to pass coded messages between them, they named them “message songs” such as “The Blue Tail Fly” (Robinson 1)

3.2 Blues and Jazz

After the end of the Civil War, slaves were freed from slavery and left desperately poor. In the poverty and depression, new form of music appeared, in 1916 was the first Blues show Ashley Street in Jacksonville performed by Ma Rainey (1882 - 1939) and Bessie Smith (1894 - 1937). They were the forerunners of the Blues; this music genre was characterized by simple melodies and plaintive songs. The lyrics are often related to the experience of the African Americans in the American society, for example Blind Lemon Jefferson's (1893 - 1929) "Rising High Water Blues" (1927) which tells what happened in the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927. (Robinson 4)

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the jazz music was born in New Orleans by African American's singers; jazz was the instrumental equivalent of the barbershop quartet. Jazz music is considered by many to be America's classical music. The 1920s were marked as the jazz age. The first jazz soloists were Louis Armstrong in Chicago and in New York, the jazz, swing rhythms was amplified into full-scale orchestras. Jazz music and dance rapidly gained popularity in the United States; it was a cultural change where jazz played a major role in it since that jazz was recognized worldwide. (Robinson 5)

3.3 Rhythm and Blues

In the late of 1920s and beginning of 1930s African American were migrating to northern cities due to poverty in the south, unfortunately, the north was not as good as they thought and they faced poverty, unemployment and racism. The migration created a new market for music, at that time Rhythm and Blues best known as R&B or RnB emerged in Detroit, R&B was pioneered by a small record company in Detroit called "Motown" many music groups and bands had signed for Motown like the Supremes and the Chi-Lites(1969 - 1974), and solo R&B stars like Ray Charles(1930 - 2004) and Ella Fitzgerald(1917 - 1996). Like many African American music genres, the Rhythm and Blues are characterized by its powerful lyrics, R&B tends to encapsulate the African-American experience in poverty, unemployment and the quest for civil rights. (Robinson 8)

3.4 Rhythmic African Poetry

By the 1980s, African Americans were facing problems in urban living due to poverty and crime; drug addiction was widely spread in the Black societies. Black people were angry about the life they were living, that emotional maelstrom led to the birth of the most aggressive music genre. Rap music came as a reaction to the poor living conditions of

African American living in the late 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s. The origins of the name Rhythmic African Poetry roots back to the oral traditions of the Blacks. Slaves used to sing their poetry which often dealt with their situation as slaves and poor, it was a way of relief, Rap music was named that way because they have common things the old poetry and the modern Rap both deals with the state of the Black in the United States. (Keyes 10)

Rap music is known by its spoken word, poetry and traditional singing; it is characterized by its hard and aggressive lyrics. Rappers always tend to send a message or explain something. African Americans used Rap to tell their stories and what they have been through; and they used it to fight poverty and racism. Rap music has become worldwide popular when it was morphed into the culture of hip-hop¹². The popularity of Rap music made it turn into a whole culture, with a specific way of living, unique clothing, hairstyles, and fashion. (Keyes 23)

By the 1980s, most Rap songs dealt with the subjects of politics and police brutality against Blacks. Rappers tend to use aggrieve words to address the government. Poverty and racism are the main themes of most songs and albums. The act of lyrically attacking or criticizing in Rap music is known as dissing; diss songs like "Black Cotton"¹³ and "911 is a Joke"¹⁴ made Rap music and hip-hop culture become a trend in the United States. The 1980s in considered to be the golden age of Rap. (Robinson 9)

The 1990s was the emergence of gangster rap, Black rappers had got enough from racism, the police were victimizing Black males in the street and rappers reacted and

¹² Hip-hop is cultural movement that attained widespread popularity in the 1980s and '90s; also, the backing music for rap. (www.britanica.com)

¹³ Black Cotton is a 1995 diss song about what the singer called "modern slavery" sang by the rapper Tupac.

¹⁴ 911 is a Joke is a song by Public Enemy, it is a diss song to the American government.

replied to this lyrically by many songs such as “Changes” by 2pac. In this song the Tupac stated in his verses:

“I see no changes, wake up in the morning and I ask myself
Is life worth livin'? Should I blast myself?
I'm tired of bein' poor and, even worse, I'm Black...
Cops don't care about a negro
Pull the trigger, kill a nigga, he's a hero” (1-5)

In these verses, Tupac is asserting that cops don't care about Blacks and they can kill them easily, in addition he stated that when a White cop kills a Black he become a hero in the eyes of the society, because Whites saw Blacks as gangsters, drug addicts and drug dealers. Due to the emergence of hardcore rap songs, gangster rap developed to be the most commercially lucrative in the industry of music. (Changes)

Rappers contributed in the fight for freedom and equality by their own ways, by their songs they made the whole world listen to them and the Blacks struggle in the United States. One of the most influential rapper of all time is Tupac Shakur best known for his stage name 2pac and Makaveli. Tupac is young rapper, writer and actor born June 16th, 1971, in New York. He is known for his gangster rap and his powerful songs about racism, most of his songs are about the life of the Blacks in the US, dissing the government and other White rappers. Tupac is considered to be the greatest rappers of all time, thanks to his powerful words and the wise word choice. His album “All Eyez on Me” has become the best-selling album in 1996. In the same year, he received the Soul Train Music Awards for his album “Me Against the World” and in 1997 he received American Music Award for Favorite Artist, and other music awards. Tupac was representing his people and his people loved him and they supported him. Tupac was killed on September 7th, 1996, in Las Vegas; his death was a huge shock to the Blacks community and the United States as a whole and many consider the death of Tupac means the death of Rap music. (Staff 03)

2.4 African American Religion

The U.S. is generally considered a highly religious nation; the African-Americans are in particular more religious on many different levels than the whole U.S. population, including levels of affiliation with a certain religion, attendance at religious services, frequency of prayer and mainly religion's importance in life. Compared with other racial and ethnic groups, African-Americans are among the most likely to state a formal religious affiliation without hesitation; whether they consider themselves Muslims, Christians or Jews. And although they exist ever so scarcely in the U.S., other Afro-American religions are still practiced in South America called "African diasporic religions".¹⁵ (Raboteau 21 - 27)

4.1 Islam

The presence of Islam among African Americans can be traced to the earliest days of their exportation to the New World. Western literature has mainly focused on African traditional religions that it became popular that most slaves back then were of traditional customs and simple out-dated beliefs, which is not entirely true as historians estimate 30 percent of 20 million deported slaves were Muslims that is due to the fact that the areas in West Africa where the majority of slaves came from were predominantly Muslims, and had been so for six to seven centuries before the slave trade was initiated. Even though, many were forced to convert to Christianity by their masters later, and this fact is becoming increasingly clear through the discovery, translation, and interpretation of Arabic slave narratives like the narrative of Omar Ben Said (1770-1864). (B.McCloud 1)

¹⁵ Or Afro-American religions, they are traditional African religions that were influenced by other religions, mainly Christianity. (www.Merriam-Webster.com)

The American Muslim Council says that 5 million Muslims live in America , while the non-partisan Center for Immigration Studies believes the number is closer to 4 million followers of Islam. The numbers vary depending on the source. The American Religious Identification Study by the City University of New York, completed in 2001 put the number of Muslims at 1, 104,000. African Americans, descendants of the slave generations who are Muslims today consist of 20% of total Muslim population in the U.S.

(www.pewforum.org/a-religious-portrait-of-african-americans)

During the twentieth century, African Americans sought to reconnect with their African heritage and many found that they had a connection with Islam, most of them converted either self-encouraged or by the influence of black nationalist groups that preached Islamic practices; the most famous group was the Moorish Science Temple of America, founded in the 1930s, the largest organization of Islam in America till today, its most distinguished members included activist Malcolm X (1925-1965) and the greatest boxer known at the time Muhammad Ali (1942-2016). After Warith Deen Muhammad (1933-2006) son of Malcolm X disbanded the Nation of Islam and started another Islamic group called the American society of Muslims. In 1981 Louis Eugene Walcott (1933) (a.k.a Farrakhan Louis), an American minister took the initiative to revive the Nation of Islam, by renaming his already founded organization from "Final Call" to "Nation of Islam". Farrakhan has been labeled as anti-Semitic¹⁶ and homophobic. (Scopino Jr 346)

4.2 Christianity

Christianity within the African American history dates back to the 16th century when Catholic missionaries from Europe traveled to West and Center Africa to spread their

¹⁶ Anti-Semitism is the total or partial rejection of Jews and Judaism as a religion. (www.oxfordreference.com)

faith and many Africans embraced it and found solace in it during their unforeseen departure to the New World. African American Christianity or the Black Church consists mostly of Protestants and with scattered groups of African-American Christian denominations, such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME): the first independent Protestant denomination¹⁷ to be founded by black people, many black churches are members of white denominations, such as the United Church of Christ. (Raboteau 139)

Most black Christians and about half of all African Americans (53%) are associated with historic black Protestant churches, according to the statistical research center of Pew. Smaller percentages of African Americans associate with evangelical Protestantism (14%) and Catholicism (5%), mainline Protestantism (4%). (www.pewforum.org/u-s-religious-landscape-survey-religious-beliefs-and-practices)

Black churches played a major role in the American Civil Rights Movement as leaders and guidelines during the 20th century for many African Americans and even whites who sought equality under the name of religion. Their history as a center of strength for the black community made them natural leaders in this moral struggle. In addition, they had often served as mediators between the Whites and the Blacks. Notable minister-activists of the 1950s and 1960s including the black icon Martin Luther King Jr, the founder of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and his successors like, Ralph David Abernathy (1926-1990) and Fred Shuttlesworth (1922-2011). In the Twenty-first century, the African American Churches have undergone severe changes. The individual organizations remain important to African American religious life. The Black

¹⁷ A distinct religious group under the banner of Christianity, recognized by unique traits, name, organization, leadership and doctrine. (www.merriam-webster.com)

Church is also at a crossroads due to the "WhiteFlight¹⁸" gentrification and systemic capitalism. The Black Church has historically been a source of hope and strength for the African American community. (Raboteau 76)

4.3 Other religions

The story of African-American religion is a story of variety and diverse culture. Enslaved Africans transported to the New World brought with them a wide range of local religious beliefs and practices. This diversity reflected the many cultures and linguistic groups from which they had come. The majority came from the West Coast of Africa, but even within this area religious traditions varied greatly. The harsh circumstances under which most slaves lived; high death rates, the separation of families and tribal groups, and the brutal effort of white owners to eradicate "heathen" (or non-Christian) customs; made the preservation of religious traditions difficult and often unsuccessful. (Giggle 65–93)

Isolated songs, rhythms, movements, and beliefs in the healing powers of roots and the enchanting of a world of spirits and ancestors did survive well into the nineteenth century. But these increases were mixed in creative ways with the various forms of Christianity which Europeans and Americans introduced to African slaves. In Latin America, where Catholicism was most prevalent, the slaves mixed African beliefs and practices with Catholic rituals and theology, resulting in the formation of entirely new religions such as Vaudou in Haiti (later referred to as "voodoo"), Santeria in Cuba, and Candomblé in Brazil. In North America, slaves came into contact with the growing number of Protestant evangelical preachers, many of whom actively sought the conversion of

¹⁸ A term that originated in the United States, and referred to the large-scale migration of people of various European ancestries from racially mixed urban regions to more racially homogeneous suburban or exurban regions. (www.oxforddictionaries.com)

African Americans to their faiths. Thus the rising numbers of African American Christians within the U.S. (Giggle 65–93)

Conclusion

The experience of Afro-Americans has predestined them to develop their own unique culture. The uniqueness of their culture is based on the use of various cultural aspects in creating their own identity. Language, literature, music and religion played a major role in the creation of African American identity, Black writers and musicians have been awarded for their artistic works; they were creative in their own way, a distinctive way. Accordingly, White Americans and the American government reacted to the Black culture.

Chapter Three
Americans reaction to African American
Culture

Introduction

Black culture has been critiqued over time from the emergence of it till now by White people and the United States government. Blacks was critiqued for their culture and the way they used it to send a message, and how they used the arts in fighting racism, African American literature was criticized from many different aspects starting from their style to the topics were disused in it. The most cultural aspect that was criticized by the White and the government was Black music; it was heavily criticized and accused, the focus of the critics was on the famous literary and music genres. The diversity of Black language and religion was seen as strange and different things for White people.

3.1 Reactions to African-American Vernacular English

1.1 African-American Vernacular English and the Whites

Diversity of black culture and corresponding black dialect that comes with it have overwhelmed the white societies and could not really keep up with it. This led some people to develop unique points of view towards the Black English, some call it vernacular English, some call it a new language while others just simply dismiss it as bad English.

North Americans have always been fascinated by the presence of “primitive” people among them. Indians, Negroes and other nonwhite people are characterized by abundant within the United States' literature of the nineteenth century, few examples worth mentioning are Chingachgook from *The Last of the Mohicans*, Jim from *Huckleberry Finn* and Queequeg from *Moby Dick*. America's greatest popular composer Stephen Foster (1826-1864) showed a tendency for sentimental “Ethiopian” songs whose lyrics called a representation of. Negro dialect. However, much of these popular characterizations in literature and songs reflect white attitudes of romantic admiration or condescending humor.

They also give evidence of genuine sympathy for the people represented, and of real interest in their human qualities. (Marc 407)

The arrival of the first slaves in North America marked the beginning of an American fascination with the culture and speech of these black men who had exchanged a barbarian life in Africa for another of servitude among civilized, English-speaking Christians. However, many novelists like Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896) and Mark Twain (1835-1910), or songwriters like Stephen Foster attempted to represent black speech, this can be found in many novelists and songwriters who take black speech as a resource for their writings. Touches of “Black” dialect that lend pity and sadness to the speeches of Stowe’s Uncle Tom, humor to the philosophizing of Twain’s runaway slave Jim, and sentimentality to Stephen Foster’s Uncle Ned “He’s gone war de good niggers go...” (Foster 1859) only because they saw it as “bad” English (Bailey 27,28). An example of such pseudo-African-American dialect is “Oh! Susanna”. This Stephen Foster composition, sung by generations of American schoolchildren in Standard English, is given here in the original version:

I come from Alabama
with my Banjo on my knee—
I’s g’wine to Lou’siana,
My true lub10 for to see,
It rain’d all night de day I left,
De wedder it was dry;
The sun so hot I froze to def—
Susanna, don’t you cry. (Foster 1848)

In the 19th century, Americans had a somewhat unified opinion on the Black's English describing it as bad English. Blacks, like the many immigrants who had come and were still coming to America, spoke a variety of English strongly mixed with the various languages they had spoken in their native lands. Being now Americans, they could only

speak English well or speak it badly no other middle option, the specific nature of their speech errors being of low interest to white communities. Compared to a Scottish¹⁹ immigrant's peculiar vocabulary and pronunciation, African American's dialect and speech, in general, were harder to understand, and America had not yet produced the school of structural linguistics that would study such "primitive" languages as those of West Africa. If Blacks were really hindered in their imitation of correct English speech because of interference from their former "barbarian" tongues, this could only be regarded as yet more proof of their ignorance. (Marc 407)

1.2 African Dialect in Whites' Lyrics

African American Vernacular English is, like any other language system, a living, always-changing system. No sample of linguistics of any kind could serve as a typical perfect example. However, the blues songs of the 1940s and '50s, probably represent good examples of spontaneous, authentic black vernacular English. Blues artists of this period sought neither to brag about themselves to white audiences nor to aggressively affirm their African-American identity. They simply made music that expressed the African-American experience, hoping thereby to sell their songs to black listeners and attract other audiences as well. They could not really have expected that their instrumental and vocal styles would provide models that several generations of popular white singers would imitate in the future. (Feldman)

One sample that could prove as a good enough example of black influence on other communities and especially the whites is one song called "Under my thumb" by the famous English rock band The Rolling Stones (1962).

¹⁹ In terms of difficulty Scottish dialect is somewhat similar to AAVE Compared to other dialects that exist in America. (Nosowitz, "How the English Failed to Stamp Out the Scots Language")

Written as:

Pronounced as:

Under my thumb, well I

Under ma' thum', well ah'

I can still look at someone else.

Ah' can steel look at somewa' else

It's down to me, oh that's what I said

It's down to me, oh tha's wha' ah sa'

This song is not really categorized as a blues song, but still the influence of blues style is everywhere present: the vocalization of “r” in “under” (undah), simplification of diphthongs in “my” (mah-ma), the simplification of consonant clusters in “thumb” (thum) where the context makes the clear utterance of the past tense morpheme superfluous in “said” (sa'). (African-American Vernacular English)

Fueled by a desire to distinguish themselves from the clean-cut, well-spoken and the perfect language of the Beatles (1960) encouraged the Rolling Stones to develop a new unique "bad-mouthed" image which fit in perfectly well with their artistic tendency towards the blues which also is still regarded by many as lower class, vulgar black music. Thus one can find that the band that consists of four young white Englishmen singing in what they believed to be an alien accent of the African-Americans. If renowned singers at the time like Elvis Presley (1935-1977) (The king of Rock and Roll) was criticized for singing “nigger music” and the detest he had, was only because of his lyrics, one can only imagine the horror English people felt when hearing these young performers of white privileges consciously imitating the African American sort, meaning Americans “of the worst sort”. (Feldman)

Life would certainly be easier for English teachers and learners if everyone around the world spoke like English commoners with perfect language. However, native English speakers have noticeable diversity in their pronunciation, vocabulary, and even grammar.

Among native English speakers, there is an abundance of dialects that are only incomprehensible to the non-native speakers, AAVE and Scottish are being two of the best-known unique dialects. Yet the English teaching profession continues to proclaim that only two English's exist: British and American. Many may hope that students traveling abroad will go to the upper-class neighborhoods of London or New York. But what if instead they end up in inner-city neighborhoods of Miami, Los Angeles, or Atlanta. The majority of residents of these neighborhoods, if they are not Hispanics, are often African-Americans. Perhaps this is why the elites of English language institutes complain of not being able to cope with the real English language they encounter when travelling abroad. Wouldn't a moderate amount of preparation in AAVE (students would not have to speak, read or write it, just understand it as spoken) is worth the efforts of English teachers and students? Even if students never hear Black English on the street, they may hear a considerable amount of it in the context of popular songs and movies. (Weinreich 13)

3.2 White Americans and Black Literature

White Americans did not accept the idea of the free and equal Black, because they thought African Americans were meant to be slaves. Starting from this idea White people rejected almost everything about the idea of the free Black; they also rejected their culture and their traditions. African-American writers used literature mainly to express Black voices; it is a representation of the struggle of the Black people in America, White Americans reacted differently to African American literature. Some saw it as their right to fight for their freedom and others saw it as that African Americans writers are overreacting and they have criticized a numerous point in its significance, traditions and theories. Americans blamed Black literature and they claimed that it is a part of the Balkanization of American literature. (Swenson 46)

African American literature was criticized from Americans; some of them think that it was a tool in the struggle for African-American liberation and not a tool to fight the struggle. They thought so because they believed it was used as propaganda, writers used the situations of African Americans to write and be famous and they have never been honest in the fight. Some²⁰ saw that literature does not portray Black people in a positive light. (Swenson 48)

Black writers were taking the role of the freedom fighters yet they missed the literature touch in their works, they were criticized for that and the themes that were used in their works were sadness and struggle as the main topics of Black literature. W. E. B. Du Bois (1868 - 1963) argued that there had to be uniquely-Black ways of judging and seeing literature and they claimed that only Blacks can understand their literature, because it is about their lives and culture, and it cannot be compared to the writing of the White writers, because the Black writers were writing for their identity. African American literature has become nostalgic, treating the same issues over the past and it missed to show the Black traditions and culture. They missed the point of using literature as a tool to spread knowledge about their heritage and to culturally educate Blacks. African American writers did not give attention to Black historical achievements by favoring the Black historical imagination over the real identity of the Blacks. (Swenson 17-23)

2.1 The US government and the African American Writers

Top classified documents from the FBI²¹ revealed how they were monitoring African American writers for decades, monitoring their activities and critiquing their work since the Harlem Renaissance, the document revealing how the FBI closely read and

²⁰ What meant by some is some writers such as W. E. B. Du Bois.

²¹ FBI is a government agency in the United States that investigates crimes in which a national law is broken or in which the country's security is threatened. FBI is an abbreviation for 'Federal Bureau of Investigation'.

aggressively chased Black writers. The FBI described the African American writers as they revolutionary and notorious Negro. The file was about well-known African American writers like Langston Hughes (1967) and James Baldwin (1924-1987). Those writers had filed, up to 1,884 pages each. The FBI was concerned with Black writing because they saw it as a threat to the nation. J Edgar Hoover (1895 - 1972) who was the first Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, he was responsible for the monitoring of African American writers. (www.theguardian.com)

The first who knew that the FBI was monitoring of Black writers was William Maxwell (1908–2000)²² when he first submitted a request of freedom of information from the FBI file of Claude McKay, Maxwell was surprised about what he had found and decided to investigate further. later Maxwell wrote a book about it. The book is titled *FB Eyes: How J Edgar Hoover's Ghostreaders Framed African American Literature*.²³ The FBI revealed a collection of document about Black writers that comprise 13,892 pages not only their works but their activities, passports and travel arrangements, the document reveals that African American writers were closely monitored by the FBI. The document also shows how the Federal Bureau of Investigation had collaborated with the police department to keep Black writers under surveillance. The FBI wanted to control Black writers and their jobs to consider whether certain African Americans should be allowed in government jobs or not and controlled the White House visits for African American writers. (www.theguardian.com)

²²William J. Maxwell, a professor at Washington University since 2009, teaches courses in 20th- and 21st-century American and African American literatures.

²³ Maxwell replaced the "I" from FBI with the term "Eye" to be Federal Bureau Eyes because FBI were watching African American writers.

3.3 White Criticism of Black Music

3.1 Jazz and Blues

Most of Jazz and Blues critics came from White people. They did not define Black music as art and the reality of White critics of African American music was seen as something normal at the time, because White people criticized Blacks, especially their culture. (Baraka 138)

Jazz and Blues music were heavily criticized starting from the style of the music to the lyrics. One major critic by the White is that the Jazz lyrics was not written by intellectual people no matter who wrote the lyrics the singer himself or a professional songwriter. Even if he was a White writer the song would be criticized because the singer was Black, or the lyrics were written by an uneducated Negroes Jazz was criticized mostly by the White middle-class Americans, it was not about music that much. They couldn't see a rich Negro, because most of the jazz singers were poor before starting singing. Black Jazz music has been consistently ignored or misunderstood by Whites. (Baraka 139)

3.2 Rhythmic African Poetry

Rap music has been always a weapon to fight White racism against Black, but not like the Jazz or the blues, Rap music uses powerful words to address the U.S government and White racism. It is powered by its unique way of music and lyrics, rappers used to use the most powerful and meaningful words to show their anger and their feelings about the experience of the Black people in America. (Durand 76)

Black music had been unconditionally criticized over time by the White American. Rap music is no exception, it had been criticized since the birth of it, White people claim that rap music is not a music genre but it is just a fast rhythmic words sang on slow rhythm music. Those words are never meant to be understood by the listeners, because rappers tend to rap fast using street English language. White people used not to understand rap songs often, that was a reason for Whites to criticize it, they thought that rap is for Blacks only, yet in fact, rap music was for the whole country, thus it was used to send a message to all its listeners. (History of Hip Hop Music)

Rap music is considered by many White Americans as revolutionary music that tends to advertise violence against them; this idea was brought from rap itself, its aggressive words and powerful lyrics against White people and the American government.. From the 1980s it has been criticized for violent content and words, encouraging violence in the American society, rap music has greater effects on violence and aggression than other music genres, due to the popularity of rap music young people are exposed to it; they are more likely to consider violence as a normal solution to resolve social conflicts, practicing violent behaviors by the Blacks against the Whites and the police forces in real life was advertised in rap music, rappers used their talents to expose to the public how the police saw Blacks, how police forces were arresting and killing Black people, African American rappers saw that the police officers who humiliate Blacks did not been punished for what they have done, that kind of music with such a powerful way of expression was easily used to control young people and to make them use violence in the streets. There are a lot of examples about violence in rap music. One of these examples is the song title Shook Ones (Part II) sang by Mobb Deep²⁴ in 1995 the artist said in the introduction of the

²⁴ Mobb Deep was an American due consist of 2 rappers f Havoc and Prodigy.

song: “Yo I got the phone thing, know I'm sayin', keep your eyes open / For real niggas who ain't got no feelings” (2-3) And in the first verse Prodigy said:

“You heard of us, official Queensbridge murderers
The Mobb comes equipped for warfare, beware
Of my crime family who got 'nough shots to share
For all of those who wanna profile and pose
Rock you in your face, stab your brain with your nose bone
You all alone in these streets, cousin
Every man for they self in this land we be gunnin’” (5-11)

These lines show very clearly how Mobb Deep was encouraging the Blacks to be violent in clear words, Prodigy was only 19 years old when his song Shook Ones (Part II) with Mobb Deep was the 25th on the Top 200 Tracks of the 90s. (Sorcinelli)

Listening to rap music were significantly and positively related drug and alcohol use, due to how much rap songs contain violence and encourages the youth to use drugs by advertising it in their songs and music videos, rap can often control unconsciously the youth, because it is the most popular music genre among adolescents. Nearly seven of ten rap songs mention the use of drugs, including references to alcohol. Violence and drug use in rap songs led the youth to criminal activity and weapon carrying. One of the activities was attacking the White police officers in the Black streets, stealing and robbing White houses. (Chen 373)

3.3 U.S Government and Black Rappers

Many Black famous rappers were arrested some of them went to jail because of their songs and the aggressive lyrics they used. White police forces reacted to the attacks of the patrols in the Black neighborhoods with the arresting of the Black rappers as suspects and as the ones who were responsible for the attacking, one of the most hating rapper to White racism and police forces was Tupac Shakur (2pac). He was arrested many times for different crimes yet he was not found guilty to most of them except one which was an act

of violence against a young Black female.²⁵ Tupac was a powerful rapper; he used his talent in writing and singing songs against racism and mainly against White people and police forces. In one of his most famous songs he clearly attack the police and accusing them, and he encourages people to resist and fight back, the song titled Changes released on October 13, 1998, he states in the second verse:

“Instead of war on poverty they got a war on drugs
So the police can bother me
And I ain't never did a crime I ain't have to do
But now I'm back with the Blacks givin' it back to you...
But tell the cops they can't touch this
Crack you up and pimp smack you up
You gotta learn to hold ya own...” (43-49)

In this song, and these verses especially, Tupac warned the police from the Blacks and he addressed them as “devil” that kills the Blacks when he stated, “How can the Devil take a brother if he's close to me?” (18)

He meant by “a brother” the Blacks, whom the “devil” will kill them, he was heavily critiqued because of this song by the Whites, media and the government, the song was a clear threat to the lives of the White police. (Tupac Changes)

3.4 Religion

4.1 Non-Religious African Americans

African-Americans are one of most religious people even for a country known for its diverse beliefs and faiths like the United States. According to the Pew Forum (2008) "United States Religious Landscape Survey" 88 percent of African-Americans believe in God with absolute certainty, compared to the 71 percent of the total population, more than half of them attend religious services at least once a week. Of course, Islam and other religions are present in the black community, but the assumption that African-Americans

²⁵ The name of the black female is unknown.

are religious always comes with the expectation that they are Christian. Many African Americans who supposedly have an affiliation with the religion say that they attend religious services out of tradition and being bound by family customs and not out of affirming faith or beliefs. Josef Sorett, a religion professor at Columbia University said:

I have some colleagues and friends who identify as culturally Christian in a way similar to ethnic Jews “They may go to church because that’s the church their family attends, but they don’t necessarily subscribe to the beliefs of Christianity.” (qtd. in Emily Brennan)

African Americans, feel as if they are bound by tradition to affiliate themselves with a religion, and the thought of being non religious is quite the odd and alien one among African American communities.

4.2 Black Atheism

Given the cultural pull toward religion, less than 0.5% of African-Americans identify themselves as atheists, compared with 1.6% of the total population, according to Pew Research Center. Black atheists, hence find themselves as a minority within a minority.

Many authors and writers during the Harlem Renaissance critiqued Christianity as pro-slavery and status quo for power hungry individuals. However, the fact that many African-American communities believe that the church is the center of morality and refuge to many castaways that turn to the church to solve various social problems that even the government is not able to solve or at least care about. Many atheist African Americans see it as an important duty to work with religious leaders and organizations to solve various social justice issues facing the community especially the needy and the poor among them.

African-Americans who come out clean and declare themselves as atheists may face a "prohibitive" social cost. As journalist Jamila Bey wrote, "It's difficult - if not impossible

- to divorce religion from black culture" This social cost is not applied only to blacks who leave Christianity, but also applies to black Muslims who leave the religion. Some reports say atheists who have left Islam have been disowned by family and called (Koffar) and even received death threats (Barnard 612-614). Similarly, black atheists in the United Kingdom face the same problems, where coming out as an atheist is associated with the fear of being "ostracized and demonized." London Black Atheists were formed in the United Kingdom by Clive Aruede and Lola Tinubu. At an atheist conference, which ironically took place next to a Christian conference in 2015 London, Britain, one of the black atheist attendees was attacked and accused by another black Christian woman for having a "slave mentality" and being "demon possessed. (Mandisa)

Conclusion

African Americans have faced racism and they have been critiqued for their skin color and their origins. White people in America critiqued African Americans' culture and the American government, similarly, reacted to Black culture in unfair ways; the FBI have been monitoring Black artists activities, police forces were acting brutally against Blacks, but the Blacks did not give up and fought back for their own identity and culture.

General Conclusion

African American culture is rich with the beauty of the quines and variation, the beauty of its literature and arts, black culture is characterized by the spirit of the fight for freedom, starting from the slave narratives to modern culture, black writers, artists, and musicians played a major role in developing black culture, the search of the African American identity, and the fight of racism.

African American started building their culture from the time of slavery, the origins of the Black culture were from their motherland African when they were brought to America, they brought with them their culture and their traditions which were neglected due to the fact that they were slaves and have no rights at the time. Black culture was shaped by the slaves, which later developed by the ex-slaves who was still a subject of racism by white, and the U.S government, the black cultural heritage is full of fight for freedom, African American used their arts and culture to express how blacks live in society, show to the world the experience they experienced in America.

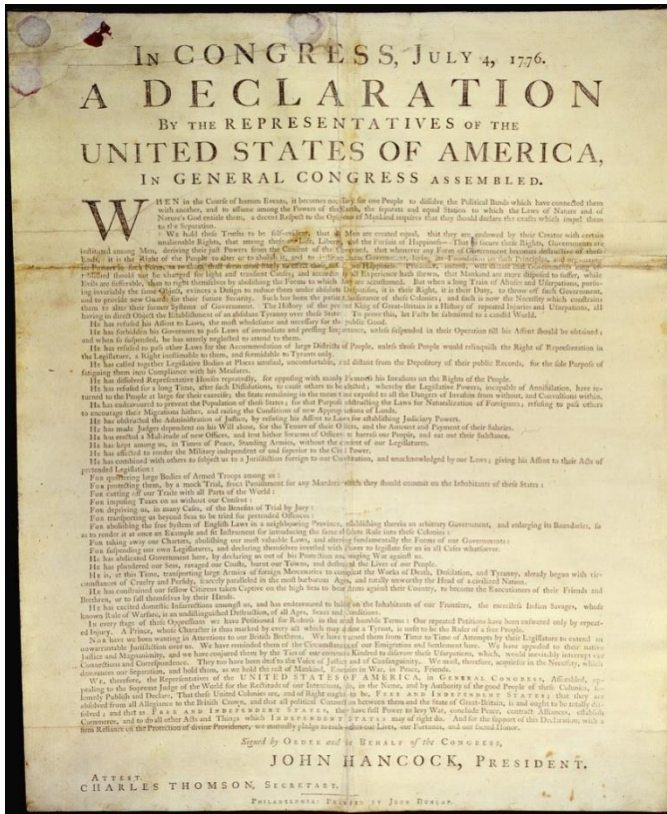
The black identity was clearly reflected in black literature, music, and the arts, most of the writers, singers, and artists tend to show the real black identity and the black society. Black writers were and still famous for their fantastic literary works, many of them had won Nobel Prizes in Literature such as the famous black writer Toni Morrison in 1993, and Alice Walker who won the National Book Award for Fiction and the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1982. The black identity was also shown in black music such as the Blues, Jazz, and Rap, music was and still a tool for blacks to express themselves and their people, music is a major factor in the African American culture, black music and especially rap music played a major role in the fight for freedom and civil rights for the black community.

White people and the United State government had been critiquing black culture for the begging, and especially after the Civil War, which was the cause for the freedom of many slaves, white people criticized the black literature for being used as a tool to fight racism, and not being art, the use of literature such way made black writers to be a subject of criticism, not only criticism but they were surveillance by U.S government, the FBI and the police department. Black music was criticized for the advertisement of violence and drugs, white people saw black music as a tool to create chaos among the youth, and police.

The black people suffered over time by the white, who took them from their lands and their families to make them work like slaves without mercy, they treated them like animals, they raped their wives, sisters, and mothers in front of their eyes, they killed them for nothing, that is was why the African American culture was based on the fight for freedom from the time of slavery.

This research has raised questions in need of further investigation. On a wider level questions are raised and research is needed on the African American cultural manifestation in each and every cultural aspect alone. Further work needs to study and investigate the development and impacts of Black culture.

Appendices



Appendix 1: Declaration of independence deleted slavery passage 1776

Human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating & carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither. This piratical warfare, the opprobrium of infidel powers, is the warfare of the

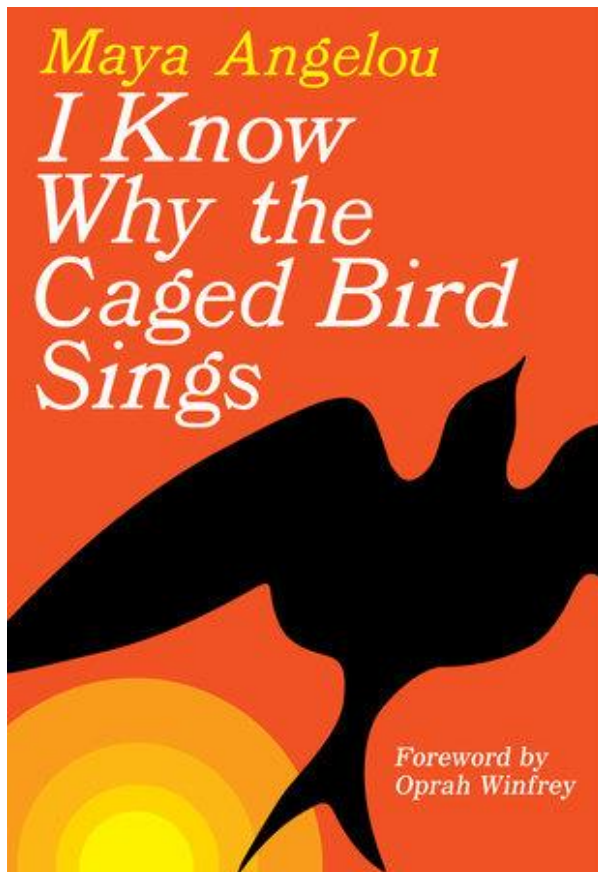
Christian King of Great Britain. Determined to keep open a market where Men should be bought & sold, he has prostituted his negative for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or restrain this execrable commerce. And that this assemblage of horrors might want no fact of distinguished die, he is now exciting those very people to rise in arms among us and to purchase that liberty of which he has deprived them, by murdering the people on whom he has obtruded them: thus paying off former crimes committed against the Liberties of one people, with crimes which he urges them to commit against the lives of another.

(see <http://www.washington.edu>)

Appendix 2: The Passage from Genesis of Ham's Curse

20 Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard.³ 21 He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent. 22 And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside. 23 Then Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned backward, and they did not see their father's nakedness. 24 When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, 25 he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers." 26 He also said, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem; and let Canaan be his servant. 27 May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant.

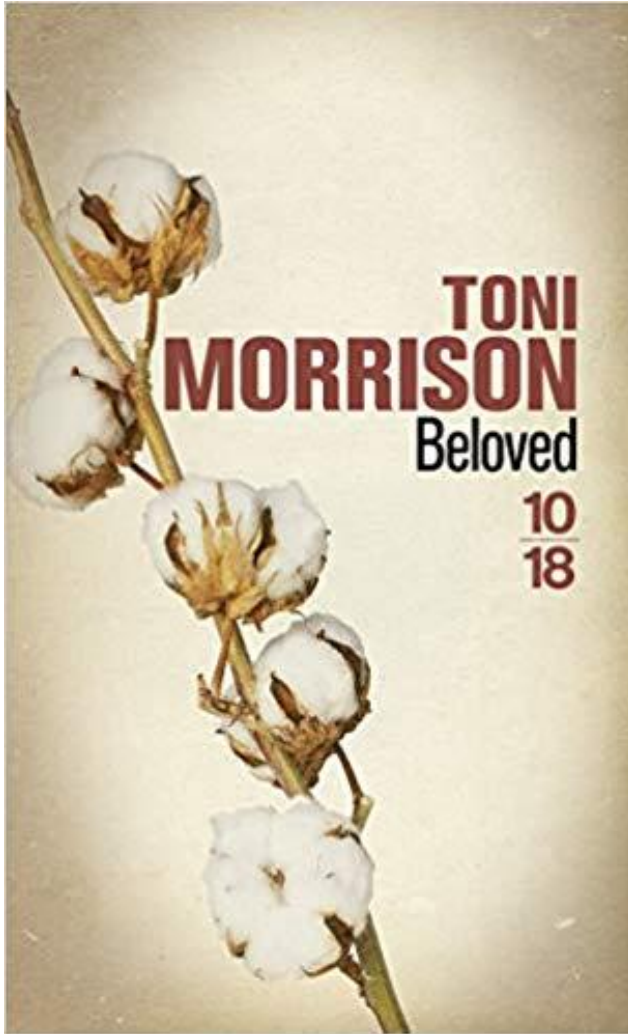
(see Genesis 9:20–27)



Appendix 3: I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings written in 1969, published in 1983, is the autobiography of American writer Maya Angelou (1928 - 2014) considered to be a unique interpretation of the autobiographical form, it is a coming-of-age story, the book illustrates how love and literature can help Blacks overcome racism and trauma. The title of the book was suggested by civil rights

activist Abbey Lincoln who was a friend of Angelou and they were both civil rights activists. Maya used the literary technique of slave narratives. The first theme of the book is Identity; Maya who has been as a symbolic character for every Black girl growing up in America. The second theme is racism; the book describes the world as a racist world divided between Black and White, male and female, good and evil. The third main theme is rape; the autobiography's description of Maya as a Black girl being raped as an eight-year-old child, the fourth them is literacy, Maya illustrated the education of Black people and Black writers in American who did not earn official degrees in the twentieth century, Maya focused on the idea of that freedom and literacy are connected. The autobiography was banned in some schools and libraries because of the depiction of childhood rape, racism and sexuality. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sing* was nominated for the National Book Award in 1970 and it remained on The New York Times paperback bestseller list for two years. (See www.aresearchguide.com)



Appendix 4: Beloved

Beloved is a novel written by Toni Morrison 1987, it won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1988 and many other awards, later the novel was made as a movie with the same name, the movie was ranked as the best work of American fiction from 1981 to 2006, by the New York Times magazine. The novel is a story of Denver and her mother Sethe, their struggle in slavery and what faced after their escape from slavery. The main themes of this novel are; the slavery, dehumanization

through slavery, destruction of African American Identity, home and the concept of freedom.

(see www.nytimes.com)

Glossary

African American, Black and Afro-American

The use of the term "Blacks" is supposed to refer to the individual(s) with black skin, whom often are Americans with African roots. The term "African American" basically refers to Blacks as an entity that is distinguished with its own habits and traditions as a free society within the U.S.A. These names are used interchangeably used. Keith Mayes believe "African American" and "Afro-American" is too limiting for the current population and the term "Blacks" refers to all Black skin people in the United States even if they are not from Africa. Black people in America do not accept to be referred to them as "Negro" from White Americans, it is insulting to them, yet they accept it from other Black. (African American or Black)

Balkanization: or Balkanisation, is a geopolitical term for the process of fragmentation or division of a region or state into smaller regions or states that are often hostile or uncooperative with one another. (www.britannica.com)

Barbershop quartet: is a group of four singers who sing music in the barbershop genre of singing, which uses four-part harmony without accompaniment by any instruments such as piano, a style called a cappella. (www.britannica.com)

Chattel slavery: slaves are considered a commodity to be sold and bought, and deprived of their least human rights. (www.britannica.com)

Diss track: or diss song, diss is an abbreviation of disrespect is a song intended to verbally attack someone else or the government. It is in the culture of hip hop.

(www.definitions.com)

Fable: a short piece of fiction that features animals, inanimate objects, mythical creatures, or forces of nature as the main characters in the role of the protagonist and usually includes or illustrates a moral. (Britannica)

Folktale: A traditional story or legend that's common to a specific culture and often passed along orally. (www.britannica.com)

Gangster rap: is a genre of rap music characterized by reflecting Black gangster lifestyle by words and music videos. Most gangster rap music videos tend to show violence and how the rapper and his map are equipped with guns and number. (www.britannica.com)

Indentured servitude: is a form of forced labor that coerces the indenture to sign a contract of work for a time. (www.britannica.com)

Slave narrative: an account of the life, or a major portion of the life, of a fugitive or former slave, either written or orally related by the slave personally. (www.britannica.com)

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