



Occasional Papers

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The Lamentations of Oppression:

The Multifarious
Nature of Race and
Racism

by
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Illinois Transatlantic
Slave Trade Commission



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*THE LAMENTATIONS OF OPPRESSION:
THE MULTIFARIOUS NATURE OF RACE AND RACISM*

ABSTRACT

This paper offers a theoretical analysis of race and racism as products of the Transatlantic Slave Trade System. The author endeavors to demonstrate the continued power of the system of racism and its deleterious impact on the life chances of people of African descent. Particular social and institutional contexts are examined in order to demonstrate the intractability of white supremacy. Lastly, the author offers insights on how the recommendations of the Transatlantic Slave Trade Project can serve to address the vexing legacy of the maafa.

SYSTEMS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY

Reality is abundantly more complicated than its surface appearances. While physical phenomena occur in actuality, our engagement with them is bound up within the worldview constructs that we inhabit. These constructs carry with them rules for thinking, frameworks for interpreting reality, criteria for assigning value, and explanatory frameworks for a range of perceivable phenomena. In fact, worldview constructs may indeed render some phenomena beyond the perimeter of perception. In short, while reality is a given, the meaning that we ascribe to it or derive from it is not. This is especially so with regards to the social construct of race.

Race is a system for making meaning. A system for making meaning is an epistemic system, a way of knowing, a way of understanding and interpreting reality. Systems for making meaning are designed to facilitate the negotiation of reality within any given cultural group. The act of designing such a system is not entirely straightforward. This means that systems for making meaning are constructed both consciously and unconsciously within the context of practice wherein such delineations of reality have become requisite and apparent. Therefore race emerged as a system for making meaning in the British colonies of North America out of a need to differentiate the status of enslaved Africans from White indentured servants. This system was actualized in daily social interactions, was codified in legal statutes, and sanctioned within religious doctrines. This was a process whose pervasiveness and organicity paralleled its necessity. As such, race became a system whose basic nature was self-evident.

This is an important matter to understand with regards to the status of Africans in what is today the United States. Without an understanding of race as a system via which reality is both constituted and interpreted, we might otherwise fail to fully understand the way in which that system's existence is not mediated within discrete temporal domains, rather it is a totalizing imperative, one that dictates the broader social-historical context in which race exists across time and space (Stovall, 2006).

This paper was devised as a part of the Illinois Transatlantic Slave Trade Project (TASTP). As such it offers an exploration of race and racism, along with their implications for understanding the contemporary malaise of Africans in America via the historical continuum of the maafa—the interrelated processes of enslavement and colonialism. I will endeavor to address three essential questions. What is the ontology of race, and how does this reinforce the intractability of racism and white supremacy? What is the political-economy of race, and how does it serve to assign disparate value, which reinforces the system of racism and white supremacy? Can racism be eradicated and what are the prospects of healing a society that has been torn “...asunder along the lesions of race difference and race hate...” (Du Bois, 1978b, p. 296)?

THE POST-RACIAL SOCIETY AND OTHER FANCIFUL NOTIONS

Thirty-four-years ago in his essay, “Brown versus Board of Education: The Interest-Convergence Dilemma,” Derrick Bell (1980) argued that racism is both permanent and indestructible. He made this claim despite the previous twenty-five years of civil rights statutes and court decisions, despite increased enrollments of African Americans in predominately white institutions of higher education, despite the expanded black middle class, and despite the fact that the state-sponsored system of racial subordination—segregation--had been eliminated. Bell’s assertion was in fact an echo of Du Bois’s claim nearly a century earlier, that “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line...” (Du Bois, 2002, p. 95). Similar to Bell, Du Bois made his claim despite the gains of the preceding three decades. African American literacy rates vastly increased, African American college graduation rates increased, and the savage system of enslavement had been relegated to the annals of history (Anderson, 1988). Were these men pessimists, clinging to visions of a hopeless future that rested upon memories of an oppressive past? Or were their perspectives on the perils of the future based upon critical interrogations of progress?

Progress is not limited to linear progression through time from the past to the future. Cyclical views of time may situate past events as stages of progress or development that once temporally displaced by the forward movement of time become paradigmatically significant as markers of progress. In this sense, progress is not simply conceived as forward movement through time towards an imagined, but not-yet-actualized ideal future state. Progress might be imagined as forward movement through time that seeks to restore the cultural dynamics of a remembered and once extant ideal past state. The Kemetic (ancient Egyptian) conception of *sp tpy* is an apt example of this. It posits that the good condition, that is, the ideal conditions for living, emerged with the inception of time itself (Carruthers, 1984). Within this paradigm the reclamation of history and the restoration of past achievements becomes a model of development. Thus movements towards restoration and reclamation took the form of *whmy msw* or the “repetition of the births”, which was an attempt to restore the

ideal conditions of the sp tpy through a cultural rebirth (Carruthers, 1997).

While the ancient Nile Valley offers a rich cultural discourse around time and its significance as a force for cultural and social renewal, Western linear notions of time pose a dissimilar thesis. This view of time situates future events as stages of progress or development that emerge inexorably from the past. This view of progress necessitates forward movement through time towards an imagined perfect future state, and away from an imperfect past state. Thus in this view, a bountiful future ever looms on the horizon, while the past, though consequential in shaping the present, often does not typify an ideal state.

I think that both Bell and Du Bois would agree that the historical contexts which preceded the publication of their theses were far from ideal for African Americans, as the arc of time subsequent to those events suggested a future that was more iterative of a violently oppressive past, rather than a utopian future where society, or rather white people, had transcended the savagery of racism. For them society had not achieved a state of post-raciality, as this would necessitate an eradication of the vestiges of racism in all forms--a revolution that would have been political, economic, and ultimately cultural. Not only did this revolution never occur, one might argue that its emergence is impossible given the ontology of race in the United States.

Race and racism are coterminous, meaning that they emerge out of a common cultural milieu, most notably the maafa—the interrelated process of enslavement and colonialism. Conceptually, races were forged via the efforts of the Spanish to construct a national identity in the wake of the end of Moorish occupation (Fredrickson, 2002). In the 15th and 16th centuries religion became a basis for the construction of races. The core assumptions inherent in the idea of race from its inception were innate difference and innate deficiency.

Anderson Thompson defines racism as a system designed to achieve the maximum exploitation of one race by another. This definition is important in a number of respects. First it characterizes racism as a system. This means that racism is never happenstance

or arbitrary, but is a part of the structure of society. Secondly, he posits that racism is designed to effect maximum exploitation, meaning that this is a system in which the benefits flow only in one direction—towards the dominant race. Additionally it argues for the multifarious nature of exploitation, thus oppression becomes an all-consuming and pervasive process. It is reinforced within religious institutions, is sustained by political and economic institutions, and is transmitted and reinforced by the various institutions charged with processes of socialization whether formal (i.e., schools, etc.) and informal (i.e., media, etc.). Lastly Dr. Thompson situates this system as being bound up in the ontology of race, wherein one group, which has constructed itself as a race, affects its will by subordinating another group, which it has also constructed as a race. Therefor racism transcends the systems in which it is embedded and is presumed to be a part of the fabric of reality itself, beyond question and beyond doubt.

Furthermore, Anderson Thompson maintains that the system of racism is an expression of white supremacy, which he characterizes as contestation between whites, or more specifically the powers of Europe and America, for dominion over the world. Thus within this framework African personhood is not only omitted, it is a non-issue. Within a white supremacist framework African land, labor, cultural productivity, and intellectual capacity are goods for the exploitation by Europeans for European benefit. Africans become consequential in so far as they contribute to the building and maintenance of the systems of Europe or America.

Therefore the theses of both Du Bois and Bell were not simply born of pessimism, but rather an evaluation of the arc of race and racism within the United States. They concluded that the system of racism had not been undone by the measurable gains of the preceding eras, and would likely never be undone absent a social change beyond the bounds of probability. This suggests that the idea of a post-racial society, that is a society that has moved beyond race, had not come into being, and most likely never would. These discourses, collectively considered, offer a framework via which we can interrogate the persistence of racism, not as an aberration, but as a normative function of American life.

WITHOUT REFUGE: THE POLITICAL-ECONOMY OF WHITE SUPREMACY

Far from being an abstract idea, racism's consequences are quite real for people of African descent in the United States. These consequences can be felt in a number of areas including education, health, and incarceration. Additionally, violence against African Americans is a potent example of the power of racism to devalue African American lives.

As an epistemic system, and as a system of valuation, race confers value upon individuals (Harris, 1993; Mills, 1997). It ascribes intelligence, moral virtue, worthiness, respectability, trustworthiness, industriousness, and so forth (Obgu, 1997). These ascriptions are grafted onto whole races of people. These attributes become the signifiers of race (Hall, 1997). They become the assumed framework of normalcy within a given racial group. Thus race becomes a fixed notion wherein even individuals or groups within the race that deviate from these racial schemata do not invalidate the system of race itself. Rather they are rationalized or dismissed as anomalies, divergences from an otherwise unquestionable norm. This is all due to the ontology of race.

Central to the constitution of race is the issue of power. Chimamanda Adichie (2009) has offered the Igbo term *nkali* as an apt descriptor here. She states that *nkali* is "...a noun that loosely translates to 'to be greater than another.'" (Adichie, 2009). It is the hyper-accumulation of the European world during the period of enslavement and later colonialism that enabled the West to create races, and then to impose these constructs of race upon the whole of humanity (Rodney, 1974; Williams, 1994). This power--which was military, political, economic, and cultural--enabled Europeans to not only impose these definitions, but to create social systems based on these basic beliefs. In effect, Europeans created races, and then sought to force human communities to exist within these strictures through the exercise of *nkali*.

If we examine specific domains of social activity, or specific institutional contexts, we invariably find that these notions of race are operative in ways that are oppressive for African people. This dynamic is exacerbated given the paucity of extant social power

among Africans in America (Wilson, 1998). This power imbalance is simply a byproduct of the white supremacist system, within which Africans are simply the objects of white consumption. The converging factors within a white supremacist system are the structural dynamics of racism, which requires the maximum exploitation of African people; the ontology of race, which serves an ascriptive role for assigning value and meaning for racialized human beings; and the power imbalances inherent in a white supremacist system, which necessitate the subordinate status of Africans as a means of reasserting their non-personhood, their inertness. Each of these three factors is consequential in any social domain that touches the lives of African people and collectively constitutes the political-economy of white supremacy.

EDUCATION: NEVER NEUTRAL

Long ago Carter G. Woodson would decry the socialization process imposed upon Africans as mis-education (1990). He argued mis-education was carefully devised to perpetuate the interests of Europeans while undermining the capacity of Africans. Carruthers would later add on to Woodson's thesis by arguing that while mis-education was imposed upon the upper strata of the African American community, deeducation was imposed upon the masses. He stated that this process of deeducation was intended to nullify the capacity of the masses to fully comprehend their condition, and struggle to transform it.

Deeducation diverges from mis-education in that mis-education seeks (in viral fashion) to reproduce the worldview and knowledge base requisite with the maintenance of an oppressive social order within the minds of the mis-educated yet subservient African elite. Therefore it is a means of subverting the capacity and agency of those individuals, who if truly educated, would provide critical intellectual leadership for the African masses. Deeducation by contrast is directed towards the African masses, not the elites. It also seeks to constrain capacity and agency, but by effectively suppressing the intellectual engagement and critical awareness the masses. (Rashid, 2012)

The point of these arguments is that education is not neutral. It can never be neutral within a white supremacist society. As a

socialization process it must adhere to the cultural imperatives of white supremacy.

Woodson's and Carruthers's contentions, far from being abstractions, seek to criticize the functioning of schools both in their totality, but also in specific aspects of their functioning. The curriculum is implicated here, as it provides the essential framework that demonstrates the socialization objectives of the institution. Schools by and large do not exist to sow the seeds of societal upheaval, therefore they generally seek to perpetuate and sustain the dominant social order. Thus the social studies curriculum is one that attempts to instill patriotic sentiment, rather than critical and painful reflection on the tragic barbarities of enslavement and colonialism that occurred in what is now the United States (Loewen 2008; Zinn, 2003). This is particularly important because it creates a fragmented consciousness about the nature of American society. Students are presented with curricular narratives, which seek to extol the virtues of a minimally blemished two centuries march towards liberty. Such a fragmented accounting of American history does more than induce an enfeebling ignorance; it is also an erasure of the humanity of those whose lives were destroyed in the creation of the United States. This narrative masks the role of white people in the creation of a system, which subordinated all other peoples, and implicitly suggests that non-Europeans have been intermittent partners on this march towards liberty and democracy. This is especially so with regards to the presence (or lack there of) of Africans in the social studies curriculum. While Frederick Douglass is a worthy addition to any curricula that covers American history, the absence of Martin R. Delany and other pioneering African American nationalists provides an incomplete portrait of the African American journey in America. Yet while Frederick Douglass represents a different political tradition than Delany, his most stringent criticisms of U.S. society are also absent, reinforcing a one dimensional portrait of U.S. society in general, and African American political leadership in particular. This same criticism of the social studies curriculum can be extended further into the past or towards the present. Additionally, all other curricular domains can be subject to this critique given the paucity of nuanced portrayals of American society and its relations to African people. These curricula serve to reinforce a basic point—the dominance of

white people over the whole of humanity.

While the curricular dimension demonstrates the racialized power dynamics of American society from the view of what is explicitly taught; school funding, staffing, and discipline policies reflect this same reality through what is implicitly taught. The funding disparities between urban, predominately African American and Latino schools is a pedagogy of social value. It teaches these students that their education matters substantially less, and that short of their becoming incarcerated or serving in the military, their futures are not factored into the future of American society. This problem is made more apparent by the inequalities in teacher staffing, whereby wealthier and whiter districts tend to hire teachers with higher qualifications and greater experience. The inverse occurs in districts with large numbers of low-income, African American and Latino students, where a disproportionate number of their teachers lack adequate credentials and/or have little to no experience (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Lastly, school discipline policies are apt conveyors of the pedagogy of differential value via the overabundance of suspensions and expulsions of African American students; practices, which reduce, black students to fodder for the school-to-prison pipeline.

WHITE SPACE

Du Bois's pioneering studies of African American communities offer vivid portraits of the imperiled nature of black life in America's metropolises. His 1901 study of the black community of New York City (Du Bois, 1978a) offers a portrait that is at once compelling and tragic. While he notes the burgeoning nature of the community--driven by migrations from the South--he also comments upon the challenges faced by these communities such as incarceration and discrimination in housing and employment. Du Bois's findings are apt, as they capture the tension inherent in the constitution of space within any white supremacist context.

Due to the totalizing nature of white supremacy, space is never neutral. It is inscribed, by default, as white space, a quality of possession that is either actual or potential. Spaces either lie within the direct possession of the white community, or they are spaces that are in the process of being appropriated by the white

community. In both instances space has already been designated as space to which whites are entitled, therefore the act of acquisition is secondary to the reality of possession, which is assumed, whether acquisition is extant in a present or future reality. This poses severe challenges to the idea of a black community, and the personhood of those who inhabit said communities.

This means that black communities are never a fixed, accepted reality. Within the cultural logic of white supremacy, their very presence must either be an intrusion upon white space, requiring expungement; or an economic extension of the white community, allowing a degree of tolerance, but also containment. Black communities become economic extensions of the white community when they are organized around servicing the dominant white community. These black communities are therefore expected to provide labor, resources, and markets to the white community in exchange for their being tolerated.

Du Bois's analysis captures a black community that was in a constant state of upheaval from its inception up until the beginning of the 20th Century. Whether it was subject to policies of racialized containment (Lipman, 2011) in the form of housing discrimination, economic strangulation due to labor market discrimination, unhealthful conditions due to inadequate health services and poor living conditions, or campaigns of racial terror in the form of mob violence, the black community of New York was under siege.

Just as Du Bois's study of New York City in 1901 offers a troubling portrait of the black community of the day, we might be similarly troubled by the state of contemporary black communities. Bearing in mind the political import of white space as an arbiter of legitimacy, we must acknowledge the basic insecurity of black communities all the way to the present day. This insecurity can be explicated from a number of vantage points.

One aspect of this malaise is the impact of mass-incarceration, which has fundamentally changed the cultural dynamics of urban black communities, whereby large numbers of teen-aged and adult African American males are either incarcerated, under the supervision of the criminal justice system, or ex-convicts (Alexander, 2012). This has exacerbated pre-existing challenges

around voter enfranchisement, unemployment, family disruption, and community stability. What's more, schools have fed into this process, reifying the myth of black male dysfunction, and perpetuating a tragic cycle of social disintegration.

A second aspect of this malaise has been the impact of gentrification on urban African American communities. To be sure, displacement via urban development schemes is nothing new. However what gentrification poses has been a sweeping transformation of the urban landscape, as historical bastions of black culture and life are reshaped under the guise promoting social transformation, stimulating capital investment, and fostering economic diversity by attracting more affluent residents. What these processes have affected has been a dispersal of African American communities, the displacement of working class and low-income families and individuals, and the militarization of gentrified and border communities (Lipman, 2011).

A third aspect of this malaise has been the public health crisis of urban African American communities, which manifests itself in a number of forms including problems associated with health, wellness, and personal safety. One critical health issue that confronts the community are problems associated with nutrition, which are themselves related to the problem of pervasive food insecurity. This refers to the absence of healthy eating options, localized food production, and comprehensive grocery stores in many communities, particularly low-income communities. In the absence of healthier neighborhood options, community members are forced to travel significant distances in order to acquire groceries and healthy foods. Wellness, or a state of mental and physical well-being, is an optimal state, but its attainment and maintenance is obfuscated by the constitution of socially disorganized environments—such as those characterized by high rates of unemployment, residential mobility, institutional dysfunction, and so forth (Belgrave and Allison, 2013). Lastly, the maintenance of personal safety is inextricably linked to the constitution of a given social environment. Thus physical safety is not simply a function of individual actions, it is also a social dynamic pertaining to the salience and potency of systems of social control. When internal to communities, these systems of social control can be an effective regulatory force. However as

communities unravel structurally, these cultural moorings are also loosened, thus diminishing the internal capacity of communities to regulate the actions of their members. Having lost this degree of internal control, denizens resort to external measures, as in law enforcement, to assure safety. But these often contribute to the cycle of diminished internal social control, mass-incarceration, and burgeoning alienation, as community—as a social value—is lost.

These issues are not simply matters of economics and access, as this would suggest that they might be due to the social class dynamics of black communities. Nor are these problems simply issues of policy, as this would suggest that they can be resolved via more effective and strategic participation in the system of electoral politics. To be sure, social class dynamics and the policy-formation process are significant factors in understanding and confronting these issues, but I would argue that these alone do not penetrate deeply enough in order to fully comprehend the nature and origins of these problems. In order to truly understand these dilemmas, we must understand the nature of white space to the very notion of a black community and its denizens.

Consistent with the conceptualization of white space, African American communities are socially constructed as a spatial other. Given that black people themselves are already regarded as cultural others, the locus of their communities become sites of contestation around legitimacy. They may be seen as usurpers of white space, as many African American communities were former white communities; harbingers of the destruction of white space, as African American communities are imagined as social contagions threatening to annihilate white space; or squatters upon white space, as many African Americans use the language of reclamation to describe the gentrification and displacement of urban black communities. These constructs shape and are shaped by the dominant narratives of black identity. Therefore as a contract of inviolable ownership, white space delineates the ontological and spatial contours of black life in white societies. Ultimately this suggests that African Americans are at best perceived as resident aliens, whose presence is afforded by the tolerance of their oppressors.

On February 26, 2012 a 17 years old, unarmed African-American named Trayvon Martin was shot and killed by a white vigilante named George Zimmerman. According to the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, Trayvon Martin's murder is not an anomaly, but is demonstrative of the imperiled existence of Africans in America (Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, 2013). They report that "...police, and to a lesser extent security guards and vigilantes killed a Black person every 28 hours..." in the first six months of 2012 (p. 12).

These killings are not simply matter of individual choices that result in fatality. Rather they are the logical consequence of the social construction of black racial identity by whites. Again, the construction of racial identity is a function of power, specifically the power to impose ones definitions of reality upon others (Nobles, 2006). Within the American context, blackness has been defined as the sum of all that is vile, sinister, and foreboding. Blackness is imagined as a force of peril, a force of disruption; an intrusive force that assails the assumed tranquility of whiteness, and of course white space. This myth expresses itself across the societal landscape in the public personas of black entertainers, black roles in film and on television, the overrepresentation of black children in school suspensions and expulsions, the overrepresentation of black people in the criminal justice system, the harsher sentences for black convicts, and so forth. The myth of ominous blackness, conceived in the white imagination, once codified in social practice is made real.

It should be noted that this myth emerged out of the era of enslavement and its immediate aftermath, wherein whites sought to fabricate rationales for their barbaric suppression of African liberty, concocted notions of black incivility. These myths became critically important during the period of reconstruction, as whites sought to protect white space, which was not simply the geographically defined white community, but was also their political and economic dominion.

This myth's power lies in the force of its divergence from reality. The myth of black criminality for instance can hardly be

sustained in light of the historic criminal depravity of the white community in what is today the United States. The wholesale slaughter, banishment, containment, and cultural suppression of indigenous communities is criminal on a scale beyond the scope of American jurisprudence. Similarly, the enslavement, torture, kidnapping, rape, mutilation, execution, banishment, containment, and cultural suppression of Africans in America is similarly inconsequential to the law. Thus given that the white community is collectively responsible for crimes, which are incomparable to anything else in the annals of human history, the criminalization of black people stands as a glaring contradiction (Wilson, 1990). In effect, the criminality of the white community has been erased, replaced with myth of white virtue. Instead of facing its own violations of human rights and dignity, black people are socially constructed as the antithesis of white virtue, and are seen as a threat to the community which enshrines it.

Therefore, as stated, the murder of black people is never simply a matter of one individual killing another, as personhood is contextual. Personhood is constituted within the ontology of any given social group. In a racist society, personhood is determined by constructs of race, denied through the exercise of racism, as power renders these processes inescapable.

COUNTERING RACISM

In the foregoing pages I have endeavored to offer an analysis of racism as a system designed to achieve the maximum exploitation of one race by another. Herein the notion of race is vitally important, as it provides the needed cultural precepts, which support and sustain this system. I also offered an overview of the political-economy of white supremacy with regards to its expression within discrete social and institutional contexts such as schools, communities, and also as it relates to the use of violence. In this final section of the paper, I will take up the recommendations of the Transatlantic Slave Trade Project as methods for healing a society so wracked by racism.

The charge of the Illinois Transatlantic Slave Trade Project (TASTP) is to document the history and impact of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Additionally, the Project has offered a number of recommendations designed to address the legacy of enslavement and its continued malformation of humanity and social possibility in the present. The TASTP's recommendations are as follows: (1) Agency and institutional development, (2) Public history and educational dissemination, and (3) K-12/Higher education and curriculum development. I will address how each of these is essential in responding to the legacy of enslavement and forging a path to the future.

AGENCY AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Under the heading of agency and institutional development, the Illinois TASTP recommended three initiatives. The first was that an Illinois Sites of Memory Project, which would erect markers along trails and sites of the Underground Railroad, along with other relevant locations. This recommendation is vitally important in complicating our notions of space. Resistance to enslavement, as represented by the Underground Railroad, demonstrates the contestation of space. That despite Illinois's legal restrictions on the movement of African Americans, and despite its obligations to protect the property rights of southern slave owners to seize runaways on Illinois's soil, defiant individuals acted for the sake of liberty. It suggests that even at the height of enslavement, some struggled for a more just society.

The second recommendation was for a public health initiative that sought to effect healing from the legacy of the Maafa in the form of a We Are Family Campaign, in addition to a process that addresses the history of racism in Illinois. This recommendation paves the way for healing by first requiring public acknowledgement that the maafa was destructive of African humanity. Secondly, it offers a framework via which the bonds of community, so fractured by the on-going dislocations of oppression, might be mended. Thirdly, it acknowledges the critical need for education around this poorly understood topic.

The third recommendation was for an archive of the works of the Illinois TASTP. This also represents a critical investment in building an infrastructure that facilitates discovery and dissemination, and also supports the TASTP's other recommendations.

PUBLIC HISTORY AND EDUCATIONAL DISSEMINATION

Under the heading of public history and educational dissemination, the Illinois TASTP recommended three initiatives. The first was for widespread outreach in order to build community support for the work of the TASTP. This prospective initiative facilitates a movement towards collective memory, as dispersed stakeholders from throughout African American communities come together to reconstruct historical memories. This holds the potential for building new generations of researchers, generating new centers of intellectual inquiry, and identifying previously forgotten historical narratives that contribute to the complex web, which is the history of Africans in America.

The second recommendation was for the funding of historic documentaries and information programs for the public through the Illinois Humanities Council and the Illinois Arts Council. The work of the TASTP is monumental in scope and audacious in execution. In order to maximize the social benefits of its work, various mechanisms of dissemination must be devised in order to stimulate public engagement and discourse around the legacy of the maafa and prospects for the future of American society. Funding for these programs would be a critical step in

changing the public conversations about race, racism, and slavery. They would create contexts for dialog, which are prerequisites for healing.

The third recommendation was for a national and international conference on the TASTP's work. The work of the TASTP, though commendable, remains incomplete, as there are parallel histories of the *maafa* in nearly every state of the United States, and throughout the Western Hemisphere. Thus continued collaboration between stakeholders, scholars, and institutions is of vital importance in order to fully understand the complexity of these nefarious systems of oppression.

K-12 / HIGHER EDUCATION AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Under the heading of k-12/higher education and curriculum development, the Illinois TASTP recommended two initiatives.

The first was for curricular review and development around the role of the Illinois laws, "Black Codes" and elected officials in the Transatlantic Slave Trade System. This recommendation is an attempt to move towards a comprehensive social studies curricula that represents the role of Illinois in the *maafa*. This offers students the chance to develop a more complex and nuanced understanding of American history in general, and Illinois's history in particular.

The second recommendation was for curricular review and development to study and organize a timeline of Illinois's role in slavery, in addition to the role of Illinois entities in the Transatlantic Slave Trade System. This recommendation is vitally important in eradicating the veneer of virtue born of ignorance about the pervasive influence of slavery on the U.S. Economy in general, and Illinois's economy in particular. As such, this recommendation enables for the development of dynamic curricula that teaches students about the complex and multilayered entities and processes that effected the subordination of Africans in the U.S. for centuries, profiting from their labor, and building the U.S. Economy.

CONCLUSION

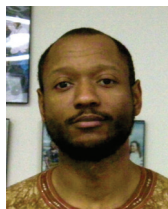
The work of the TASTP remains unfinished. Its recommendations stand strong as viable models for expanding awareness of the legacy of the Transatlantic Slave Trade System, in addition to creating a context for healing the lingering trauma of America's violent past towards African people. It is my sincere hope that this report offers critical insights into the power of racism, and the urgent need to counter it via the implementation of a range of solutions, certainly beginning with those of the Illinois TASTP.

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Dr. Kamau Rashid is an Assistant Professor of Educational Foundations, Technology, and Inquiry at National-Louis University in Chicago. He earned his doctoral degree in the Sociology of Education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2009. Prior to starting his doctorate Kamau earned a Master of Arts degree in Inner City Studies from Northeastern Illinois University and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Dr. Rashid's research focuses on African American history and culture, particularly on the inter-generational dynamics of African American social critique. This has included an exploration of the theorizing of W.E.B. Du Bois and contemporary critical theories of racism and white supremacy, including the African-Centered paradigm and Critical Race Theory. He also explores two forms of independent media: socially-conscious Hip Hop and African American comic books as forms of critical public pedagogy. Currently he is co-developing an oral history and archival project focused on African American social movements in the Chicago area from the 1960s-1980s.

In addition to his scholarly pursuits, Kamau has been active in a variety of contexts and initiatives aimed at integrating technology into teaching and learning. This has included providing technology support to faculty at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, as well as his own work and training around technology and education. In his present position at National-Louis University he has sought to advance institutional initiatives around the infusion of technologies throughout the instructional infrastructure.

Kamau has been active in the field of education and African Studies. Formerly, he was the Technology Chair for the Critical Race Studies in Education Association. He is also a member of the Kemetic Institute of Chicago and is currently the Education

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Lastly, Kamau is active in a number of community initiatives in Chicago. His work includes supporting institutions that work to build community-food security, supporting neighborhood schools and other school reform initiatives, facilitating environmental education for K-12 Students and adults, and being actively engaged in community education and cultural enrichment.

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