Synergizing Culture: African American Cultural Recovery through African Name Acquisition and Usage

By

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The intellectual so-called Negroes think it is a
disgrace to them to not be called by the slave-master's name.

Elijah Muhammad (1973:185)

One of the most culturally and historically relevant illustrations of how naming and language is bound up with power and the exercise of dominance is the practice of European colonizers attacking, defiling, and altering African names in order to suppress and erase African identity. For slaves, names encompassed their identities as individuals but also aided in the survival of a collective history. Despite this erasure, one of the ways in which enslaved and free Africans sought to preserve culture and identity was through naming.

Jené Gutierrez (2016)

Dedication: Cizinho Afreeka and Jéssica Juliana of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, parents prevented from registering the name Makeda Foluke for their daughter in 2016 by government officials who considered that the name may cause future problems for the child. The parents sited racism as the reason (Uwumarogie 2016).

Abstract

This essay is focused on the cultural political formations that have influenced the prevalence of African name acquisition and usage by African Americans in the U.S. after the Civil Rights era to the present. It is argued that a personal name is an inalienable human right with supporting evidence of psychological paradigms that may explain why most African Americans do not have an African name. The presentation draws on personal observation, involvement and knowledge discussions with persons with and without African names in the U.S. since 1971, and it recommends that people of African heritage in the U.S. and elsewhere aggressively begin to embrace African names and African naming practices.

Key concepts/words: African anthroponymy, African names, African naming practices, Afrophobia, Fanonism, inalienable human right, internalized oppression, internalized racism, *Kawaida*, Negro-to-Black Conversion Experience, Mentacide, Négritude, Nigrescence Theory, Nkrumahism, post traumatic slave syndrome.

Introduction

The above quotes (Muhammad 1973; Gutierrez 2016) outline the challenge that people of African heritage have with names, particularly in the Western Hemisphere. The first concerns the former enslaved person wanting the name of his/her former oppressor, and the second, is an articulation of how the process of names and naming are locked in power relationships designed to dominate/kill the African ethos, while the African soul seeks to preserve its culture and identity.

The irony is that, should we prepare a list of famous or well-known people of African heritage in the U.S., and not identify them as persons of African descent via photograph, it would be almost impossible to identify their African heritage based on their personal names. Hence, usually when one is taught about the history, life and culture of Black people in the U.S., the focus is on 'race' because names like Huey Newton, Coretta Scot King and other names held by African Americans (e.g., Fannie Lou Hamer, Shirley Chisholm, Harold Washington, etc.) do not give a clue that they were actually of African heritage, unless there is a drawing, photo, or biography identifying them as African Americans.

Considering this reality, certain exceptions bear some attention. The first is of those with names that perhaps identify them as a person via his/her ethnic origin or identification, such as the creator of the African American and Pan African holiday *Kwanzaa* (Karenga 2008), Maulana N. Karenga or Cuban exiled former Black Liberation Army activist Assata Olugbala Shakur (Shakur 1987, Wazo Weusi Collective 1995), both of whom are engaged in the social and political domain of African liberation.

The second are of those who have elected to be known based on their religious affiliation such as activist athletes Muhammad Ali or Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. And third, we have those born into their names like Barack H. Obama, the 44th President of the United States, attorney Chokwe Antar Lumumba, the mayor of Jackson, Mississippi, or free agent NBA player Chukwuemeka Ndubuisi "Emeka" Okafor.

Hence, we can see that there are at least three ways some people of African heritage in the U.S. come to be known via an African name, i.e., cultural political formations, religion, and birth. In this paper, the focus on cultural political formations via organizational affiliations that have influenced the prevalence of African name acquisition and usage in the U.S. Accordingly, this work also draws on (1) the author's personal observation, (2) involvement and knowledge discussions with persons with and without African names in the U.S. (3), a literature review, (4) the argument that a personal name is an inalienable human right, and (5) with psychological paradigms that may explain why most African Americans do not have African names. It is recommended that people of African heritage in the U.S and throughout the world more aggressively begin to embrace African names and African naming practices.

The Cultural Dynamics and Politics of Naming

Given the complexities aforementioned, the act of naming is one of *Kujichagulia* (i.e., self-determination via Kiswahili, and the second principle of *Kwanzaa* (Karenga 2008) in a set of seven [the *Nguzo Saba*] total in the holiday), wherein people, particularly in the context of the crime of enslavement, have the right to independently name, define, speak and create for themselves, instead of having others do those essential cultural grounding activities for them. And although often ignored when examining names and naming practices, personal names in the African context specifically serve as useful tools for reference, and as sources of authoritative and authentic pieces of information (Adjah 2011). Hence, Adjah (2011) found that when we emphasize the communicative values of names, they become similar to an open diary of recorded information that can be preserved, retrieved and disseminated throughout society.

Furthermore, naming is a human rights issue (a concern that will be addressed with more detail later in this essay), based in human ethics which should be applicable everywhere, at every time, and for everyone. Nevertheless, this basic right has been violated seemingly without an afterthought as people of African heritage in Africa and around the world have been burdened with European names (first, middle or last). For example, many know of Nelson Mandela, but few know of Rolihlahla Mandela, the African name (an isiXhosa name that means "pulling the branch of a tree", and colloquially, "troublemaker"), given to him by his father. Alternatively, the name Nelson was given to him on his first day at school by his teacher who undoubtedly learned the practice from her British colonizers, who according to Mandela, they could not easily pronounce or often would not pronounce African names. Thus, naming can be an early act of violence on the African mind, i.e. psychological warfare, when it is politically given without regard to cultural reference or respect.

The result of violence-by-naming is the institutionalization of a personal conscience or subconscience that would accept or internalize the views of the dominant society (e.g., British colonialism) over his/her own ethnic group, and thus, participate in internalized oppression/racism (Bailey 2011, David 2014, Mandela 1974, Sullivan 2017).

Literature Review

Literature on African American personal name acquisition or usage in reference to African names is slim. Instead, focus is usually on names chosen after emancipation, most of which were not African in origin. However, an exception is a M.A. thesis titled "African Names and Naming Practices: The Impact Slavery and European Domination had on the African Psyche, Identity and Protest" by Liseli A. Fitzpatrick presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in African American and African Studies at Ohio State University in 2012. Fitzpatrick's (2012) study on African naming practices during human enslavement in the U.S. and its aftermath focused on the centrality of names and naming in creating, suppressing, retaining and reclaiming African identity and memory, based on the idea that several elements of African cultural practices have survived the oppressive onslaught of enslavement, and European domination.

And in doing the above, the thesis investigates African names and naming practices in Africa, the United States and the Caribbean, not merely as elements of cultural retention, but as forms of resistance in an effort to outline their importance in the construction of identity and memory for persons of African descent; and most importantly, as a sociopolitical construct that also examined how European colonizers attacked and defiled African names and naming systems to suppress and erase African identity. Fitzpatrick (2012) aptly argued that because names not only aid in the construction of identity, they also concretize a people's collective memory by recording the circumstances of their experiences. Accordingly, to obliterate African collective memories and identities, the colonizers assigned new names to our African ancestors or even left them nameless, as a way of subjugating and committing them to perpetual servitude (in body and mind). In response to this, the author also investigated how African descendants in Africa and throughout the world resisted this process of obliterating their memories, and thus, deployed the practice of naming for survival in a hostile environment. And unlike most studies, the study focused on the deliberate attempt made by European colonizers to obliterate African memory, and instill a sense of shame within the African community, while simultaneously studying the various ways African folk resisted and sought to maintain their identity through names and naming practices, given the important role that names played in Africa, and elsewhere.

Second, López (2015) discussed names and naming practices among enslaved African people and their descendants in the Americas, and also presented an overview of naming systems among people in colonial as well as modern Brazil. According to López (ibid.), data from previous research on names and naming practices in a number of enslaved societies in the Americas constitute a point of departure for discussing who named the enslaved and their sons and daughters to provide an overview of the different types of names that have been registered for the population, and to comment on how these names may have been chosen and used in reflection of power relationships, and expressed resistance to power imbalances. Thus, she found that enslavers were not always the name-givers of the enslaved, and that although African names are rare in historical records, modern naming practices may still include components of African origins, and therefore, they evoke important memories of collective experiences.

And third, Lupenga Mphande (2006) in "Naming and Linguistic Africanisms in African American Culture" in the *Selected Proceedings of the 35th Annual Conference on African Linguistics* informs us that the enslaved were captured on the African continent and brought to the 'New World', they had *names* as a means to identify their environment and themselves. And although many studies have catalogued African names in America, no study has examined the processes that go into linguistic name construction or in the encoding of its semantic import. Second, there has also been no study that has discussed the process that leads to the creation of names, versus simply cataloguing the forms of names themselves.

Hence, in his paper, Mphande (2006) examined the linguistic remnants of the African naming practice in American culture, and interrogated the imaginative processes African Americans have deployed in retaining their African cultural heritage. For example, he describes the Zulu naming practice as an example of a naming culture that the enslaved may have been acquainted with before they arrived in the Americas and the Caribbean, which directed him to examine the contemporary naming practice in the African American community with a view of suggesting similarities between them, therefore attempting to trace specific linguistic processes as part of the African carryovers in African American culture. In doing so, he filled a gap in the knowledge of the mechanisms in the naming practice in African societies and its importation into the African world community in a hope to serve people, particularly African American students, who have expressed a desire to adopt African names for self-identity; hence, a desire often encouraged by the adoption of African names by famous celebrities, such as the writer Paulette Williams who changed her name to Nguni Ntozakhe Shange.

These studies indeed help support discussion and research on the above ideal of having people of African heritage fully embrace their African essence by acquiring African personal names, regardless of their political, religious, or geographical locations.

In review, Mphande (2006) examines the linguistic remnants of the African naming practice in American culture, and looks at the imaginative processes that African Americans have deployed in retaining their African cultural heritage, while López (2015) discusses names and naming practices among African people and their descendants in enslaved societies in the Americas with an overview of naming systems among African people in colonial as well as modern Brazil.

Next, Fitzpatrick (2012) examines discourse on this important topic by outlining the self-determining nature of people to retain their names, despite deliberate attempts by European colonizers to obliterate African memory and instill a sense of shame within the African community, and most importantly, she outlines how people resisted and sought ways to maintain their identity through names and naming practices.

And finally, in what seems like one of the few books to discuss this topic of African name usage in reference to African Americans, Molefi Kete Asante (2011) in his memoir, *As I Run Toward Africa,* he states that "carrying the surnames of those who enslaved your ancestors is a constant reminder of a lack of self-determination, a badge of conquest," and that "… wearing them without question [is] tantamount to accepting the enslavement and all of its violations of our Africanity …" (Asante 2011:2). Hence, Asante offers a powerful assessment of a horrific history, and he continues to write that, "The baggage became heavier each time we were called by names that were not ours", then in a fashion of not sparing personal feelings, he writes "Mature people give themselves names from their history and culture; others are like pets that are given names by humans" (Asante 2011:3), and concludes by writing, "Naming is a religious experience because it grants us access to the mysteries of creation" (Asante 2011:4). Indeed, a powerful argument from someone who relinquished his European name in 1973, and become a leading scholar in the contours of Africology, nationally and internationally.

The Use of African Name Books in the Acquisition Process

There are a host of books on African names (Adebayo 2005, Ahanda 2006, Asante 1991, Hodari 2009, Karim 1976, Madubuike 1976, Musere 1998, Musere 2000, Obeng 2001, *Noms Théophores d'Afrique* 1977, Sanyika 1975, Starr 2015, Stewart 1996, Zawawi 1993). The better books provide readers with the source of a name (e.g., the nation or region of its origin, religion, ethnicity, etc.), a pronunciation guide, a gender guide, several meanings of a name, a gender neutral guide, a theme roster, an alphabetized roster, examples of famous/well-known names used, factors to consider when choosing names, and other features designed to assist in the selection of a name.

However, an interesting fact regarding the books is that one may contradict the other in regards to name origin or meaning, thus, it is best to conduct a comparative review/analysis to obtain the most correct spelling, history, pronunciation, etc., of a selected name.

Hence, African name books are only as good as their authors, and those with a linguistic background with perhaps a specialty in anthroponomastics or anthroponymy (the study of the names of human beings), and perhaps the most expert in this arena (Obeng 2001).

In the early 1970s several books focused on African names, and they attempted to meet some of the above categories (i.e., name meaning, origin, pronunciation, etc.), but most fell short because they were very slim in content. However there were exceptions, one being *Names from Africa: Their Origin, Meaning, and Pronunciation* (1972) organized by Ogonna Chuks-Orji with the assistance of Barbados-born scholar Keith E. Baird, published by Johnson Publishing Company, an African American owned and operated publishing company based in Chicago, Illinois. In the description of the book, it reports that it was written for people of all ages; parents looking for names for their children; for any person that would like to acquire an African name to substitute for or add to his/her given name; and for students in Black Studies programs who may want to adopt a name that is meaningful to them.

Furthermore, the book targeted the new African consciousness within the African American community, and thus, the author (Chuks-Orji) reports that he undertook the compiling of the book as a result of numerous inquiries for African names from people in "… all walks of life who were interested in using them for themselves, their children, and their friends," thus he introduces the topic by writing that "the giving of names is of great importance in Africa" and that people are named after events, happenings, great things, the days of the week, or the order in which they were born. Continuing, he writes that if parents wanted a son, in Nigeria they may call him "Ayinde" (a Yoruba name) meaning 'the one we prayed for'; in Ghana, if a boy is born on Saturday, he is called "Kwame" (an Akan name); and in Tanzania, the second born of twins are called "Doto" (a Zaramo name). In short, the book set the standard on how a book on African names should be organized and introduced. Fast forward to 1998, Jonathan Musere and Shirley C. Byakutaga in *African Names and Naming* compiled some 2,500 personal names from eastern, central, and southern Africa (many appearing in print for the first time) with entries showing how African names relate to ceremonies, prayer, proverbs, mode of birth, deities, spirits, ethnic affiliation, and within the overall dynamics of family relationships.

Seize the Time: African Names Matter

Considering the past and present availability of books and other resources on African names and naming practices, it is time for African American people, and other people of African heritage (and perhaps others) to acquire and celebrate African names. And in this acquisition and celebration, a salute is in order for those who took an African name and helped popularize its importance and utility in public life in the 20th century. Hence a roster of individuals like education consultant and author Jawanza Kunjufu; former five-term Democratic Congressman from Maryland Kwesi Mfume; poet, publisher-editor and educator Haki R. Madhubuti, poet-writer and activist Amiri Baraka [Woodard 1999] (1934-2014); educator and former president of

Lincoln University (the oldest historically Black institution in the U.S.) Niara Sudarkasa; performance artist, playwright and poet-writer Ntozake Shange; Bardo distinguished professor at Western Carolina University, Kofi Lomotey; doctor of chiropractic Kweli Tutashinda [Tutashinda 2013, 2015]; chair and professor of African-American Studies at Georgia State University Akinyele Umoja; Republic of New Africa second president Imari Abubakari Obadele [Obadele 1975] (1930-2010); Mukasa Dada (credited with coining the phrase "Black Power" during the March Against Fear in 1966 in Greenwood, Mississippi); associate professor of African American Studies and History at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua; national co-chair of the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (a mass-based coalition of organizations and individuals organized for the sole purpose of obtaining reparations for African descendants in the United States) Mashariki Jywanza; department chair of the department of Black Studies at San Diego Mesa College and board member of the National Council for Black Studies, Thekima Mayasa; and a host of other notable/successful people of African heritage in the U.S.

Next, in an attempt to push further on the question of African names particularly for African people, we will turn to a discussion on why personal naming is an inalienable universal human right in unity with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris, France in 1948, which has been translated into over 500 languages in recognition of the inherent dignity and equality therein for all members of the human family in the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

A Personal Name: An Inalienable Human Right

Here, the aim is not only to suggest that the ideal in the question of names and naming would be that people of African heritage would fully embrace their African essence, and therefore, acquire African personal names, regardless of their political/religious or geographical location, but also to outline how these actions are so important that they echo the call for human rights. Hence, essential conditions guiding the following discussion include a right to self-determination (*Kujichagulia*) in recognition of the inherent dignity and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as a foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world; and in this, the right to an African name, which should read like the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in that in naming ourselves, we are exercising a 'freedom of speech'; and therefore a freedom from fear and want because we elected to acquire/maintain an African name. And further, via dignity, reason and conscience, others should honor our decision and welcome our decision in an authentic ethics of human kindness.

Furthermore, there should be a global acknowledgement that: (1) Everyone is entitled to an African name without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status with no distinction made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country

or territory to which a person belongs; whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty; (2) No one should be held in slavery or servitude because of his/her name/heritage; (3) Every person has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law, regardless of his/her name; (4) Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him or her by the constitution or by law; (5) No one should be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile because of his or her name; (6) No one should be subjected to arbitrary interference with his/her privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his/her honor and reputation because of his/her name; (7) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state; (8) Everyone has the right to a name and nationality and no one should be arbitrarily deprived of his/her name or nationality nor be denied the right to change his/her name or nationality; (9) Anyone of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, should have the right to alter their name; (10) Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and this right includes freedom to change his/her name either alone or in community with others and in public or private, and to manifest his/her religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance; (11) No one may be compelled to belong to an association because of his/her name; (12) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his/her country, directly or through freely chosen representatives, regardless of his/her name; (13) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his/her country, regardless of his/her name; (14) Everyone has the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of his/her interests; (15) All children should have a name, and all the same social protection that come with childhood; (16) Everyone has the right to education, regardless of his/her name; (17) and that everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of their community, to enjoy the arts and share in scientific advancement and its benefits, with no limitations in reference to his/her name.

Perhaps this human rights approach can be a part of the African-centered cultural renaissance mentioned by Oba T'Shaka (1995) in *Return to the African Mother Principle of Male and Female Equality,* which draws on gender equality, democratic institutions, and local leadership with an ability to improvise and center on truth and knowledge (T'Shaka 1995: 289). And further, the concern for human rights coincide with the pillars of African ethics concerning: "(1) the dignity and rights of the human person; (2) the well-being and flourishing of family and community; (3) the integrity and value of the environment; (4) and the reciprocal solidarity and common interest of humanity" (Karenga 1999: vi).

Cultural Political Formations: The Spark for African Name Acquisition and Usage

In tracking the spikes in interest for African names and naming, we can turn to history, from the day our ancestors set foot in the Western Hemisphere, until today. More specifically, we can at least for this exercise trace the interest in Africa from the era of the Universal Negro Improvement Association to the rise of the Nation of Islam when its leader, Elijah Muhammad (1897-1975) pointed to the contradiction in African people holding to the names of their oppressors, after their emancipation. Hence, name and nation-conscious organizational formations at various points of history in the African American community set the spark for continuing the desire for *Kujichagulia* (self-determination) such as when the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee conducted sit-ins at lunch counters, spearheaded the freedom rides (1960-1961), and organized voter registration (in association with other organizations), which shook White complacency and awakened Black political consciousness to ultimately establish the Black Power Movement (Van Deburg 1992, Diouf 2016, Umoja 2017) that redefined Black identity and culture in America. And in a comparative assessment, Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar in *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* (2004) contended that Black Power had more of a lasting cultural consequences among African Americans and others than did the civil rights movement as it engendered pride, and influenced the political, cultural, and religious spheres of mainstream African American life for the next three decades. With the Black Power Movement (Van Deburg 1992, Umoja 2017) as the spark to Black political consciousness toward the right to self-determination, there was also a rise of nationalist (progressive nation building) posture in the following cultural political formations/movements or theoretical/implementational positions that pushed directly or indirectly for African name acquisition and naming practices in the U.S. Hence in alphabetical order (with their date of formation), they are: African Liberation Day (1972); African Liberation Support Committee ["Attempt to Shift Bay Area ALSC Fails" 1976; Erhagbe 2011; Johnson 2016; Salaam 1976, formed in 1972]; Afrocentricity (Asante 1980) articulated 1980; [Asante 2007: 99-100 discuss an "Africological Movement"]; Ahidiana [Work/Study Center] (1971); All African People's Revolutionary Party (1958), Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations (1984); Black Arts Movement [Salaam 2016] (1965); Black Christian Nationalism [Cleage 1972] (1972); Black Panther Party [members particularly in New York had adopted African names, see Ogbar, 2004: 118] (1966); Black Studies Movement [T'Shaka 2012] (1968); Congress of African People [Simanga 2015] (1970); Council of Independent Black Institutions [Hotep 2001, Shujaa 1996] (1972); Free South Africa Movement via TransAfrica [Johnson 2016, Zulu 2015] (1984); Institute of Positive Education [Madhubuti 1979] (1969); *Kwanzaa* [Karenga 2008] (1966); Malcolm X Liberation University [Hopkins 1970] (1969); Million Man March [Madhubuti and Karenga 1996] (1995); National Black Child Development Institute (1970); National Black Political Convention (1972); National Black United Front (1980); National Conference on Black Power (1967); National Council for Black Studies (1975); Nation of Islam (1930); Olympic Committee for Human Rights (1968); The Organization Us (1965); Pan Africanism (1900); Pan African People's Organization (1971); Republic of New Africa (1968); Sixth Pan African Congress (1976); and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (1960).

And worthy of special note in the quest for promoting the acquisition and use of African names was/is the Council of Independent Black Institutions (CIBI), the largest professional association of Pan African nationalist educators in the United States. Hotep (2001) looks inside the organization via episodic interviews with four elected national executive officers of the association, consistent with an Afrocentric research paradigm of internal consistency, persuasion, introspection, retrospection, triangulation, and personal mythmaking. In his study, he discovered that the founding of CIBI was linked to the Black Power Movement (including the five conferences held between 1966 and 1970) and the independent Black school movement (Bush 1997, 2004, 2006; Rickford 2016) that subsequently emerged from the manifestation of Black Power activity known as the community control of public schools involved a national move by African people in New York City, Chicago (Madhubuti 1979, 1991), Los Angeles, Boston, East Palo, California, Columbus, OH (Rayford 2012), Detroit, Michigan (Chike 2011) and Washington, D.C. to obtain power over the school systems in their communities. Prominent among this involvement was Uhuru Sasa Shule (Freedom Now School) school via the East organization (Konadu 2009, Niamke 1999), established in 1970 in Brooklyn, NY headed by Jitu K. Weusi (1939-2013), a leader in the African American Teachers Association (Brooklyn, NY) and founder of the National Black United Front.

Most interesting in light of a common notion that the school movement was a failure, since its founding, CIBI has provided examples of positive educational outcomes for youth of African descent in the U.S. and elsewhere (e.g., Africa, the Caribbean, the UK, etc.), and helped to popularize African-centered observances, such as African name acquisition, African Liberation Days, the birthdays of Malcolm X (El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz), Marcus Garvey and others, African dance/music formations (Brooks 2014, Green 2011, Monteiro 2011), and adolescent rites of passage programs (Davis 2017, Hill 1997, Ma'at 2017, Williams 2013).

Indeed, the way and the extent to which the above organizations/movements and concepts promoted African name acquisition and usage varied, however, the need for people to see and feel a new cultural and social energy around things, concepts and ideas about and related to the African experience in an international and national context was met by all of them, from workings within the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee to the 1968 Olympics Black Power salute by Tommie Smith and John Carlos during their medal ceremony at the 1968 Summer Olympics in the Olympic Stadium in Mexico City (Blackman 2012). Thus, during the same era were the international struggles of African people in Africa (e.g., Angola, Namibia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe) and a present reminder of Jim Crow (apartheid) America, particularly in the South where open air racism was a daily reminder of how power and law operated to the detriment of Black people (Erhagbe 2011, Salaam 1976, Williams 2007). And the prior work of Kwame Nkrumah, W. E. B. Du Bois, Anna Julia Cooper, Henry Sylvester-Williams, Amy Ashwood Garvey, Rayford W. Logan (Reed 2014), Malcolm X (Bangura 2016, Mbughunilu

2014), Léopold Senghor, Franz Fanon (Faustino 2015), Amy Jacques Garvey, Irving Davis, and other Pan African advocates had consequently set the stage for a worldwide intellectual/cultural movement that would work to encourage and strengthen bonds of solidarity between people of African descent in all parts of the world.

Fundamentally, there was no abstract unity, but instead, a concrete association wherein the seeds of Pan Africanism had been planted by the Garvey movement, picked up in the 1930s in Paris, France by French-speaking African descendant graduate students from French colonies in Africa and the Caribbean, represented by Léopold Senghor (1906-2001), a poet, politician, and cultural theorist who for two decades served as the first president of Senegal (1960–80); Aimé Césaire (1913-2008), a poet, author and politician from Martinique; and Léon Damas (1912-1978), a poet and politician born in French Guiana (an overseas department and region of France, located on the north Atlantic coast of South America in the Guyanas).

The trio launched the *Négritude* movement, a cultural movement focused on issues of race identity and African internationalist initiatives to combat French imperialism, Western domination, anti-African racism, enslavement, and colonization with a cultural arm centered upon solidarity, affirming African pride in their shared African identity/heritage, and the reclaiming of African self-determination, self–reliance, and self–respect.

In short, the *Négritude* movement signaled an awakening of world African consciousness lead by an international African intelligentsia. And later, the era of Ghana-born Kwame Nkrumah (Lincoln University, and nearby University of Pennsylvania) mushroomed into a set of socialist and Pan Africanist principles and policies that gave birth to *Nkrumahism*, now mostly championed by the All African People's Revolutionary Party, and once lead in the U.S. by Trinidad-born Kwame Ture (1941-1989), the former chairperson of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee during the Civil Rights era in the U.S. Then in the arena of political thought, came Martinique-born Frantz Fanon (University of Lyon, France) via his critiques of racism, sexism, colonialism, capitalism, and humanism as suggested by Reliland Rabaka in *Forms of Fanonism: Frantz Fanon's Critical Theory and the Dialectics of Decolonization* (2010). Fanonism, argues Rabaka (2010), organized into anti-racist, de-colonialist, Marxist, feminist, and revolutionary humanist perspectives juxtaposed to provide a critical theory of ideas and sociopolitical thought.

Intellectuals and activists in the 1970s read Fanon and echoed the speeches of Malcolm X (El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz) as the music and lyrics of Jalal Mansur Nuriddin (Alafia Pudim), Abiodun Oyewole, Umar Bin Hassan, Suliaman El Hadi, and Nilaja, as they, '*The Last Poets'* delivered politically charged and culturally grounded messages through poetry so explosive that the group was listed as dangerous under the counter-intelligence program of the U.S. government during the Nixon administration (Oyewole 1996).

With the politics in place, an African cultural thrust was also set by the First World Festival of Black Arts (World Festival of Negro Arts) held in Dakar, Senegal in 1966, initiated by Léopold Senghor, under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), a political discourse via the Sixth Pan African Congress in 1974 in Tanzania, and later the 1977 Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC '77) held in Lagos, Nigeria, with the Wajumbe dance troupe of San Francisco, California headed by Nontsizi Dolores Cayou and several other U.S. based African dance companies victoriously featured in the May 1977 edition of *Ebony* magazine, all which further fermented the groundwork for an African American interest in Africa. Thus, African names were ripe, as most of the leadership from the above organizations had also by the 1970s demonstrated: e.g., the Oyotunji Village was founded in 1970 in Beaufort County in South Carolina, African Libration Day was headed by Owusu Sadaukai of Malcolm X Liberation University; the Congress of African People (Baraka 1997, Simanga 2015) was led by Amiri Baraka (1934-2014); the Pan African People's Organization in San Francisco, California head was Oba T'Shaka (T'Shaka 2005); Maulana Karenga had founded the Organization Us; Imari A. Obadele was the president of the Republic of New Africa (see vol.3, no.6 of this publication for a memorial profile), Queen Nzinga Ratibisha Heru was the international president of the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations (see vol.4, no.6 of this publication for a memorial profile), Jaramogi Abebe Agyeman established the Shrine of the Black Madonna church and cultural centers in Detroit, Michigan and Atlanta, Georgia, etc.

At least six of the above organizations directly encouraged every Black person to have an African name as a mark of full organizational membership and commitment to the goals and objectives of the organization, a practice not so unusual when one considers how some religions encourage their members to take on biblical or Islamic names (e.g., Muhammad Ali, Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin, Ben Ammi Ben-Israel; 1960 civil rights activist known as a member of the Greensboro Four, Jibreel Khazan, etc.). Hence, a conversion experience wherein a person adopts a set of beliefs identified with one particular religion to the exclusion of other religions. For the change in name, the purpose and process in either case is similar, that is, whether as a sign of full organizational membership and conviction toward the goals and objectives of the organization, or as a conversion from one psycho-spiritual state to another. The former is undoubtedly what many of the above mentioned organizations hoped for, while others considered it a consciousness developmental process packaged in what William E. Cross, Jr. in 1971 called the "Negro-to-Black Conversion Experience" (which later became Nigrescence theory meaning the transition into an African person) related to the latter. In fact, "the process of becoming Black" was theorized to take course through a five-stage sequence of pre-encounter, encounter, immersion/emersion, internalization, and internalization-commitment (Cross 1971).

The Cross model has been in place since 1971 with a few modifications that include lifespan such as "Cycles of Psychological Nigrescence" presented by Thomas A. Parham in *The Counseling Psychologist* (vol. 17, issue 2, 1989, pp. 187-226) in an attempt to expand the descriptive characteristics of the Cross model by discussing a theory of psychological

Nigrescence (a French word that literally means "process of becoming black", see Cross 1991:147) outlining the changes in racial identity that most Black people are believed by Cross to experience at various points in his/her life-cycle. Thus, Parham works to describe how various stages of racial identity are manifest in three periods of life (i.e., late adolescence/early adulthood, middle adulthood, and late adulthood), and concludes by outlining its implications for counseling Black people who display varying degrees of racial-ethnic healthfulness. Correspondingly, in the context of this essay, the Cross model, further interrogated by Parham, may assist in understanding why some may hesitate in taking an African name or simply reject the idea/notion because they may not have reached the stages of immersion/emersion, internalization, and internalization-commitment (Cross 1971).

In reflecting on the reasons why a person (of African descendent) would reject an African name, the epic 1977 television mini-series *Roots* (viewed by over 100 million people) showing the capture (kidnapping) and deportation of Kunta Kinte of Gambia, and how one of the first things done to him by his enslavers was to force him to answer to a new name, a European name, is a great example. Refusing to abandon his name and forget his identity, Kunta Kinte attempted an escape from enslavement on Christmas Day, and once captured, he was whipped 30 times in public until he answered to Toby, instead of Kunta, his African name. After being physically brutalized, Fiddler, another enslaved African who treats Kunta's bloodied back tells him to keep his real name inside, no matter what White men may call him.

The level of psychological and physical warfare placed on people of African heritage during chattel enslavement was a high crime against humanity, and still, there has been no compensation for the pain, suffering and historical trauma inflicted. Yet, some wonder why many Black people are in the streets, screaming 'no justice, no peace'.

Following the above juggernaut of psychological and physical warfare, the Cross model and theory may explain some of the reasons why an African person may be slow to embrace an African name or quick to reject it. Further, this topic is so important that it is worth considering at least two additional psychological theories that may explain the blockage of African personal name acquisition and usage among people of African descent; they are the post traumatic enslavement syndrome explanation presented by Joy DeGruy in *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing* (2005), and internalized oppression theory presented by Tamba-Kuii M. Bailey et al, in the *Journal of Counseling Psychology* (October 2011), and E.J.R David's *Internalized Oppression: The* Psychology *of Marginalized Groups* (2014), with a definition of internalized racism juxtaposing an inventory of the phenomena is also presented.

African Name Acquisition Blocks: Enslavement Syndrome, Internalized Oppression/Racism

There are many reasons (e.g., too exotic, un-American, faddish, unpronounceable, too ethnic, may hurt life/job opportunities, not normal, damage to family legacy, disrespectful, etc.) why most African Americans have failed to embrace African personal names. One theory that may help explain this situation is "post traumatic slave syndrome", a theory developed by Joy DeGruy in *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing* (2005). In her text, DeGruy addresses the residual impacts of generations of enslavement and opens up discussion on how the African American community can use its strengths to heal in the present. Specifically, the theory explains the etiology of many of the adaptive survival behaviors in African American communities throughout the United States and the world, and suggests that "post traumatic slave syndrome" is a condition that exists as a consequence of the multigenerational oppression of African people and their descendants from centuries of chattel slavery predicated on the belief that African people were inherently/genetically inferior to European people, which was then followed by institutionalized racism that continues to perpetuate injury, until today.

DeGruy also argues that multigenerational trauma together with continuous oppression, and the absence of opportunity to heal or access the benefits available in the society led to "post traumatic slave syndrome" under which the following circumstances are caused: vacant esteem, an insufficient development of primary esteem, along with feelings of hopelessness, depression and a general self-destructive outlook, marked propensity for anger and violence, extreme feelings of suspicion perceived negative motivations of others, violence against self, property and others, including the members of one's own group; racist socialization, internalized racism, learned helplessness, literacy deprivation, distorted self-concept, and antipathy or aversion for members of one's own identified cultural/ethnic group, the mores and customs associated with one's own identified cultural/ethnic heritage, and the physical characteristics of one's own identified cultural/ethnic group (http://joydegruy.com/resources-2/post-traumatic-slave-syndrome/).

In short, African Americans are in pain, suffering from an induced historical situation that needs to be healed. And perhaps realizing or even articulating that they wear the badge of enslavement by their very name (e.g., U.S. President George Washington had over 100 enslaved people, along with holders of the enslaved named Williams, Jones, Jefferson, Jackson, etc.) only adds insult to a perplexing set of signs and symptoms that occur together, and characterize a particular abnormality or condition.

Following the above tragedy, is the reality of internalized oppression that David (2014) discussed in relationship to marginalized groups in the United States from a mental health perspective that focuses on the ways in which it influences the thoughts, attitudes, feelings, and behaviors of the oppressed toward themselves, other members of their group, and members of the dominant group.

And more specifically, Bailey (2011) describes the development and validation of the *Internalized Racial Oppression Scale* (IROS) through two studies using a sample of 468 Black college students. The IROS was designed to measure the degree to which racial oppression is internalized and replicated by Black individuals in the United States. Hence, an exploratory factor analysis suggested a five-factor answer of: belief in the biased representation of history (BRH), devaluation of the African worldview and motifs (DAW), alteration of physical appearance (APA), internalization of negative stereotypes (INS), and hair change (HC). Also, a confirmatory factory analysis supported an adequate model fit of a four-factor model (BRH, APA, INS, HC), and all factors of the IROS were positively correlated with a pre-encounter subscale of the Racial Identity Attitude Scale, a self-report method to evaluate the types of attitude in the four phases of Cross' model of Nigrescence.

Four of the factors were negatively correlated with an Immersion/Emersion subscale. Both of these reports add value to our topic (African name acquisition and usage), because they suggest that the influence of internalized racism clouds thoughts, attitudes, feelings, and behaviors of the oppressed toward themselves, other members of their group, and members of the dominant group, and thus, a person under such a cloud may never consider themselves or anyone in their group worthy of respect, and therefore unworthy of a name based on his/her ethnic origin.

Second, the Bailey study with its similar divisions to the Cross model, employs a five-factor solution of belief in the biased representation of history (BRH), the devaluation of the African worldview and motifs (DAW), the alteration of physical appearance (APA), the internalization of negative stereotypes (INS), and hair change (HC), all of which point to strengths or weakness in reference to personal identity; and thus, a negative in all or most of the five-factor areas can suggest an unwillingness to accept an African name or identification.

Considering the "post traumatic slave syndrome" and internalized oppression as presented above, the issue of internalized racism is an expected component of family trauma. Consequently, internalized racism can be defined in several ways: (1) a process of internalization by people of racist attitudes towards members of their own ethnic group, including themselves; (2) the personal conscious or subconscious acceptance of the dominant society's racist views, stereotypes and biases of one's ethnic group; (3) or as a phenomenon which occurs when victims of racism, through coercion or conditioning, turn racist attitudes and actions against themselves or their racial/ethnic group. However, whatever definition is best, it is damaging, especially when one doesn't realize he/she is disrupting human growth and progress.

Perhaps the teacher of Nelson Mandela thought she was doing the right thing, perhaps there was some traumatic psychological manipulation disguised as education, but in reality, a process of institutional racism via an African body was in effect, and substituting for the central oppressor. Also in this discussion, the *Internalized Racism Inventory*
(i.e., http://www.culturalbridgestojustice.org) provides a useful guide to a self or group evaluation of internalized oppress/racism.

Moreover, perhaps an additional unit can be added to the matrix, that is, the fear or embarrassment of being associated/identified with an African person, Africa, or anything African, ergo an *Afrophobia*, i.e., a perceived or actual fear/contempt or bias against Black people, or simply the 'fear of being an African' as Oro (2012) outlines in *Afrophobia: The Fear of Being an African*.

Unfortunately, the grip of psychological bondage is so great that even some of our greatest thinkers, scholars and activist of yesterday, went to the grave with a name historically linked to their oppressors, e.g., Alex Haley, Amos Wilson, Frances Cress Welsing, Tony Martin, John Henrik Clarke, and others, a reality acknowledged by Daudi Ajani ya Azibo (2016) in his list of forty psycho-cultural perpetrations committed by Caucasian Americans in an effect to strip African people, by renaming them with Caucasian names. Amos Wilson perhaps explained the situation vividly, saying "… our language, the way we view ourselves and the names we answer to are remnants of centuries worth of social conditioning" (Riley 2016), and thus, it coincides with novelist Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (2009) via his problem with Europhonism in its attempt to replace African names, languages, and identities with European ones, resulting in the dismemberment of African memory. And even more frightening is *mentacide*, or "… the deliberate and systematic destruction of a group's mind with the ultimate objective being the extirpation of the group", theorized by Wright (1994; Zulu 2002: 112). Perhaps it is time for the *intellectual maroon* to step forward as the late Jedi Shemsu Jehewty mentioned (Carruthers 1999), and Hotep (2008) expounded upon, in reference to analysis, and a public declaration of freedom from intellectual bondage.

The Long Walk to Freedom

At the risk of being accused of 'airing dirty laundry', this essay was undertaken not to offend or defame anyone, but only to raise a greater awareness of a step, indeed (collective step), that can be taken to gain greater dignity for people of African heritage in the Western Hemisphere, and, anywhere that the need is applicable (Quinn 2013). Moreover, it is hoped that this exercise is a contribution to the *Kawaida* paradigm (Karenga 1980, 2008, 2016) of being an ongoing synthesis of the best of African thought and practice in constant exchange with the world that centers on the idea that culture is the fundamental source of a people's identity, purpose and direction as each member is placed in a position of continuous dialogue with African culture, holding to an ability to ask questions and seek answers to the central and enduring concerns of the African person, and humankind in general.

Maulana Karenga (1980, 2008, 2016) has provided and championed the paradigm of *Kawaida*; and it is worth our exploration as it involves a continuous search for models of excellence and paradigms of possibilities in every area of human life, but especially in the seven core areas of culture, history, spirituality and ethics, social organization, political organization, economic organization, creative production (art, music, literature, dance, etc.), and ethos.

Juxtaposing the above, is also the act of creating a language and logic of liberation, one of opposition and affirmation, and therefore, a corresponding focus to create a just and good society that embraces an effective paradigm of mutually beneficial human relations and human possibilities (Karenga 2010: 260-263). Can it get any better?

The answer to the conundrums facing people of African descent perhaps begins with the acquisition of African names: a psychological soul-searching journey in personal identity development packaged in a rite of passage journey seeking liberation from a historically oppressive ordeal (e.g., name stripping, *mentacide*, *Afrophobia*, internalized oppression, etc.). Names hold immense power for African people, in part because they were a tool used to strip-away history and identities. And although freedom is a long walk, it is worth it. Rolihlahla Mandela (Nelson Mandela) suffered for twenty-seven years in apartheid South Africa prisons to reach his space of freedom on the planet. And indeed, as Asante (2003) so eloquently said, "There can be no freedom until there is a freedom of the mind" (Asante 2003: 41). But should it take twenty-seven years or more for people to free themselves from their oppressors, and join those who have decided to exercise *Kujichagulia* (self-determination) by accessing an African name? Today, Kunta Kinte would at least be able to answer to an African name, and if not Kunta, maybe at least Togba or Tutashinda.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The above discussion has hopefully opened some neurons (cells that send and receive electro-chemical signals to and from the brain and nervous system), and since there are about 100 billion of them in the brain, I and those carrying African names with me may indeed rest assured that something reached the intended destination.

In summary, this paper: (1) centered upon a focused presentation on the cultural political formations via organizational affiliations that have influenced the prevalence of African name acquisition and usage by African Americans in the U.S. during the 20th and 21st centuries; (2) stated that a personal name is an inalienable universal human right in unity with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights; (3) contended that the seeds of Pan Africanism were planted by the Garvey movement followed by the Nation of Islam, and picked up by the Negritude movement and later the Black Power (Umoja 2017), Black is Beautiful (Camp 2015) and Black Arts movements to welcome Asante's Afrocentricity and an overall African centered approach to phenomenon; (4) argued that in considering the past and present availability of books and other resources on African names and naming practices, thus, it is time for African Americans and others of African heritage (and perhaps other people) to acquire and celebrate African names; (5) reviewed psychological paradigms that may explain why most African Americans still do not have an African name; and (6) recommended that people of African heritage (especially) in the U.S, throughout the Western Hemisphere (Warner-Lewis 1997) and elsewhere, more aggressively begin to embrace African names and African naming practices.

To the sixth point, some of the ways that may assist this is by: (1) participating in one of the organizations listed above that are still active; (2) instituting a national/international African Personal Name Day; (3) visiting/repatriating to Africa (Ababio 1999, 2009); (4) participating in African dance and music programs/companies (see Brooks, Green, and Monteiro below); (5) participating in *Kwanzaa* (Karenga 2008); (6) and by promoting African name adoption by high-profile leaders and celebrities (imagine Oprah Winfrey or Denzel Washington with African names representative of their contributions to mass communications and the arts).

Finally, and in unity with the above, I recommend that people consider an African name for themselves and for members of their family (first, middle and last). Several African name books (and articles: Adjah 2011, Agyekum 2006, Fásíkù 2006, Olatunji 2015, Osagie 2015) may be consulted in the decision making process, and it is also a wise idea to ask those knowledgeable of African names and naming practices for guidance. Further, consider a legal name change (Sedano 2014), consider a public/festive naming ceremony (Zulu 1988) after deciding to acquire and use an African name, be patient with those who may initially object to your new name (if they respect you, they will honor your change), avoid a name that could easily become a nickname (who is Nick anyway?), and for youth or young adults, consider a naming ceremony as part of the conclusion of an Afrocentric (African centered) rite of passage program (Davis 2017, Hill 1997, Williams 2013). Indeed, there are more suggestions, but our central concern should be on how we work to increase human progress and personal growth in our particular space on the planet, and throughout the biosphere.

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