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African Diasporas and Postcolonial Africa

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In recent decades, research on a narrowly constituted 'African diaspora' has given way to an increasingly expanded focus on multifarious diasporic communities in Africa, Eurasia, and the Americas.¹ State and economic crises, military rule, civil war, natural disasters, violence and oppression, desires for belonging and home(land), and potential economic opportunities (for both incoming and outgoing migrants) have all shaped African diasporas spawned in the 'postcolonial' moment. In light of the circuits of movement and reconstitution, the forms of violence (economic, political, and 'ethnic') that animated the colonial state and that underpin ongoing diasporas have stubbornly endured in the present, making the 'postcolonial' moment a meaningless marker indexing how Africans moved through historical time. Those circuits, instead, belong to an elongated historical process rather than a 'postcolonial'

¹On the definition of the "African diaspora," see: Brent H. Edwards, "The Uses of Diaspora," *Social Text* 19, no. 1 (2001), 45–73; Colin A. Palmer, "Defining and Studying the Modern African Diaspora," *Journal of African American History* 85, no. 1–2 (2000), 27–32; Joseph E. Harris, ed., *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1993); Kim Butler, "Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse," *Diaspora* 10, no. 2 (2002): 189–219. For a standard, narrative account (in all its bewildering details), see Patrick Manning, *The African Diaspora: A History through Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009). On the African diaspora contextualized as a "migration," see Tiffany R. Patterson and Robin D. G. Kelley, "Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Making of the Modern World," *African Studies Review* 43, no. 1 (2000): 11–45.

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moment, where intra-African movement remains just as dynamic as that of those who move and resettle beyond the borders of continental Africa and its offshore island-states. To be sure, the influx and outflow of individuals to, from, and within Africa have multiple geneses, but these movements must be understood within the historiography of African diasporas and within the specific contexts that help explain departures and arrivals, sources and destinations. This chapter discusses two of the more recent and significant trends in diasporic approaches to African history, and makes a case for addressing methodological and other shortcomings inherent in those trends, in terms of approaches in the field of African history that might engender an African world perspective and practice.

Conventional accounts of the 'African diaspora' in African historiography view Africa as bounded unto itself and as an imaginary source for its diasporic folk to draw upon in their (re)imagined selves and communities.² According to this view, there is only Africa *and* the diaspora. The conjunction 'and' envisages diasporic movement and community formation as something that has (and continues) to occur *outside* of continental Africa. Rarely do such accounts consider diasporic movement and community making *within* Africa writ large. It is precisely out of this framework that we have been held captive to binary debates about the continuity or creolization of African cultures, about imagined communities and invented identities, about diaspora as principally a return or reconnection to Africa, and about the relationship between Africa and African America, docked in their impervious hemispheres. Within this framework, a fashionable lexicon populates its universe: hybridity, creolization, cosmopolitanism, (re)invention, imagination, and (Black) Atlantic. Unsurprisingly, there exists a clear asymmetry in knowledge production (where Atlantic diasporas have received far more scholarly attention than Indian Ocean or Mediterranean or Eurasian varieties) in addition to the global and chronological breadth of African diasporas reduced to a singularly constituted 'African diaspora', itself a shorthand for the fashionable but defective 'Atlantic creole' and 'black' Atlantic conceptualizations of diaspora.

²Giles Mohan and A. B. Zack-Williams have rightfully lamented, "African Studies has retained its generalist colonial (and neo-imperial) features and resolutely sees Africa as a self-contained continent." See Giles Mohan and A. B. Zack-Williams, "Globalisation from below: Conceptualising the Role of the African Diasporas in Africa's Development," *Review of African Political Economy* 29, no. 92 (2002): 213. For the most recent statement of the conventional view, see: John Parker, "The African Diaspora," in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern African History*, ed., John Parker and Richard Reid (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 132–48; John Parker and Richard Rathbone, *African History: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 32–37, 82–86. For more on so-called "imagined" identities, see Sidney J. Lemelle and Robin D. G. Kelley, *Imagining Home: Class, Culture and Nationalism in the African Diaspora* (New York: Verso, 1994), and, on the African side of the Atlantic equation, see V.Y. Mudimbe's *The Invention of Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988) and *The Idea of Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

ATLANTIC CREOLES: CREOLIZATION IN THE ATLANTIC DIASPORA AND AFRICA

Though the concept of 'Atlantic creoles' came out of linguistics in the late 1960s and 1970s, especially Ian Hancock's work around 'Negro English' of West Africa and the Americas, the current iteration of the concept was adopted by North American scholars who fell in love with the postmodernist ideas of 'hybridity', 'fluidity', or 'plasticity' as applied to cultures and identities.³ Chief among the targets of these postmodernists are the ideas of race and 'blackness', both squarely rooted in the politics of knowledge and in the cauldron of US racial politics and violence. To many scholars, 'blackness' is a commodity that is fluid and permeable, though without the distinct burden of 'living-while-black'. A survey of the literature reveals an increased use of the terms 'creole' and 'creolization' during the very height of the Black Power movement and the use of 'Africa' in the 1960s and 1970s, but a sharp downward trend in the use of 'Africa' in the late 1970s and the equally steep over-the-cliff descent in 'Black Power' by 1980. What does this mean? Scholars peddling the 'creolization' idea (as a framing device) were pushing back ideologically against what they perceived as Black Power interpretations of and claims to African cultural history and identity. The year 1980, not surprisingly, witnessed a parallel but sharp rise in the use of 'creole' and 'creolization', peaking in the late 1990s and into the early 2000s.⁴ The normative skill set and lives of most Africans, with or without contact with Europeans, constituted a history for which scholars deeply shaped by the politics of knowledge and race in twentieth-century North America were not writing about. Instead, their preoccupations with the present moment framed narratives of a past in which the key categories and logic at play had little to do with the African lives at stake.

In the early twentieth century, the idea of 'acculturation' occupied the intellectual space that 'creole' and 'creolization' would assume. Both the category of creole and the process of creolization took off during the socio-political context of the 1960s, and both were shaped by white anthropologists working on 'black people' at the nexus of Africa and the Americas. Between the publications of *The American Negro: A Study in Racial Crossing* (1928), *Acculturation: The Study of Culture Contact* (1938), and the

³See e.g. Ian F Hancock, "A Provisional List of English-based Atlantic Creoles," *African Language Review* 8 (1969): 7–72; idem, *The Relationship of Black Vernacular English to the Atlantic Creoles* (Austin: African and Afro-American Studies and Research Center, University of Texas at Austin, 1978).

⁴I have used Google's Ngram Viewer (<https://books.google.com/ngrams>), an online graphing tool, that shows the usage or trend of a word or phrase by searching over 5 million books, or some 500 billion words, published in North American English (and other languages) between the years 1500 and 2010. My Ngram search settled on the years between 1900 and 2010, using the terms "creole," "creolization," "Black Power," and "Africa."

Myth of the Negro Past (1941), anthropologist Melville J. Herskovits became the 'authority' on African and African diasporic affairs and on race in North America. Though W.E.B. Du Bois's trilogy (*The Negro* [1915], *Black Folk: Then and Now* [1939], and *The World and Africa* [1946]) and Carter G. Woodson's *The Negro in our History* (1922) covered much of the ground on which Herskovits's 'authority' rested, it was Herskovits's ideas about race and culture that came to shape the study of Africa and its diasporas. It is no surprise Herskovits had an adversarial relationship with leading intellectuals such as Du Bois and Woodson. Herskovits feuded with Woodson and, through his influence amongst corporate funders and politicians, he sabotaged Du Bois's *Encyclopedia Africana* project. (Herskovits considered Du Bois's project an instrument of 'racial uplift' propaganda.⁵) Armed with the financial and political means to control the study of Africa and its Atlantic diasporas, Herskovits institutionalized his ideas of race and culture (framed around African studies) through the African Studies program established at Northwestern University in 1948 and the African Studies Association (ASA) founded in 1957.⁶ To be sure, Herskovits built his ideas of race and culture around interracial ideals shaped by the racial politics of US society. In spite of Herskovits's later attention to African cultural 'retentions', his linear and teleological conception of acculturation was to be understood as 'Negro acculturation to European patterns'.⁷ Other anthropologists working in the turbulent decades of the 1960s and 1970s, notably Sidney Mintz and Richard Price, assumed much of the content and context of Herskovits's work on acculturation, replacing it with a linguistic brand of 'creolization' that served to 'underemphasize the African past' in the study of African cultures in the Americas.⁸

In *Anthropological Approach to the Afro-American Past: A Caribbean Perspective* (1972–1973), Mintz and Price stipulated their essay was written 'in the immediate aftermath of the Civil Rights [and Black Power] struggle and the swift establishment of Afro-American and Black Studies programs in U.S. universities'. The provocation, then, for the essay was 'certain polarizations emerging

⁵ Jerry Gershenhorn, *Melville J. Herskovits and the Racial Politics of Knowledge* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 106–7, 147–56.

⁶ Readers need to be reminded or made aware that the first African Studies Program in the USA was founded at Fisk University in Tennessee in 1943 with the help of linguist Lorenzo Turner, and the first such program to grant a Bachelor's and Master's degree was the one at Howard University in 1954. See Margaret Wade-Lewis, *Lorenzo Dow Turner: Father of Gullah Studies* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 140.

⁷ Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1941), 114; Gershenhorn, *Herskovits*, 65.

⁸ Sidney W. Mintz and Richard Price, *Anthropological Approach to the Afro-American Past: A Caribbean Perspective* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1976), reprinted (with a new preface) as *The Birth of African-American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective* (Boston: Beacon, 1992), 95 n. 16.

in Afro-American Studies' such as 'ideological preoccupations might deflect the scholarly quest'.⁹ In the 1960s, African and African diasporic scholars fought to interrogate the reigning paradigms and personnel exercising hegemony over the study of Africa(ns) and its worldwide diasporas. This intellectual fight erupted in the very organization Herskovits helped establish (the ASA) at Montreal in 1969 and in elite (historically white) universities such as Northwestern, Cornell, and Columbia.¹⁰ When the aforementioned hegemony and the subjugation of (diasporic) African claims to African studies were challenged in 1969, entrenched stakeholders in ASA framed the issue as one of 'untrammelled scholarly inquiry' with respect to whites studying Africa against 'black interests' driven by 'strong emotion' and 'progressive politics'.¹¹ Nothing short of invoking Herskovits's spirit, ASA stakeholders had no ambiguity about what was at stake; 'the future of African studies in the United States'.¹² The intellectual ownership of a discipline and a continent were also at stake, and so those principally white stakeholders in elite US universities and in the US State Department acted as Herskovits did against Du Bois and Woodson, ceding little control in the study of the African world. In response, some African and diasporic African scholars created their own professional organizations (e.g. the African Studies Heritage Association and the National Council of Black Studies) and established several African/a studies programs, departments, and centers at principally white universities and colleges. These individuals were the targets of Mintz and Price. Both anthropologists assumed their posture against such 'black interests' with abiding 'ideological preoccupations' would not expose their own 'ideological preoccupations', namely propagating a 'miracle of creolization' theology in a society where Americanization was the end game and where Africans were destined to acculturate to 'European patterns'.¹³ Insofar as Mintz and Price's essay 'built on and extended

⁹ Mintz and Price, *Birth of African-American Culture*, iv.

¹⁰ Among others, see Iris Berger, "Contested Boundaries: African Studies Approaching the Millennium," *African Studies Review* 40, no. 2 (1997): 1–14. On the Black Studies/Power protest movement on historically white colleges and universities, see: Joy Ann Williamson, *Black Power on Campus: The University of Illinois, 1965–75* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003); Noliwe M. Rooks, *White Money/Black Power: The Surprising History of African American Studies and the Crisis of Race in Higher Education* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006); Fabio Rojas, *From Black Power to Black Studies: How a Radical Social Movement Became an Academic Discipline* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007); Stefan M. Bradley, *Harlem vs. Columbia University: Black Student Power in the Late 1960s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009); Ibram X. Kendi, *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Racial Reconstitution of Higher Education, 1965–1972* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Martha Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); and Delores Aldridge and Carlene Young, eds., *Out of the Revolution: the Development of Africana Studies* (New York: Lexington Books, 2000).

¹¹ Benjamin Nimer, "Politics and Scholarship in African Studies in the United States," *African Studies Review* 13, no. 3 (1970): 353, 355–56.

¹² Nimer, "Politics and Scholarship," 353.

¹³ See Richard Price, "The Miracle of Creolization: A Retrospective," *New West Indian Guide-Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 75, no. 1–2 (2001): 35–64; idem, "African Diaspora and

the ideas of Melville J. Herskovits', so too did it fail to consider the profound cultural and socio-linguistic mutual intelligibility amongst African societies or the systemic racialization and colonial regimes that forced diasporic Africans to fight against 'social death' through life-sustaining institutions that affirmed their humanity and shaped their lives.¹⁴

In 1992, Mintz and Price 'republished [their] original essay largely unchanged'.¹⁵ The essay contained a new title (*The Birth of African-American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective*) with no reference to an under-emphasized 'African past' or the 'Caribbean' (the locus of their research). The essay was strategically reprinted in a socio-political climate where ideas of 'biracial', 'mixed race' and 'creolization' were on the rise with a steep decline in the 'Afrocentric' idea. It is in this climate that historian Ira Berlin published an essay and then a monograph outlining his version of the 'Atlantic creole' idea; an idea appropriated, once more, from the study of languages. Following Mintz and Price, Berlin eschewed the 'African past' and the African continent, claiming, 'Black life on mainland North America originated not in Africa or in America but in the *nether world* between the two continents'.¹⁶ Berlin's teleological thinking is yet another installation of the inexorable procession toward Europeanization and Americanization in arguing the first generation of Africans in British North America were 'Atlantic creoles' because of their acculturation to European cultural norms.¹⁷ Berlin uses particles of evidence about a minute cast of 'creoles' granted legal emancipation as representation of a people and their predicament; in his parallel universe, these outliers become the norm. Berlin eschews African cultures and histories, statistics for these 'Atlantic creoles', and focuses almost exclusively on a distinct minority rather than the bulk of Africans because it is impossible for him to specify how prevalent 'Atlantic creoles' were in seventeenth-century North America. To be sure, there was little that was 'creole' about the 20

or so captive Africans from West-Central Africa brought to the Jamestown colony in 1619.¹⁸ Those Africans brought to the colony were too atomized to constitute a community or self-identify as 'Atlantic creoles'. Unlike so-called 'Luso-Africans' who traded in captives but whose numbers were also very small, the mass of captive Africans from West and West-Central Africa had trivial exposure to European culture and were involuntary parties, for instance, to the bureaucratic mass baptisms (e.g. naming, salt on the tongue, water on the head) that some scholars parade as 'creolization'. Most Africans, however, interpreted this baptismal ritual as witchcraft and as preparation for consumption by European witches!¹⁹

In 2007, Linda M. Heywood and John K. Thornton published their *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas*, adopting Berlin's 'Atlantic creole' idea but in a historical moment punctuated by the profusion of 'creolization' and 'black Atlantic' verbiage and by Barack Obama's presidential candidacy and its 'post-racial' outgrowth. If Berlin sought to make a handful of 'quasi-black people' originating from an imaginary 'nether world' the founders of African-American culture, Heywood and Thornton simply shifted the locus of Berlin's personnel from West to West-Central Africa. Using the updated Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, Heywood and Thornton argue large parts of West-Central Africa had developed an 'Atlantic creole' culture by the early seventeenth century and it was an 'Angola wave', and not those from Berlin's West Africa, that were the 'charter generation' of Africans in the early Americas.²⁰ Their ambitious project, however, is less insightful than it is a symptomatic chorus where 'creolization' translates into Europeanization and where 'Atlantic creoles' corresponds to 'Europeanized Africans'. Claims of pervasive Catholic influence saturate their work. Whatever the innermost content of some expressions

¹⁸James H. Sweet, "African Identity and Slave Resistance in the Portuguese Atlantic," in Peter C. Mancall, ed., *The Atlantic World and Virginia, 1550-1624* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 225-47.

¹⁹Joan Cameron Bristol, *Christians, Blasphemers, and Witches: Afro-Mexican Ritual Practice in the Seventeenth Century* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007), 73; and James H. Sweet, *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441-770* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 197.

²⁰Linda M. Heywood and John K. Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585-1660* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 2, 236. This work builds upon an earlier volume: Linda Heywood, ed., *Central Africans and Cultural Transformations in the American Diaspora* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002). For doubts about the 'creolized' nature of those from Angola, see Roquinaldo Ferreira, *Cross-Cultural Exchange in the Atlantic World: Angola and Brazil during the Era of the Slave Trade* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 247-48. For non-creolized views of the culture and identities of West-Central Africans, see Christina F. Mobley, "The Kongoese Atlantic: Central African Slavery & Culture from Mayombe to Haiti" (PhD dissertation, Duke University, 2015); Barbaro Martinez-Ruiz, *Kongo Graphic Writing and Other Narratives of the Sign* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013); and Maureen Warner Lewis, *Central Africa in the Caribbean: Transcending Time, Transforming Cultures* (Mona: University of West Indies Press, 2003).

Anthropology," in *The African Diaspora and the Disciplines*, ed. Tejumola Olaniyan and James H. Sweet (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 67.

¹⁴Price, "African Diaspora and Anthropology," 57.

¹⁵Mintz and Price, *Birth of African-American Culture*, xi. Price, as recently as 2007, amended his perspective on the "creolized" nature of African diasporic cultures: rather than "continuous creolization," he has opted for the unfolding of "creolization-like process." See Richard Price, *Travels with Tooy: History, Memory, and the African American Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 299.

¹⁶Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 17 (emphasis added); idem, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2003), 23; and Alison Games, "Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities," *American Historical Review* 111, no. 3 (2006): 752.

¹⁷Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 18. The same argument (that is, "Atlantic creoles" only become so upon contact with Europeans) formed the foundation of Berlin's *Generations of Captivity*, which can be read as an abridged version of *Many Thousands Gone*.

of faith, the records make it clear those expressions were linked to political expediency, operating through the machinations of ruling elites, persistent warfare, acute slaving, and exile. Viewed from this perspective, it is no wonder the authors *cannot* show how most West-Central Africans, especially those (to be) enslaved, became seduced by Portuguese and Catholic ideals and how 'creolized' their daily lives became. Efforts to elucidate African ideas and intra-African histories are aborted in favor of fervently seeking to prove the existence of 'Atlantic creoles' and to minimize the extent of fraudulent baptisms received by captives prior to embarkation. Rather than lay bare the processes by which Africans incorporated or rejected Portuguese cultural or religious ideas, the authors quantify 'creolization' through a set of maps scaled from 'no creolization' to 'most creolization'.²¹

If, as they argue, 'Atlantic creoles' from West-Central Africa were the 'most homogeneous group of Africans to enter the Americas in the whole history of the slave trade' and they were 'culturally much closer to the Europeans', then how do we explain their short-lived social compatibility and how quickly their 'race' mattered in the inchoate European overseas colonies?²² They tell us it was only in the late seventeenth century that English and Dutch colonists came to view Africans as 'slaves' in the strictest sense, but this explanation fails to integrate earlier Anglo-Dutch understandings of race and caste appropriated from their Iberian slaving partners and competitors. The English learned much of the racial and economic contours of Atlantic slaving from the Iberians and then the Dutch. Early English merchants in Iberia and English privateers regularly plundered Iberian ships in the Atlantic and Mediterranean, and readily adopted the racial category 'negro' and expelled undesirable 'negars and blackamoors' through a series of edicts.²³ Indeed, there is little evidence for their interpretation of Anglo-Dutch racial thinking, 'Atlantic creole' influences on Anglo-Dutch colonies, or for the culture of Africans of the late seventeenth century being 'different and more alien to Euro American expectations' than 'creolized' Africans.²⁴ The absence of significant evidence, especially for the bulk of common folks among a 'most homogenous group', severely undermines the 'Atlantic creole' argument.

It is difficult, therefore, to figure out how scholars can measure the sincerity of one's conversion or the adoption of European culture among socio-political elites much less the commoners cast as political subjects, social undesirables, and converted souls. Matthew Restall has lamented the same

²¹ Heywood and Thornton, *Atlantic Creoles*, 227–35.

²² *Ibid.*, 238, 293.

²³ Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 1984), 10–2; Steven A. Epstein, *Speaking of Slavery: Color, Ethnicity, and Human Bondage in Italy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 108; and April L. Hatfield, "A 'Very Wary People in the Bargaining' or 'Very Good Merchandise': English Traders' Views of Free and Enslaved Africans, 1550–1650," *Slavery and Abolition* 25, no. 3 (2004): 1–2.

²⁴ Heywood and Thornton, *Atlantic Creoles*, 331.

in his study of Africans and their descendants in the Yucatan under Spanish colonial rule: 'It is thus hard to determine whether professions of faith were sincere or whether Africans slaves paid lip service to the religion of their [Spanish] masters'.²⁵ We can apply these same misgivings to the claim of 'significant acculturation' to European values, especially Catholicism, and the claim that what mattered 'was the assertion of a Christian identity rather than a sectarian Catholic one'.²⁶ The repetition of an argument does not make it more convincing. We are told many times that 'Atlantic creole' culture was 'best represented by the profession of Christianity', among other features, but *how* an Africanized form of Catholicism found expression in the lives of those who allegedly had a substantial impact on African-American culture formation, or in the embryonic Anglo-Dutch colonies, is left unattended.²⁷ To their credit, Heywood and Thornton skillfully lay out the context of warfare and disintegration that produced West-Central African captives in stunning detail, but their sources say comparatively little about the 'creole culture' these captives supposedly transferred to the Americas. Ultimately, they are unable to demonstrate the 'ways in which this generation of Africans helped lay the foundation for the subsequent development of African American culture'.²⁸

Rather than assume, at face value, the categories and content of the European-supplied sources, teasing out the broader historical patterns central to the formation of African diasporas requires a pan-European approach instead of a 'national' one for those sources. The very networks of merchants, clerics, capital, and commodities that would seriously contest Iberian quasi-monopolies in the constant but shifting relations between European partners and competitors sustained the Iberian presence in Africa and the Americas. Thus, for instance, the English colony in Virginia or in Barbados would have been established earlier and with enslaved labor if the Iberian slaving monopoly had been broken sooner. Once the Virginia colony was established and tobacco became a profitable staple crop, its colonial elites, planters, and the gentry 'began purchasing slaves as soon as they could get them and continued to buy more as fast as the limited supply and their individual resources would allow'.²⁹ As early as 1637, officials of the Company of Adventurers of London Trading to the Ports of Africa, 'to whom the King has granted a patent for the sole to trade to Guinea, Binney [Benin], and Angola', began 'to trade upon

²⁵ Matthew Restall, *The Black Middle: Africans, Mayas, and Spaniards in Colonial Yucatan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 235.

²⁶ Heywood and Thornton, *Atlantic Creoles*, 272.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 67.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, i.

²⁹ John C. Coombs, "The Phases of Conversion: A New Chronology for the Rise of Slavery in Early Virginia," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 68, no. 3 (2011): 347; Douglas M. Bradburn and John C. Coombs, "Smoke and Mirrors: Reinterpreting the Society and Economy of the Seventeenth-Century Chesapeake," *Atlantic Studies* 3 (2006): 131–57. See also Edmund Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975), whose ideas about the rise of slavery Coombs challenges.

the coasts of Guinea, to take “nigers,” and carry them to foreign parts’.³⁰ The number of enslaved individuals soon surpassed indentured servants by end of 1650s, but this would have been quicker had greater supply reached the colony through Dutch and other foreign traders. In 1664, the English capture of New Netherland ended the Holland–Virginia–Barbados trade link and the capture of Carolusborg (Cape Coast) in Gold Coast established direct supply lines between West Africa and the English plantation colonies, especially Barbados.³¹ Settled in 1627, Barbados became a fully fledged slave society within a generation, punctuated by laws enslaving Africans for life (1636) and a slave code (1661).³² By the late seventeenth century, Barbados was ‘a laboratory of labor [and racialized slavery]’, diffusing its racialized ideas and plantation practices through planters who left the island with their captives and settled in the Carolinas, the Chesapeake region, Jamaica, and other islands.³³

These developments in the Anglo-Dutch Americas, however, came after a century of Iberian plantation slavery and where an ‘Angola wave’ allegedly responsible for the foundation of African-American culture was preceded by dominant patterns of Senegambia importation into Spanish America. The Spaniards had virtually no presence in West-Central Africa. But under a united Iberian crown (c.1580–1640), Portuguese merchants had access to Spanish America, while other Europeans attacked Iberian ships and settlements (from 1581), (re)sold captives to Spanish settlers in the Caribbean, and adopted sugar production techniques (from São Tomé to Brazil to Barbados) and ideas about racialized slavery. By 1640, the Spanish Caribbean was flooded with other Europeans through *asientos* granted by the Spanish Crown. Between the 1660s and 1670s, Genoese merchants procured enslaved Africans in the Caribbean from Anglo-Dutch traders, and resold them to major Spanish American ports. Late seventeenth and eighteenth-century Dutch and French merchants supplied Veracruz, Havana, Cartagena, and Panama with captives from their West African enclaves, while English merchants and loggers remained active in the Yucatan and Belize between 1655 and 1722.³⁴ Until the mid-seventeenth century, the idea that an almost

³⁰W. Noël Sainsbury, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies, Volume I, 1574–1660* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1860), 1: 260.

³¹For some contemporary accounts of Anglo-Dutch wars and English activity in Gold Coast, see UK National Archives at Kew (TNA): Public Records Office (PRO), Colonial Office (CO) 1/19, no. 5 (1665), “A Breife Narrative of the Trade and Present Condition of the Company of Royall Adventurers of England Trading into Africa;” CO 1/17, no. 60 (1663), “An Extract of Letters from Cormantine and Other Places in Affrica;” CO 1/17, nos. 110–1 (1663), “The Company of Royal Adventurers Trading into Africa to [the King].”

³²Simon P. Newman, *A New World of Labor: The Development of Plantation Slavery in the British Atlantic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 250.

³³Newman, *A New World*, 251. For accounts of early English sugar plantations, see TNA: PRO, CO 1/22, no. 20.

³⁴Restall, *The Black Middle*, 19–20.

exclusive West-Central African cast was trafficked to the early Americas is deeply at odds with the statistics for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, especially for the major Spanish American slaving hubs in Cartagena, Veracruz, and Buenos Aires.³⁵ Between 1525 and 1640, the vast majority of slaving voyages and the number of captive Africans went to Spanish America, with peaks between 1586 and 1640.³⁶ Between 1595 and 1640, half of all recorded captive Africans to Spanish America came from Senegambia with some 4000 per annum to Cartagena alone.³⁷ The year 1640, of course, corresponds to the end of the united Iberian crown and the lost of an Atlantic monopoly, illustrated by some two-thirds of all recorded captives flowing from Angola to the region between 1626 and 1640.³⁸ From 1641 to 1650, the largest number of slaving voyages went to Brazil and Barbados.³⁹

Until the early or mid-seventeenth century, transatlantic slaving was largely an Iberian affair when we look at the numbers, though we should be very much aware of the multitude of hands that stirred this transatlantic pot. In Linda A. Newson and Susie Minchin’s *From Capture to Sale*, the authors show the value of kin networks for Portuguese slavers who used kin and compatriots in Senegambia and Angola and in negotiating the imperial South American bureaucracy to further their commerce in ‘pieces of slaves’ (Span. *pieza de esclavo*). To this, we must add what the available databases do not account for concerning any ‘wave’ of captive Africans: contraband trafficking, bribes to royal and other officials, and intentional concealments of arrivals and departures to bolster self-interest in Atlantic Africa and in the Americas. Lastly, we must reckon with the perception of slavers in their procurement of captive Africans. In 1622, royal officials in Bogota wrote:

The black slaves that are brought to Cartagena and sold are of three types – the first and most esteemed are those of the Rivers of Guinea [i.e. Senegambia], who are also called *de ley* [‘authentic’ or ‘top-quality’]. They have different names, and their common price is 200 pesos of assayed silver. The second type is that of the Ardas or Ararás [i.e. Allada]. These are brought with least frequency, and are sold at 160 *ducados* of 11 *reales*. The third and worst is that of the Angolas and Congos, who are infinitely numerous in their lands, and who commonly sell for 150 *ducados* each.⁴⁰

³⁵Linda A. Newson and Susie Minchin, *From Capture to Sale: The Portuguese Slave Trade to Spanish South America in the Early Seventeenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 153.

³⁶Data from the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade database, accessed December 3, 2014, www.slavevoyages.org/tast/database/search.faces.

³⁷Newson and Minchin, *From Capture to Sale*, 62, 66.

³⁸David Wheat, “The First Great Waves: African Provenance Zones for the Transatlantic Slave Trade to Cartagena De Indias, 1570–1640,” *The Journal of African History* 52 (2011): 4, 12, 14–15.

³⁹Data from the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade database, accessed December 3, 2014 www.slavevoyages.org/tast/database/search.faces.

⁴⁰Cited in Wheat, “The First Great Waves,” 19.

Captive Africans from Senegambia also reached a price double the value of Angolan counterparts in Africa.⁴¹ Taken together, these factors and their numerical support point to a composite African (rather than an 'Angolan' wave that reached the shores of the Americas) with an equally composite culture that looked inside to their foundational understandings of life to deal with external forces they could not fully control. The countervailing fight for life against such forces was neither a 'miracle' nor a function of 'creolization'. It is what humans held captive on land or at sea do.

'BLACK' ATLANTIC HISTORIES

For millions of captive Africans dispatched to what became worldwide African diasporas, the Atlantic Ocean was experienced as a medium of alienation from natal kin and community. Between 1400 and 1900, this was true for the vast majority of Africans evicted from their homeland and from humanity en route to the Americas or Eurasia. Framing devices such as 'Atlantic creoles' and 'creolization' remain out of sync with their lived experiences, languages, and ideas. As Pier Larson has shown for Madagascar and the western Indian Ocean, in *Ocean of Letters*, 'creole' ideas and cultures have been overvalued at the expense of indigenous cultures among captive Africans in the region.⁴² Wherever supposed creolization occurred, it grew out of conquest, rupture, displacement, and in moments of asymmetrical power relations. Proponents of 'Atlantic' or whatever creoles have a difficult time substantiating the latter's existence in specific human details and cannot show beyond reasonable doubt how a 'creolized culture' operated in their daily lives because of weak evidence and a view of the Atlantic as a transformative portal that hollowed out Africans' ancestral inheritances. Rather than view the Atlantic as some magical threshold that miraculously created new peoples and cultures, an integrated space where power relations among the participants was symmetrical, or a transfer point for 'creolized' cultures, we need abstinence from grandiose claims framed by contemporary politics. What did imprisonment in one dungeon, stepping aboard yet another (floating) dungeon, estrangement from kin and community, and faced with perpetual incarnation in a foreign land and religion mean to those who followed the characteristically one-way Atlantic route? Diasporic scholarship might be served better by focusing on the lives, experiences, and ideas of Africans. In so doing, we would elucidate contemporary socio-political contexts borne out of transatlantic slaving and against their deep histories, rather than be guided by fashionable trends.

⁴¹Newson and Minchin, *From Capture to Sale*, 300.

⁴²Pier M. Larson, *Ocean of Letters: Language and Creolization in an Indian Ocean Diaspora* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Scholars are, in fact, 'creatures of fashion and this ... affects the fate of ideas. The ebb and flow of fashion is, at least, exhausting and, at worst, quite pernicious'.⁴³ Most fashionable ideas have a shared storyline. Take, for instance, the 'invention of the tradition' idea popularized in an edited volume by historians Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger in 1983. Though a volume largely unconcerned with Africa (except one chapter by Ranger), the 'invented tradition' idea became contagious, reaching epidemic proportions with new articles and books donning titles such as 'the invention of Africa' and hundreds of books whose titles contained 'The Invention of'.⁴⁴ In the end, Hobsbawm and Ranger's argument about culture change, packaged in the distinction between 'invented' and 'genuine' tradition, was pointless because all human traditions are innovations with specific durability, and culture change is not the only outcome of encounters. The fashion of 'creolization' (Atlantic or otherwise) followed an identical trajectory: a linguistic concept applied to historical processes by anthropologists unconcerned with the 'African past' became a popular explanation for African cultures in various diasporas. One of the latest kindred fashions, in this genealogy of vogue ideas, is the concept of Atlantic history.

Like 'creolization', Atlantic history is a multicolored world unto itself (with red, black, green, and white Atlantics) that stubbornly eschews Africa and African histories. To be sure, 'Atlantic Africa is largely ignored in all [current] schemas [of Atlantic history]', but Atlantic history falters as a 'discrete unit' of inquiry by its wholesale obsession with Western Europe and North America and in circumnavigating most of the global systems of exchanges that flowed through Africa, Eurasia, and the Americas, especially 'non-Atlantic' parts.⁴⁵ For many, Atlantic history had its origins in the 'sudden and harsh encounter between two old worlds [i.e. indigenous America and Western Europe] that transformed both and integrated them into a single New World'.⁴⁶ Although some have disputed this framework by pleading the 'most urgent and immediate challenge is to restore Africa to the Atlantic', such well-intentioned appeals concede to, rather than seriously confront, a white/European constructed 'Atlantic world' in which Africa(ns) might be

⁴³Quoted in Paul J. Cloke, Chris Philo, and David Sadler, *Approaching Human Geography: An Introduction to Contemporary Theoretical Debates* (New York: Guilford Press, 1991), 93.

⁴⁴Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 211–62; Derek R. Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival: A History of Dissent, c. 1935–1972* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 3. See also Terence Ranger, "The Invention of Tradition Revisited: The Case of Colonial Africa," in Terence Ranger and Olufemi Vaughan, eds., *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth-Century Africa: Essays in Honour of A. H. M. Kirk-Greene* (New York: Palgrave, 1993); Valentin Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

⁴⁵Jack P. Greene and Philip Morgan, eds., *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 18, 21 (quotation), 339, 345 (quotation).

⁴⁶Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 55–56; Donald W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History*, Vol. 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 1.

integrated.⁴⁷ The challenge for scholars of the 'Atlantic world', in whatever hue, is to comprehend that significant parts of 'Atlantic history' are sub-plots of larger (intra)African historical processes for which the Atlantic was a marginal frontier. For many Africans, the Atlantic was peripheral and remained so even with increased European contact.

Atlantic history can only be 'Atlantic' and a human history when we engage Africans in the full profile of *their* own world(s) and lived experiences. Ironically, most of the sixteenth to eighteenth-century travel accounts, however exoticized and problematic, did place Africa(ns) at the center of their 'Atlantic' narratives. But since the eighteenth-century era of racial science and slavery, there has been an explicit if not coordinated 'straw man' argument made (Africans are 'black-unchristian-slaves' and slavery was justified by this racial profile) as if Africans ever opted out of their humanity for any slaving nation, merchant company, or planter. Too many scholars have taken quite literally the enslaved or the emancipated Africans' appropriated use of non-African categories of being and belonging to affirm their humanity as evidence of the Africans' self-understanding.⁴⁸ In what seems like an out-of-body experience, scholars seek distance rather than the discovery of African understandings of self, kin, and society, embedded in the violence and trauma that birthed the 'modern' world. African experiences of the Atlantic were ones of permanent alienation from place of birth and socialization and from those who mattered in their life (kin and community). To them, this Atlantic world was neither a stable concept, theoretical frame, nor a 'master text' made intelligible through literary criticism and racialized hermeneutics. Regardless of whether we 'whiten' or 'blacken' the Atlantic, we would still miss the opportunity to take our cues from their lived experiences.

The 'Black' Atlantic idea is therefore woven from threads of a falsely perceived shared geography that did not exist in either the minds or the archived experiences of most Africans who traveled as prisoners on the Atlantic. The root problem is that the conjoined histories of Africa *and* the Atlantic region has been hijacked, first, by a cast of anthropologists and, more recently, literary critics who collectively have little desire to seriously engage the 'African past', the Africans' foundational self-understandings accessed through *their* languages and cultures, and *their* categories of family and community rooted in bio-genetics and ancestry. It is not that historians are the only ones capable of producing such histories; their record is at best mixed and at worst makes

⁴⁷ Games, "Atlantic History," 754.

⁴⁸ Ironically, the "face value" approach rarely occurs or is taken seriously when Africans and their progeny self-identify themselves using one or several toponyms/ethnonyms, such as "Congo," "Angola," "Mina," etc. In a recent and otherwise exceptional book on revolutionary Haiti and Cuba, the author describes one Juan Bautista Lisundia as a practitioner of "Afro-Cuban religion," a drummer, and one who identified himself as "Congo." The author, however, categorized him as a "creole." See Ada Ferrer, *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 298.

them accessories to a protracted crime against African historicity by reducing them to supporting cast or invisibility in their own histories. Regardless of who researches and writes, we need context, not simply the interpretation of text! This is even truer for Africans who dictated or created some archived remembrance calibrated to specific economic and socio-political contexts: they cannot engage in nor protest our interpretations of their lives!

In the current 'Black Atlantic' fashion, the multiplicity of these lives, especially for the vast majority who were either illiterate in European languages or lacked the opportunity for documentary representation, matters little. Instead, what seems to matter is the autobiographical anxiety or 'the special stress' these literary critics-cum-intellectuals feel about *their* own 'African' ancestry and *their* own 'striving to be both European and black'.⁴⁹ Not unlike the travel accounts of earlier centuries, travelogues of the tourist kind produced by 'black' scholars, especially those inclined to literary criticism, have come to stand in place of deep contextualization and an engagement with historical processes in Atlantic and non-Atlantic Africa over time.⁵⁰ Rather than sober us by charting how race was ideologically determined in fifteenth and sixteenth-century Iberia and grafted onto human bodies (especially African ones) by so-called Enlightenment thinkers, these literary critics and their theorizing peers have reified the very thing that triggers their anxiety and which they persistently argue against: the idea of 'blackness'.⁵¹ This ironic and intoxicating trend has led to the branding of a 'black Mediterranean', a 'black Pacific,' and a 'black Indian Ocean'.⁵² Perhaps there is some meaning in following today's or tomorrow's fashion. In either case, this much is clear: neither 'blackening' an ocean nor intellectual voyeurism (where there

⁴⁹ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 1, 3. For a thorough and largely accurate critique of Gilroy, see chapter three ("Gilroy: Neither Black nor Atlantic") of Don Robotham's *Culture, Society, Economy: Globalization and Its Alternatives* (London: Sage, 2005), 43–61.

⁵⁰ Specimens of this anxiety can be found, for instance, in Henry Louis Gates's *Wonders of the African World* video series and the book of the same title; idem, *Tradition and the Black Atlantic: Critical Theory in the African Diaspora* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2010); Saidiya V. Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007).

⁵¹ On locating "race" in early Iberia, see Francisco Bethencourt, *Racisms: From the Crusades to the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013). On science and race-making related to African bodies, see Andrew Curran, *The Anatomy of Blackness: Science and Slavery in an Age of Enlightenment* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 6, 168.

⁵² Jay B. Haviser and Kevin C. MacDonald, eds., *African Re-Genesis: Confronting Social Issues in the Diaspora* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2006), 251; John Parker and Richard Reid, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Modern African History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 144; Seifudein Adem and Ali A. Mazrui, *Afrasia: A Tale of Two Continents* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2013), 261; Heather Smyth, "The Black Atlantic Meets the Black Pacific: Multimodality in Kamau Brathwaite and Wayne Compton," *Callaloo* 37, no. 2 (2014): 389–403; Yasuhiro Okada, "Gendering the 'Black Pacific': Race Consciousness, National Identity, and the Masculine/Feminine Empowerment Among African Americans in Japan Under

is only the 'idea of Africa') will allow us to see the stories that need telling, especially the ones creolization and Atlantic perspectives obfuscate.

MOVEMENT PEOPLE

Since antiquity, there has been a series of human movements in and outside of Africa and at various scales, but in the past five centuries we have witnessed unprecedented forms of forced migration and dispersal of peoples outside of Africa. This outflow of diverse yet overlapping cultures and histories was coalesced into servile and racialized categories, settling in (slave) societies bordering the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian and Atlantic Oceans. For scholars who have focused on parcels of the past half millennium, the locus of inquiry has been the Americas. Understandably, most scholars of a singularly constituted 'African diaspora' are based in the Americas (the region most transformed by captive African labor, ideas, and cultures) and so African diasporic research and writing have been stubbornly centered on the Atlantic basin. A few scholars who are proficient in African and Asian languages and cultures bordering the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean have begun to address this imbalance in the study of African diasporas in Asia. In the case of either the Americas or Eurasia, however, even fewer scholars have sought to bring these diasporic strands into a cohesive and broader history of the ways in which African cultures and histories took shape in and outside of Africa. Though a modest attempt, my *Transatlantic Africa, 1440–1888* provides a number of methodological tools and substantial storylines that push us toward that cohesive and broader history. The sources and narrative in the book spanned the past 500 years, geographically integrated the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Trans-Saharan, and Mediterranean worlds, and told a composite story that foregrounded global African voices and perspectives.⁵³ This kind of history offers a crucial turning point in how we can think and write about global African history and African diasporas as integral perspectives on world history.

U.S. Military Occupation, 1945–1952" (PhD dissertation, Michigan State University, 2008); Wanni Wibuswasdi Anderson and Robert G. Lee, eds., *Displacements and Diasporas: Asians in the Americas* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), Chap. 7; Robbie Shilliam, *The Black Pacific: Anti-Colonial Struggles and Oceanic Connections* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015). On the different "colored" Atlantics, see, more generally, Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal* (Oxford University Press, 2008), and more specifically works such as Jace Weaver's *The Red Atlantic: American Indigenes and the Making of the Modern World, 1000–1927* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

⁵³Kwasi Konadu, *Transatlantic Africa, 1440–1888* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

In the past twenty years, the study of African diasporas has provided a wealth of new information and interpretations. However, very little research and analysis have been devoted to studying the interconnections between worldwide African diasporas. We need to know more than just the statistical evidence for Africans transported to the Americas, the personal story of exceptional yet less than representative enslaved Africans who attained notoriety in Asia or Islamic empires, or the silence that surrounds the lives of enslaved Africans brought to Czarist Russia or imperial China. We need to understand the relationship between these various facets of a composite African diaspora as strands that constitute a quilt rather than discrete and isolated phenomena unto themselves. Consequently, emergent scholarship on African diasporas may need to adopt a global framework (as a prerequisite methodology) for specific and broader diasporic strands studied in isolation or in comparative perspectives.⁵⁴ This way, we firstly lay bare the processes by which the types and formation of African diasporas relate or diverge and what, for instance, the endurance and transformation of African cultural forms (in response to mechanisms of socio-political inclusion and exclusion) reveal about the substance and inner corridors of diasporic lives. Secondly, we need a critical assessment of how the global forces at play and local conditions, such as the population density and range of Africans within specific regions of the world, influenced the content and course of memory, culture, and identities. Finally, we need, on the one hand, to account for the presence or absence of so-called 'back-to-Africa' and 'black consciousness' movements in specific times and regions of the world, socio-political movements that invariably engaged in and promoted the very idea of African diasporic scholarship and networks across boundaries that human movement created. On the other hand, we also need to account for intra-African dispersal as well as transborder circulations within Africa, especially after the decade of African political independence from formal colonial rule, and the inflow of peoples of African ancestry in West, East, and Southern Africa during the same historical moments.⁵⁵

⁵⁴Though focused on the Atlantic, a number of methodological questions raised by James Sweet may have broader salience. See James H. Sweet, "Mistaken Identities? Oludah Equiano, Domingos Álvares, and the Methodological Challenges of Studying the African Diaspora," *The American Historical Review* 114 (2009): 279–306.

⁵⁵On internal circulation of peoples in continental Africa in the contemporary moment, see, for instance, Aderanti Adepaju, ed., *International Migration within, to and from Africa in a Globalised World* (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2009); Victor Agadjanian, "Research on International Migration within Sub-Saharan Africa: Foci, Approaches, and Challenges," *Sociological Quarterly* 49, no. 3 (2008): 407–21; Giles Mohan and A.B. Zack-Williams, "Globalisation from Below: Conceptualising the Role of the African Diasporas in Africa's Development," *Review of African Political Economy* 29, no. 92 (2002): 211–36. On the historic inflow of diasporic Africans to various parts of Africa, see Kwame Essien, *Brazilian-African Diaspora in Ghana: The Taboo, Slavery, Dissonance of Memory, Identity and Locatina* (East Lansing, MI: ...)

Pioneering scholarship on African diasporas in Asia offers a striking contrast to trends that privilege an Atlantic or North American ownership of the 'African diaspora'. During the past three decades, several important monographs and edited volumes have appeared. These include the likes of: Joseph Harris's *The African Diaspora in Asia*; Shihan de Silva Jaysuriya's *African Identity in Asia*; Edward Alper's *East Africa and the Indian Ocean*; Shaun Marmon's *Slavery in the Islamic Middle East*; Paul E. Lovejoy's *Slavery on the Frontiers of Islam*; and John Hunwick and Eve Troutt Powell's *The African Diaspora in the Mediterranean Lands of Islam*. Taken together, these studies focus on excavating silenced African and African-descended histories and adding other integral strands to our worldwide diasporic knowledge base. These works and others have made concerted efforts to create new ground for research, but underlying both this and the Atlantic history/creole development is the tendency to concentrate on specific historical topics, peoples, and places without pushing us toward a cohesive and broader history of African diasporas. Whether the loci have been the Americas or Eurasia, these studies have illuminated some of the key socio-political and cultural underpinnings of studying African diasporas, and so have provided a nascent framework for interpreting diasporic histories in specific nation-states and regions. However, historians have not traced the historic and cultural links between African diasporas or their relation to broader patterns at the level of world history. By taking a holistic and global view of historic Africa and its diasporas we can perceive, for example, how the memory and culture of a 'homeland' affected the outcomes of diasporic (trans)formation in 'foreign' lands. This perspective might prove fruitful in framing the ways in which cultural identity, memory, and production proved crucial in how dispersed and forced migrants within and outside of Africa dealt with mechanisms of socio-political inclusion and exclusion in host societies. Thus, by analyzing the connection between African diasporas, a more developed interpretation of how African peoples, ideas and cultures moved (in all their various forms) through their global histories. In 1946, W.E.B. Du Bois published *The World and Africa*, and, in it, he argued for the contributions made by Africa to world history, but for reasons of funding and what was known said little about diasporic African histories throughout the world. With our current tools and state of knowledge, our understanding of 'Africa' and 'the world' should coalesce around a field of knowledge and perspective we might call 'African world histories'. African world histories attuned to the specifics of local communities, their self-understandings and optics, and the flow of global exchanges (where Africa is porous and an integral part of those exchanges) seem to be where diasporic approaches to African history should take us.

University Press, 2016); Kwasi Konadu, *The Akan Diaspora in the Americas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); and Nemata A. Blyden, *West Indians in West Africa, 1808–1880: The African Diaspora in Reverse* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2000).

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