

Africans on the Move: Transnational, Intranational, and Metaphorical Migrations

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There are amazing parallels between this issue and the last. The writing of the editorial began with one member of our editorial board on the move tri-continently, starting off from Brooklyn, New York and another in the Bronx, New York. Both Brooklyn and the Bronx are multicultural, multi-ethnic locales that are rapidly becoming hubs for Africans of all nationalities. The migration this time like the last began in New York City from which there was a road trip to upstate New York and back over the fourth of July weekend. A few days respite and then a plane journey to Lagos, Nigeria via London, U.K. Another ten hour layover which differed remarkably from the last one since it was spent participating actively in the British tourist economy by taking a bus tour of London with a colleague and an eight-year old. This was a less frenetic stopover than the last one that included a mad dash to the airport and a missed flight.

Of course, being en route from one place to the next is a process that lends itself to thoughts of migration. Traveling with a child who asks when he sees people in African attire – “Mom, Nigerian, Ghanaian, or from someplace else?” also draws one’s attention directly to the back and forth movement of Africans around the globe. So does hearing the inflection in the voice of conductors, travel wardens, other travelers on the train, in the park, on the street. Especially so does hearing someone carry on a cell phone conversation in any number of African languages. Being on a 400-seater Boeing 747 bound for Lagos, Nigeria is also a definite reminder of migration and population movement. Were one to be able to conduct an interview on this plane, it would reveal different facets of the migration story – vacationers returning home – migrants on a first visit home after a while, Nigerians resident in the UK on a visit back home for a brief or extended period, business people of various stripes completing yet another trip, already calculating the costs, benefits, and profits of this trip, a sprinkling of European/American/Asian/other travelers for business or pleasure, probably some University Professors like yours truly, maybe some researchers on a field trip, maybe an official of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), United Nations (UN), or of a Non-Governmental Organization – the possibilities are endless.

To return to Britain, observing the economy in motion brings to one’s mind time and again, the phrase, “the empire strikes back”. The service economy is chock full of one example after the other of Indians in Sari, Pakistani in Salwar Kameez, Nigerians, Ghanaians, Gambians, Irish, Kenyans, South Africans, Zimbabweans, Ugandans, . . .

brain drain representatives of the far flung British empire come to the metropole to make good since opportunities for this are more restricted on the home front. The more visible work at the cash registers, undertake sanitation, work as newsagents, tour guides, and take any number of council jobs on the lower levels. Of course, one cannot forget the West Indians. Another level of visibility is presented by the very few who have risen to the top of the political and economic pile. This situation drives home the relevance of Grosfoguel's, Takougang's, and Baptiste's papers, which discuss various elements of transnational migration of people from Africa and various parts of its far-flung Diaspora.

There are also striking differences between this issue and the last. The largest immigrants' rights march in history just ended in New York City in October 2003. This was a phenomenon that brought together an array of immigrant rights and human rights groups as well as immigrant activists in a struggle for more liberal immigration laws^[1] and equal rights for immigrants.^[2] In a post-September 11 America, the advocacy for better respect for immigrant rights and action to defend and enhance the rights of immigrants are more necessary than ever, particularly given the economic downturn that has in the usual manner, created enough economic pain to cause the upsurge of ethnocentrism and xenophobia. In the wake of September 11, 2001, Europe continues to shore up its anti-immigrant fortress, using all the resources at the disposal of the EU to collaboratively devise strategies to combat what is believed to be a law and order problem of foiling wily human traffickers.^[3] Neither the US nor Europe is undertaking a new effort. Instead, the anti-immigrant measures have only taken on additional intensity due to the perception that immigrants are the enemy among whom lurk potential terrorists from various points in the "axis of evil".^[4]

London was also the site of a British National Gallery display of Nigerian artist, Sokari Douglas Camp's short-listed entry for a work of art to occupy the empty fourth Plinth in Trafalgar Square, London.^[5] Douglas Camp's entry is titled "No-o-war-r No-o-war-r." The artist describes this steel sculpture as "a celebratory piece that captures Londoners' diversity and energy."^[6] Sokari Douglas Camp's selection is an honor for the artist, and a much needed boost for Nigerian and African immigrants in Great Britain.

In London yet again, the "Torso in the Thames" case of a boy whose decapitated body, posthumously named Adam by the Scotland Yard detectives investigating the case, was found near the Tower Bridge in the Thames river continued through the summer, fall, and winter of 2003.^[7] The case was designated as involving "voodoo", "black magic," human sacrifice, human trafficking, ritual murder, a white South African pathologist conducted a second autopsy, declaring that this was a "muti killing" of the South African variety, at least one South African traditional healer was consulted in South Africa, an appeal was made to Nelson Mandela, who for the detectives is "the voice of all Africa,"

to publicize the case. He reportedly obliged and proclaimed that “if any family ‘even in the remotest village of our continent’ is missing a boy of this age, they should contact the London police.”[\[8\]](#)

This case was investigated in Britain, Germany, Ireland, and Nigeria. Ms. Joyce Osaghiede, a Nigerian woman from Benin City who was deported from Britain “as a bogus asylum seeker” was believed to “hold the key to the murder of the boy.” Ms. Osaghiede at her asylum interview, claimed to be fleeing from her estranged husband, Sam Onojhighovie, who was convicted of people-trafficking and fraud, and sentenced in absentia to seven years in prison in Germany. He was found in Dublin where he was reported to be “currently in prison . . . awaiting extradition to Germany.”[\[9\]](#) The news stories reported a tragedy. The headless and limbless torso of a boy of between four and seven is a tragedy of immense proportions. However, in finding the perpetrators of the crime, the language used to describe the possible suspects and the nature of the crime remind one of earlier times when Europeans boldly declared that Africa is the “dark continent.” I like the Guardian. Its report of this event however, was classic “dark continent” Africa. The title of one of this paper’s report is: “Thames Torso Boy was Sacrificed.” The blurb that followed was: “Police suspect the victim was a West African child slave, after forensic evidence points to a ritual killing.” The story goes on to say that

Detectives are now working on the horrifying theory that he was bought as a child slave in West Africa and smuggled to Britain solely to be killed. Experts on African religion consulted by Scotland Yard believe Adam may have been sacrificed to one of the 400 ‘Orisha’ or ancestor gods of the Yoruba people, Nigeria’s largest ethnic group. Oshun, a Yoruba river goddess is associated with orange, the colour of the shorts, which were placed on Adam’s body 24 hours after he was killed as a bizarre addition to the ritual. The body was then stored for a further 24 hours before being offered to the Thames. The cultural clues fit neatly with the forensics as the Yoruba are found in Benin, Togo and Ghana as well as in Nigeria. Thousands of Yoruba slaves were also taken to the Caribbean, where elements of their religion formed the basis of voodoo rituals.[\[10\]](#)

The report then gives a blow-by-blow account of how the sacrifice was done, and informed readers of the alert by law enforcement agencies “that African ritual killings have been imported to Europe.” Readers are informed that there was even an international conference at The Hague “to discuss the phenomenon.” One cannot help but wonder though, why this theoretical reconstruction was presented as the “real deal,” instead of the reports veering on the side of accuracy and presenting just the bare facts,

which at the time, was that no one knew exactly what had happened.

This story ended with two quotes, one by Dr. Hendrik Scholtz at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa who said in response to the question, “Could it happen again?” “If another one happens then it is likely to be a different group of people involved. The ones who killed Adam are already satisfied with what they have done.” According to the report, “Temi Olusanya, the Nigerian vice chair of the African Caribbean Development Association said that Adam’s murder had deeply shocked the West African community.” The quote by Olusanya as reported by the Guardian is the following: “This is a crime that cannot be tolerated in African religions. Murder is murder and we should work together to find the people who did this.”^[11] After reporting a lot of theories and suppositions as fact, the article seems to redeem itself by quoting a Nigerian who states that the crime is intolerable. However, it presents the South African professor as the expert and seems to insinuate that this is the person whose testimony should be trusted, although we are never told what kind of expertise Dr. Schultz has. On the other hand, Temi Olusanya is just a vice chairperson of a development association, and the quote seems to be presented as less reliable because we also do not know what kind of expertise Olusanya has. My point here is that as the result of the tragic murder of a little boy, all the hoary demons of traditional “black continent” analysis in Europe are deployed to show that there are “barbaric” strangers in Europe who have brought in these “voodoo” and “black magic” and “witch-doctoring” practices. Ethnocentrism, xenophobia and nativism are combined and the reporting, whether it’s by the Guardian, the BBC, or any other newspaper, or media outlet, totally loses any sense of objectivity.

In the US, we also witnessed the passage of the bipartisan Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act of 2003 (DREAM Act). The Act was sponsored by Senators Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) and Richard Durbin, (D-Illinois) and co-sponsored by Senator Dianne Feinstein, (D-California). It is designed to give “educational and residence opportunities” to high school students who came into the US as undocumented aliens at least five years prior to the passage of the bill. These students must also be below the age of 16 when they first arrived. They must have strong moral character, and must not be deportable for any criminal conviction, fraud, or person smuggling. Qualified students can serve in the US military for two years, or go to college for two years in order to be granted conditional residency status.^[12] According to Senator Feinstein,

"I believe it is in the national interest to provide talented students who have clearly embraced the American Dream the incentive to take the path towards being a responsible, contributing, law abiding member in our civic society, . . . I fear the alternative would not only dim the hopes of a gifted youth, it would diminish our potential as a compassionate society.”^[13]

The Act also provides that those who are unable to fulfill the specified conditions must prove that they were unable to fulfill the conditions and demonstrate that they would face significant hardship if deported from the US. Pursuant to an amendment that was sponsored by Senators Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) and Dianne Feinstein, all students that are granted conditional residency under the DREAM Act must also be tracked by the SEVIS system that was devised to track foreign students, and they are not eligible for Pell Grants, but can apply for work study and federal student loans.[\[14\]](#)

The League of United Latin American Citizens, (LULAC) supported and actively advocated for the passage of the Act.[\[15\]](#) On the other hand, the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) was categorically opposed to the Act, actively campaigning for its elimination, and lamenting the passage of the bill by characterizing it as follows: “Senator Orrin Hatch's DREAM Act is a massive illegal alien amnesty program disguised as an educational initiative.”[\[16\]](#) Better coalition building and information campaigns by immigrants rights advocacy organizations and grassroots activism by immigrants themselves is necessary to ensure the passage of laws that are more favorable to immigrants. The need for such organizations and coalition building among African immigrants cannot be over-emphasized.

Grosfoguel, who argues that migration reflects the circumstances intrinsic to the development of the world system, provides a framework through which one can understand the frenzied anti-immigrant goings on in the post-September 11 2001 Europe and America. His focus on the relationship between metropole and colonies as played out by migrant transgressors into the heart of empire provides a window through which one can consider the relationship between the centers and peripheries of today's world system. We still live in a capitalist world system where opportunities for economic advancement are foreclosed to the overwhelming majority of people in the global south who pursue migration to the north as an avenue to economic survival. The core countries also afford refuge from oppressive authoritarian regimes, many of them sponsored by patron states to which the refugees flee in the north.

In times of trouble, these economic and political refugees bear the brunt of the nativist, xenophobic and virulent resentment that forever lurks below the surface in their host countries. This was the experience of the Caribbean migrants that Grosfoguel focuses upon in the sense that their presence led to development crises in the national identity of each core countries that they settled in. In each of these metropolitan countries, there was an observable shift in racial discourses as well as the development of what Grosfoguel terms the coloniality of power. Thus, while colonialism has ended, the relationship between the old metropole and its former colonies remains one of keeping migrants from

the old colonies out of the mainstream of the metropole's economy, and worse, denying them of equal rights. These migrations were in part, geared at supplying cheap labor from colonized countries to core zones during the postwar expansion of the capitalist world-economy. One of the advantages to the migrants was that they had automatic citizenship in the metropole. However, their citizenship did not protect them from racism and discrimination, which worsened after the downturn of the capitalist world-economy after 1973, when these migrants and their offspring were denied jobs. The virulence of xenophobia and nativism became more overt as evidenced by the cultural racist demonization of the migrant workers proliferated. Grosfoguel asks why discrimination and marginalization coexist with citizenship. As well, he seeks to explain the differences in each of the four countries that he focuses upon. Are the differences a consequence of national differences in the core states?

Grosfoguel's argument is that in its uses of labor, its immigration policies, and its domestic political economy, the old empire seeks to maintain a dominance vis a vis its old colonies. And although formal colonization may have ended, old colonial subjects remain peripheral to the mainstream of political economy and social life in the various metropolises of the colonizer. A sort of pecking order develops wherein some migrants from old colonies are absorbed into the lower echelons of the metropole's public bureaucracy, offered privileges and held up as models who demonstrate the possibilities that can be accomplished for migrants who play their cards right. At one and the same time, these "paragons of virtue" are discriminated against in employment, access to housing, and the social welfare benefits. The rest of the migrants from old colonies occupy even lower levels in the socioeconomic totem pole, suffering from rampant discrimination and lacking any voice in the political sphere. While this model applies to France most directly, the UK, Netherlands and US are variations of the same theme. This situation underlines the fact that the causes and consequences of the migration of people from old colonies to the metropolitan centers of the colonial powers follows a worldwide schema.

Baptiste's analysis of US labor procurement policies during the Second World War focuses on Amy Ashwood Garvey's critique of the policies as gender biased and on her failed attempt to force Britain and the US to extend these opportunities to women. While these labor recruitment schemes only provided work in the agricultural sector, opportunities to secure these jobs and to work as domestic labor meant access to resources that were unavailable in British speaking Caribbean colonies where unrequited poverty was the lot of the overwhelming majority of black and Amerindian colonial subjects. Amy Ashwood Garvey's ploy to force Jamaican colonial authorities to include women in the migrant labor schemes was repaid by U.S. authorities with Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) surveillance. Baptiste also makes a connection between the older labor recruitment schemes and more contemporary ones in Canada and the US, that are

focused on procuring female migrant labor from the Caribbean. These latter schemes are similar to those that recruit au pairs and nannies from Europe. When the two schemes are compared, it is clear that female migrant workers from the Caribbean are discriminated against while their white European counterparts are offered various services that ease their transition and stay. Canada introduced these labor recruitment schemes earlier and these modest jobs were snapped up by middle class women who sought access to financial resources that were not available in the Caribbean. Thus, these opportunities were parlayed into the accumulation of resources that were not available to colonized people back home. Of course, these labor recruitment schemes were not without incidence. Concentrating on the Second World War schemes, Baptiste shows that the workers in the US resented their treatment under Jim Crow conditions. Some reacted by protesting, and others by engaged in spontaneous uprisings that provoked investigations.

Amy Ashwood Garvey's critiques are still relevant to contemporary labor procurement schemes that recruit Third World peoples for menial, poorly remunerated positions in domestic service and agriculture. The endemic racism and gender bias that pervade labor recruitment recall the transportation in the slave ships in the Middle Passage, the inequality, endemic coercion, forced labor, and other abuses of slavery, the indentured servitude, broken contracts, discrimination, racism, and segregationism of Jim Crow, and the harassment of activists who like Amy Ashwood Garvey, question the status quo. Labor migrations, whether temporary or permanent, also have unexpected consequences, among which are the creation of new connections, including those of marriage, parenthood, return migration, and many forms of cultural transformation. In many ways, labor recruitment from the Caribbean, whether historically or contemporarily, brings into question the nature of the capitalist world system and the role that each region plays within it.

Clearly, the Caribbean is treated essentially as a labor reserve by both the US and Canada. This region is first and foremost, a source of cheap labor, some documented, but the overwhelming majority, undocumented. The documented migrants have to their advantage, the singular benefit of not having to live in constant fear of arrest and deportation by immigration authorities. They are not necessarily well-paid, neither are they guaranteed good conditions of service, a factor that is glaringly revealed when they are compared with European migrant workers who are recruited to perform similar tasks. The presence of these migrant workers in the economies of the US and Canada make it possible for middle class families to live more affordable, comfortable lives at the expense of women who also may seek these opportunities as for the chance that they offer to make some extra money that can be parlayed into better life chances and opportunities back home. The irony of the matter is that these migrant workers come to pluralist democracies where people supposedly have rights. What options are open to

them? If they intend to stay beyond the period of their employment contract, or they are undocumented workers, they have to think of how to legalize their resident status, negotiate space, material and personal security.

That this migrant population exists and takes the decisions that it does is crucial to the continued success and reproduction of late capitalism in numerous ways. First the existence of a ready pool of cheap, employable and also exploitable labor keeps the economic engine running because these workers fill jobs that indigenes do not want. The creation or retention of these jobs also has positive impacts on economic expansion, particularly in the household economy and agricultural sector. Since the Canadian scheme enabled recruited migrant women from the Caribbean to seek employment in other fields after serving out a one-year term, there are also positive effects on the service economy, or in the remnants of the industrial sector, which is where most of the women would be most likely to secure immediate employment. It is also significant that many a middle class-to affluent family's leisurely lifestyle is built on the backs of poorly-paid immigrant labor; that many a farmer could not make as much, or any profit whatsoever, were it not for seasonal agricultural labor, and many a factory would have closed its doors, and many a sweatshop owner would be out of a job were it not for migrant labor, both documented and undocumented.

Further, Baptiste shows that the collusion between the United States Department of State and multilateral agencies like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and United Nations leads to A-3, B-1 and G-5 special visas being issued annually that enable the elite staff of these organizations to employ migrant domestic labor. It is not only the Caribbean that supplies such documented migrant workers. Indeed, the Caribbean is a negligible source. Other third world areas, particularly Asia and to a lesser extent, South America, are the most important sources. Majority of the workers are women. Majority of them do not bring their children in tow. Ironically, since they're employed in households, many such women may be providers of child and elder care to strangers who have become employers while their families back home may need the same services, but there is no space for such luxuries when the costs and benefits of taking decisions about survival are being calculated. It is even greater irony that many of the officials that are employers may speak up constantly about lofty principles such as equity, justice, and human rights when they are on the job.

The Caribbean is also not the source of another documented pool of migrant workers, nannies and au pairs, who are granted J-1 visas by the US Immigration and Naturalization Department (INS) for purposes of "educational and cultural exchange". Europe is the primary source of such workers, who are given privileged treatment in the form of orientations, support, counseling, information on educational opportunities and

community resources. There are clear and glaring disparities in the treatment of these documented immigrants as compared with the experiences of A-3, B-1 and G-5 visa holders. This latter group is unprotected from exploitation and abuse, which is only ameliorated by informal assistance from a variety of non-governmental institutions, and more formal assistance from the Washington D.C. based Institute for Policy Studies.

Baptiste shows that the most overexploited migrant workers are in the main “poor, relatively uneducated women from “Third World” countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean”. Being undocumented immigrants to the US whose numbers are negligible when compared with the numbers of immigrants from other parts of the world may also mean that there are fewer services available and provided by their affinal community and also that they’re highly invisible to the policy elites. It may also mean that they fall through the cracks and cannot be found by non-governmental organizations that might otherwise help them. Baptiste’s characterization of these undocumented female migrants as “the wretched of the earth” within the US underlines the depth of inconceivable abuse that these women face, since they’re forced to remain in the informal sector as low-paid, under-valued labor with few opportunities to advance. Because many such women leave their home countries “by any means necessary” as contended by Jayne Ifekunigwe,[\[17\]](#) their economic insecurity and defenselessness are significant. Although both men and women may share undocumented status, women continue to be less advantaged and more vulnerable to negative economic influences.

The ‘stayers’ and ‘returnees’ in these population movements may also contribute to chain migration in a manner that fuses people from certain regions in the global economy into particular occupations because newcomers rely on old-timers for job referrals, assistance in securing housing, and tips on how to negotiate the new terrain. Baptiste like Takougang and Adeyanju shows that many migrants are integrated into the economies of their host countries as underemployed, poorly paid labor, since their educational training and experience belie the physical drudgery and low remuneration that they endure. However, the foreclosure or non-existence of opportunities in their home countries forces them to see migrant labor as an opportunity rather than a disadvantage.

What would Amy Ashwood Garvey think about these circumstances? Caribbean women are now part of the labor pool that is increasingly flowing out of the region into North America. Does this mean that one aspect of Amy Ashwood Garvey’s struggle is won? It is questionable at best that Ashwood Garvey would consider today’s circumstances better than in the past. There is a great deal of inequality built into the labor recruitment schemes that bring documented workers into the US. White privilege still continues, as do privileges earned by virtue of having old colonial ties to the United States. However, Grosfoguel’s contention that the coloniality of power contributes to limitations on the life

chances of migrants from the colony into the metropole is confirmed, since Filipino migrant women who work for international civil servants in New York and Washington, D.C. are incorporated into the US labor market as domestic servants who are abused and exploited. As for Caribbean women, although they seek every possible opportunity to gain entry into the US, they are yet to be treated equitably, and must fight tooth and nail to gain legal status. Equality to a great extent remains an elusive dream in matters of immigration and consequent access to jobs and humane treatment by employers.

Why do immigrants from Africa decide to change their status to residency and citizenship in the United States? Are African immigrants becoming more or less integrated into their communities of settlement? Takougang attributes the increased influx of African immigrants to the US to the combination of serious economic woes in their countries of origin and more favorable immigration laws, as well as harsher immigration laws in Europe which have accompanied the slowdown in Europe's economic growth in the 1990s. The decision to seek permanent resident status or citizenship is also influenced by the resignation by many African immigrants to the permanence of their emigration, and to the desire to become involved in the political process. Many African immigrants could also be said to be in active pursuit of "the American Dream", most of them in the larger cities where they can benefit from established networks of African immigrant communities and/or they can draw on the assistance of kith and kin to secure temporary housing and navigate the tortuous process of settling down.

What determines the community of settlement, particularly for long-term immigrants? As the numbers of African immigrants increase and as they gain more of a foothold in the US, many choose to leave the hustle and bustle of the cities for life in smaller towns and the suburbs. Takougang argues that such decision is spurred by the existence of more congenial social, economic, and political circumstances. The need for jobs is what most of all, drives the decision to settle down in one locale as opposed to another. The jobs taken, particularly at the initial stage of arrival, tend to bear no relationship to the skill level or educational training of or even experience of the new immigrant. Thus, the lower level service jobs are almost assured to be occupied by new immigrants, African included, regardless of skill, education, experience.

Takougang also indicates that there are niche economies developing, particularly in cities that have experienced the heaviest inflows of African immigrants. The businesses that comprise these economies are established by, or to provide services for African immigrants in these cities. Takougang's acceptance of the argument that "African women . . . have traditionally been in the background of most traditional African family structure now find themselves at the forefront of economic opportunities in the United

States and thus are playing important economic roles in maintaining the family structure both for the family members who are still in Africa and those in the United States” is belied by research and documentation, particularly from the 1970s that demonstrate that African women have always participated in economic production, but their contributions are not acknowledged by predominantly male dominant societies.^[18] Their active engagement in economic production probably explains why a significant number of African women come to the United States on their own account, not just to join a spouse, but to generate material resources that enable them to take care of their children and kinfolk.

Takougang also argues that remittances to Africa from immigrants are on the increase, as are economic and social institutions established by African immigrants to provide various forms of assistance to their membership. Becoming integrated into American society entails having to experience the stereotypes, racial and ethnic slurs directed against African Americans, as well as racial profiling, and police brutality, which may culminate in murder, as with Amadou Diallo, who was cut down in a hail of 41 gunshots by the Street Crime Unit of the New York Police in 1999. The reluctance of African immigrants to realistically assess the extent to which the full enjoyment of the benefits of American citizenship is mediated by the politics of race means that they continue to express shock and disappointment at their non-acceptance, but they are yet to sufficiently address the institutional inequities as political problems that ought to be confronted and challenged through organized political action.

In his paper titled: “Hegemony and Transnational Practices of Nigerian-Yorùbás in Toronto”, Charles Adéyanjú uses Gramsci’s concept of hegemony in an analysis of the transnational practices of Nigerian-Yorùbá immigrants in Toronto. He argues that these transnational practices emerge out of the combined influence of material experience in Canada, and the immigrants’ formation of a Yorùbá ethnic identity in post-colonial Nigerian society prior to migration. The feeling and articulation of social exclusion and inequality by this community in Toronto is an expression of common sense understandings of their lived experience. Within this community which itself experiences racial, class, and gender inequalities as normalized and naturalized aspects of Toronto social life, gender and class inequalities are naturalized and normalized by dominant elites to oppress those in subordinate positions. Adéyanjú concludes by suggesting the development of strategies forged by “trans-nationalism from below” to foster a bottom-up challenge to these established racial, gender and class inequalities.

Adéyanjú’s contribution is to show through the case of Nigerian- Yorùbá transnationals, the extent to which their practices contributes to the entrenchment of unequal social relations at global and local levels. Paradoxically, the transnationals’ actions emerge out

of their conscious and deliberate desire and struggle for economic and social power, but inadvertently, they reinforce old and new structures of class, race, and gender domination. For Adéyanjú, Nigerian- Yorùbá transmigrants' actions materialize from the attempts by dominant elites within this community to maintain their social positions and ethnic identity, thus ensuring that class and gender inequalities within the transnational community remain largely static, while at one and the same time, the Toronto, and by implication, Canada, remain geographical spaces where white dominance is accepted as a foregone conclusion.

Adéyanjú like Takougang, shows that in the contemporary period, economic and political crises spur migration from the African continent to North America. Although the combined effects of restrictive and ethnocentric immigration laws and the perception among Yorùbá that they owed a duty to their home country of participating in nation-building ensured that most Yorùbá in Canada prior to the mid-1980s were students who wanted to go back home once their studies were completed, many of these same students returned with their children when the Nigerian economic crisis intensified. Thus, global capitalism created high incentives to flee economic marginalization in Nigeria while Canadian political, social and economic relations ensured that settlement there would be at the cost of being incorporated as part of an excluded visible minority.

Adéyanjú's respondents experience racism at both the systemic and subliminal levels. Racism is encountered both institutionally, and as part of individual casual encounters, thus signaling rejection, and spurring the desire to withdraw into an ethnic enclave which avoids both the opposition and antagonism of the dominant whites. Consequently, the Yorùbá trans-migrants may not feel psychologically obliged to grant Canada their full loyalty. Contemporary migration cannot be divorced from the effects of global capitalist forces such as the penetration of post-colonies by trans-national capital. Migration to the industrialized countries of the Northern hemisphere is just one of the consequences. Indigenous and migrant labor suffer the consequences of the re-location of industries to lower wage, lower cost locales. Yet, migration is unrelenting because the alternative to migration is to accept long term, almost perpetual unemployment as the norm. Unfortunately for migrant Yorùbá and other African labor, racial prejudice and xenophobia further complicates the struggle for gainful employment. For Adéyanjú, this means that these migrants will have great incentive to build "a transnational community with requisite practices." Several community-based organizations develop that valorize the culture of the migrants. Leadership opportunities that may not have been accessible in the home country, and contact with political elites that are consequent upon the creation of such opportunities open up, and are milked to the maximum extent possible by the migrants. Social, economic, and political power devolves to the leaders of such community organizations, with each form of power being parlayed into building influence in other domains. Transnational economic and social projects can thereby be

generated that not only enables migrant community associations to build cross-national relationships, but also reinforce the power of transnational elites on the political, social and economic planes. Some of this power is deployed toward the funding of community development and philanthropic projects both in the migrant community abroad and in the home community back home.

Adéyanjú gives various examples of philanthropy and community development derived from his study of Yorùbá transnational associations in Toronto. He also argues that ethnicity becomes more, rather than less entrenched among transnational Yorùbás whose leaders “seized on the Diasporic experiences of ordinary members of the community to construct a Yorùbá nation ‘socio-biologically’” and discursively, the notion of ‘Yorùbá nationhood’ emerges which makes common-sensical differentiation between the Yorùbá and ‘other peoples’. Adéyanjú suggests that ethnic particularism emerges which reproduces class and gender inequalities. He recommends that such particularism should be eschewed in favor of emancipatory politics which propels enlightened transnational practices that are based on mobilization on the basis of gender and class in a manner that transcends ethnicity and race. How possible is this? To the extent that transnationals face racial and ethnic hostility in their host countries, the tendency is that they will reflexively use defense mechanisms that reinforce tried and tested strategies for empowerment rather than explore optimal strategies for community building that would guarantee intra-group equality, equity, democracy and transparency. For the transnational aggregations to become democratic, those who are oppressed within the groups would have to mobilize and challenge the entrenched power structures. When this is attempted, those in power will use all possible measures to force them not to break ranks. Such measures may include banishment or excommunication or being ostracized from the group.

Saadia Izzeldin Malik’s paper, “Displacement as Discourse” considers the rural-urban migration that followed the 1983 and 1990 drought and famine in the Western Sudan, a process that caused the dis-location and re-location of affected populations who fled from the after-effects of drought and desertification in Darfur and Kordofan. She argues that the conventional portrayal of these migrants as “displaced” in scholarly literature forces them into one of two pigeonholes is wrong. These populations are either portrayed as negatively impacted by socio-economic forces that make them into urban food consumers whereas they were previously rural food producers or they are portrayed as just victims of natural disasters whose move to the urban areas is a quest for non-agricultural sources of sustenance. Instead, Malik argues that while rural migrant women in Greater Khartoum, in the Sudan are labeled in state and scholarly discourse as “displaced”, they have their own counter-discourse that both respond to and resist such characterization of their situations and identities.

Using Foucault's construction that discourse frameworks contested meanings and struggles for power, and taking seriously the feminist contention that women are agents of knowledge who can apprehend reality, name themselves, assert their viewpoint, and to give voice to their concerns, Malik deconstructs "displaced", a term which is used by local, regional and national state authorities to push the women who have been dislocated from their normal lives and re-located in Greater Khartoum. The words, poems, and imagery of these selfsame women are used to foreground the presentation of the women's thought, perceptions, presentation of their history and interpretations of their changed circumstances. Engaging in such interpretation illuminated the various ways in which women in these communities made meaning of their lives as well as the struggles that they encountered women on a daily basis.

Malik considers "displacement" as not only connected with and limited to social-economic and natural factors but also as discourse to which those who have been thrown out of familiar terrain and homes by ecological, economic and social crises as well as political decisions have responses. Such responses are derived from knowledge garnered from the experiences of daily life, and they differ in accordance with the individual's gender, class, and status. Unfortunately, displaced women suffer from the fate of most poor people worldwide in the sense that they are not considered knowledgeable. They are presumed to be voiceless, and others routinely name them, speak for them, and make policies that radically mark their lives without any consideration for their opinion. The interest in discourse as a marker of the voice and knowledge of displaced women also is significant because of the Foucauldian construction of discourse as a framework through which knowledge and social practice are structured, as power.

Malik, drawing upon Foucault's thought contends that within discourse, one can identify "the power of truth, of knowledge, of knowing and of defining what is truth." Considering the discourses of the displaced women of Greater Khartoum on their situation then, one can uncover profound truths about the displaced and the experience of displacement that do not enter into the discussions of the powerful state officials and bureaucracy. At the same time, displaced women react to the prevailing discussions on displacement by asserting first and foremost, the power to name themselves, and then to project a counter-hegemonic image of themselves that challenge common perceptions of that they are problems to society, the dregs and the wretched of the earth. These displaced women insist on historical specificity that recognizes that while they may have been displaced due to famine and drought, continued use of the term constituted ahistorical inaccuracy. Thus, these women tell society through stories and songs that they are productive citizens, hard working people who may have suffered from misfortune, but are hardly the source of diseases. Instead, what diseases they were afflicted with, they trace to their residence in Omdurman.

Unfortunately, the displaced women do not see the invisible hand of the World Bank in providing advice, technical know how and financial assistance that may exacerbate natural disasters such as drought and consequent famine. They do not see the extent to which unsustainable national debt may make the state unable to exercise any meaningful autonomy in the determination of policy. They also experience the government of the United States as a magnanimous aid-giver rather than a manipulative super power that may give or withhold aid according to whether or not its national interests are served. Instead, based on their material interests, both the World Bank and US government are compassionate while the government of their country is harsh, authoritarian, and lacking in compassion. This observation is not meant to dismiss the women's understanding and explication of their situation, but to point out that this, as with other perspectives, is limited by lack of information, and structured by material interests.

Jalani A. Niaah focuses upon the development of the Rastafarian movement in Jamaica which for him, developed a philosophy based on asserting their identity as Ethiopians and Africans who were torn away from home, but are engaged in a struggle to return home. Marcus Garvey's Back to Africa Movement and similar organizations believe in the principle of repatriation, with the starting point being the granting of Shashamanie, often conceived as the promised land, to Ethiopia's supporters during the war against Italy from 1935 to 1941. For Niaah, there is a multiplicity of philosophical, physical and spiritual meanings associated with the notion of going Back to Africa that ultimately imply a subscription to the ideology that Africa's children must return to the way of the father.

The Rastafarian movement embodies the commitment to the philosophical, physical, and spiritual ideologies of repatriation. Haile Selassie is taken to be a father figure to whom Africa's scattered, orphan children could look for leadership, spiritual guidance, and refuge as an alternative to morally bankrupt colonial and post colonial political elites and the oppressive discrimination of the Christian churches. Returning to the Way of the Father as conceived by Niaah is derived from the thought of folk philosophers for whom the re-connection with the missing black Ethiopian father would heal many of the wounds inflicted by captivity, enslavement, and colonization. The father is also an elder, a teacher who in Rastafarian cosmology, takes on the responsibility of preaching the message of liberation to oppressed, illiterate orphaned children of Africa.

For Rastafarians, Africa is home, and Ethiopia the center. Repatriation is conceived as a re-connection, a re-establishment of ties with the family, and commitment to the idea that Haile Selassie is the divine leader. These ideas are taught to followers who have been mis-educated to engender their transformation through critical thinking, awakened creativity, commitment to activism, and to the dissemination of knowledge. The message of the

Rastafarians is that there is a need for revolutionary change through self empowerment. Self empowerment is only possible when people understand their culture and are properly connected with it such that they achieve a decolonization of the mind. Proper reasoning is taught in informal social and intellectual gatherings of ordinary folk under the guidance of a leader/elder/teacher who motivates them to collectively engineer change based on analysis of reality as they experience it.

Rastafarians believe that the liberation of Africa and Africans are the pre-eminent goals to which the rehabilitation and liberation of the absent and marginalized Jamaican father is hinged. Slavery, colonization and the consequent dislocations within the African family created poverty, wrenched African males from the bosom of their families and kept them alienated in the inner-city ghettos of urban Jamaica. Rastafarian thought is also presented as encompassing a progressive revision of Caribbean history to resist negative and destructive institutions, structures and ideologies. The African father is absent, made so by these negative influences that were set in motion by European imperialism. Because institutionalized slavery also destroyed the African family and supplanted the fathers within them with the white male plantation owners, while Britain became the surrogate mother country, progressive resistance would heal the psychological wounds of Caribbean people who must recover from being stolen, sold, abused and oppressed. Female dominance in the absence of the father in the postcolonial urban ghettos put overwhelming burdens on mothers.

Rastafarians criticized colonialism, claiming their African identity, and deriving inspiration from support by Emperor Haile Selassie, the Ras Tafari. Emperor Selassie is deified as the almighty Godhead and Father who provided strategies, tools and mechanisms through which liberation could practically be achieved. The knowledge of what to do came from study and teaching about Africa and its philosophies. The leadership of the Elders who drew upon Christian methods of proselytization, and interpretation, played a crucial part in this effort, which led to the development of a national movement that garnered a great deal of intellectual and legal attention. Even the colonial government was interested. The use of music to spread the word was so effective that young people around the world were inspired and persuaded that the Rastafarian way was the best one to self-liberation.

The 1960s brought its share of protests to the Caribbean. In Jamaica, there were struggles against the repressive system of law enforcement, which targeted the Rastafarians. This spurred Rastafarian appeals to the intelligentsia based in the University of the West Indies to study the movement and explain its relevance to the government. For the first time, a multidisciplinary intellectual study of the movement was conducted. It recommended repatriation, which for the Rastafarians, is central to their new Ethiopianist

ideology. Within the context of Niaah's analysis, this Ethiopianist endorsement of repatriation denotes a search for a reconnection with the father. From Marcus Mosiah Garvey to various teacher-leaders and folk philosophers within the movement, including Bob Marley, Mortimo Planno, and Bongo Watto led what Niaah describes as "the forces of progressive resistance" against "those of systemic domination and destruction" to foster the return of the father to the bosom of the family; a return to the way of the father, and the involvement of the father in the socialization of children within the family. Ultimately, this return is carried to its logical connection when there is a connection with Africa, African philosophies of life, and particularly, the deification of the Ras Tafari as Godhead and father par excellence. Within Rastafarian cosmology, all of humanity share brotherhood and have a common father, God. The African Diaspora is conceptualized as the contemporary Israelites in Babylon – captivity and bondage – a return to Africa is then a return to righteous ways, since Africa is "the land of Our father", the land of God "the All Mighty Father Creator". This return is also cast as the re-connection with the original foundational principles in fulfillment of a biblical admonition that recommends that fathers and children become emotionally re-connected in order to ward off the catastrophe of the earth being cursed, and embrace and claim the promised abundance and blessings galore.

Niaah's Jamaican Rastafarians resemble Adéyanjú's transnational Yorùbá in Toronto in one crucial respect. The two groups valorize the aspects of African tradition that elevate men to the stature of demi-gods and denigrate women. It would have been very interesting to hear what the women in each community think and do about this. This is in no way to downplay the importance of having men step up to the plate and take their responsibilities as fathers seriously, as Niaah tells us that the Rastafarians did, but it is to question the extent to which both men and women participate developing what Niaah describes as the "New Faculty of Interpretation" Africa after all, is also commonly referred to as Mother Africa. A Google search at 9:18 am on December 11, 2003 spit up 2,150,000 webpages that have "Mother Africa" references, while a 9:19 am search turned up 1,610,000 references to Father and Africa. While the references to Mother Africa linked the two words, Father and Africa were not necessarily linked. This bit of information can be dismissed as arising from the "headcayshun" of those whose minds have been tampered with by colonialism, but it does arise out of serious engagement with the liberatory project of the Rastafarian movement. For the Rastafarian project of social recovery and political and economic liberation to be successful, it is our humble opinion that both men and women must engage in the struggle as co-equals. Adéyanjú recognized that the transnational Yorùbá in Toronto would not get very far in their struggle against white dominance and its negative ramifications if they do not democratize from within in a manner that challenges entrenched class and gender privileges.

Araoye's contribution to this issue is especially refreshing because it brings to mind the

poetry and songs of the days of halcyon childhood, when many Yoruba children recited:

Mo lè g'òkè, mo lè sò,

Mo lè g'òkè, mo lè sò,

Òkè t'álájàpá ò le gùn,

Mo ti gùn-ún, mo ti sòó,

Faka-fikì, faka-fikì, faka-fikì

I can climb up and down mountains,

I can climb up and down mountains

The mountain that the itinerant trader cannot climb,

I have climbed, I came down

Faka-fiki, faka-fiki, faka-fiki

There is also another...

Bamidélé, olókò ilè,

Bamidélé, olókò ilè,

Jòwó gbé mi dé'lé,

Jòwó gbé mi dé'lé,

Ilé baba mi, o-ó.

Bamidélé, olókò ilè.

Bamidele, owner of the train,

Bamidele, owner of the train,

Please take me home,

Please take me home,

To my father's house, o-o

Bamidele, owner of the train.

In some songs, Bamidélé is substituted for Akìwowo, who is the main character in Àráoyè's poetry. Late Baba Olátúnjì, Nigerian master drummer who was also an immigrant in America popularized this tune by using the Akìwowo name. Baba was old enough to know what happened when trains were brand new in Nigeria, and for him, Akìwowo was a famous conductor who faithfully ensured that the passengers on his train did not miss the train.[\[19\]](#) Àráoyè's Akìwowo both recalls Baba's and is in synch with our childhood memories of "Bamidélé, olókò ilè". It recalls Baba's lyrics in the sense that there is a common name. It is in synch with our childhood memories because the central character is a trainmaster.

The poem also speaks to the theme of migration because it alludes to a restlessness in the constant movement of the train. It indirectly alludes to the never-ending rural-urban migration of alájàpá and of women who bring produce from rural to urban locales. Of course, the train also carries travellers who want to visit kith and kin, it carries business people, and it carries everyone who needs transportation. The train may be decrepit and slow today, just like that in Àráoyè's poetry, but in its heyday, it was a romantic, faster mode of transportation that provided some very valuable communication linkages between rural and urban Nigeria. That the trains are now in their disreputable state is yet another indictment of the wanton neglect of Nigerian infrastructure by the country's post-colonial governments, a fact that is familiar to most Africans who experience the same in their own countries. As the Yorùbá say, "arúgbó s'oge rí—"the elderly were once fashionable." The trains too were once fashionable, preferred, and novel enough to spur creative poetry and songs. These immigrants would dearly love for the Nigerian government to bring back the efficiency, utility, and poetry of the trains and railroad. Other African immigrants would similarly love their countries to refurbish and rehabilitate the continent's crumbling infrastructure, and keep their ends of the social contract by providing even better and more extensive infrastructural facilities that would enhance the possibility of communication and economic development within and between the continent's countries.

According to one who is more skilled than we in decoding the hidden messages in poetry,

The “Train to Ìdògò” captures with graphic accuracy the movement of a train through a tropical terrain. Most emphatic is the apt use of sound and sense devices that are the distinguishing hallmarks of good poetry. Staccato rhythms are spotted in the predominant trochaic feet that themselves convey the totality of a continuity of movement and sound, to tie with the moving train. Linked to the auditory imagery is visual imagery in the repeated ‘the train to Ìdògò puffs its black soot’, and other visual imagery. Ecological diction is aptly used including ‘ìrókò’, cactus, etc.[\[20\]](#)

The poem also speaks of the train moving through many Yorùbá towns, from hinterland to coast. The references to Òkun, Etí-òsà, Ìbarà, Láfénwá, Ìdògò, and Ejìgbò tell a history. As indicated in the explanatory notes below the poem, Ìdògò was connected to the railroad line in 1930. It is probably better known today as the birthplace of Ebenezer Obey, one of the most famous Nigerian jùjú musicians. Ejìgbò market could be located in Ògùn State. It could also be in Òsun State, or a neighborhood in Lagos mainland that was thrust into the global public consciousness when the explosions at the Nigerian Army cantonment in Ìkeja forced those fleeing the inferno and explosions to dive into the canal. Multinational oil companies that have fuel distribution businesses in Nigeria also probably know Ejìgbò as the fuel depot. Àráoyè also considers Ojà Ejìgbò to be “an abstract representation of an unceasing dynamism and the train, whatever its “black and sooty downside, as an instrument of the compelling centripetal/fugal transactions that keep pushing us along its train.” This is the metaphorical migration of which our editorial title speaks.

Finally, the poem speaks of good-byes. It speaks of departures and returns, and reminds us that the train is slow. It is old, and so is the trainmaster. It carries both the young and old. It carries women and men. This Akìwowo, the trainmaster, is being implored, as done in the children’s song above, to take the sojourner home to the fatherland. In this way, Àráoyè’s poetry also connects with Niaah’s theme of repatriation – a return to the land of the father and the ways of the father.

What of the mother? Àráoyè tells us about the merchant women of Láfénwá who wave “their headgears to their sons on night boats that face up and downstream.” The harmony of life in Yorùbá cosmogony includes both the female and the male, with good luck, safe travel, and fertility being described as abo, (female) and the opposites as ako (male). Migration is also necessarily an experience that combines the negative and positive. Misfortune, exploitation, discrimination and marginalization may be the lot of the

migrant. Other migrants may enjoy good fortune, abundance, realize their full potential, and gain acknowledgement as contributors of valued knowledge to their host country. Whether transnational, intranational, or metaphorical, migration then is a complex, multidimensional experience that shows us the process of globalization in motion.

Endnotes

[1] Mike Perrault “Graciela Ramirez: Her Ride For Freedom: Woman Tells of Traveling Across Nation in Campaign For More Liberal Immigration Laws” The Desert Sun, October 27th, 2003.

[2] Ben Ehrenreich “Sí, Se Puede! L.A.’s new Freedom Riders Take Their Quest For Immigrant Equality on the Road” LA Weekly, October 24-30
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[3] Immigrants are being expelled from Western Europe Online Pravda
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[5] Angelique Chrisafis “Artists Line Up in Battle of Trafalgar” The Guardian (online) Saturday, July 26, 2003.
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[10] Martin Bright and Paul Harris "Thames Torso Boy was Sacrificed" Guardian Unlimited, June 2, 2002.
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/crime/article0,2763,726490,00.html>

[11] *ibid.*

[12] I was first made aware of the passage of the DREAM Act by Ms. Andrene Bonner, who sent me an email titled: "DREAM Act, with Weakening Provisions, Voted out of Full Senate Judiciary Committee" on Saturday, October 25, 2003. This spurred a desire to find out more about the Act and thoughts on the significance and ramifications of the new law. See also, Senator Dianne Feinstein's

website, where information is posted on the DREAM Act "Senate Judiciary Committee Approves "The DREAM Act"" October 23, 2003, <http://feinstein.senate.gov/03Releases/r-dreamact3.htm>

[13] "Senate Judiciary Committee Approves "The DREAM Act"" October 23, 2003, <http://feinstein.senate.gov/03Releases/r-dreamact3.htm>

[14] *ibid.*

[15] League of United Latin American Citizens Action Alert "LULAC Urges Passage of the Dream Act and the Student Adjustment Act" <http://www.lulac.org/Issues/Alerts/Dream%20Act.html>

[16] Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR). "The "DREAM Act": Hatch-ing Expensive New Amnesty for Illegal Aliens" <http://www.fairus.org/news/NewsPrint.cfm?ID=2194&c=34>

[17] Jayne O. Ifekwunigwe, "Recasting 'Black Venus' in the African Diaspora of the Global Age" Conference on Gendering the Diaspora: Women, Culture and Historical Change in the Caribbean and the Nigerian Hinterland, Dartmouth College, Hanover, N.H., November 21-24, 2002.

[18] See for example, Titilayo Ufomata, "Women in Africa: Their Socio-Political and Economic Roles." *West Africa Review* 2: 1, August 2000; Takyiwaa Manuh, *Women in Africa's Development: Overcoming Obstacles, Pushing for Progress*. New York: United Nations. Department of Public Information, 1998; Colleen Lowe Morna "Mixed Progress for African Women: Review of Beijing Conference Finds Both Gains and Reverses" *Africa Recovery Online* <http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/afrec/vol14no2/women.htm>; Simsa'a L. El Awad "Structural Adjustment Policies and Women in the Rural Areas of Africa: A Review of Some Major Issues." *Africa Development*, 23, 3-4:135-147; "Women's Roles in the Development of the African Economies" *Afr-Fem Discussion*. <http://www.dse.de/za/lis/ci/wom-ecom.htm>; Gracia Clark, *Onions are My Husband: Survival and Accumulation by West African Market Women*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994; Christina H. Gladwin, ed., *Structural Adjustment and African Women Farmers*. Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 1991; "Unifem at Work Worldwide: Africa." http://www.unifem.undp.org/at_work_worldwide/africa.html

[19] See the transcription of the lyrics for Babátúndé Olátúnjí's "Akiwowo Oloko Ile" at Djembe-L <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/djembe-l/message/7246>. Unfortunately, there is some typographical error in the translation on this page.

[20] Dr. Martha Ngwainmbi, Assistant Professor of English, Kentucky State University.

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