

NEW ROUTES TO THE AFRICAN DIASPORA(S): LOCATING 'NAIJA' IDENTITIES IN
TRANSNATIONAL CULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

By

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ABSTRACT

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Nigerian American Yvonne Orji—star of HBO Series *Insecure*—shared her self-defined expressions of her Nigerian Diaspora aka ‘Naija’ identity at a Breakfast Club online interview. She demonstrated her negotiation of her Nigerian and Black American identity, and in doing so reveals the multiplicity of her Black identity. The Nigerian Diaspora is increasingly producing normalized tropes in global Black popular culture, such as formulations of the Nigerian film industry, Nollywood, and transnational music in the Afrobeat and Naija Mix genres. Cultural productions that come from these and other Nigerian cultural industries are being created and represented by members of the Nigerian “cultural” Diaspora all over the world. These cultural representations are mapped onto cultural artifacts (e.g. film, music, literature, television, food, clothing) are reflected back into diasporic communities when accepted by its members as having meaning and telling stories of their everyday experiences. Works like these are constitutive of a growing cohort and body of cultural productions emerging from the African Diaspora in the post-colonial era. Examples examined in the current dissertation study include the now famous Nigerian Diaspora representations conveyed in cultural productions such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Americanah*, rapper Wale’s “My Sweetie” and “The God Smile,” Yewande Omotoso’s *Bom Boy*, Akin Omotoso’s *Man on Ground*, and Adze Ujah’s *Jacob’s Cross* to name a few.

This dissertation is situated within the growing scholarly discourse about new African Diasporas through the prism of cultural diasporas. To guide the study theoretically, I draw from African Diaspora theorists such as Kim Butler, Isidore Okpewho, Paul Zeleza, Juan Flores, and

Ruth Simms Hamilton as well as from Cultural Studies theorists Stuart Hall and Pierre Bourdieu to examine select Nigerian artists, their productions, and subsequent representations in the Nigerian Diaspora as cultural diasporas. I present these cultural productions of Nigerian diasporas as a way of examining the transformative and transnational identities (i.e. racial, ethnic, cultural) and community formations that are forged in the dialectical relationship between African homelands (Nigeria) and African Diaspora hostlands (the US and South Africa).

In this dissertation, I argue that the social construction of the core identity formation of Nigerian Diasporas (Naija) has a purposeful and useful function for Nigeria in the world through its migrants Diaspora hostlands. The study shows the Nigerian Diaspora identity in this regard acknowledges and unifies Nigerians wherever they may be in the world and allows them to assert an emotional attraction and belonging to the Nigerian homeland. The social construction of 'Naija' is used in this study as prism for interrogating issues facing Nigerian people in their respective diasporas, while also revealing the distinctive cultural life-styles that Nigerian Black immigrants bring and contribute to their hostlands. The research design focuses in on those primary components of the cultural diasporas—the experiences of the cultural producers (interviews and public talks) and the analysis of their cultural productions (literature, film, television, YouTube, music)—in order to extrapolate cultural representations of the Nigerian Diaspora communities in the United States and South Africa. The study aims to use this data to significantly contribute perspectives of how Nigerian Diasporic cultural identities and experiences are self-represented and exerted in global Diasporic communities, specifically in the racially and ethnic diverse nations of the United States and South Africa. Further, the dissertation examines how representations of self and community becomes decolonial tools for defining and asserting complex Black Diasporic identities and cultural formations.

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This dissertation is dedicated to the people of the African world:
those who came before us, those who exist today, and those yet to return.

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Even when we walk our roads alone, it's always with the guidance of those we met along the way. I must begin by thanking my parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, and cousins—blood and chosen, living and departed—who shared their love and support in various ways. Between my family of kin and closest friends, I survived this journey and will survive endless more. Sometimes it was encouragement, words of caution, a heartfelt or casual conversation, love via good food, or a place to lay my head. So many thanks must go to my dissertation chair, Dr. Rita Kiki Edozie, for her passionate and no-nonsense guidance as a Black Studies Africanist mentor, teacher, scholar, and friend. She brought me into Africana Studies, and helped me transform the matters of my heart into heartfelt and intentional research projects. I also want to thank my dissertation committee—Dr. Glenn Chambers, Dr. Tama Hamilton-Wray, and Dr. Galen Sibanda—for their honest, encouraging, and patient support through this dissertation journey.

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PREFACE

I am a Black, Igbo, Nigerian, African, American, female, loving, inquisitive, and stubborn storytelling traveler who is constantly changing. Like any African, or human, my path has been forged by my environments and by my communities. However, my journey is determined by how I respond to the worlds that made me, and by those worlds I have yet to encounter. I turned left on the fork in my road labeled “Africana Studies, Ph.D.” because I was curious to know myself, as a product of multiple African communities: Black America and Nigeria. I grew up knowing that in ways I belonged to and was excluded from both communities. But for the life of me, I could not understand why the exclusions, and at times tensions between the communities, when both spaces looked to me like reflections of each other.

Two different and diverse Black worldviews, no doubt, but there was a celestial level of comfort I felt existing in these African communities that was always the same. It’s the same feeling I’ve come to experience from traveling to South Africa over the past few years, making close relationships with Africans and exchanging worldviews. It’s the same feeling I have today when I am unable to distinguish a Nigerian song, from a West Indian song, or from a South African song because my father lovingly flooded my siblings’ and my ears with African world music from Detroit to Lagos to Trenchtown to Soweto and back again. I feel alive, represented, and connected to a Pan-African reality.

I wanted to tell stories about my myself, my family, and my communities from a place of truth and knowing. What better way then to learn how to conduct research to more accurately write our realities into existence? I came to Black/Africana Studies because a series of future mentors—both living and departed—showed me it was alright to seek African epistemologies and lived experiences as well as to center them as guides to how I produce knowledge. More so, they

revealed that my passion for experience-based knowledge was already at the core of the disciplinary objectives. Black/Africana Studies—a discipline dedicated centering the African lived experience to produce academically excellent and socially responsible knowledge towards the liberation of African people—would allow me to develop a multifaceted interdisciplinary research design that could combine the histories, cultural studies, and ethnographies of an African diasporic community to represent their environments, experiences, and productions.

The story I aim to tell today is about the decedents of ancient people, who happen to be born into what is now Nigeria. I do while not being unmindful that many generations of those decedents are also being born in places like the United States, Brazil, and Cuba as Black Americans, Afro-Brazilians, and Afro-Cubans. It's a story of travel across space and time, focusing on how people in this case study—today's Nigerian—move between spaces, interact with each other and other African communities, and bring who they are along with them. I chose to represent these travelers' journeys from the perspective of their storytelling and by examining the cultures that they create. I hope that my work here can contribute an African-centered methodology of engaging and studying the cultural creations of African communities more generally in order to—as Manning Marable would suggest—more descriptively, correctively, and prescriptively generate and disseminate self-determined representations of global African people, identities, and knowledge.

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INTRODUCTION

Nigerian (African) Diasporas and Global Cultural Production

In a British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) piece written about Nigeria's 50th anniversary of its independence from Great Britain, the question was posed, "What does Naija mean?" (Labaran). Nigerians in the United Kingdom were polled, and many answers were given. 'Naija' was defined as Nigerians asserting pride for Nigeria, wherever they may be in the world. When the word is said correctly, emphasized with "a hook for the 'Nai' and a jab for the 'ja,'" then one knows that they are part of a community, and that they are trusted and accepted (Labaran). The emergence of Nigerian cultural producers, especially in the West, has triggered routes of communication between the members of the African Diaspora and Nigerian communities around the world who are representing the 'Naija' identity in their works. They are musicians, writers, poets, novelists, professors, actors, athletes, dancers, filmmakers, television hosts, movie producers, documentary makers, sculptors, chefs, teachers, spiritual healers and artists. In these capacities, there is evidence of them specifying belonging to a Nigerian homeland and Nigerian cultures and traditions. There are cases where Nigerian cultural producers also publically specify their belonging to ethnic and racial groups within their diasporic hostlands, sometimes simultaneously. They reveal the various ways they negotiate their Nigerian identities formed from their relationship to Nigeria vis-à-vis the identities formed as a result of their relationship to their hostlands.

This embodiment of Nigerian diaspority was illustrated in the words of actress Uzomamaka Aduba, who stars in the Netflix series, *Orange is the New Black* (Kohan). Aduba shared a memory that is linked to her own identity formation in the United States in an article "The Eyes Have It," when asked, "Did you ever consider changing your name?"

When I started as an actor? No, and I'll tell you why. I had already gone through that. My family is from Nigeria, and my full name is Uzoamaka, which means "The road is good." Quick lesson: My tribe is Igbo, and you name your kid something that tells your history and hopefully predicts your future. So anyway, in grade school, because my last name started with an A, I was the first in roll call, and nobody ever knew how to pronounce it. So I went home and asked my mother if I could be called Zoe. I remember she was cooking, and in her Nigerian accent she said, "Why?" I said, "Nobody can pronounce it." Without missing a beat, she said, "If they can learn to say Tchaikovsky and Michelangelo and Dostoyevsky, they can learn to say Uzoamaka." (Soroff)

Asserting her Igbo (Nigerian ethnic group) ethnicity, Aduba reveals an event with both ethnic and racial implications. Her attempt to change her name to 'Zoe,' an American name, indicated an affinity to both a white American culture and attaining a social position within that culture. Her mother's response, comparing the difficulty of 'Uzoamaka' to Russian names such as 'Tchaikovsky,' like a proverb teaches Aduba that her peers and teachers could pronounce her Igbo name if they exerted the same effort given to pronouncing non-American Eurocentric names. She evokes a deeper understanding of the memory through national identity, by indicating that she distinctively remembers her mother's "Nigerian accent" in the telling of the story. Her 'Naija' identity is one that has experiences of negotiating Nigerian culture in light of conflicting or repressive societal conditions, in this case her Black identities in the United States.

This dissertation study examines identities such as Aduba's as cultural representations of Nigerian Diaspora lived experiences. It does so by analyzing components of Nigerian cultural diasporas, specifically cultural producers (artists) and cultural productions (artwork), to determine ways that Nigerian diasporans express who they are in relation to the spaces they occupy. Nigerian Diasporas produce what I refer to throughout the dissertation as the 'Naija' identity. This identity has been forged in the post-colonial era through African, and specifically Nigerian, immigration. It is representative of the transnational lived experiences and perspectives of Nigerian people in diasporic sites within Africa and the African Diaspora.

Aduba is a second generation Nigerian-born and raised in the New England area in the United States. She and many other Nigerian artists in the United States and around the world are unapologetically articulating their Nigerian heritage through their work, their bios, and/or interviews through various media outlets. This is especially true in the United States and the United Kingdom where they make up the largest populations of Nigerians outside of Nigeria, but also increasingly so in places like South Africa (SA) where more recent Nigerian Diaspora communities are emerging. They use their agency as artists to produce representations of themselves and their communities through their art, and by articulating their own experiences as evidence of knowledge about what it means to grow up and/or exist in the African Diaspora.

Because of the country's population size—the largest in Africa with 182 million people in 2016—Nigerians often make up some of the largest populations of Black immigrants in various receiving countries around the world (i.e. US, Canada, UK, Italy) (National Population Commission). Specific to the sites of study used for the current dissertation study (US and SA), there are 237,000 Nigerian immigrants in the United States, and South Africa currently estimates an immigration of 15-17 thousand Nigerians as of 2015 (United Nations). It is in the context of both countries as diasporic hostlands that 'Naija' emerged as a way for members of the Nigerian Diaspora to refer to and identify with their Nigerian homeland. 'Naija' is an increasingly normalized trope that is culturally produced by members of the Nigerian Diaspora and is made real by the factors that contribute to the formation of transnational identities and African Diaspora communities. Regional and global representations of 'Naija' identities reveal who members of the Nigerian Diaspora are, what their experiences are, and who they are constantly becoming. Their visibility as part of the greater African Diaspora increases (e.g. Nollywood, Nigerian literature, Naija Mix) by way of the constant contributions of cultural expressions,

formations, and representations to African diaspora communities in the world.

This dissertation study, “New Routes to the African Diaspora(s): Locating ‘Naija’ Identities in Transnational Cultural Productions,” is situated within the growing scholarly discourse about New African Diasporas and their cultural formations. The study is about Nigerian *neo*-Diasporas examined as cultural diasporas whose artists—what I refer to as cultural producers—contribute to the cultural life and cultural industries of Diasporic hostlands. The study discerns the representations of Black identities that emerge from Nigerian Diaspora cultural productions, and it also examines cultural producers’ personal identities and lived experiences. Together, this data is used as a way of observing the transnational and transformative identities and experiences that are forged in the dialectical relationship between African homelands and African Diaspora hostlands. Analyzing interviews of cultural producers and content from their cultural productions in two African Diaspora hostlands—the United States and South Africa—the dissertation reveals the social construction of the ‘Naija’ identity as a way to examine and document an African country-based contribution (Nigeria) to contemporary African diasporas.

The everyday experiences of being a Black immigrant offers insight to how these Africans understand their society’s structures of race and ethnicity in relation to other pan-ethnic Black communities and diasporic societies (US, SA). The Nigerian Diaspora cultural identity that forms the content of these productions are created and transformed when they clash, enmesh, or are made hybrid with the cultures around them. Nigerian Diaspora cultural identities are also transformed by the way that diasporans who are able to create or access physical, telephonic, and online routes and networks to maintain mobility between Nigeria and the Diaspora. These routes and networks are formed by Nigerians and other contemporary African diasporas from the resources globalization offers transnational citizens. All of these components help to locate and

map diverse identity formation of ‘Naija’ through the lens of Nigerian Diaspora cultural producers.

This study contributes new insights in the study of the African Diaspora by revealing how members of this African neo-Diaspora are shaping the cultural life and cultural formation of their hostlands in the United States and South Africa (Flores). The social construction of ‘Naija’ is used as prism for interrogating issues facing Nigerian people in their respective diasporas, while also revealing the distinctive cultural life-styles that Nigerian immigrants bring and give to their hostlands around the world. In shaping new African Diasporic identities, the artists presented are at the helm of these transnational processes. The study analyzes Nigerian cultural diasporas in several ways. Nigerians artists are examined as members of their communities who are doing culture, and their cultural productions are examined as artifacts that represent diverse perspectives of the Nigerian Diaspora experience. It also uncovers transnational social networks that emerge as members of Nigerian cultural diaspora communities express who they are and who they have become as public intellectuals in relation to their diasporic hostlands and homelands.

Using cultural theorist Pierre Bourdieu’s framework of cultural productions, the artwork of these Nigerian artists can produce meaning when members of a society accept and then disseminate artwork as being representative of their cultures. The artists participate in defining the actual community they represent when the community accepts the production into its collective knowledge of who they are (Bourdieu and Johnson). This project forefronts ‘Naija’ artists who are consciously “doing” culture by forming it. Similar to Bourdieu’s cultural productions, “doing” culture refers to the artist who consciously considers the social conditions that influence the texture of cultural spaces (i.e. cultural norms, “invisible rules that guide our

behavior”), and then actively thinks about the effects these conditions have on situating cultural practices (Zobl and Klaus).

In this way, this study aims to exhibit how Nigerian cultural diasporas define, self-determine, and represent the transformations of their pluralistic ‘Naija’ identity in their hostland communities racially, culturally, ethnically, and transnationally through the creation of literary, filmic, televised, Internet-based, and musical cultural artifacts. Some examples of Nigerian Diaspora representations of cultural, racial, and ethnic transnational ‘Naija’ identities conveyed in cultural productions include those analyzed in this study: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s novel *Americanah*, Wale’s rap songs and videos “My Sweetie” and “The God Smile,” Rahman Oladigbolu’s film *In America: The Story of the Soul Sisters*, Yvonne Fly Onakeme Etaghene’s novel *For Sizakele*, the YouTube videos productions from the Wowo Boyz, Akin Omotoso’s film *Man on Ground*, Yewande Omotoso’s novel *Bom Boy*, and Adze Ugha’s direction of the television show *Jacob’s Cross* (*Americanah*; *My Sweetie*; *The God Smile*; *In America*; *For Sizakele*; “Wowo Boyz”; *Man on Ground*; *Jacob’s Cross*).

There are three major interrelated research objectives that guide this dissertation study. First, the study demonstrates how identities are forged in the New African Diaspora as expressions that have been drawn from a nexus of transnational movements between African homelands and African Diaspora hostlands. The second objective is to reveal the social construction of the ‘Naija’ identity—a distinctive Nigerian Diaspora in an age of globalization. Lastly, the study examines how Nigerian communities abroad, especially through cultural productions, formulate racial, ethnic, cultural, and transnational representations of Nigerians.

Guided by the research objectives, the current research asks the following questions in examining the cultural dimensions and formations of the ‘Naija’ identity. How have Nigerians

forged new dimensions of the African Diaspora through cultural diasporas? How do transnationalism and globalization contribute to the distinctiveness of New African Diaspora formation? How are Nigerian Diasporas creating community and nation formations worldwide? How have Nigerian Diasporas experienced transnationality, displacement, and relations with home? How are race, ethnicity, culture and transnationality represented in media and literary productions from the Nigerian Diaspora? How has the Naija identity been socially constructed by Nigerian Diasporas and how is it represented in Diaspora hostlands?

This dissertation study is significant for several reasons. The study reveals knowledge about Africa from a grounded cultural context through the voices, experiences, and cultural productions of Africans. It engages a research study of recent African continental migrations manifest through an African country-based example of African diasporas, in this case Nigeria. The study, related to the African Union's *Charter for African Cultural Renaissance*, centers African ways of knowing, histories and traditions to reflect on how we engage each other and the problems facing African people—continental African and African Diaspora. In order to find African world processes of decolonization, it calls for the “the promotion of African identities exemplifies African dignity and freedoms. It presents African values and the contribution of Africa and the African Diaspora to the building of universal civilization” (African Union 6).

While the New African Diaspora has increasingly become a popular basis for research and many accounts exist; few accounts present the continent as a producer of African Diasporas. African Diaspora usually refers to cross regional and transnational migrations. This study examines the United States case as a way to engage the African Diaspora, significantly, it also includes a study of South Africa. Oliver Bakewell's “In Search of the Diasporas within Africa” suggests that ‘indigenous’ African diasporas also exist where members of historic African

Diaspora look for their origins within the continent (Bakewell 16). South Africa is a prime example being a location of indigenous diasporas including African migrants leaving for cultural, as well as economic and political reasons.

A third distinction to this study is that it engages methodologies of interdisciplinary Black Studies and Cultural Studies by unraveling the ‘Naija’ identity as a distinctive African Diaspora identity—one that privileges the voices and experiences of Nigerian cultural producers. There is a growing body of study specific to the African Diaspora, but most studies use methodologies drawn from History and Sociology. This study draws from some of these theoretical frameworks to define the Nigerian Diaspora by examining historical and contemporary movements to and from the homeland, reasons for and conditions of dispersal (Hamilton; Palmer), and systems of oppression in Diaspora hostlands (Okpewho and Nzegwu; Zeleza).

However, the dissertation study departs from these studies by also examining the African Diaspora from the vantage point of the Humanities—from an analysis of how African (Nigerian) Diaspora is produced, reproduced and represented through African artists and cultural productions. The story this dissertation aims to tell is one of a Nigerian neo-diaspora, and how its members use their cultural heritage and lived experiences to artistically define who they are in the world on their own terms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The three main research objectives—a study of the New/neo African Diaspora examining an African country-based Diaspora (i.e. Nigeria), a means to examine a case study of cultural diasporas, and revealing how transnational identities are forged from and within Diaspora hostlands—are used to engage a body of literature that will act as a theoretical framework for the

study. First, cultural diasporas are used to refer to the transnational cultural productions and industries that have emerged as a result of the New African Diaspora. Secondly, the literature on neo-diasporas and the New African Diaspora is reviewed in relation to literature about African Diaspora formations. Much of this literature contributes ways of defining African diasporas historically, and based on socio-cultural and socio-economic conditions of both African homelands and diasporic hostlands. Contemporary, or Neo-diasporas are situated within the current conditions of globalization and transnationalism to describe its emergence and to contextualize its existence today. Third, literatures about the transnational manifestations of African Diaspora identity are assessed to demonstrate how its members forge complex and intersectional notions of self and community.

Cultural Diasporas and Cultural Productions

Cultural diasporas refers to the artists, cultural productions, and the transnational organizations and social networks that emerge as members of diaspora communities culturally express who they are and who they have become in relation to their hostland and homeland (Meinhof and Armbruster).¹ Juan Flores characterizes the phenomenon by illustrating how members of neo-Diasporas create cultural artifacts and industries, and transport them between their homeland and hostlands. As a result neo-Diasporas fashion their own physical, telecommunications, and organizational networks that allow these “cultural remittances” to exert “innovative and catalytic influence on the course of national and regional histories” (Flores 11).

¹ Ulrike Meinhof and Heidi Armbruster define cultural diasporas in their study for the European Union as a combination of artwork from “musicians, film-makers, visual artists and other cultural artists” along with the extensive networks diasporic communities make between Europe and West Africa, North Africa, and Turkey.

Agency is developed when ‘remigrants’² are able to use their lived experiences and expression of culture to collectively establish transnational identities. The ‘Nuyorican’ identity is an example of this, a culturally self-determined transnational identity of the Puerto Rican diaspora to New York that is constantly transformed by the circular movements of ‘Nuyorican’ people and cultures between New York and Puerto Rico. As a result of the constant production of cultural identity between home and hostland, Flores argues that the ‘Nuyorican’ identity counters imposed identities and oppressive racial and ethnic systems of the United States (Flores).

Other African cultural diasporas act in a similar fashion as they distribute cultural productions between homeland and hostlands, and in some cases other geographical locations of the African Diaspora. What are cultural productions and how do they relate to cultural representations? How do African cultural diasporas and their cultural productions contribute to creating diasporic identities? This sub-section answers these questions to provide a framework to understand how the Nigerian Diaspora specifically, and the New African Diaspora generally, are forged through cultural productions and representations and how post-colonial conditions affect the formation of African Diaspora identities. Cultural Studies pioneering scholar Stuart Hall suggest that African Diaspora communities and their cultural art forms have a reciprocal relationship, providing cultural knowledge back and forth between each other. In his essay, “What is the ‘Black’ in Black Popular Culture?” Hall proposes that black popular culture plays a critical role in generating counter-narratives and contradictions to mainstream representations of Black people across the Diaspora. In an attempt to define “black popular culture,” Hall analyzes its dependent relationship to Black Diasporic communities.

² Remigrants refer to members of neo-diasporas who return to their native homelands and bring with them transformed cultural artifacts that are incorporated in some way back to their homeland communities, or cultural remittances.

It has come to signify the black community, where these traditions were kept, and whose struggles survive in the persistence of the black experience (the historical experience of black people in the diaspora), of the black aesthetic (the distinctive cultural repertoires out of which popular representations were made), and of the black counternarratives we have struggled to voice. Here, black popular culture returns to the ground I defined earlier. "Good" black popular culture can pass the test of authenticity the reference to black experience and to black expressivity. These serve as the guarantees in the determination of which black popular culture is right on, which is ours, and which is not. (Hall, "What Is the 'Black'")

According to Hall, Black communities become the repository of their traditions and experiences. Authentic Black cultural artifacts are those that draw from this repository to represent the Black community. Hall also contends these Black cultural repertoires, or cultural artifacts, are laced with evidence of black experiences and black counter narratives to hostlands' cultural hegemony as well as evidence of their African cultural heritage. In any African diaspora then, their cultural artifact are embedded with stories that explain and express some snippet of personal knowledge drawn from the community of the person or people who made it. Art created in this way will pass the test of authenticity, where only the community can fully recognize representations that there their own, that are from others outside of their community, and that they believe is reflective of the their people and diasporic experiences.

The cultural producers are part of what Ngugi wa Thiong'o considers the resistance tradition, one that protects its people and asserts its national heritage. wa Thiong'o suggest that the intentional cultural productions that come from this tradition's artists are blowbacks to imperialism, and at the same time are cultural representations of national heritage (wa Thiong'o 2). The producers imagine fictional and real experiences that tell of their conditions within domination, while at the same time defining themselves in ways that challenge grand monolithic narratives of universal human existence. African cultural representations' potency is in their ability to develop conceptual maps of African life and tradition. These conceptual maps emerge

from cultural productions as cultural representations of the diasporic community that created it.

In *Representations: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, Stuart Hall suggests that meaning is constructed through systems of representations. Culture can be defined in terms of the meanings, or conceptual maps, shared among a group of people. Hall defines representation as the meaning process that links signs, conceptual maps, and ‘things.’

At the heart of the meaning process in culture, then, are two related ‘systems of representation’. The first enables us to give meaning to the world by constructing a set of correspondences or a chain of equivalences between things – people, objects, events, abstract ideas, etc. – and our system of concepts, our conceptual maps. The second depends on constructing a set of correspondences between our conceptual map and a set of signs, arranged or organized into various languages, which stand for or represent those concepts. The relation between ‘things,’ concepts and signs lie at the heart of the production of meaning in language. The process which links these three elements together is what we call ‘representation.’ (Hall, Evans, and Nixon 19)

In one system, representation provides meaning to the world through correspondences between things and our conceptual maps. In the second, representation depends on the development of links between conceptual maps and a set of signs that then point to represent those concepts (19). African diasporic representations can be understood as the interaction between the things (e.g. communities, cultural producers, and cultural productions, communities’ networks and organizations) and the process that links concepts and signs (e.g. culture, traditions, ideas, knowledge) from diasporic communities to those things creating languages or symbols that represent the communities. Cultural representations are drawn from shared cultures, allowing Black popular culture to be reflections of any communities shared cultures’ and collective Black lived experiences.

African cultural diasporas are defined looking at their components—communities and their cultural organizations, cultural productions, cultural producers, and cultural representations. They are also defined by the oppressive systems that marginalize self-determined African

cultural identities often rendering their representations invisible, incomplete, or distorted.

Dialectically, African cultural diasporas are also determined by the way African Diaspora artists create counter narratives by expressing who they are (i.e. cultural productions, cultural representations) and disseminating (i.e. cultural remittances) these cultural artifacts globally. Self-determination of one's African diaspora cultural identity is as Hall suggests a combination of, and perhaps tension between, the African cultural heritage being expressed and represented, and the diasporic conditions that the cultural producer must endure in life in order to successfully create and share their representations of their reality.

For instance, the Haitian filmmaker Raoul Peck, when making the film *Lumumba*, ran into difficulties receiving government funding for the film and receiving permission to tell a story of Patrice Lumumba he felt was an accurate and self-determined representation of his legacy. Peck, who has also lived in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) as part of its Haitian Diaspora, positioned the late Patrice Lumumba, the first president of the DRC, as the storyteller of the film by using his actual speeches and letters as the content of his narration. In doing so Peck participates in wa Thiong'o's resistance tradition by, as he Peck defines it, stealing back African images from global institutions, like mainstream Hollywood, who "want to maintain a certain way of telling stories and not others, whatever their reasons may be" (Peck and Temerson).

African Diaspora Identities

Cultural diasporas have been set up to encompass communities' cultural productions, producers, organizations, networks, and subsequent culture representations. They ultimately reveal the cultural identities of the African Diaspora subject, which is examined here as the intersections and combinations of diverse identities experienced transnational ways due to the

geo-circular nature of her or his existence. This section attempts to situate the ‘Naija’ identity as an transnational identity, where its members are forced to contend with the transformations of their racial, ethnic, cultural, gendered, class-based, religious and sexual identities (to name a few). How then have diasporic experiences contributed to transformations of specifically cultural, racial, and ethnic identities? How have members of the African Diaspora imagined their identity in light of diasporic conditions? Transnational formations within the context of the New African Diaspora identity in this respect are exemplified to illustrate their dynamism (i.e. Afropolitan, pan-ethnicity) and intentionally contribute a definition the ‘Naija’ identity.

What then is the cultural identity of the African Diaspora subject? While examining representations of the Afro-Caribbean diasporas in cultural productions, Stuart Hall specifies two distinct ways to define cultural identity. The first looks at cultural identity as fixed and collective, one that links its subjects together by a shared history and cultural codes. Hall suggests that this form of cultural identity is unchanging, allowing the culture to be continual frames of reference. However, as part of the diaspora, the identity is as much a retelling or recounting of history but a production of identity. Instead, he considers a second definition of cultural identity in the African Diaspora that forefronts how Africans have and continue to be able to identify themselves by expressing communities’ lived experiences that are continuously made and remade.

Cultural identity, in this second sense, is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being.’ It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history, and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture, and power. Far from being grounded in mere ‘recovery’ of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past. (“Cultural Identity and Diaspora” 236)

The African Diaspora subject's cultural identity is constantly in a transformative state of becoming. On one hand, culture may consist of its recovered histories, but on the other cultural identity is also determined by the context in which the culture is produced. Hall suggests that this transformational space of cultural identity is the only space where Cultural Studies scholars can understand the conditions of diasporization—the traumatic character of the colonial experience. Cultural identities of the diaspora, as transformational, are also located in their relationship to Africa, a mythical or physical home. It involves movement—a circularity of journeys. By this nature of Africana cultural identities, the Black subject cannot be contained to merely his blackness as a dystopic reflection of whiteness. He must be considered in relation to his culture as it is, and as he defines it (i.e. the lived experience).

This study examines the cultural identity of the Nigerian Diaspora, by considering cultural (life-style, language), ethnic, and racial identities that are forged transnationally between African homelands and Diasporic hostlands. The imposed identities (i.e. Black, African), systems of oppression (i.e. racism, xenophobia, post-racialism, non-racialism), of a hostland having an effect on how the Nigerian immigrant, or child of that immigrant understands who they are in relation to their hostland. Their Nigerian heritage also provides traditional or national identities (i.e. Yoruba, Igbo, Ijaw, Nigeria) from which they must negotiate with their experiences abroad. They join other Black and ethnic communities who have spent time negotiating these conflicting identities.

Scholars examining the construction of identity within the African Diaspora often point to the complex and transformative nature of becoming in a diaspora hostland. That is to say that negotiating one's individual and collective belonging is a major characteristic of diaspora making. What does a national of one country become, once they leave the homeland? How does

that vary from place to place? The complexities of becoming in the African Diaspora not only involve one's cultural identity, but also the imposition and negotiation of racial and ethnic identities.

Candis Watts Smith's *Black Mosaic: The Politics of Pan-ethnic Identity* examines Blackness in the United States as a pan-ethnic racial identity composed of a diverse African descendent population by considering the implications of racial and ethnic identity for native and foreign Blacks in the United States contemporarily (Smith). This identity is conceived through diaspora consciousness, which she suggests is "the duality that people of African decent who live in the United States hold as they consider their racial identity and the political issues associated with it along with their ethnic identity and the political matters closely associated with that subgroup identity" (65). She suggests that there are multiple steps to build an "identity-to-politics link" by being cautious of the complexity of how this actualizes amongst groups and individuals. This link begins with group membership, or the involuntary imposition of racial and ethnic identities; to group identification, or the psychological attachment to a group; to group consciousness, or the politicization of one's identity. As a pan-ethnic race with a diaspora consciousness, Smith argues that Black people in the United States fall into one of these categories (47–50). Considering DuBois' notion of double consciousness and Watts Smith's contribution of diaspora consciousness, members of the Nigerian Diaspora experience Blackness vis-à-vis their nuanced engagements as Black African immigrants against the normative to impossibly integrate into the societies of the hostlands. Their diasporic consciousness is determined by how they decide to collectively—however that collective may manifest—respond to socio-political issues and their newly determined racial identities and experiences.

Sarah Nuttall and Cheryl-Ann Michael recognize that a post-apartheid South Africa reveals a complexity in configurations of identity that always existed, but were not recognized in the racial imposed identities of the apartheid regime. Instead, cultural identity was dominated by “the over-determination of the political, the inflation of resistance, and the inflections given to race as a determination of identity” (Nuttall and Michael 10). What has been ignored in South African cultural studies is the creolization of cultural, linguistic, and religious identities that needs to be explored to understand processes of self and group consciousness or process of integration. In an attempt to explore the complexities of cultural identity, and to make visible marginalized identities, the authors’ edited volume *Senses of Culture: South African Culture Studies* moves away from the separation South African apartheid has caused to examine the rich texture of transformative identities formed as a result of their socio-political context.

Abdoumalig Simone’s contribution to the edited volume, “Going South: African Immigrants in Johannesburg,” examines how new African immigrants economically and culturally influence Johannesburg’s metropolitan landscape and effectively. African immigrants are multifaceted in the labor force. For instance, he suggests that many create a niche market and use affiliates from their home countries to provide products and services unavailable to Africans in South Africa. Along with their various community-oriented means of supporting each other, he suggests that Johannesburg is an example of how African immigrants contribute to the re-spatialization of the city. These spaces must be examined in order to forefront the salience of national and cultural identity that faces being continuously remade as a result of the diverse intra-African communities (Simone).

What would it mean for one to be both Black and African? Afropolitan and Nigerian? Afro-Brazilian and Yoruba? The identities that are forged in the African Diaspora take on

various characteristics that are tied to the conditions and experiences mentioned earlier. These identities become the subject of cultural productions created by Africans in the contemporary African Diaspora. Lynnée Denise, a queer African American female DJ, has worked and lived in the Netherlands, and traveled to South Africa. Drawing from the African Diaspora, her transnational work, or DJ Scholarship, identifies her role to a “an archivist, cultural work and information specialist who assesses, collects, organizes, preserves, and provides access to music determined to have long time value” (Denise). Her music includes infusions of South African house music, audio-recordings from various liberation movements, songs from immigrant singers (e.g. Bjork) and Black singer activists (e.g. Nina Simone). The layering of song, words, and music is used to create “multi dimensional and multi sensory experiences” aimed to critically assess how the arts can play a role in ending social inequality. We see in the example of Denise, a self-manifestation of identity and how it then relates to how she translates her experiences into her cultural productions for others to also experience.

Afropolitanism is an example of a transnational identity, one whose emergence has challenged the notion of mono- or even bi- nationality, by suggesting Africans’ own cosmopolitan identity that traverses multiple global metropolitan cities. Considering multinational and multicultural complexities of African identities, Achille Mbembe in his essay “Afropolitanism,” defines it using a “worlds in movement” approach wherein Africans’ dispersal and immersion are the markers of who they are across the African world (Mbembe 27–8). He examines some of the major voluntary and involuntary movements of Africans across the Sahara, Atlantic and Indian Ocean to mark forced and chosen contexts where African people must negotiate the interviewing of various cultures. There is a perpetual movement of Africans, and along with the presence of foreigners in Africa itself, has created over time a complexity of

blended, mixed, or hybridized African cultures. Being aware of this complexity is a key component of his Afropolitanism (Mbembe).

Afropolitanism becomes a powerful aesthetic, or a particular poetic of the world. It is a way of being in the world, refusing on principle any form of victim identity—which does not mean that it is not aware of the injustice and violence inflicted on the continent and its people by the law of the world. It is also a political and cultural stance in relation to nation, race and difference in general (Mbembe). Further, Mbembe defines it as a transnational culture in which its members are able to embrace and “recognize one’s face in that of a foreigner and make the most of the traces of remoteness in closeness, to domesticate the unfamiliar, to work with what seems to be opposites” (Mbembe 23).³ Mbembe’s Afropolitan can be understood as inclusive of both the stationary and constantly traveling African Diaspora subject, given that their environments provide access to knowledge about their oppression, and that the emergence of telecommunication and internet-based spaces increases their ability to retrieve resources that connect them to other cultures globally.

The ‘Naija’ identity is a product of the transnational and transformative nature of the Nigerian Diaspora. It is self-defined by its people and it has come to denote a purposeful and useful function for Nigeria in the world; it acknowledges and unifies Nigerians everywhere and asserts an emotional attraction and belonging to the Nigerian homeland. Simultaneously referring to a land, a people, and the cultural artifacts that it claims its own, ‘Naija’ has come to represent the distinctiveness of Nigerian globality. In this respect it is an identity that is transnational and a global socio-cultural construction and representation of New Africa Diaspora communities drawn from the multi-faceted lived experiences of the post-colonial Nigerian

³ Using Mbembe’s piece on Afropolitanism, J.K.S. Makokha suggests that Africans in the west are automatically Afropolitan. The perpetual dispersals of Africans is an “ongoing phenomenon powered by personal ambition, political strife” (Wawrzinek and Makokha 16).

nation. In his book, *Naija No They Carry Last!* Nigerian Diaspora scholar, Pius Adesanmi refers to ‘Naija’ as not just the Nigerian country, a geographical location, but also as an attitude, a way of being and acting in the world. The title itself evokes a Nigerian saying that loosely translates to “Nigerians always win, they never come in last,” asserting a normal disposition of Nigerians as prideful, confident, and successful people (*Naija No Dey, Carry Last!*). A popular translocal show, *Naija Bites*—in using ‘Naija’ in its title—demonstrates the global reach, presence, and impact that Nigerian diasporas currently have on the world. Each season of the show is hosted in London, Los Angeles, Atlanta, or Lagos, and in traveling between these three countries (UK, USA, and Nigeria) attempts to incorporate local Nigerian diasporic interpretations of traditional Nigerian dishes, visual aesthetics of various Nigerian attire, and narratives of the Nigerian diasporic lived experience (“Naija Bites”). In doing so, the show brings together diverse Nigerian cultures into one existence—‘Naija’—that is a pluralistically global but united identity.

Indeed the Nigerian Diaspora, like other African cultural diasporas in the post-colonial era, have been forged as a result of these multifarious identities that are transformed and created in geo-circular spaces. The cultural expressions of these identities, African cultural productions, have taken shape in various forms over time but have consistently represented the African’s own image of himself or herself in the world. Despite the colonial and racial impositions of self and culture emergent African world cultural representations of self are akin to narratives of home. Carole Boyce Davies’ notion of ‘writing home’ can help to visualize the salience of this study’s goal to reveal and illustrate how the ‘Naija’ identity is not only formed but intentionally represented by members of the Nigerian Diaspora in light of oppressive conditions of the diaspora (e.g. cultural hegemony, post-colonialism, racialism). The idea of ‘writing home’ comes from Davies’ analysis of the Black female migrant, who negotiates her dispossessed

identities and then must remember them in order to write of her experiences (Davies 114). Writing home is the process of self-definition, which “takes into account the multifaceted nature of human existence and female identity.” Said differently, writing home allows the Black female migrant to remember and articulate her identities, which moves beyond linear histories and metanarratives of self and identity. It is a form of resistance to domination, remembering and articulating where one is from and “locating home in its many transgressive and disjunctive experiences” (Davies 114–6). The ability to translate one’s reality and everyday understating of what it means to exist in the diaspora into written form creates knowledge about an individual, and in relation to their diverse communities and identities (e.g. Black female, Black South African, Nigerian dyke, Nigerian Christian).

African Diasporas

The African Diaspora, like the ebbs and flows of its formation, is imagined and defined by scholars continuously, multifariously, and vastly based on the conditions and forces that formed it. It is also defined by how African descendent people have responded to these forces and conditions, and transformed their cultural identities in light of their experiences. The nature of the African Diaspora continuously changes as Africans move and create community across time and space. African Diaspora theorists such as Kim Butler and Ruth Simms Hamilton examine the African Diaspora by locating major factors that lead to the creation of its communities (i.e. relations to homeland/hostland, geo-circularity, conditions of dispersal, agents of resistance) (Butler; Hamilton). There are patterns and consistencies of global processes and identity formation in the making of the African Diaspora must be explored in order to define the emergence of the contemporary African Diaspora, or the New African Diaspora. What is the New African Diaspora and how is it distinguished from historically located formations of the

African Diaspora? What are the shared characteristics of historic and neo-diasporas that can be used to define them systematically? This section engages these questions in order to provide the context necessary to understand how the New African Diaspora was forged, and how transnationalism and globalization contribute to its formation.

Specific to the movement of Africans to the West, the African Diaspora is marked by the displacement and deterritorialization of Africans due to systems of Western imperialism: the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and colonialism (Okpewho and Nzegwu; Falola, *The History of Nigeria*). Robin Cohen offers that African Diaspora communities, often being a result of multiple displacements, become “traveling cultures” that combat erasure of their homeland identities by centering African religious, cultural, and economic achievements in their hostlands (Cohen 123–134). As a result, the movement of African people has been a consistent factor in the development of African Diaspora communities, cultures, and identity.

As the lived experiences of African communities are revealed, and paralleling conditions are determined, the study of the African Diaspora constantly shifts to consider how the patterns of African world denote meaning about African people worldwide. Paul Zeleza offers a definition of the African Diaspora, which attempts incorporate its multifaceted and shifting existence. He defines it simultaneously as...

...a process, a condition, a space and a discourse: the continuous processes by which diaspora is made, unmade and remade, the changing conditions in which it lives and expresses itself, the places where it is moulded and imagined, and the contentious ways in which it is studied and discussed. It entails a culture and a consciousness, sometimes diffused and sometimes concentrated, of a 'here' separate from a 'there,' a 'here' that is often characterized by a regime of marginalization and a 'there' that is invoked as a rhetoric of self-affirmation, of belonging to 'here' differently. (Zeleza 41)

The African Diaspora’s existence is subject to the conditions (i.e. political, social, economic) of the geographical spaces (i.e. ‘here’ and ‘there’) where its members are able to imagine collective

memories and mold their cultural expressions. It is in this conditional space that the identities of African Diaspora communities are studied, based on the factors that determine how Diaspora communities refer to, and connect to, their homelands and hostlands.

Kim Butler and Ruth Simms Hamilton offer structures of African Diaspora formation that can help to operationalize Zeleza's definition into parts that can be applied to determine the nuanced nature of diasporic communities. Butler recognizes that distinctions need to be made between migration and diaspora, in order to determine if acculturation and ethnonationalism are intrinsic dynamics of diasporas. She understands that all of humanity may be considered part of a diaspora if movement is its distinguishing characteristic. Thus she provides a way to examine diaspora from the perspective of singular binding conditions of community making, by concentrating on shared and essential characteristics of diaspora and examining their status through five dimensions: "reasons for, and conditions of, the dispersal"; "relationships with the homeland"; "relationship with hostlands"; "interrelationships within communities of the diaspora"; and "comparative studies of different diasporas" (Butler 195).

A comprehensive study of a single diaspora (e.g. Nigerian, African American, Afro-Brazilian, 'Nuyorican') is possible by centering the sites where diasporas take form—"the homeland, the hostland, and the diasporan group itself" (Butler 195). Butler argues that if the first four categories exist forming a diaspora community, then naturally they can be compared to another diaspora. These dimensions promise distinct characteristics to identify a single diaspora, and I offer that the relationships between each dimension are also necessary to understand how one affects the other, especially given transnationalism currently plays a larger factor amongst diasporans as a result of globalization. Where would the Afropolitan identity—which includes those individuals from and constantly moving (physically or through networks) between multiple

diaspora and homeland communities—fit into this category? It would fit into many of these categories while manifesting itself differently within the sites of interest, dependent on the freedom an environment allows diasporans to negotiate identities. She or he—the Afropolitan—would fit into their diasporic community, but while having nuanced experiences that create a community of consciousness of people from highly pluralized geographically based diasporic experiences.

The extent to which members of the African Diaspora are able to acculturate or maintain ethnonational identities is related to the way hostlands relate to diaspora populations. However, what emerges from these relationships must also be accounted for to understand the texture of diaspora communities. Ruth Simms Hamilton’s social identity formations provide a useful theory to examine the African Diaspora, which accounts for this by also examining power in relation to the oppression that the diaspora communities face (i.e. agents of resistance, power domination and inequality). She conceptualizes the African Diaspora as connoting people whose “social relationships have been largely inscribed by their geographical displacement at historically significant moments” (Hamilton 4). The social relationships are distinguished as a salient point of reference to help understand and explain identity formation within the African diaspora.

Four tools are used to aid in identifying the characteristics of the African diaspora: geo-social mobility and displacement, power domination and inequality, agents of resistance and communities of consciousness. Members of African Diasporas commonly experience “the persistence of oppression, racialization, prejudice and discrimination, political disenfranchisement, and hostile social environments” (Hamilton 7). While geo-circularity and communities of consciousness provide parallel conditions to Butler’s framework, power domination and inequality as well as agents of resistance focuses in on the structures of

oppression and questions how communities have responded to said oppression. The nature of the displacement and oppressive dispossessions of Africans in Diaspora must emerge in order to understand relational constructs of self, community and home. This study considers and reveals some of these characteristics of diaspora in order to systematically define and describe the New African Diaspora more broadly, and the Nigerian Diasporas specifically.

Where and when does the New African Diaspora begin, and where did it come from? In an attempt to map the African Diaspora, historian Colin Palmer examines the African Diaspora temporally by drawing attention to six phases of African migration. Neo-diasporas, and specifically the New African Diaspora are part of the sixth phase, which accounts for the contemporary movement of all African descendent people. Palmer, considering the chronology of African dispersal from the beginning of time, categorizes African Diasporas into pre-modern and modern diasporas (Palmer). The first of the pre-modern diasporas are the very first movements out of the continent or great exodus two million years ago until 100,000 years ago. The second phase includes the migrations of Bantu-speaking people, or the Bantu expansion, from now West Africa to other parts of the continent and across the Indian Ocean beginning in 3,000 BC.

The modern diasporas are more commonly discussed: the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in the 15th century, the East African Slave trade ending during the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, and the contemporary movement of Africans (Palmer 57–8). The movements are also a function of Arab and Muslim trade and enslavement within the African continent, and as a result of the spread of Islam especially in Northern Africa (Falola, *The African Diaspora*). Outward, the migrations to the Middle East also included the development of a slave market in Mecca, which brought involuntary and voluntary migrations to the Arabian Peninsula. Africans, as well as

Circassians, Malays, Indians, and central Asians were also enslaved in this market (Falola and Usman). The Trans-Atlantic slave trade beginning in the 15th century marks one of the most profound migrations of African people, because it established the Atlantic region as an “active trading network that united four continents in the exchange of people, goods, and service” (*The African Diaspora* 37). Involuntarily enslaved and displaced, Africans of this diaspora were brought to the Americas in the millions from the 15th to 19th century (Falola and Usman).

The contemporary African Diaspora, marked primarily by the movement of post-colonial Africans but beginning in the late 19th century, maintains many of these trading networks post enslavement, but also includes transnational networks between Africans themselves (Palmer). It must be pointed out that this diaspora’s geo-circularity includes the development of diaspora communities composed of African descendants in and out of Africa, moving to between various African Diaspora hostlands and African homelands. For instance, by the 1950s and 1960s members of the historic African Diaspora in the northern hemisphere were moving to other parts of the world including African American expatriates to Ghana and South Africa, Haitians to the Congo, and Caribbean immigrants to the United Kingdom. While these migrations were often voluntary, many of these movements were determined by governments or international companies who control immigration laws and labor industries, respectively, and thus determine how and when Africans can move. With a history of imperialism so extensive and a continuous history of movements, scholars of the African Diaspora must be comparative in their analysis and consider other geographical regions because of what can be gained by understanding different African communities’ modern diaspora experience.

It becomes clear, that although many of these migrations may be voluntary, they are a result conditions of both homeland and hostlands relationships. The New African Diaspora is

marked by the shift from imperialism functioning via the Trans-Atlantic slave trade to functioning via colonialism and neocolonial continuums. Isidore Okpewho defines New African Diaspora by characterizing “the older diaspora as precolonial and the more recent one as post-colonial, or... ..the diaspora of enslavement and the diaspora of imperialism,” noting that the latter uses “Western European colonialism over African nations” to replace the Trans-Atlantic slave trade (Okpewho and Nzegwu 5). The persistence of colonialism over African nations, and people, remains a consistent marker of the African Diaspora, an appropriation of African economic, natural, political, and social resources.

Dividing the New African Diaspora by the conditions of dispersal, Paul Zeleza imagines this diaspora in three waves: “the diasporas of colonization, decolonization, and the era of structural adjustment.” The diaspora of colonization includes “students who went to study abroad and stayed, seamen who became settlers, and many others who could migrate and become citizens according to the prevailing immigration regimes of the host countries” (Zeleza 55). The diaspora of decolonization includes those who migrated during the struggles for independence as well as immediately afterwards. The diaspora of the era of structural adjustment include professionals, traders, refugees, and many others who’ve come in what is considered the neocolonial era.

Like Palmer’s distinctions of the African Diaspora, this contemporary Diaspora, or New African Diaspora, there are a number of reasons that force migration and propels African people to different parts of the world. The section of the poem below, “Home,” by Kenyan-British poet Warsan Shire, provides an example of how one negotiates leaving home for asylum seeking reasons.

No one leaves home unless
home is the mouth of a shark

You only run for the border
When you see the whole city running as well

...
You have to understand,
that no one puts their children in a boat
unless the water is safer than the land (Shire)

In this case, the need to seek asylum away from one's home only exists once home becomes "the mouth of a shark" that must be escaped for survival. Evidence of this is drawn in her reference to immigrants putting "their children in a boat," believing that what lies ahead is better than from where they once came. For instance, from January to April of 2015 alone, over 20,000 migrants from Eritrea, Somalia, Nigeria, Gambia, Senegal, Mali, and Sudan crossed the Mediterranean Sea to Italy. At the same time, during the same time span, thousands died or were lost in sea (Almukhtar et al.). African migrants traveling from North Africa to Italy make up the largest population of migrants crossing the sea, as well as the largest population of deaths and missing persons. Shire's reference to the border is fitting here suggesting that migrants do not leave alone; you run when "you see your whole city" running too. There is a collective of shared experiences in the homeland, a place that has been deemed no longer inhabitable. Seeking asylum, as well as seeking education, labor and income are the major reasons why African immigrants leave their homes along newly paved routes to the African Diaspora. Some of the conditions that allow or control how and where they move vary from host country immigration laws, skilled labor needs, refugee NGOs programs, and multi-country organizations (Okpewho and Nzegwu). The New African Diaspora consists of migrants displaced by deterritorialization, a persistent residue from colonial rule.

Juan Flores, in *The Diaspora Strikes Back: Caribeño Tales of Turning and Learning* imagines neo-diasporas by focusing on what the members of diasporas contribute to their hostland and homelands. Neo-diasporas are defined as the displacement, migration, and dispersal

of individuals away from their homelands. However, unlike the majority of historic diasporas, Flores considers dispersals that are primarily voluntary and occurring in the context of contemporary or post-colonial forces such as globalization, transnationalism, and post-colonialism. Diasporic hostlands in the global north are often in dominating positions to exert power in homelands of the global south (i.e. Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic), while at the same controlling economic, political, and social hegemony in receiving countries (i.e. USA). The receiving countries find themselves deriving a balance between finding attractive reasons for members of the global south to emigrate from their homes, while maintaining imperial power over immigrant communities never fully allowing them to become a part of the society of the hostland (Flores).

Neo-diaspora studies examine cultural, economic, political, and social causes driving diasporization, as well as analyzes the multi-locality and self-consciousness developed by the social group (Flores). Flores suggests that the hostile conditions of hostlands created by domination, and specifically racial and ethnic oppression, creates a ‘radicalized diaspora.’ This said Flores defines neo-diasporas as a combination of racial oppressions felt in the hostland, the reasons why the populations emigrated, and how they negotiate and understand their own identities. He asks, “how do they identify themselves relative to where they are, where they came from, and where they are going?” (Flores). Judith Shuval adds to the distinction of neo-diasporas by suggesting that the “modern diaspora” insinuates a contemporary distinction between historical and modern diasporas because they consist of ethnic minorities groups that form communities in a hostland, and maintain strong ties to their homeland (Shuval 41). Similarly, the neo-diaspora framework also analyzes the ties between diaspora communities to their native lands, which are expressed through strong political and cultural participation in their ancestral

lands (Flores).

The Nigerian Diaspora, as will be described in Chapter 1, is situated within the wider discourse of New African Diaspora studies. As a country-based diaspora, its members leave with diverse notions of national and ethnic identities that they take with them wherever they go. These identities, in the case of the United States and South Africa for instance, are challenged by the systems of oppression (i.e. post-racialism, non-racialism) and discrimination (i.e. xenophobia/Afrophobia, racism) that they face in their hostlands. Nigerian diasporic communities are formed within the conditions of modern globalization, but emerge as the members of the communities have consciously defined and express themselves. Nigerian diasporas have been maintained as a result of economic, social, cultural, literary, and media-based networks between Nigeria and its developing diasporic communities. The relationship Nigeria has to its Diaspora adds to how it is characterized. This includes country-based organizations for diasporans, mobilization of resources for prospective migrants, and employment opportunities for diasporans who decide to return to Nigeria (Akinrinade and Ogen). The transnational identities of the Nigerian Diaspora, or the ‘Naija’ identity, unfolds vividly when examined vis-à-vis the characteristics that forge and maintain it, as well as how its members consciously exist within it.

Transnationalism and Globalization

Understanding the contemporary nature of transnationalism and globalization helps to determine how current world systems influence and affect the configurations of African Diaspora routes and the movements of African people. The social, economic, and political conditions of African nations in relation to global processes also influences how members of African country-based diasporas relate to their homelands and hostlands through transnational physical, social,

economic, and political networks. This section illustrates some of these global processes and subsequent transnational networks in order to answer the research questions that ask how the Nigerian Diaspora experiences transnationality, displacement, and relationships to home.

Globalization focuses on the way that Africa and Africans are able to participate in global systems of commerce, society, and policy, while transnationalism focuses on the multifarious networks created and maintained by African people.

Transnationalism addresses the circular movement of people, information, cultures, and citizenships that diaspora communities form as a result of constructing multiple locals of home. James Clifford suggests that diasporas can be considered “transnational migrations circuits” that represent experiences of displacement, of constructing multiple locales of home, of constantly transformed identities, and of interconnected cultural relationships (Clifford). This not only refers to African migrants, but African Diaspora communities who also maintain transnational networks based on contemporary constructions of home. The diaspora subject finds herself able to maintain relationships with the homeland, if not physically by visiting or returning, then by transnational portals and resources such as telephones, Internet, and multimedia devices. Their ongoing relationship with the hostland, by way of ability to assimilate or be accepted, and the homeland by way of myth, vision, or memory, are responsible for emergent transnational identities and networks (Clifford).

These transnational forms of communication forge informal and formal social networks that allow members of neo-diasporas to maintain connections to cultural, political, and economic systems at home and transfer knowledge to back to their hostlands. In this sense, transnationalism can be understood in relation to transculturalism. To be transnational, rather than some type of state apparatus type creation, involves the migrants and how they interact with

both their homes and hostlands. Focusing on transmission of culture, transculturalism “refers to continuities in migrants’ experiences: the simultaneous living of aspects of different cultures, the intersocietal and transfamilial economic nexus of remittances, the emotional ties between family member in two or more cultural spaces” (Harzig, Hoerder, and Gabaccia 83–4). Transculturalism offers a nuanced means to examine transnationalism because refers to the transformative cultural spaces that are created between a homeland and the hostland(s) in which people live. A transcultural individual or community may “live in two or more differing cultures and, in the process, to create a transcultural space which permits movements and linkages between the evolving space of origin, entry into the evolving space of designation, connections to other spaces, and the everyday praxes of métissage, fusion, negotiation, conflict, and resistance” (Harzig, Hoerder, and Gabaccia 84–5).

The transcultural networks are formed by the members of the diasporas. When they leave home with their notions of cultural identity, they then forge global spaces where their communal identity is re-created, sent back home, re-created, and sent back again. However, the homeland and hostland countries’ allowance of these cultural remittances affect *how* and *how often* members neo-diasporas can transfer knowledge. Examining the Dominican Republic community in New York, Nancy Foner suggests that with migration of groups there are networks developed and maintained that allow for information to pass, relationships to be maintained, transnational governance and business enterprise, and the forging of transnational identities and citizenship (Foner). For instance, some citizens of the Dominican Republic who live in New York travel back to the Dominican Republic in order to vote for upcoming elections. Candidates from the Dominican Republic may find it relevant to campaign in New York and maintain relationships with its transnational citizens. At the same time economic remittances from members of the

Dominican Republic Diaspora, and many other country-based diasporas, have become one of the most lucrative foreign exchanges for its homeland's government (Foner). Many transnational subjects find a multitude of ways to maintain dual or multiple citizenships as well as affiliations to homelands and hostlands. It follows that the nature of transnational networks depends on not only the moving diasporic subjects, but how they relate to both their homelands and hostlands.

If African transnationalism is the collective system of ideas, people, resources, knowledge, culture, and religion moving between African homelands and Diasporic hostlands, then globalization is the apparatus that controls and determines how fluidly those systems rotate. Africans have participated in globalization since antiquity; their contributions to global systems have long involved the development of civilization. The globalization of the modern world cannot be effectively discussed without an accurate account of the role Africa has played in creating it. Africa has participated in the transferal of resources, cultures, ideas, and identities that are the fabric of global networks, and have been doing so for a long time.

Considering different phases of Africa's role in globalization, John Lonsdale suggest it participated in 'archaic globalization' and 'protoglobalization' that facilitated the development of cosmopolitanism. Examples of Africa in the 'archaic globalization' involved the development of commerce along the Nile between communities, the rise of West African kingdoms in order to control the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and the trade of gold in places like Ghana and Zimbabwe. However, most of these powers were based on smaller group, ethnic-based powers and not participating in domination in a global scale. Because of the nature of commercial domination, Africa was never able to gain market sway within the economic side of globalization (Lonsdale 199–202).

As we move into the modern globalization, in relation to the emergence of neo-diasporas,

we find that marginalizing Africa away from an equal and central participation in global was needed in order to assert Western empire. Lonsdale suggests this is a “de-globalization of Africa,” a colonial re-definition of tribes attributes and abilities can affect shifts in the identification of tribes, ethnic, groups and individuals. De-globalization occurs when one’s people, or ethnicity, is stripped of its worldly perspective and forced to abide to a new national identity (Lonsdale 207). For instance, comparing the large transatlantic migrations in the second half of the nineteenth century to the contemporary mass movement to Italy, Di Maio explains that migratory waves of Africans are “bounded in space, time, and scale” and that the contemporary flows to Europe involve the entire world and its global market, and are characterized by new forms of economic, political, and cultural transnationalization (Di Maio 123).

However, while these systems are working, there are counter systems created in African continental, regional, diasporic, and country-based spaces that work to reincorporate Africa into the world by through processes of self-definition. Some examples include the development of Third Cinema, Pan-Africanism, Negritude, and the emergence of African literature globally; later the African Union, the African Renaissance; and specific to Nigeria, Nollywood and Naija Mix. These industries, institutions, and movements mark some of African and African Diaspora cultural, political, and media contributions to the world in the mid to late 20th century and into the 21st century.

Specific to this study, the African Renaissance and the African Union’s (AU) African Cultural Renaissance charter are examples of contemporary movements that focus on the reclaiming of African world histories and cultures and the self-definition of African identities. Thabo Mbeki, South Africa’s second president of the Republic of South Africa and African

Renaissance leader, articulates the African Renaissance as a response to centuries of European domination. In *The African Renaissance: South Africa and the World*, Mbeki suggest that as South Africans [we]...

...speak of an African Renaissance, we project into both the past and the future. I speak here of a glorious past of the emergency of homo sapiens on the African continent. I speak of works of art in South Africa that are a thousand years old. I speak of the continuum of the fine arts that encompasses the varied artistic creations of the Nubians and the Egyptians, the Benin bronzes of Nigeria and the intricate sculptures of the Makonde of Tanzania and Mozambique. (Mbeki 7)

What he does is historicize the African past, within the context of the skills and trades produced in those times to characterize whom the people are. Mbeki centers the African subject within the African Renaissance, considering it a space to “rebel, to assert the principality of her humanity—that she, in the first instance, is not a beast of burden, but a human and African being” (8). And in doing so, Africans can re-position Africa for a renewal, a rebirth, that will lead to their freedom through self-definition of liberation.

Another example of a Pan-African project aimed at repositioning the African subject globally is the AU’s *Charter for African Cultural Renaissance*, which argues that political, economic, and social liberation for Africans cannot be achieved divorced from cultural development, considering that culture “constitutes for our peoples the surest means to chart Africa’s own course towards technological development, and the most efficient response to the challenges of globalization” (African Union 3). The AU recognized the existing and future challenges Africa and the African Diaspora, and by extension the rest of the world, faces by not being able to promote and transfer their cultural identities and cultural diversity into the global scene of information and communication technologies.

Article 6: At national level, the promotion of identities consists of fostering mutual understanding and coordinating inter-cultural and inter-generational dialogue. At global level, the promotion of African identities exemplifies African dignity and freedoms. It

presents African values and the contribution of Africa and the African Diaspora to the building of universal civilization. (African Union 6)

Africans globally need modern day apparatuses to harness, preserve, and promote African cultural heritages, which the AU believes is critical to combatting cultural oppression and by extension is critical to decolonization. The charter acts as a guideline for the African subject globally to participate in promoting their identities culturally by infusing their cultural heritage into various aspects of everyday life (i.e. education, communicative technologies, government policies), and find means to participate in transnational networks to disseminate these cultural experiences and knowledge systems to learn from other Africans globally, and ultimately to continue building Pan-Africanism.

Transnationalism and globalization offer ways to understand the some of major forces that work with and push against the African world, its geographically scattered lands and people. No doubt, how African Diaspora individuals or communities identity is continuously transformed as products of these conditions. The following section examines transnational networks in a more nuanced manner, by focusing African cultural diasporas and their cultural industries and cultural productions.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Cultural Production: Film, Literature, TV, Music, and Social Media

This project examines cultural productions and its producers by using Stuart Hall's definition of Black popular culture and Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical framing of cultural productions within his book *The Field of Cultural Production* (Bourdieu and Johnson). Bourdieu frames the social conditions and structures in which cultural works are produced, circulated, and

consumed as critical tools for understanding their perceived meaning and subsequent societal impact. Artwork only becomes a cultural production, or a symbolic object, if it is

known and recognized, that is, socially instituted as works of art and received by spectators capable of knowing and recognizing them as such, the sociology of art and literature has to take as its object not only the material production but also the symbolic production of work, i.e. the production of the value of the work or, which amounts to the same thing, of belief in the value of the work. It therefore has to consider as contributing to production of not only the direct producers of the work in its materiality (artist, writer, etc.) but also the producers of the meaning and value of the work - critics, publishers, gallery directors and the whole set of agents whose combined efforts produce consumers capable of knowing and recognizing the work of art as such, in particular teachers (but also families, etc.). (Bourdieu and Johnson 37)

Similar to Hall's definition of representations, or the links between things, concepts, and signs drawn from a shared cultural space, Bourdieu suggests cultural productions produce meaning when members of a society accept and then disseminate artwork as being representative of their cultures. It is then that the productions can take part in shaping and contributing to the actual community they represent; that is when the community accepts the production into its collective knowledge of who they are.

To this end, this project forefronts Nigerian Diaspora artists who are consciously and actively "doing" culture by creating it. Similar to Bourdieu's cultural productions, "doing" culture refers to the artist who consciously considers the social conditions that influence the texture of cultural spaces (i.e. cultural norms, "invisible rules that guide our behavior"), and then actively thinks about the effects these conditions have on situating cultural practices (Zobl and Klaus). Cultural productions can come in numerous forms such as books, poetry, film, fine arts, television, performance, cuisine, music, fashion, scriptures, course lessons, sports, sculptures, etc. This project focuses specifically on media-based cultural productions (i.e. film, television, music videos, and social media shows) and literary cultural productions (i.e. novels).

The films examined in this dissertation join the cohort of cultural productions called

African cinema. In the 1950s and 1960s, African films around the world were created in light of the shared oppressive conditions facing African people (Bakari and Cham). Similar to African cinema, the emergence of post-colonial literature was characterized by African and African Diaspora artists' ability to reveal their cultural practices in their writings, in light of and against structures of colonial domination (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin). Today, various African film industries and African writers have emerged from these traditions. Following the literary tradition set by earlier writers, New African Diaspora cultural producers are producing novels that are being published both in diasporic and homeland spaces. In the case of Nigeria's film industry, Nollywood, extensions of this industry have materialized that encompass the artists in this study. New Nollywood⁴ refers to artists who attempt to increase the aesthetic nature of their films and Nollywood Diaspora refers to films created by Nigerians outside of Nigerian who specifically attempt to elevate "social consciousness of Nigerians and the image of Nigerians across the world" (Morales).

African produced television shows have emerged and expanded as multinational media companies developed and began to compete with African film industries. Companies such as Africa Magic and Multichoice have hired filmmakers to create television shows, but also began to sponsor filmmakers' movies and as a result limited the scope of content for national imperatives (Krings and Okome). The South African television industries, attempting to portray a multicultural post-apartheid South Africa, began to promote television shows that represent diverse South African and international communities, cultures, and languages.

Specific to the single musician in this study, Wale, African American hip hop is the main venue of his cultural production. However, it may be important to note major Nigerian musical

⁴ Haynes also describes that New Nollywood films attempt to be distributed through DVD formats as well as Nigerian theaters (Hayes).

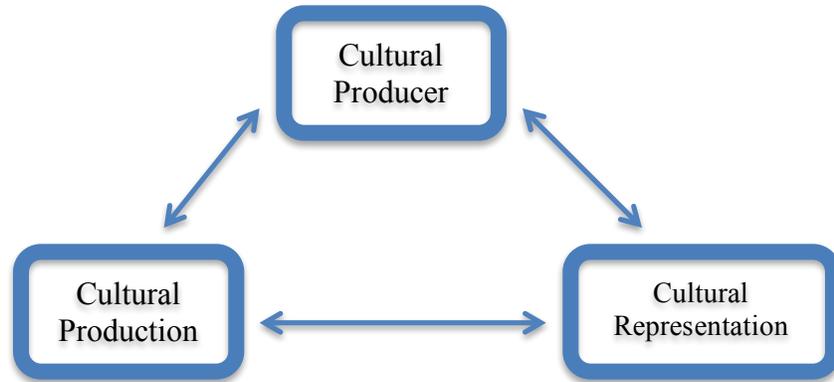
styles that may influence his work, including Highlife, Afrobeat, and more recently Naija Mix. Wale and most of the cultural producers in study also fall into the category of popular cultural producers who actively use social media as a means to promote their artwork. H. Cecilia Suhr, referring to social media as part of the digital field of cultural production, considers social media as hybrid sites where cultural producers have many roles. They have many roles, because social media may be used to not only post songs and videos, but to maintain interactive communication streams between cultural producers and their audience. It is hybrid because it can be on one hand a place where unknown artists use social networking sites to generate an audience, and on the other a place for known artists to increase and expand their audience (Suhr). Examining both sides, YouTube is used in this study as a social media site of analysis. On one hand an emerging Nigerian cultural producer whose career was made through YouTube is examined (i.e. Wowo Boyz), and on the other the two music videos of an already popular Wale that are used in this study were posted and shared onto Wale's YouTube page.

Cultural Nigerian Diasporas: A Methodological Framework

The methodology employed by the dissertation will extend Bourdieu's approach of cultural production to cultural diasporas and new African diasporas. Drawing from the artistic works in film, TV, music, social media and literature of select Nigerian diaspora artists, I have formulated a heuristic framework for examining and analyzing Nigerian Diaspora formation through cultural productions, cultural producers, and cultural representations (Figure 1). The study reveals the linkages between the Nigerian cultural producer and the production she or he creates by examining the relationships between these three. These 'Naija' cultural producers create cultural meaning about Nigerians in the Diasporas through novels, films, music, social media productions, and television media. As a result, Nigerian cultural producers represent the

‘Naija’ identity through their cultural productions and cultural identities.

Figure 1: CULTURAL AFRICAN DIASPORAS: A METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK



The research design serves to interrogate the varying ‘Naija’ identities of the producers, who are part of the Nigerian Diaspora. It also examines these identities in relation to specific aspects of the culture they produce to draw on racial, cultural (life-style), ethnic, and transnational representations evident in their works. The representations help to understand not only the nature of the cultural productions, but also the relationship the cultural producer has to those representations. The African diasporic variables that I use to interrogate my thesis about the ‘Naija’ identity in the global African diaspora (the US and South Africa) are race, ethnicity, culture, and transnationality. These variables are used specifically in analyzing the cultural productions through content analysis. The goal is to understand how each of these variables is represented in the cultural productions, accumulating to diverse expressions of the ‘Naija’ identity.

Much has been written about both Diaspora hostlands that are the contexts of this study of Nigerian Diasporas. The US and South Africa are both historically constituted by racial formation theses where foundationally both states and societies have been formed by White Supremacy and racial segregation. George Fredrickson, Anthony Marx, and Howard Winant and

Michael Omi have all presented theories of racial capitalism and state racism that inform both countries in the contexts of national and global contexts of racialism. A significant consensus exists that the concept of race persists, as idea, as practice, as identity, and as social structure; this fact will be supported through the dissertation study of Nigerian Black immigrants to the multi-racial countries US and South Africa.

Themes of Post-racialism in the US and Non-racialism in South Africa will be used to understand the formation of Nigerian Diasporic racial identities. In terms of racial identities, race is examined both from national and global contexts of racialism. W.E.B. Dubois' concept of double-consciousness is essential to this framing, in considering the intra-racial experiences and references the cultural producers use to explain or differentiate one's Blackness in relation to Whiteness. Double-consciousness refers to the feeling of twoness that Black people feel as a result of their indigeneity (Africanness) clashing with the dominating culture of the West (America) (Du Bois). This is used to interrogate race in the United States and South Africa, but I also consider the racialized space that Western imperialism and post-colonialism pose in racially dividing and dominating Black spaces, people, and ideologies in the African world.

Ethnicity is examined similar to Candis Watts Smith's definition of pan-ethnicity, or an intraraciality of Blackness. That is to say that within a Black racial category, and in light of new African diasporas to the USA and South Africa, there are many nationalities and ethnic groups that exist creating moments of intra-racial tension and cohesion (Smith). In South Africa, Afrophobia is a perceived fear of and bias against peoples from Africa, including the African Diaspora. Primarily a cultural phenomenon, it pertains to the various traditions and peoples of Africa, irrespective of racial origin.

Culture, like Hall's definition of Black cultural repertoires, refers to the representations of

the inheritances from their African heritage (Hall, “What Is the ‘Black’”). That is to say, this study extrapolates the Nigerian cultural life-style references such as use of languages (i.e. Pidgin, Igbo, Yoruba, “Nigerian” accent), cuisine, clothing, traditional practices, etc. Lastly, transnationality is used similar to Flores’ definition of remigrant, or transnational members of neo-diasporas. This may be in the form of physical, communicative (i.e. mail, internet, phone), or imagined movements and networks between Nigeria, the site of location (hostland), and perhaps any other geographical spaces brought into the cultural production’s narrative.

This study applies this framework to two sites of analysis, the United States and South Africa, in order to draw connections to, and meaning about, the Africana domain of inquiry (McDougal 4).⁵ Like case studies, they provide insight to the social construction of diverse ‘Naija’ identities consisting of various manifestations of other diasporic identities (i.e. racial, ethnic, cultural, transnational) As such, a critical study that is also systematic must be used to engage the complexities involved in forging identity, community, and ways of knowing. For this dissertation study, the use of both qualitative and quantitative approaches to answer the research questions allows for increased reliability of the data collected (i.e. content analysis, semi-structured interviews). The goal is to locate representations of the Nigerian Diaspora or ‘Naija’ identity using these cultural producers and cultural productions as the subjects and objects of study.

Table 1 shows the nine cultural producers and the respective cultural productions that are used in this study. They were chosen based on their cultural production, which represents at least two of the variables defined above. The cultural producers were examined through a combination of semi-structured interviews and public interviews. The semi-structured interviews were

⁵ The Africana Studies domain theory suggests that the African world is the domain of inquiry for the Africana Studies researcher. That is to say that ‘Africana’ refers to African and African descent people and communities culturally, geographically, and that “stretches beyond time, space, politically boundaries, and continental shores.”

collective over the past four years. I was unable to interview Wale and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, but able to gather answers to interview questions from their extensive database of public interviews and public talks (audio, video, transcriptions) found by searching the Internet. I interviewed the rest in their current cities, in a space of their choosing between the United States and South Africa. The goal of the interviews was to learn about the cultural producers in relation to 1) their backgrounds and journeys (or parents' journeys) to their hostland; 2) their relationships to their homelands/hostlands (i.e. how they identify and/or define home, encounters with other African diasporas, and experiences of belonging/discrimination); and 3) the cultural production examined in this study. The semi-structured interview draws from the major research questions to ask open-ended questions in this regard (Appendix A). The results of these interviews are revealed in Appendix C, and used in Chapter 2 as a way to introduce the cultural producers and explore their cultural productions from their own perspectives.

Table 1: SELECT CULTURAL PRODUCERS, CULTURAL PRODUCTIONS, AND REPRESENTATIONS

Cultural Producers	Cultural Productions	Cultural Representations
	United States of America	(most prominent)
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie	<i>Americanah</i> (novel)	(e.g. racial, cultural, transnational, ethnic)
Yvonne Fly Onakeme Etaghene	<i>For Sizakele</i> (novel)	(e.g. cultural, ethnic, racial, transnational)
Rahman Oladigbolu	<i>In America: The Story of the Soul Sisters</i> (film)	(e.g. racial, ethnic, transnational)
Wale	“My Sweetie” and “The God Smile” (music videos)	(e.g. cultural, transnational)
Andrew Ogale	<i>Wowo Boyz</i> YouTube Channel	(e.g. cultural, ethnic)
	Republic of South Africa	
Yewande Omotoso	<i>Bom Boy</i> (novel)	(e.g. racial, transnational)
Akin Omotoso (director) AND Fabian Lojede (actor, producer)	<i>Man on Ground</i> (film)	(e.g. ethnic, cultural, transnational)
Adze Ugah (director) AND Fabian Lojede (actor)	<i>Jacob's Cross</i> (TV show)	(e.g. ethnic, racial, cultural, transnational)

The cultural productions (novels, films, music videos, TV and social media shows) are the units of analysis examined in Chapters 3-5 as the major findings in this dissertation study. Qualitative content analysis was used to extrapolate evidence of racial, ethnic, cultural, and transnational identities. The whole texts were assessed, in the case of the films and novels. A sample of music videos and episodes were examined, rather than complete musical albums or television and social media seasons/series. The results are revealed qualitatively, drawing on examples from the cultural productions to represent emergent themes found from the content analyses (Appendix D). The final analysis will draw attention to how the relationships between the cultural production, cultural producer, and representation reveal meaning about the ‘Naija’ identity. The following section indicates further how this study comes together through the orientation of the dissertation.

CHAPTER ORIENTATION

Whereas this introduction chapter lays out the theoretical and methodological frameworks of the dissertation study, Chapter 1 examines some of the background and contextual components specific to the Nigerian Diaspora. Chapter 1 focuses on empirically placing Nigerians within the African Diaspora more generally, and in the United States and South Africa more specifically. It examines the historic dispersals of Nigerians out of Nigeria, and maps some of the major places Nigerians go, in order to distinguish the major contributing factors to migration, as well as identity formation in and out of the country. It also introduces Nigeria’s cultural diaspora, by revealing the diversity and geographical scope of some of its contemporary cultural producers. Defining the Nigerian Diaspora will thus engage the socio-political, socio-economic, and socio-cultural conditions of Nigeria, South Africa and the United

States in order to provide a deepened analysis of the routes and networks forged and maintained. Additionally, Appendix B provides a list of key definitions of terms used throughout the dissertation.

Chapter 2 uses narrative analysis to report on the findings from the Nigerian cultural producers based on the background data collected about them (i.e. semi-structured interviews and public interviews). The goal of this chapter is to reveal some of the ways transnational identities are understood and internalized, specifically from the gaze of the cultural producer who then creates cultural meaning about their diasporic communities. Chapters 3 through 5 uses data collected from content analysis of selected cultural productions. This is done to determine the extent and the ways ethnic, racial, cultural, and linguistic identities are represented in Nigerian cultural productions. Chapter 3 presents the literary Nigerian cultural productions from the United States (i.e. novels), while Chapter 4 presents on the media-based Nigerian cultural productions (i.e. music, online social media videos), and Chapter 5 focuses on select Nigerian cultural productions that come from South Africa.

The conclusion chapter analyzes these findings to reveal the ‘Naija’ identity, by analyzing the way that transnational African identities emerge in the cultural productions, the experiences of the cultural producers, and the representations created and disseminated about the Nigerian Diaspora. In an attempt to theoretically contribute to the way the African Diaspora is studied, it will provide an analysis of how the relationships between cultural productions, cultural producers, and representations can provide a method of defining and engaging the New African Diaspora. The dissertation will conclude by suggesting how I, and other scholars, can build on the scholarship about the Nigerian Diaspora specifically and the African Diaspora more generally, through interdisciplinary studies of its communities.

CONCLUSION

This study will use the interdisciplinary mixed-method approach of engaging African Diaspora producers, productions, and representations as a way to consider African-centered approaches to consuming and analyzing their cultural expressions. This study hopes to use cultural productions as a way to deepen the knowledge about African cultures, people, and communities away from primarily Western scholarship and theory. As a Black Studies scholar, this dissertation contributes to the body of knowledge that engages its disciplinary approaches to examining the lived experience. By achieving the objectives of demonstrating how identities are formed in the New African Diaspora, the study forefronts the complex networks within the contemporary African world and encourages future studies on how Diaspora communities engage their homelands and hostlands as a result of the conditions that produce them.

CHAPTER 1

'Naija' Pride: Forging the Nigerian Diaspora in the African World

“The reason I have so much confidence in what’s happening with Nollywood and Nigeria at the moment is, for me, so much of the confidence I have as an actor comes from my Nigerian heritage. I lived in Nigeria for seven years, from the age from six to thirteen, and something I learned there was how to walk into any situation as a king. We don’t know how to be shy. We don’t know how to walk into a room sideways.”

-David Oyelowo, Toronto Film Festival

At the 2016 Toronto Film Festival’s “City to City: Lagos” opening, Nollywood and Hollywood actor David Oyetokunbo Oyelowo greeted the Nigerian crowd “My people! E Kuurole o! [Good evening!]” (Oyelowo). He revealed to them that it had been a very long time since he had been in a room where people could properly pronounce his name. He excitedly shared his experiences in the African Diaspora, the United Kingdom specifically, switching between British and Nigerian Englishes. In one moment he was proudly saying his entire name with a Nigerian (Yoruba) accent, and in another pronouncing the “British” version of his name: David Oyelowo. Jokingly, he shared some of the vast differences between Nigerian and British culture, and how he negotiates it. When entering a casting audition, he suggested that his demeanor is a mix of British deference and Nigerian pride. His British side softly says, “Hello, yes, yes. My name is David Oyelowo. I’m going to be reading...” versus “the Nigerian side of me” who will proudly announce, “Ah ah! Just give me the part!” to become “Hello my name is David Oyelowo... Just give me the part!” This “mix” exemplifies how many Nigerian diasporic cultural producers similarly negotiate their transnational identities, forefronted with a firm sense of Nigerian pride (Oyelowo).

David Oyelowo, born and raised in England, represents the epitome of a Nigerian Diaspora subject identity and experience that the current dissertation study examines. He has

played seminal Hollywood roles (e.g. Martin Luther King in the movie, *Selma*) certainly making him a cultural producer of Nigerian Diaspority. What, where, and who is the Nigerian Diaspora? Oyelowo represents a prism through which we can examine the luster of the Nigerian Diaspora. Who is the Nigerian cultural producer in the contemporary African Diaspora, and how does she assert who she is, or who he is, in contrast to enforced identities in a hostland (e.g. Black, African)? How does the Nigerian Diaspora contribute to the African Diaspora as a whole, to historic and contemporary manifestations of the African Diaspora? These are the questions that this chapter engages. The chapter presents a conceptual and historical mapping of the Nigerian Diaspora by attempting to describe some characteristics of its development. It also contextualizes the Nigerian Diaspora in relation to contemporary (post-colonial) and historic manifestations of the broader African Diaspora.

The chapter lends specificity to this conceptualization by presenting this movement in relation to the 21st century cultural producer, examining the way cultural identities are maintained and expressed through Nigerian cultural productions around the African world. The Nigeria Diaspora, as a country-based manifestation of the New African Diaspora that has been forged as a result of the global conditions and processes that create new routes to and from African Diaspora. These post-colonial global conditions and processes influence the environment where emergent transnational—and what have been referred to in the Introduction as ‘Naija’ identities (i.e. racial, cultural, ethnic). These identities are created in combination with their existing and transforming cultures, knowledge, traditions, and ideologies. Taking globalization and transnational identities into account, the Nigerian Diaspora examined is an example of one of the largest emergent manifestations of African diaspora communities today, and reveals to what extent Nigerian Diaspora cultural identities projected in the media resonate in various

locations in the African world. The themes examined in this chapter beg the question of representation and expression of self, as resistance, or maintenance of a 'Naija' identity which can be manifest based on race, gender, ethnicity, language, class, sexuality or any intersection of identities that a member of the Nigerian Diaspora experience. Examples of Nigerian diasporas are drawn from across time and geographical space, while the chapter also connects historical movements of people of the now Nigerian region of West Africa to the modern day African diasporas.

Also examined is the way that members of the Nigerian Diaspora find a multitude of ways to negotiate, represent, and express who they are in the contemporary era of globalization within a post-colonial present. Physical and internet-based transitions between spaces in the African world make cross-communications more easily accessible (Okpewho). Nigerian films, music, and television find their way across the African world through media outlets such as Pan-African networks (i.e. MNet, Africa Magic), national-based networks (i.e. Africa Channel in USA, OHTV in UK, SABC in South Africa), internet-based channels (i.e. Iroku TV, Buni TV), and physical distribution networks (Krings and Okome). Nigerians and other Africans across the world, cultural producers or otherwise, also use social-media networks in many ways to forefront corrective or self-determined representations of oneself and one's community.

For instance, in 2014 the popular British TV cook Jaime Oliver traveled to Ghana to learn how to cook a dish traditional to many West African and Caribbean nations, jollof rice, traditionally cooked with blended tomatoes, oils, meats, and spices. As a result, his rendition of the dish, including parsley, lemon, and tomato slices, was posted on his website to the attack and dismay of many African people. Over 4,500 comments, and two popular twitter handles later (i.e. #jollofgate and #jollof), many Ghanaians, Nigerians and other Africans in the continent and

Diaspora had made clear that what Oliver made was not in fact jollof rice. Instead, recipes were offered to Oliver, along with pictures of elegant presentations of jollof rice in various African restaurants in the continent and the Diaspora. This attack was not one of derogatory put downs, as much as it was a use of satire to point out to a larger African community just how far from the mark Oliver was. Some examples by Nigerians from the social media community include, “Obituary: Jollof rice. Death by lemons,” and another “You had me at Jollof, but lost me at Jaime Oliver” (BBC Trending).

Of note also during this social media event was the aggressive Nigerian ownership of Jollof rice reflective of the rivalry between Nigerians and Ghanaians over the dish, and especially embodying Jollof rice as ‘Naija’ pride symbolism. The dispute sparked new articles and blogs further denouncing the dish and relating it to other appropriations of African world culture, as well as support in its denouncement from other parts of the African world. For instance, an African American woman weighed in: “I get it now. Jollof rice purity is my Iggy Azalea,” referring to the Australian ‘rap’ artist who has been criticized for her appropriation of African American hip-hop music and style. A southern African weighed in: “I’m Namibian, and even I can see this is a sorry excuse for a dish doesn’t even LOOK like Jollof Rice! How dare you sully the name of this very TASTY dish that my African brethren have perfected over the years?” (“That Time Jamie”). Though these responses were vast, some still critique the fact that as long as this recipe remains on Oliver’s popular website, non-African people who make the dish will begin to normalize Oliver’s version in the West as ‘jollof rice.’ However, the policing of the authenticity of Jollof rice on social media remains a form of resistance to attempts to appropriate African cultures. Black Twitter in the United States being a prime example, African world communities use social media to protect the beliefs and values of their community by

providing corrective narratives to popular culture representations. A pride of self and community is asserted by addressing their concerns for how non-Africans represent African people.

This assertion of pride is no less true for Nigerian cultural producers in the African Diaspora, though asserting one's identity is made complex by their experiences in the hostland. An example of this assertion of self and community is evident in the Nigerian film industry, Nollywood. It is the Nigerian film industry with one of the top grossing film industry worldwide (along with Hollywood and Bollywood). While their affinities to the goals of Third Cinema are contested, what they do is provide not only representations of African on Africans' terms, but they also exemplify alternative modes of mass production and global dissemination. Its reach includes Tanzania, Northern Nigeria, Brazil, the United States, South Africa, the United Kingdom, Kenya, to name a few (Krings and Okome). Translated into various languages, or cultures, the films become representative of Nigerian film, as well as Nigerian people throughout the world. It is the representations of Nigerian Diasporas that will be extrapolated from the cultural productions used in this study in order to characterize the transnational identities of the Nigerian Diaspora. The question of so called Nigerian represented as 'Naija' pride is further considered here, as the nature of and character of the Nigerian Diaspora is engaged to better understand how and why certain cultural productions and representations find their way through and between new routes of the New African Diaspora.

What follows then for this chapter will be an examination of the role that Nigerian cultural producers play, through media and their works, in making the African Diaspora and especially in representing Nigerian Diasporas in the 21st century African world. First, the Nigerian Diaspora is mapped using tools provided by African Diaspora scholars that identify diasporic communities based on shared characteristics including relationships to

homeland/hostland, conditions of dispersal, geo-social mobility and circularity, agents of resistance and communities of consciousness (Butler; Hamilton). The pre-colonial history of African migration and diaspora making is considered to better examine the circularity of Nigerian movement over time. Some of the major migration flows of Nigerians within the New African Diaspora are provided within the context of globalization, to reveal how the global economies and cultures influence the nature of these diasporic communities, or those of the Nigerian Diaspora that the cultural producers currently inhabit.

This chapter aims to distinctively exemplify how transnationalism and globalization contribute to the distinctiveness of the New African Diaspora formation, and how Nigerians experience transnationality, displacement and relationship to home within it. By focusing on Nigerian cultural producers, a sample of the Nigerian Diaspora, this chapter hopes to provide some context to how Nigeria is contributing to the processes and representations of the New African Diaspora, or better, the African world.

THE NIGERIAN DIASPORA IN THE MAKING: A HISTORY OF DISPERSAL AND IMPRINT

The New African Diaspora, as mentioned in the Introduction, begins after the end of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in the late 19th century. Rather than being a “new” phenomenon of African migration, it is examined as a continuation of the movement of African people using contemporarily determined conditions of globalization and imperialism. New routes look like increased telecommunication and internet-based communication systems, labor needs in the global North that attract members of the global South to Northern and Southern locations, obscure and latent methods of human trafficking and enslavement, hostile or desperate conditions at home that essentially force Africans from their homes, desires to reconnect with

certain homelands, and increased access to vehicles (i.e. plane, car, or boat) to transport them to their new destinations.

The Pre-colonial Diasporas and Migrations in Nigeria

The Bight of Benin and the “River Niger Area” (contemporary Nigeria) represents a crux and heartland of the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade. 25% of New World Africans in the US and other countries in North America have Nigerian heritage. This fact is especially evidenced by the history and contemporary diasporic dominance of Yoruba diasporas, a prominent ethnic group that has its core roots in western contemporary Nigeria. The Oyo Empire and Yoruba identities of current day Nigeria provides an excellent platform to consider the way connections are forged and maintained as African migrants move and settle in new places. The Oyo Empire involves a flux of internal migrations within the Oyo empire from the 15th century onward. The Yoruba ethnicity, as Olatunji Ojo suggests, is forged as a result of the immigration of freed Africans in the Americas to a “Yoruba homeland”—an identity that wasn’t identified as Yoruba until the immigration of Yoruba descendent people back to their homeland (Ojo 54).

Transnational communities within Yorubaland were not only a result of internal African migrations, but also of the return immigrations of Africans in the Diaspora. Coming from predominantly Cuba and Brazil, it was the diaspora communities who in the 19th century were assisting the homeland in understanding and asserting its Yoruba identity. When the Yoruba from the Diaspora came, they did with a unified Yoruba identity formed as a result of their exile, in order to maintain cultural, spiritual, and economic values in their transposed communities. They were defining their origins as those in Yorubaland did before their arrival, by their locations “Nago-Ba (Egba), Nago-Jubu (Ijebu), Nago-Gexá” and so forth (Ojo 54). Orisha and Santeria were major factors of the Yoruba identity that repatriates brought with them to Yoruba

land.

What this allowed for was the unification of Yoruba people away from ethnic divisions towards “pan-ethnic religious” groups including “Oro, Ifa, Egungun, and Ogboni” (Ojo 62). As a result, different religious affiliations spread through Yorubaland, forging identities around these central connections. For instance, where continental Yorubas did not see female leaders of religious sects (i.e. Christianity, Islam), adapted religious sects (i.e. Orisha) were centered on the involvement of women worshipers and leaders (65). Religion became a means of creating a supraethnic Yoruba identity, one that was a result of “complex web of cultural intermixture and wide-ranging social and ethnic relationships was being woven by events that took place in the Yoruba country at the same time as the diasporic Yoruba were active” (73).

This Yoruba identity can be considered a transnational identity and what it looks like is a homeland re-constructed based on the return of migrants who have, as a result of their initial involuntary dispersal, re-created their identity in the hostland. The result is a homeland re-constructed based on the movements of African people. Along with the internal migrations within the current day Yorubaland, these movements provide examples of how transnational identities are created, re-created and maintained based on the reasons of their dispersal, which range from intercultural relationships and their environments. This examination of pre-colonial migrations provides a context for understanding the historical context, and perhaps trajectory, of post-colonial African migrations and their participation in globalization.

Not only the Yoruba, but the Efik and the Igbo are Nigerian ethnic nationalities that have dominant diasporic presence. For example, the enslaved Igbo, writer, and abolitionist Olaudah Equiano was certainly a well known example of this route of slave trafficking. Olaudah Equiano was forcibly taken and enslaved in the 15th century. Equiano was taken at age seven to Virginia,

and over time sent to England and the West Indies (*The History of Nigeria*). His slave narrative revealed his memories of being stolen from his home and brought to the Americas, but most critical is his account for his Igbo heritage. In “Mistaken Identities? Olaudah Equiano, Domingos Álvares, and the Methodological Challenges of Studying the African Diaspora,” James Sweet points out that Equiano was able to use his narrative to articulate the complexities of his ethnic and national identities, Igbo and African. The process of enslavement forced African individuals and communities to fracture and shift ethnic identification even before leaving the continent. Equiano’s tale becomes more pertinent for his ability to recall linguistic and cultural (i.e. scarification) indicators of his Igbo heritage. However, as a result of becoming part of the diaspora of the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade, he was also able to express his emergent identity as African and in doing so he prominently tethered himself to all people of the Blackworld (Sweet).

The movement of Africans across time has consistently been tethered to the forces of globalization, specifically the need for resources in combination with socio-political and socio-cultural structures and environmental conditions. The modern African diasporas were specifically affected by the need for wealth as well as social and economic power in the West or the East. The New African Diaspora maintains many of these dominating structures of the global north over the global south through major wealth gaps between developed and developing countries, such as the contracts with the Jamaican Banana workers or Caribbean people to England and France. However, Africans have still used these routes to also determine paths of communications to share and develop cultural practices and identities, as was the case with Brazilians who returned to Nigeria. As the New African Diaspora grows into what it is today in the 21st century, these conditions have continued to shape the global routes of the transnational African.

NIGERIAN ROUTES TO THE NEW AFRICAN DIASPORA: CONTEMPORARY DISPERSALS AND IMPRINTS

Where does the Nigerian roam in the 21st century? How does she move, and who does she move with? What socio-cultural and socio-political situations greet them as they enter various diasporic spaces? And what makes this diaspora distinct, among many transnational African diasporic communities around the world? Nigerians are among the largest numbers of Africans leaving the African continent and settling in places like the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Ireland, Brazil, China, and Italy. However, like other African continental migrations, the majority of Nigerians leave home for other parts of the African continent such as Ghana, Cameroon, and South Africa. Why do they choose one place over another, and what resources (financial, physical, or community based) are they able to use as routes to these spaces?

Geographical Dispersal of the Nigerian Diaspora

Nigerians can be found in many developed and developing countries around the world. South-South migrations in the African continent make up approximately 45% of the global migrations of African migrants, as opposed to 37% percent South-North migrations (Crush 4), and this is no different for regarding the movement of Nigerians. The International Organization of Migration (IOM) keeps live data on the movement of people from country to country using an interactive map on their “World Migration” website, which is based on numbers generated from the United Nations (United Nations). Specific to Nigeria, it demarks the amount of Nigerians immigrating to other countries worldwide, as well as non-Nigerians immigrating to Nigeria in 2015. They indicate that are approximately 1.2 million emigrants to Nigeria, making up just

.66% of the total residents of the country. The majority of emigrants as of 2015 come from other West African countries: Benin (351K), Ghana (222K), Mali (160K), Togo (147K), and Niger (112K). However, missing are numbers of emigrants from many non-African countries, as well as African countries outside of West Africa (United Nations).

As far as Nigerian immigrants, the IOM suggests that there are just under 1.1 million Nigerians outside of Nigeria. None of these numbers account for 2nd generation Nigerians, but focus on migrants themselves. The UN Migrant Stock report for mid-year 2015, shows that of the 1.1 million, 62% travel to “developed regions,” while the other 38% are in “developing regions.” 34% or approximately 371K migrate to other sub-Saharan African regions (82K to Cameroon, 18K to South Africa, 15K to Gabon, and 15K to Sudan), with 231K of that total number are within West Africa (68K to Ghana, 45K to Benin, 39K to Cote d’Ivoire). Other regions of the world include: 398K Nigerians in Europe (216K in the UK, 56K in Italy, 31K in Spain, 27K in Germany, and 22K in Ireland), 272K to North America (237K to USA, 34K to Canada), 39K Nigerians in Asia (23K in the United Arab Emirates, 4K in Kuwait, 4K in Qatar, 2K in Japan), and about 5K to Central America, South America, and the Caribbean (United Nations).

The United States is one of the oldest locations of the post-colonial movement of Nigerians outside of the African continent. Today there are over 375K 1st (immigrants) and 2nd (children of immigrants) generation Nigerians in the United States, however this migration flow started primarily after the independence of Nigeria from Great Britain in 1960s (Migration Policy Institute). They constitute they largest number of Sub-Saharan Africans within the United States, with 34K making their way just north to Canada.

South Africa did not become a major location for Africans to migrate until the 1990s,

following the end of apartheid rule. While the majority of immigrants to South Africa originate from other Southern African Development Community (SADC), especially Zimbabwe and Mozambique, there has been an increasing number of immigrants coming from eastern and western Africa for labor opportunities. Nigerians immigrate to South Africa in increasing numbers, many who come for professional as well as menial job opportunities. The African Centre for Migration & Society estimates 7,172 Nigerians in South Africa as of 2001, with 70% of them concentrated in the Gauteng province. Nigerians in South Africa represent “a primarily male population of small entrepreneurs, highly to medium-skilled workers, students, and dependent” (Segatti, Adeagbo, and Ogunyemi). It is estimated that, as of 2012, there are 12,000 to 17,000 Nigerians in South Africa. While this is a significantly lower population than the United States, the migration of Nigerians to South Africa represent a significant inter-continental route of the New African Diaspora that has emerged as a result of economic, educational, and asylum seeking opportunity in Africa’s last country to gain independence.

Conditions that Determine the Movement of Nigerians

The Nigerian Diaspora, as an African country-based diaspora, is determined by the connections the Nigerian country and its people have to its diaspora communities. Like other African country-based diasporas, some of the conditions and reasons of Nigerians’ dispersal include joining economic, expatriate, refuge, exile, and ethno-national based communities. Nigerians have migrated for reasons such as education, high and low skilled labor, to seek asylum, and as human traffic (Akinrinade and Ogen 73–4). It follows that many conditions facilitate voluntary as well as forced emigration from Nigeria to other countries consistent with global flows of contemporary diasporas. For instance, as of 2014 Nigeria was ranked 8th by the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR) in countries from which asylum

seekers originate around the world (United Nations). So urgent is the desire to leave home, that Nigerians also contribute some of the highest numbers of migrants attempting the risky transit between Tunisia and Italy along the Mediterranean Sea. This section examines some of the reasons why Nigerians leave their Nigerian home, and the conditions that facilitate their migration, both from the perspective of Nigeria and case hostlands (i.e. US, South Africa).

After the mass independence of African countries, especially after 1960, newly independent nations saw enormous financial gains and subsidies were provided to begin government and private ventures to process raw materials, or oil, in the case of Nigeria. The post-cold war boom during the 1970s had a devastating effect on the African nations' ability to form nation-states. Nigeria underwent an oil crisis and banks such as the World Bank began to terminate Nigerian's access to privatized public assets. The Nigerian government defunded essential goods and services such as food, housing, health, and transportation subsidies. The same banks played influential roles in the political, social, and economic status of Nigerians. After the economic crisis, the Nigerian government provided subsidies for students to travel to the United States to obtain degrees, come back to Nigeria, and apply their skills at home in order to build Nigeria's economy. However, by the 1990s the government was unable to bring students back home. This, as well as oil opportunities in places like Houston, Texas, were major contributing reasons why Nigerians moved to countries such as the United States and stayed (Okome and Vaughan).

Fast forward to the 21st century, and circumstances such as brain drain maintain high levels of emigration. Nigerians with post-secondary education find themselves among the growing unemployed, where jobs opportunities do not grow at the same rate of the skilled labor force. Just in the second quarter of 2016, Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics reported a

12.2% increase in the unemployment rate, suggesting that low private and foreign investments caused large disparities in exchange rates and forced employers to decrease their labor force (“Labour Productivity Report Q2 2016”). Nigerians leaving do so through high skilled work opportunities, and allotted work visas. However, this is not enough to account for the need and migrants find alternative, and often desperate, means of leaving Nigeria for economic opportunities.

While Nigerians primarily leave for education and work opportunities, they also consist of one of the top 10 asylum seekers around the world.⁶ Beyond economic migration, Nigerians also migrate to escape politically charged situations based on religious or ethnic conflict. The UNHCR found in 2014 that Nigerian migrants make up the majority of asylum seekers in the United Kingdom, Canada, Ireland, Italy, Korea, Japan, Switzerland, Spain, and other countries. Europe alone has received 21K Nigerian refugees, with almost 10K going to Italy. While they do not make up the largest numbers of asylum seekers in the United States, they do make up the largest group from Africa, followed by Eritrea, Ghana, and Somalia (The UN Refugee Agency).

The intensity of emigration of some Nigerians can be noted by some of the extreme measures they have taken to leave for Western countries. For instance, the growing number of migrants traversing the Mediterranean Sea do not only come from publicized countries such as Syria, but from western and eastern African countries. In fact, according to the International Organization of Migration’s migrant routes reports, Nigerians make up the largest pool of these migrants, making trips from Nigeria north through Niger, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya or west through the Atlantic bordering countries Ghana, Liberia, Senegal, and the Western Sahara to eventually depart for Italy via Libya and Spain via Morocco. Niger is the largest of these transit

⁶ This is the case for both asylum seekers around the world, as well as within the 44 most developed countries as defined by the UNHCR (United Nations).

countries, receiving over 120,000 migrants from western African countries just in 2016 (*Migrant Routes*). This central Mediterranean migrations, specifically to Italy, makes up the largest density, with Nigerians, along with Eritreans and Gambians, making up 40% of this group. By March 2016, Nigerian emigrants surpassed any other African country with 22K arrivals to Italy and Greece (*Migration Flows Europe*). Among these travelers, Nigerians send some of the most unaccompanied minors, 10% of the all minors to Italy. 42% of Nigerian travelers are women (*Mixed Migration Flows*). The UN estimates that over 80% of women who come by boat will be trafficked and sold into prostitution. Sub-Saharan African by far consists the highest number of deaths, or missing migrants, in the Mediterranean; 1,218 accounted deaths/missing persons of 3,675 in the Mediterranean total in 2015 were from sub-Saharan Africa (*Recorded Deaths*).

The prospect of using these and other migrations routes entices Nigerians and other Africans to pay thousands of dollars to transporters who promise them safe passage or job opportunities once they arrive. Thousands of Nigerian women, and to a lesser extent men, are sold into slavery through illegal services such as prostitution and domestic work. It is a lucrative industry that yields billions yearly. Transporters dealing in human trafficking are able to use these methods of visa racketeering to easily move women by air or boat to destinations such as Europe, the Middle East, the United States and South Africa. In Italy alone, over 42% of its human trafficking comes from Nigeria. They use the states that border Nigeria to move women in and out of the country such as Lagos, Imo, Rivers, Enugu, Ondo, Ebonyi, Osun, Kano, and Delta. Women of various class and education levels pay up to \$40K to \$50K in hopes of securing safe transport and a job once resettled. In reality, the trafficking rings create false identities for those trafficked to travel legally, sell them into this modern day slavery, and find legitimate ways to silence any outcry through legal or traditional means (Olaniyi).

For instance, women trafficked to South Africa are often high skilled professionals coerced by the prospect of lucrative work. They pay money to what they assume to be connected companies or transporters to fix their visas, often done by marrying the women to fictitious South African citizens which allows them to use legal immigration services provided by the government. In places like Italy and Spain, false IDs are created by swapping images on the legal documents of citizens of recently war torn countries like Liberia and Sierra Leone to the trafficked Nigerian woman so they can seek asylum. Once legal identities in the countries are created, they can then easily move throughout Europe. Debt is created to quell attempts to escape once sold into slavery. This is done either by forcing the women to sign legitimate contracts in Nigeria to repay the money borrowed for visa arrangements, or by forcing the women or their parents to undergo traditional oaths to use fear of repercussions to befall their family. (Okogbule; Olaniyi).

The same conditions that force Nigerians to voluntarily leave Nigeria are the reasons its citizens are manipulated into human trafficking. Some families have sold their daughters, or women into slavery to receive payment to support the family remaining. As mentioned earlier, women leave assuming they can attain a job in industries they are qualified for but are unable to secure in Nigeria (i.e. nursing). More telling is the generational length of these practices, given many of the trafficking rings in the host countries are maintained and repeated by women who were formerly victim to the practice. In northern Italy, they are called Nigerian ‘Madams’ who ‘sponsor’ the women for \$5000-\$7000 each (Olaniyi). Nigeria, and the United Nations, has made efforts to end human trafficking such as through Nigeria’s 2003 Trafficking Act that increased monitoring, investigation and prosecution of those involved (Okogbule). However, Rasheed Olaniyi suggests that this ongoing cycle exemplified by the Nigerian ‘Madams’ reveals how the

global economy structurally maintains and replicated patterns of exploitation in order for them to survive.

Beyond the conditions that force Nigerians out of their country, there are also changing conditions of hostlands that allowed African immigrants to enter their countries. The United States and South Africa provide interesting post civil rights and post apartheid examples of exponentially increasing numbers of Nigerian, and other African immigrants to their countries. The United States' immigration law of 1965, or "Public Law 89-236," made it possible for more people from non-European countries to enter the United States (*Public Law 89-236*). The preceding immigration law of 1924 was immensely restrictive of immigrants from the continents of Africa, Asia, and South America. It allotted less than 1% of the immigrant quota to the whole of Africa and just the top three countries immigrating to the United States from Europe (Germany, Great Britain, and Irish Free State [Ireland]) made up just shy of 47% of the yearly quota ("Who Was Shut Out?"). Thus, by 1965, immigrants from non-European nations were increasingly able to enter the United States, including Africans. 28,954 Africans immigrated to the United States in the 1960s, 80,779 in the 1970s, 176,893 in 1980s, and in 2000 alone over 60,000 Africans entered the United States (Roberts).

Since the 1990s, after the end of South African apartheid, there has been a surge in continental African emigration to South Africa. The number of international migrants grows as transportation becomes more assessable and affordable, an affect of globalism in post-colonial Africa. West Africa's lack of a single country that can monopolize labor opportunities factors into the reason why Africans moved to South Africa. The mining boom also created a need for workers and subsequently opened opportunities for labor seekers in neighboring countries (Agadjanian).

The South African government passed memorandums that allowed immigration of refugees and an attempt to control illegal immigration, respectively the Refugee Act of 1998 and Immigration Act of 2002. Additionally, immigrants are given the same services South African nationals receive such as health care, education, and employment. As of 2012, there are approximately three million immigrants in South Africa; over 50,000 refugees and over 170,000 asylum-seekers. However, with the increase of immigration and unequal distribution of resources, there has also been the increase in attacks on African continental foreigners by Black South Africans, most notably beginning in 1998 and achieving global attention at its peak in 2008 where 60 citizens and non-citizens were killed and thousands displaced (Shange-Buthane). While this is xenophobia, the dissertation refers to it specifically as Afrophobia because this type of discrimination is targeted towards various continental and diasporic Africans and foreigners from other geographical regions in South Africa primarily do not face xenophobia in this way.

For both the United States and South Africa, their changing immigration laws in face of socio-political change (i.e. Civil Rights, end of Apartheid) facilitated in the immigration for labor, refugee status, and based on kinship to existing US and South African residents/citizens. The conditions that led to migration of Nigerians out of Nigeria, and made countries such as the United States and South Africa accessible are important to understand how global flows affect transnationality of members of the Nigerian Diaspora.

Circularity of Relationship Between Homeland and Hostland

Some of the distinctions of the Nigerian Diaspora, are the various transnational networks—“faith, trade, occupation, politics, gender home place and ethnic group”—that exists between Nigeria and their various hostlands (Akinrinade and Ogen 75). In some cases, Nigerians also dominate in achievements in both their homeland and hostlands. In 2012, Nigerians were the

group with the highest percentage of bachelors (37%) and advanced (29%) degrees in the United States, and had a labor force employment rate of 88% (Migration Policy Institute 3). For Nigeria, connections made between homeland and hostlands have various physical connections that socially, politically, and economically impact both spaces.

The conditions of dispersal are connected also to the ties that Nigerians have both to their hostlands and homelands. For many, the responsibility that the Nigerian migrant has to their home is integral to how they interact at home. Nigeria receives the highest number of economic remittances in sub-Saharan Africa spanning from \$2.26 billion in 2002 to \$18.2 billion in 2009 (Akinrinade and Ogen 79). In 2012, the World Bank reported that the highest volume of remittances, \$1 billion or more, came from Nigerians in the United States (\$6.1), the United Kingdom (\$3.8), Chad (1.3), and Italy (1.3) with Cameroon and Spain just behind with under \$1 billion (Migration Policy Institute 6). This correlations is without context of the number of Nigerians versus other African countries, however there are many other ways that Nigerian communities develop economic and developmental support systems for those who remain in Nigeria. An example of the networks that support these remittances are isisu, or rotary clubs, which allow smaller communities of Nigerian diasporans (mainly Igbos) to collectively raise and share money to benefit their specific hometowns or communities in Nigeria (Osondu).

Additionally, the Nigerian government has set up organizations for its Diaspora, such as the Nigerians in Diaspora Organisation (NIDO). NIDO, run by the government, is connected to Nigerian embassies worldwide, and encourages its Diaspora to associate and organize themselves through its network. For Nigeria, connections made between homeland and hostlands have various physical connections that socially, politically, and economically impact both spaces (Akinrinade and Ogen).

What is coming to the forefront is that transnationalism is a major contributor to the texture of the contemporary Nigerian Diaspora. It addresses the circular movement of people, information, cultures, and citizenships that Diaspora communities form as a result of constructing multiple locales of home. James Clifford suggests that diasporas can be considered “transnational migrations circuits” that represent experiences of displacement, of constructing multiple locales of home, of constantly transformed identities, and of interconnected cultural relationships (Clifford 302). This not only refers to African migrants, but African Diaspora communities who also maintain transnational networks based on contemporary constructions of home.

NIGERIANS IN THE PRODUCTION OF CULTURAL DIASPORA

Using a cultural lens to examine the African Diaspora, or cultural diasporas as fore-fronted in the Introduction, offers a self-determined framework to examine art as a tool for locating and identifying Nigerian diasporic identities. The cultural artifacts that are produced by Nigerian cultural producers in the African Diaspora include a segment of the Nigerian Diaspora who represent the identities of their transformative communities. Understanding the lived experiences of the artists is vital to understanding not only the content and trajectory of their cultural productions, but also to provide deep insight into how they understand their own identity in transnational diasporic spaces. Regional and global ‘Naija’ identities increasingly become a visible part of a diverse African Diaspora, and cultural productions become vessels that historically capture how its members understand themselves, and their cultures, within a hostland with domineering representations of national, racial, and ethnic cultures.

Intergenerational Representations of Post-colonial Nigerians

Considering the framework for examining cultural diasporas as the contributions that African Diaspora artists (cultural producers) make to cultural life and cultural industries in their hostlands, as well as Stuart Hall's conceptual definition of cultural identity in the diaspora, we can see how the transformations of the identities of several Nigerian Diaspora cultural producers at any given point in time are represented in various cultural productions over historical time. For instance, during the late 1950s into the 1970s, the public and global representations of Nigerian culture were encapsulated and articulated through literature from novelists such as Chinua Achebe, Buchi Emecheta, and Wole Soyinka or music from artists like Fela Kuti. These artists emerged as storytellers of the newly post-colonial Nigerian experience, in an era of Pan-Africanism and other African decolonial projects that followed. Their works penetrated globally, creatively portraying snippets of the realities of Nigerian people to their communities as well others in the African world.

Fela Kuti's music career was transformational, where he began as an "apolitical" highlife performer, his life experiences in a newly post-colonial Nigeria shifted not only his politics but his Afrobeat music to align with the cultures and his communities. Tejumola Olaniyan, in *Arrest the Music! Fela and His Rebel art and Politics* details this shift within an emerging post-colonial Africa. Fela's musical sounds, that of Afrobeat, was a shift from highlife that represented a westernized and elite Nigerian. He used Pidgin English to communicate to masses of Nigerians, and Africans globally, and teach them about the "post-colonial incredible," or the egregiousness of post-colonial systems who still benefited from the exploitation of African people and land. His music became a revolutionary tool for Pan-Africanism and African consciousness, challenging

the colonial and post-colonial state by revealing how it still holds the African citizen captive (Olaniyan).

Novelist Buchi Emecheta, who migrated to the UK in the 1970s, used her writing as a way to express the challenges of being Black and African in the diaspora by portraying a 1970s London new with emerging African migrant communities from Nigerian and the Caribbean. In *Second Class Citizen*, the title is used to demark the positionality of the African immigrant to the UK who joins other “second class citizens,” or Black people, in a common battle against racialized housing, education, childcare, and labor opportunities. The protagonist, Adah, is also faced with challenges as a woman. Her experience with a defunct husband reveals the complexity of transformative values. She feels traditionally bound to her husband, while his responsibility to his family is undermined by the normalcy of independence in the UK and the absence of their Igbo community to hold him accountable (Emecheta).

These artists have paved the way for contemporary artists who use a plethora of media to represent themselves and their communities around the world. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s novel *Half of a Yellow Sun*, tells the story of the Biafran War in Nigeria as a fictional tale with historically references. In an interview with Kenyan author Binyavanga Wainaina, she indicated fellow Igbo author, Chinua Achebe as an inspiration for her own work. The book was one of responsibility to her people to tell, an act she learned from his literature. It was not until that novel was complete that she felt she could tell other stories about the Nigerian experience, but specifically the story she wanted to tell rather than those that still needed to be told.

In another example, the popular Naija mix artist Flavour reached international fame with his rendition of Nigerian highlife singer Cardinal Rex Lawson’s 1960s hit “Sawale,” which he called “Ashawo” (Lawson; Flavour). He uses the highlife beats and the chorus of the original

song, interweaves the new age Naija mix beats, and a mix of new and old lyrics to recreate a nostalgic song that's perhaps responsible for its popularity across generations of Nigerians. As will be shown later, Wale also remakes the popular song "Let Me Love You," by the Sierra Leonean singer Bunny Mack to create a rap rendition "My Sweetie," which also draws from original highlife beats to envision a new fusion Nigerian and African American musical styles (Mack; Wale, *My Sweetie*). These contemporary Nigerian Diaspora cultural producers, by family or community, have re-envisioned what their work will be by forefronting expressions of their cultural past. In each example, the work of the contemporary artists became an intergenerational success, reaching both young and old members of Nigerian, and other African diasporas. This indicates a complexity of belonging, and of being, by revealing some of the ways their past is evident and even prominent in their present.

Nigeria's Multimedia Cultural Diaspora

Nigerian Diaspora cultural producers in the 21st century draw from various media to create and disseminate their cultural artifacts. Their cultural identities can be found expressed in film, literature, television, internet-based video platforms, food, clothing, paintings and sculptures, poetry, and surely more spaces not listed here. Who are the contemporary Nigerian Diaspora cultural producers, where are they from, and what types of works do they produce? How are these works of these contributing to their African Diaspora hostlands? This section introduces some Nigerian cultural producers who engage contribute to the representation of a dynamic African diaspora generally, and the Nigerian Diaspora specifically.

There are many examples of Nigerian Diasporas cultural producers in mainstream popular culture, especially in the United States and the United Kingdom but also emergent from other African diasporas. Some of cultural producers from the United Kingdom include actors

Chiwetelu “Chiwetel” Umeadi Ejiofor – *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *12 Years a Slave*; Chukwunonso Anozie – *Game of Thrones*; John Boyega – *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Star Wars*; Sophie Okonedo – *Hotel Rwanda*; Hakeem Kae-Kazim – *Roots*, *Man on Ground*; David Oyelowo – *Selma*, *The Butler*, *Red Tails*; and UK-based TV-show host Mary Adeyeye – *Naija Bites* (Bandeled; McQueen; Benioff and Weiss; Abrams; George; Noyce et al.; A. Omotoso, *Man on Ground*; DuVernay; Daniels; Hemingway; “Naija Bites”). Some actors based in the United States includes US-born Gbenga Akinnagbe – *The Wire*, Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje who was born in the UK and has lived in the United States – *Oz*, *Lost*, UK-born and America-based financial reporter Zain Asher – *CNN Newsroom*, *Marketplace Africa*, Nigerian-born and US-based filmmaker Andrew Dosunmu – *Restless City*, *Mother of George*, and Nigerian-born and US-based president of Universal Television Pearlana Igbokwe Makes (Simon; Fontana; Lieber, Abrams, and Lindelof; “Zain Asher-Anchor”; *Restless City*; *Mother of George*; “Executive Bios: Pearlana Igbokwe”). These cultural producers have made their way into the Hollywood, South African, and Nollywood film industries, and especially the American, British, and South African media through their acting, producing, or filmmaking. Many of the shows, films, and public spaces listed extend beyond Nigerian representations and ultimately include a more diverse representation of African diaspority from Western perspectives (i.e. African American, Black British).

Nigerian musicians in the Nigerian Diaspora come from various spaces with multiple national experiences. For instance, in Europe, Nigerian musicians are gracing the audio scenes such as German-born and UK/France migrant “Ayo” Joy Olasunmibo Ogunmakin – *Ticket to the World*, *Billie-Eve*; French-born “Asa” Bukola Ememide – *Beautiful Imperfections*; Nigerian-born and UK-based Sade – *Stronger than Pride*, *Soldier of Love*; Tiwa Savage who was born in

Nigeria but lived in the UK for some time – *Once Upon a Time, R.E.D.*, Nneka Lucia Egbuna who is Nigerian-born and German-educated to a Nigerian father and German mother – *Concrete Jungle, Soul is Heavy*; Nigerian-born and South African-based gospel singer Uche Agu, and Nigerian-born and China-based singer Emmanuel Uwechue known as Hao Ge. Some artists, like Sade, gained popularity in the United States as well. In the United States, American-born rappers include Wale – *Attention Deficit, The Album About Nothing*; Jidenna – “Classic Man,” *The Chief* – who is of both Nigerian and white American heritage, and “Chamillionaire” Hakeem Seriki – “Ridin Dirty” – born to a Nigerian father and Black American mother. The works of these artists resonate in various diasporic spaces, beyond the borders of their hostlands and homelands. For instance, Naija-mix sensation Tiwa Savage in 2016 signed with Roc Nation, the record label of African American rapper and businessman Jay-Z (Killakam). She is one of many Nigerian artists who have signed on to African American music record labels.

Beyond music and film, there is a continuous presence of Nigerian diaspora writers who also write on topics specific to Nigerian cultures and identities in westernized spaces such as US-born and US and Nigerian-based poet, novelist, activist Yvonne Fly Onakeme Etaghene – *For Sizakele*, UK-born and US-based writer of Nigerian and Ghanaian descent Taiye Selasi – *Ghana Must Go*, US-born novelist and professor Teju Cole – *Open City, Everyday is for the Thief*, US-born science fiction novelist and professor Nnedi Okorafor – *Lagoon, The Book of Phoenix*, Nigeria-born and UK-based Noo Saro-Wiwa – *Looking for Transwonderland: Travels in Nigeria*, Nigeria-born and South Africa-based Yewande Omotoso – *Bom Boy*, US-based novelist Chinelo Okparanta – *Under the Udala Trees; Happiness, Like Water*. Their work mainly speaks to the Nigerian Diaspora experience, and from various perspectives. Etaghene and Okparanta write about the Nigerian lesbian experience. Okparanta’s protagonist in *Under the Udala Trees*

comes to her lesbian identity as a child and during the Biafran war, where Etaghene's *For Sizakele* is a contemporary US-based story about the complexities of African diasporic queer love. Okorafor uses Nigerian cultural themes to create science fiction novels, *Akata Witch*, where an albino Nigerian-American returns home to Nigeria to come into her traditional and magical powers.

While above we see assertion of national Nigerian heritage, specific (Igbo, Yoruba) or general (Africa) ethnic belonging, there are also artists who define themselves within multiple frameworks in order to describe their relationship with their work. For instance, artists such as American-born fashion designers Kelechi Anyadiegwu and Eleanor Anukam make clear that their work reflects the lack of African cultural representation in clothing and shoes, respectively. Kelechi Anyadiegwu, in Black Entertainment (BET) special on "10 Black Women Making Major Moves in Tech," defines herself as both an "African-American Woman of Nigerian heritage." She indicates that part of the inspiration for her "Forbes 30 under 30" clothing store, *Zuvaa*, was both her experience engaging African textiles as a Nigerian as well as the need to fill a void she noticed between her home and hostland. "Growing up, I often found it difficult to find modern and trendy African Inspired pieces. I created Zuvaa to fill this void" ("10 Black Women Making Major Moves in Tech"). Similar sentiments are indicated with US-born shoe designer and shop owner Eleanor Anukam, whose shoes are given Nigerian names with the intended audience in mind (Spena).

There are also many print-based painters and sculptors such as US-born painter Kehinde Wiley – *Economy of Grace*, Nigerian-born and US-based filmmaker and photographer Zina Saro-Wiwa – *This is My Africa*, Nigerian-born and US-based painter Laolu Senbanjo – Beyoncé's *Lemonade*, Nike shoes, and Nigerian-born and China-based photographer and painter

"Saint Jerry" Ajike Njoku. Painter Laolu Senbanjo's calls his work, Afromysterics, or "the mystery of African thought pattern" that is drawn from sacred art of the Ori and thus from a cultural and spiritual place (Laolu).

In my language, Yoruba "Ori" literally means your essence, your soul, your destiny and also comes with a mantra. When I work with a muse, the muse, their Ori, and I become one. My Art form is physically drawing what's on the inside, what's in your soul, and your essence and being; on your canvas which is the skin. It's the deepest most spiritual experience I've ever had with my Art as an artist. It's amazing and energizing. The connection is phenomenal. (Laolu)

His effort to make connections between his art and his muse is clearly depicted in the film *Lemonade* by Beyoncé Knowles. Beyond other references to Yoruba and Nigerian cultures, includes scenes preceding and within the song "Sorry," in which those painted by Senbanjo seem to represent "half living, and half dead" Black women. Read along with the satirical poetry of Warsan Shire, a spiritual space is created and enacted by these painted women (Beyoncé).

As mentioned above, many of the artists mentioned come from Europe, the United States, South Africa, and a couple from China. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list, but only to introduce some of the physical, spatial, and artistic spaces that Nigerian cultural producers occupy. They are a combination of 1st and 2nd generation Nigerians who immigrated themselves, did so as a child with a family member, or were born in their diaspora. The Nigerian Diaspora is diverse in its scope. There are members of historic African diasporas, such as African American Forest Whitaker – *The Butler, The Last King of Scotland* (Daniels; Macdonald), who learned of his Igbo ancestry and made the journey home to reclaim his African ancestry. "Brother Whitaker" was made a chief by elder chiefs in the village Nkwere in Imo State, Nigeria, and given an Igbo name 'Nwannedinamba,' meaning "a brother in a foreign land" ("Danny Glover"). Where do these cultural producers go, and why? Like the data on Nigerian Diaspora communities, many of these artists share similar reasons for emigrating to the West.

Asserting Multidimensional ‘Naija’ Identities in Popular Spaces

How do Nigerian Diaspora cultural producers represent complex identities in the African Diaspora generally and the Nigerian Diaspora specifically? While this dissertation focuses on Nigerian cultural producers who create original works that incorporate Nigerian centered themes, there still exists complex ways that Nigerian and/or other African and Black identities are represented by these producers. While a film director may have agency over the storylines, he and his actors may find their publicity to be an alternative space to express who they are. The clip presented at the start of this chapter is an example of how David Oyelowo uses his publicity to articulate his pride for and belonging to Nigeria culturally. It is not without his understanding of the complexities of being Nigerian, outside of Nigeria, and encompassing other identities as a result of also being from the Diaspora. He and others have found ways to proudly and perhaps necessarily express their ‘Naija’ identity in light of imposed identities from the Diaspora.

For instance, UK-based Nigerian Diaspora actors Chiwetel Ejiofor, Chukwunonso Anozie, John Boyega, United States-born Gbenga Akinnagbe, Uzoamaka Aduba, UK-born and US and Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje played diverse Black roles on-screen—listed above—while proudly indicating their ethnic and racial identities off-screen. When John Boyega was cast for a leading role in *Star Wars VII: The Force Awakens*, criticism arose that the iconic series would fail after incorporating a Black actor for the role of the former Storm Trooper “Finn.” He clapped back by responding to the pushback in a New York Times article.

I’m grounded in who I am, and I am a confident black man. A confident, Nigerian, black, chocolate man. I’m proud of my heritage, and no man can take that away from me. I wasn’t raised to fear people with a difference of opinion. They are merely victims of a disease in their mind. To get into a serious dialogue with people who judge a person based on the melanin in their skin? They’re stupid, and I’m not going to lose sleep over people. The presale tickets have gone through the roof — their agenda has failed. Miserably. (Itzkoff)

Not only does Boyega define himself as a confident Black and Nigerian man, he indicates that those who judge a person based on skin tone are “victims of a disease in their mind.” Here his criticism of a psychological state of racism, can point to a white supremacist ideology of racial hierarchy and the subsequent norms of Western representation. He goes on to critique Hollywood by pointing out that when other actors such as Brad Pitt, Tom Cruise, and Shia LeBeouf are cast for roles, there are no conversations about race, and that therefore, singling out and questioning Black actors who receive roles is “blatant racism” (Lewis). Further, he debunks the stereotype that the film would fail as a result of the inclusion of Blacks by suggesting that the box office success *Star Wars* points to the “miserable” failure of their racist criticism failed (Itzkoff).

Other examples can be found recently when it comes to pronouncing and using Nigerian names in Hollywood. Aduba’s assertion of her name as a child was detailed in the Introduction. Anozie and Akinnuoye-Agbaje have pushed back both against family and public pressure to change their names once they gained popularity. Anozie described his resistance of Europeanizing his acting name while in drama school, by reasserting a pride in his African lineage. He indicated a point of reference in his childhood, “Even though when you are young and people make fun of you at school, I still feel blessed every time I hear my name” (Busch and N’Duka). Like Anozie and later Aduba, there is a trend of Nigerians asserting their Nigerian names, and rejecting the suggestions to simplify them. In a Deadline article “Actors Of Nigerian Descent Blazing Path In Hollywood For Next Generation,” Akinnuoye-Agbaje refers to an ongoing struggle since childhood to maintain his name.

I fought for my name because it is who I am. I was very intent on not changing my name. As a child in school, even my teachers (in England) tried to changed my name to Robert, but it didn’t feel right. It’s not me. I had to fight for it. Your ancestors and your parents

name you based on the constellations and the legacy of that lineage, and I learned early on that every time someone calls you that name, it re-affirms who you are. My name describes my purpose in life. (Busch and N'Duka)

Anozie and Akinnuoye-Agbaje, refer to the importance of their African-based lineages, and Akinnuoye-Agbaje specifically referring the process of naming as important to one's identity. He suggests that a name "describes my purpose in life," and acts as guide to a journey provided by parents and ancestors. Singer and songwriter Ayo, born and raised in Germany to a German mother and Nigerian father asserts, "My full name is Joy Olasunmibo Ogunmakin. Joy means 'Ayo' in Yoruba. When I released my first record my dad said 'you cannot say Joy, you have to use the name Ayo.' So I became Ayo. He said he wants the world to know that this is a Nigerian girl" (Ade-Brown). Ayo, the Yoruba word for 'Joy' was then used as a way to Nigerianize her stage name, and represent her Nigerian ancestry.

A perhaps forceful and intentional effort to make connections between a cultural producer, his Nigerian heritage, and his art comes from a letter to "To all my Nigerian brothers and sisters" by rapper Jidenna, who was born in the United States to an Igbo father and white American mother. The letter responds to commentary by members of the Nigerian community that he does not assert his Nigeria heritage. He suggested that in fact "I am, always have been, and always will be proud of my Nigerian heritage," however that these narratives are left out of articles and interviews and instead stereotypes take their place ("Jidenna Pens"). He suggested that he "would never do or say anything to intentionally disgrace the legacy of my father nor my fatherland" and also indicated that he does in fact unapologetically refers to his biracial identity. Regarding his music, and hit song of 2015, "Classic Man," he attributes its quality to his Nigerian heritage.

My name is Jidenna, which means "to hold or embrace the father" in Igbo. It was my father who gave me this name and who taught me countless parables, proverbs, and

principles that made me the man I am today. These same principles helped me to write the record “Classic Man.” When I brought home a 98 percent on a test, my father would say, “ah ah, where are the other two points? Go and get them, then bring them back.” My father and Nigerian culture has always stood for excellence. While the majority of my childhood memories are beautiful, I also have experienced the challenges that Nigeria has faced since Independence. (“Jidenna Pens”)

Here Jidenna attributes his Nigerian heritage to his father’s naming, and the “countless parables, proverbs, and principles” that define him. These were integral to the development of his song and video “Classic Man,” which has clear imagery of African textile influence attire. His “Classic Man Manifesto” provides a guideline for aspiring “Classic Man” who “pays homage to his legacy” by taking pride in “his self and his livelihood” (Jidenna). He also refers to his Nigerian pride, and lessons from his father, in his indication that [educational] excellence was a necessary component, perhaps pointing to Nigerian immigrants’ perspectives on excellent. In fact, 37% of Nigerians in the United States have a college degree, which is 17% higher than the percentage of the American average. They are also more likely to attain jobs in the labor markets (Migration Policy Institute).

While some have kept their names and succeeded, there are examples where attempts were foregone to take up names more acceptable to the hostland’s culture. For instance, Chiwetel” Umeadi Ejiofor’s sister and CNN reporter goes by the name Zain Asher. However, her profile for CNN refers to her fluency in Igbo, “her native Nigerian dialect,” and that she has lived in places such as “Mexico, France, and Nigeria” (“Zain Asher-Anchor”). This is also evident in a non-Western diasporic context with China’s Nigerian-born pop singer Emmanuel Uwechue. He sings in Mandarin and has picked up the stage name “Hao Ge,” or “good song.” His success and likability was directed at his ability to sing and speak Mandarin, unlike other foreigners on Chinese television. He indicated his limitations based on Chinese success often being determined by the ability to integrate his profile to Chinese cultural norms. However,

while he has achieved nationwide success, he suggested in 2011 that he was boxed into romance songs and feels it necessary that he “expand the horizons of my distributed work.” He has recorded more “upbeat, rhythmic songs,” but conceded that these songs would not likely be taken up by Chinese producers (Wang).

These artists identify themselves in multidimensional ways, but many still asserting cultural ties to a Nigerian homeland. They do so intentionally, and in spaces where they are compelled to explain their resistance to certain forms of assimilation. In some cases, they push back against xenophobic or racist attempts to westernize (or easternize) some aspect of their identity. In other cases, as with Ayo and Jidenna who are both biracial Nigerians, they have asserted their ‘Naija’ identity by expressing their name in light of the fact that they may not be visually recognized as Nigerian. Asher and Hao Ge may not forefront their names, but find other ways to express their cultural identity as public figures. These examples are nowhere near all inclusive, and intentionally leave out examples where Nigerians actively reject their heritage while in the Diaspora. The goal here was to show a legacy of representation of complex ‘Naija’ identities by cultural producers in one’s work and to one’s community.

What we find is that Nigerian cultural producers find their way into popularized spaces, and share with the public how they see themselves and share parts of their lived experiences to reassert consciousness of Afropolitan or African world, Black, Nigerian, and ethnically-based identities. Beyond roles and art that engages specifically Nigerian diaspora identity, many of these cultural producers are contributing to characters that represent Black communities in their hostlands. They are also providing critique of their ‘Naija’ identities of themselves and their communities in social spaces as well as within the cultural productions. The recurring theme of an assertion or reassertion of Nigerian heritage within dominant hostland communities has

clearly indicated the presence of a growing diasporic group within historic African Diaspora spaces (e.g. United States, United Kingdom, South Africa). They contribute to the formation of diverse Black Diaspora identities in these various ways, through expressions of their lived experiences and through the works they produce.

‘NAIJA’ PRIDE: PRODUCING SELF AND COMMUNITY IN THE AFRICAN WORLD

Nigerian cultural producer Ima Mfon, an immigrant to the United States, put out a call on Facebook for people of Nigerian heritage to be photographed for his series, “Nigerian Identity,” a part of his dissertation project (Mfon). In a CNN article, he explained that his goal was to combat the negative images media presents of Black people by “creating pictures that had a sense of pride and elegance to them” (White). The exhibit itself is a collection of portraits of Nigerians from New York and Texas, portraying only their skin, hair, and any cultural accessories chosen by the participant. The images are in black and white, and their dark skin becomes the focus of the image. Their hairstyles and accessories become individual markers of identity including headscarves, glasses, braids or natural hairstyles, and jewelry such as necklaces representing African cultures as well as religious faiths (i.e. Islam, Christianity). Mfon imagines this project as a coming together of people based on what bonds them together, their awareness of and pride for their Nigerian identity. When he asked his participants what makes them Nigerian they responded with many of the same answers, “my family, my upbringing, my name” (White).

Mfon joins this cohort of Nigerian cultural producers who center representations of their Nigerian cultural identity as a way to assert pride for who they are, and combat discriminatory and imposing portrayals and stereotypes of their Blackness. The each express their Nigeria heritage in some shape or form, but are able to envision various ways to interweave their

transnational cultural, racial, ethnic, religious, gender-based, sex-based identities and experiences. Their expression of cultural identity can be examined as ‘agents of resistance,’ which Ruth Simms Hamilton argues is a critical characteristic of African Diaspora identities. Faced with oppressive social, economic, and cultural conditions, asserting one’s Nigerian cultural identity as intersections of various selves creates self-determined representations of their diasporic communities.

When these cultural producers use public spaces to announce how they understand who they are in relation to their Nigerian heritage, they contribute edifying knowledge of the Nigerian Diaspora specifically, and the African Diaspora in general. Mfon and John Boyega, asserted their Black and Nigerian identity because they felt it was necessary to combat discriminatory images of Black people by proudly asserting a multidimensional identity in which they affirm belonging to various identities simultaneously. While Boyega, Oyelowo and other actors may not always be portrayed as Nigerian characters, they use interviews or speaking engagements to define who they are. Beyond the popular Nigerian cultural producers, the social media attack on Jamie Oliver’s “jollof rice” through hashtag satirical responses on twitter also shows another way the Nigerian and African public produce their own culture by finding ways to also correctively represent their communities’ traditions. They bypass popular media networks, often owned by Western conglomerations, to attempt to control their own narrative.

Nollywood is an example of this—a film industry originally developed by masses of Nigerians because of their limited access to celluloid film (Saul and Austen). Any Nigerian could use his resources from his immediate surroundings to cheaply develop, copy, and distribute their films, which culturally expresses how he wants to represent himself and his community. Nollywood and other Nigerian films have provided space for Nigerians worldwide to share their

localized lived experiences on a global platform and on their own terms. It is a chance for filmmakers to tell their stories of who they are and how they understand Nigerian society and economy, as well as Nigeria and Nigerians' relationship to the African Diaspora (primarily the West). It is this ability to represent narratives of society through Nigerian experiences that allows Nollywood to reach the popular public. Nollywood films have been translated into various languages spoken by Africans across the world, and in some cases the dialogue is augmented to fit with other African cultural norms. In this sense, it contributes to the African Diaspora culturally, by providing Nigerians and other Africans additional outlets that represent the Black experience. Its popularity across the African world demonstrates Hall's argument that "good" popular Black culture emerges from what its community determines to be authentic and worthy of consumption.

CONCLUSION

The Nigerian Diaspora in the 21st century, as a part of the African Diaspora, is by sheer volume one of the largest emergent diasporas coming from the most populated African nation in the world. This is also a factor to note, when discussing the reach of Nigerian cultural productions or cultural expressions. Their belonging to the African Diaspora is complex, and not without its negative aspects that befall other African world communities as well. Nigerian immigrants make up some of the largest percentages of college-educated communities in some hostlands, but also make up the highest percentage of asylum seekers and human traffic in others. It is clear their relationships to home as well as the hostland can prove to be hostile economically, socially, or politically. High unemployment rates, with a high volume of college educated citizens, become reasons to leave Nigerian for more lucrative and secure job opportunities.

When they arrive to their new destinations, they must negotiate why they have left in combination with the Nigerian Diasporan they choose to be. As this paper shows, the Nigerian Diaspora's popular and everyday cultural producers have declared a diverse and complex diasporic 'Naija' identity and delivered representations of cultural identities through various routes of global communication. While this paper does not detail negative representations of Nigerians, from Nigerians, it does recognize that not all accounts are positive, nor are they all the same. Rather, I intentionally expose ways that Nigerians in the Diaspora positively affirm their identities, as well as incorporate other explanations of who they are to exemplify meaningful representations of the African world that can naturally counter simplistic and denigrating narratives of African descendants that permeate globally.

CHAPTER 2

Re-Producing Self and Community: The Lived Experiences of Nigerian Diaspora Cultural Producers

“I always like to say, for my brother and my sister, my father and mother really created a way for us. The house is full of books. My dad never answered any questions. If you asked him a question he would point you to a book and say "the answer is there in the book." So you're forced to seek out knowledge. That ethic, that idea that both of them worked hard to make sure that their children had the best education. They had put us on the right the right path. Their influence is not so much, 'yes he's in the dramatic arts' and 'yes, I'm a filmmaker' but it's more about being a human being and how you approach the world and how you approach what you do.”

-Akin Omotoso, Africa Channel interview at the Pan African Film Festival LA

The South African-based, Nigerian-born filmmaker, Akin Omotoso, son to lecturer and acclaimed Nigerian novelist Kole Omotoso, speaks here of the path his parents put he and his siblings on in life. Here, in an interview with the African Channel during the screening of his film *Man on Ground* at the Pan African Film Festival in Los Angeles, he shares that regardless of what he does in life his parents made learning and knowledge central to how he and his siblings approach the world. When he began writing stories, his father encouraged him to "write what he knows" which guided his trajectory as a storyteller of African worldviews. Further, asserting his name "Akinrimola," Omotoso admitted that its meaning, "He who's surrounded by wealth," was reflected in his own life through love and support and created a responsibility in him to do the same on to others in turn (Luna).

Akin, like the Nigerian Diaspora cultural producers in this chapter, are intentionally writing "what they know" into their creative works. What they know, from an African diasporic framework, includes their experiences in their hostlands (United States or South Africa) and often in relation to their homeland–Nigeria. Each Nigerian Diaspora cultural producer has a different story to tell, being a product of different environments with varying identity markers that are important to how they tell their story. However they approach their stories, what will

also emerge from their narratives is the responsibility they collectively have to themselves to tell narratives that represent their cultural heritages and the world around them as they know it.

Carole Boyce Davies' notion of Black migrant women "writing home" provides a theoretical framework that helps to understand the power of writing one's lived experiences into permanent existence. Her analysis of the Black female migrant reveals that she negotiates her dispossessed identities and then must remember them in order to write of her experiences. Black women's writings—read as a process of re-memory—not only reveals their identities but also establishes it and in doing so defines home. The migrant is often dispossessed of a home, leaving her homeless, homesick, displaced, and subject to metanarratives of home that counter how they understand their lived experiences. For the Black woman migrant, home can be dispossessed when she is asked where she is from which suggests that she is an immigrant and ultimately belonging somewhere else (Davies). Writing home is the process of self-definition and "takes into account the multifaceted nature of human existence and female identity" (85). Said differently, writing home allows the Black female migrant to remember and articulate her identities, which moves beyond linear histories and metanarratives of self and identity. It is a form of resistance to domination, remembering and articulating where one is from and "locating home in its many transgressive and disjunctive experiences" (85).

This notion of writing home can be tied to the experiences of these Nigerian Diaspora cultural producers, who find it necessary to express their truths through their experiences and identity and as a result define multiple locales of home. While in the African Diaspora considering home, Nigeria, the producers determine what it means to them now that they have left. This is a transformative process that they undergo while simultaneously processing imposed identities in their diasporic hostland. Most of them identify as Nigerian, but many of them are

also quick to also explain other cultural, racial, ethnic, and transnational identities and incorporate these experiences into their work. In all cases, the artists expressed their feelings of responsibility for producing cultural works that express the experiences of themselves and their communities. Stuart Hall's assertion that the Black community is synonymous with its Black cultural repertoires or Black cultural productions comes into play here. The cultural producers publicly articulate personal experiences in either the United States or South Africa that define their works' themes. The stories diversely vary, but they all forefront humanistic approaches of supporting their communities locally and globally. They all recognize the power of sharing stories, so as not to sit by and watch mainstream media perpetuate, as Adichie calls it, "the danger of single story" (*The Danger of a Single Story*).

This chapter exposes some of the lived experiences of the Nigerian Diaspora cultural producers in this dissertation, considering Hall's analysis. It presents the findings from semi-structured interviews and public interviews of Nigerian Diaspora cultural producers by providing detail about who they are and where they come from; their experiences living in the African Diaspora and specifically with other African communities; how they identify as a result of being in the African Diaspora and where they consider home; and their perspectives on the content and value of their creative work. The chapter provides data useful to understanding the extent to which transnational, racial, cultural, and ethnic aspects of their environment and their identities are also represented in the cultural productions they create.

From the United States Nigerian cultural producers Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (novelist), Rahman Oladigbolu (filmmaker), Andrew Ogale (comedian/YouTuber), Wale (rapper), and Yvonne Fly Onakeme Etaghene's (novelist) stories are fronted. From South Africa are brother and sister Akin and Yewande Omotoso (filmmaker/actor and novelist

respectively), Fabian Lojede (actor/producer), and Adze Ugah (filmmaker) were interviewed. The chapter depicts the experiences of Nigerians as a transnational diasporic group whose journeys to the African Diaspora are determined by the ebbs and flows of modern globalization. In doing so, it will also address the lived experiences of the Nigerian Diaspora, and how Nigeria contributes to the New African Diaspora by providing critical context to begin to understand the diaspora communities themselves. This chapter serves as a way to understand the connections between the cultural producers, as members of their communities, and the productions they create. It uses these experiences to argue that like other African Diaspora communities, the work that best represents Nigerian Diaspora communities are those that come from within the community. Understanding the lived experiences of the artists is vital to understanding not only the content and trajectory of their cultural productions, but also to providing deep insight into how they understand their own identity in transnational Diasporic spaces.

COMING TO THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

Prior to their journeys to America, the majority of the Nigerian immigrant cultural producers Nigerian Diaspora grew up in Nigeria. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, an Igbo woman, grew up in Nsukka while Adze Ugah, a Ninzo man, grew up in Kaduna. Andrew Ogale, an Idoma man from Benue State, was born in Port Harcourt and grew up in Abuja. Fabian Lojede, a Yoruba man, spent his early childhood and late teenage years in Lagos and part of his childhood in the United Kingdom. Rahman Oladigbolu is a Yoruba man who grew up in Ibadan. Akin Omotoso and Yewande Omotoso are born of a Yoruba father and a mother from Barbados, and lived in both Barbados and Nigeria. Yewande was born in Barbados, while Akin was born in Ibadan spent some of his childhood there. Akin, as well as Fabian Lojede, spent some of their childhood in the United Kingdom, while Yewande spent her first 12 years in Nigeria. The second

generation Nigerian cultural producers, Yvonne Fly Onakeme Etaghene and Wale, were both born in the United States. Yvonne was born and raised in Syracuse, but spent three years of her childhood in the Delta region of Nigeria. Wale was born in Northwest Washington D.C. and claims the DC-Maryland-Virginia (DMV) region as where he grew up. Adichie, Ugah, Oladigbolu, Ogale, and Lojede chose to leave Nigeria, while the Omotosos travelled to South Africa with their family. Etaghene and Wale's parents made the decision to immigrate to the United States and the cultural producers were born and raised in the United States. All Nigerian immigrant cultural producers, save Yewande, began their journeys with obtaining bachelor's and/or master's degree. The parents of Yvonne, Wale, and the Omotosos came to the United States and South Africa for work opportunities.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has spoken often of her initial experiences in the United States. In her Ted Talk "The Danger of a Single Story," Adichie uses the story of her roommate at Drexel presuming that she did not know how to use household appliances and that she must listen to "tribal music." However, she also described in other interviews her own ignorance of American cultures, and specifically that of African Americans. She described it within the context of her own experience becoming 'Black' in America. For instance, when in undergrad an African American classmate attempted to tell Adichie about an offensive reference made to her by a white woman about fried chicken. She expected Adichie to understand her dismay, however Adichie was unable to grasp the connection between fried chicken, and derogatorily racialized white American stereotypes of Black Americans (*The Danger of a Single Story*). She suggests that being Black, as well being African are identities America forces on you. Reading James Baldwin and African American history helped her to understand, make peace with, and be proud of being Black (Adichie, "Interview by Koyo Nnamdi").

Adichie also suggests that her Nigerian context made it difficult to understand race in America. She articulates the priority of ethnic difference in Nigeria society, not racial differences. She acknowledges that this is something she understands as normal to West Africa, but that if she came from places like South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, or Kenya, who had “white seculars who stayed on,” her awareness of race before coming to America would be greater (“Interview by Kojo Nnamdi”). Within America, she suggests that the misunderstandings between African and African Americans are two-sided.

...I do think that often there is a lack of understanding on both sides, and I think we immigrants, black people who come to the U.S., often don't have context. We don't know African-American history. And we come here and I think we very easily absorb a lot of negative stereotypes, and I think on the other hand, the African-American community, many people in that community don't know very much about Africa. And these are people who I think have been raised to think of Africa as a place of negatives. Because I have African-American friends who tell me that to say you look African to somebody in the African-American community is an insult. And I think because of both of those stereotypes on both sides, misunderstandings, people can clash. People can misunderstand each other very easily. But also, at the same time, their friendships formed understanding... (“Interview by Kojo Nnamdi”)

Adichie recognizes that on both sides, lack of context makes it easy to absorb negative stereotypes of other African communities in the United States and form relationships of misunderstanding. However, she makes note that at the same time, there are positive experiences and friendships that form as a result of being in the United States. As a starting point to facilitate this, she feels that African immigrants should be required to take a course on African American history, and that African Americans should be required to take a course on African history.

Rahman Oladigbolu describes his initial experiences in the United States as pleasant, however he notes that there are ways that his understanding of racism in America is hindered. For instance, as a result of having to undergo surgeries prior to coming to America, Oladigbolu walked with a cane when he initially came to the United States. This caused people to see him

first for their perception of his ability, rather than of his race. He found himself fighting for his own agency, that he didn't need help getting around. "A sympathetic approach" is how he defines these encounters. Since then, he has kept the same focus during his time in America: to learn as much as possible about how things are done, and how different people approach different experiences (Oladigbolu).

Oladigbolu, like Adichie, acknowledged experiences of not being able to grasp the history and contemporary context of racism in America. Oladigbolu and a close African American friend would get into racist interactions, where Oladigbolu would find the racism comical and his friend found it infuriating. This was because he was unable to grasp or recognize these negative experiences as racist. This is a problem he feels faces most African immigrants in America, and thus his work attempts to help Africans understand race in America. When asked how becoming Black or African plays into his experience in America Oladigbolu responded,

...people see me and they see a Black person, where as it was different in Nigeria. But the truth is also that when saw a white person in Nigeria, we saw a white person. And you know, we would call ... 'eh heh! Oyibo.' So I know that there are some, how do I call it, some adverse way that that identity play[s] out here. ...I know I have a problem with some people when it comes to that, but I feel like it's my experience and I may always come back to this. You see the time that I was ill, I was on bed, it's a significant part of me and what that did to me, still does to me, it's in my perspective. ... So when I look at a situation like that—which is why when I said 'yea, I came here and I know that I become more black than I was when I was over there'—I was quick to mention that the same way. Simply because I look at these things as a function of people's minds, rather than to see someone act towards me and I say 'oh, you're being discriminatory. (Oladigbolu)

Here he articulates that he understands himself as Black, within a racialized society. He analyzes racialized experiences by first assessing the mentality that is created by race, or racial prejudice, before assessing the physical response.

Rahman's experiences with other African and African Americans were profoundly positive and critical to his understanding of the United States, especially the Boston area. He

describes Boston as extremely diverse, and that it was there he met many other African people from non-Nigerian nations. He says he formed friendships with people from “Kenya, Ethiopia, Somalia—and I’m talking of real strong friendships—South Africa, Sierra Leone, Cameroon. You know I loved that idea so much that I feel, even every time I went back to Nigeria now. The fact [is that] you don’t have this kind of mix.” His experiences befriending Africans challenged him to reconsider ethnic-based stereotypes that his people in Nigeria had of foreigners. When he came to Boston, he very quickly came to meet African Americans there. He met a couple who were also affiliated with Boston University, but additionally led an Afrocentric Black community film organization. He joined their organization, and felt his connection to the community was instant. To this he says, “With Black America, it was pretty easy. . . .The organizations that I talked about with everyone there, it was natural. You know? ‘Oh our Brother from Africa, come on Then we were just... but yes you learn about the differences and all of that.’” He suggests that while differences were clear, an African or Black commonality and unity was easily established (Oladigbolu).

Andrew Ogale, like Rahman, was first introduced to the United States in 2008 through a diverse Black community while at Texas South University in Houston, a historically Black university (HBCU). There he felt he had a good mix of mostly Americans mixed with Nigerians. It wasn’t until he graduated that he began to go “to Nigeria deep” in a city we collectively agreed could be called “Nigeria, Part 2.” That is, he did not begin to meet many Nigerians in Houston until after college, and spent most of his time getting to know Black Americans from various places, especially from the United States and Jamaica. Coming from an HBCU, he feels he has not yet had the time to meet white Americans, and hopes to do so eventually to understand other perspectives of the American experience (Ogale).

In 2008, Andrew admitted that it was difficult being a Nigerian in Houston, even amongst American-born Nigerians there. For instance, he learned of the ignorant and misinformed perspectives many Black Americans he met had of continental Africans as well the perspectives of longer standing African immigrants.

There was a lot of ignorance I faced. When I was in school someone asked me how does it feel to wear good shoes? How does it feel to wear clothes for the first time? Do I have a pet lion? One thing is—someone called me Kunta Kinte and the thing was I never knew what Kunta Kinte is. And when I came to this country I wore my traditional clothes, because that's how I dress in Nigeria. But going to TSU, I got like different reviews. The Americans said "oh this looks nice. You're different, different." Then they have the ignorant side like "Bro you putting on PJs?" [I'm] like "PJs? This some expensive lace o!" Then even some Nigerians. My fellow Nigerians like "Bros, why are you doing? Like we're in America now. You have to act like an American." (Ogale)

His initial experiences were mixed between those who were accepting or interested in learning more, and those who shared their stereotypical views of who Africans were and who they must become in the United States. Andrew also mentioned the difficulty meeting women, especially Nigerian American (2nd generation) women. They called immigrants such as himself FOBs, or fresh-off-the-boat, arguing that they do not date Nigerian men because they could relate. Andrew countered that they must know something about his culture, because their parents are Nigerian immigrants. He reflected that he believed their own upbringing, being teased and called 'African booty scratcher' as children perhaps played into their repulsion toward Nigerian immigrants. It was to a point, the un-coolness of the Nigerian man, that Andrews friends even pretended to be Jamaicans when picking up women, because everyone thought Jamaicans were cool—even the Nigerians.

Andrew said he was witness to the shift, however, around the time he was a member of TSU's African Studies Association, when it did become cool to be a Nigerian. In sharing their Nigerian culture, others eventually came to understand "Ok, they're doing this thing. They have

their own kind of music” and not only became accepting, but desired to connect with it more. The Nigerian American women began being more particular about wanting to date a Nigerian man over time, where African Americans wanted to be given Nigerian names to go and tell others that they were Nigerian. In his limited experience with white Americans, he found them more accepting, or at least more cognizant of Nigerian culture. While visiting his cousin at a predominantly white institution, his roommate even asked if he was from Lagos because his sister was currently there working. He repeatedly stated that while he faced a lot of ignorance, he met a lot of wonderful Black Americans (African Americans and Jamaican Americans) who accepted him as he was and became good friends (Ogale).

Wale and Yvonne have also spoken about their experiences growing up in America, but also their experiences returning to Nigeria. Like Andrews analysis of Nigerian Americans, Wale and his brothers faced isolation as the “African family” on the block where they lived. They stood out because their parents were strict, especially with their safety. As Wale puts it “If you’re watching the news in the early ‘90s in D.C., the mayor’s on coke. There’s a war going on out there. You ain’t going outside” (Richards). Amongst peers, Wale’s brother Alvin said in an interview with the Washington Post that Spanish kids would try to fight them so Black kids wouldn’t make fun of them, Black kids wouldn’t talk to them because they felt they would catch something, and white kids wanted nothing to do with them. Wale explains it in relation to having, and asserting pride in his Nigerian heritage.

Nigerian in America, in the mid-90s you know when kids was making fun of you and your parents pick you up at the neighbors and all that stuff. You gotta defend yourself a lot. It ain't really easy. You the butt of a lot of jokes in the States at that time, when there was really not that pride in like being African. I always had the pride, so I was fighting a lot. It turned into like a chip on my shoulder though. It's like, you know, long first name, long last name. The first day of school the teacher like "O-o-o-o-o-o-o." I said, "It's not that hard to say Olubowale, Ms. Johnson. It ain't that hard." (*Mo Wa Lati*)

Wale shares not only the hardships faced with other kids, but also the separation felt in school when teachers were unable or perhaps unwilling to pronounce his name. He felt there wasn't a normal pride in being African, perhaps both children of African immigrants and African Americans, and as a result he found that he must fight to represent that respect of his culture.

Wale, true to his DMV roots refers to it as home and that he has "love for everything that's DC" such the sports teams and Black celebrity artists that emerged from it including Martin Lawrence, Mya, Dave Chappelle, Redskins, and The Capitols. During the Black Lives Matter protest of the death of Baltimore native Freddie Grey, Wale participated in protests and spoke out in an interview with Revolt TV about how he felt Black lives should matter to Black people. He didn't "care about tryna rally up people for the wrong reasons. I want us to realize the power we have got within ourselves and to love ourselves more should be the first object as far as understanding the who Black lives thing" ("Real Talk"). He speaks to it as a responsibility of community, that Black people should work to keep Black people alive and empowered.

Wale traveled to Nigeria for the first time at the age of 29 in 2013, after achieving years of popularity as a famous Nigerian American rapper. His journey was documented in Revolt TV's documentary of Wale called "Mo Wa La Ti" meaning "I am from" in Yoruba. He traveled to Nigeria to "find peace with his family" since the majority of them were there and especially his paternal grandfather who he had yet to meet. When asked what he planned to bring to Nigeria, he responded that he had "a whole lot of love for Nigeria" and was interested in what it could bring to him. There reflected on the fact that growing up, his friends' grandparents were always around and they knew them intimately and their parents came to their games or event. Wale's experiences were different with physical distance between him and his grandparents, and

parents who felt activities outside of becoming “a doctor or lawyer” were not worth attending (*Mo Wa Lati*).

Yvonne Fly Onakeme Etaghene, on the other hand, visited Nigeria at various parts of her life, and moved to the Delta region for three years from age six to nine. Her father had returned to Nigeria permanently and her mother agreed she should spend time there. There she grew up her brother and met her siblings, and got to understand Nigeria as home and part of who she is stating, “My first memory ever of life is being in an airport on my way to Lagos. Being so young, is so important to how strongly I identify with my country, with our country” (Etaghene).

Once she became a young adult, she’s made efforts to travel home in 2007 by working extra hours to save for plane tickets. Since then, each travel brings her closer to her dream of living in both the United States and Nigeria and splitting time between. There she found people surprised about how much she valued her culture as a Deltan.

So some of them, especially the ones I’m just meeting are surprised at hoe much I value Nigerian culture, that I wear traditional Nigerian clothes a lot of the time. Sometimes more than the people around me that live in Nigeria, that I understand Pidgin, that I speak Pidgin. I can eat all the food, and you know the food. “I grew up eating this...” “I make eba and ogbono soup.” “Yea... I’ve had garri before.” (Etaghene)

Growing up in the United States, Yvonne spoke often about imposed identities and the frustrations of having to constantly reassert who you are, and who you aren’t. Her time in Nigeria taught her that no one could take her Nigerian identity from her.

I remember very distinctly in Oberlin where I went to college in Ohio—I had this conversation with somebody, maybe more than one person—where I was saying I'm Nigerian and they were like 'Oh so you were there' and I'm like 'No I was born here', and they were like 'Oh so you're American.' And... that conversation to me epitomizes so much of my experience here, because it's like 'you ask me a question and then you desire that I answer it, and then I answer it and your response is actually to attempt to invalidate my entire fucking life based on your own prejudices. So fuck you.' So many people have this really super, beyond simple, beyond basic understanding of ethnicity, nationality, and home. And they want to apply it to me, because their experience of themselves might be

super simple and for lack of better terms, black and white, you know, or black or white.
(Etaghene)

Etaghene's peers created distinct contrasts between her American and Nigerian identity using what Etaghene felt were simplistically determined demarcations, such as location of birth or racial indicators. More so, she felt the conversations were less about learning who she is but telling her who she is. Additionally she also felt that a times Black Americans "co-opt" different aspects of Nigerian culture when it's convenient, rather than taking on the culture completely for better or worse. Like, other world cultures, she believes it to be an American colonialist mindset to "be like 'I want yoga. I want curry. I want ying yang. I want feng shui.'" It is complex, however, as she recognizes in the case of Black Americans, reclaiming stolen cultures is more the centerfold.

And to recognize your location as a Black American in an American colonial force like America, the richest country on the planet, to understand the importance and the fucking power of your blue passport. To understand what it means for you to point to Africa and pick and choose what you want when it's convenient for you is a privilege. Because when people are fucking in dying in my country, I can't ignore that. I have to call home to be like 'Are you ok?' You don't have to do that. And granted the fucking transatlantic slave trade, and what it's done, and how it's robbed people of their culture - that pain cannot be fucking underestimated in any way whatsoever. And I'm not disregarding that.
(Etaghene)

Here she makes an attempt to bring to light the globality of not only African culture, but African suffering. Reclaiming one's identity must be tethered to the responsibility to those people. More so, her and other Black Americans' privilege as Americans must not be understated or taken for granted. She later argued that she constantly takes into account her Black privilege abroad—the ease of access into most African countries with her 'Blue passport' (US Passport) versus her disappointment that this curtesy isn't always extended to her African national counterparts. She receives mixed reactions when telling this to others from those who never considered that position, to those who agree, to those that feel she is attempting to strip their African identity

from them. As she thinks of those who do so to her, her response is always “I can’t take it away from you. I can’t take your blood away from you.” Etaghene stressed that she respects Black American culture, and as well as engages in the struggles for its people. However, her experience is that in some cases Black Americans don’t necessarily respect her Nigerian culture as well (Etaghene).

Akin and Yewande Omotoso, Fabian Lojede and Adze Ugah’s Diaspora experiences come from the context of Gauteng and Cape Town South Africa, of which Gauteng now has the largest concentration of Nigerian immigrants. However, they arrived to South Africa prior to or at the beginning of the large influx of Nigerian immigrants. Ugah and Lojede have been in South Africa for 13 years and Omotosos 24 years, and all speak to having close relationships with people of various races, ethnicities, and backgrounds in South Africa. When asked about how his experiences between various communities or groups of people, Akin Omotoso fore fronted that he tries not to focus on analyzing ethnic differences, while still being aware of them.

I generally take people as people and haven’t spent a lot of time analyzing people’s various ethnic backgrounds in my experience. That’s not to suggest a lack of knowledge of various ethnic/racial groups or awareness, it’s a life view that attempts to not generalize or stereotype people. (A. Omotoso, “Interview with Akin 2016”)

At the same time, he recognizes how his own identity is constantly simplified and negated. Even traveling in and out of South Africa became an added issue, given that his passport was from Nigeria. He noted that while his late mother and sister rarely ran into issues with their Barbadian passports, he and his father were constantly stopped with their Nigerian passports. While taking this into account, Omotoso also has a method he uses to combat racist and xenophobic encounters and experiences (“Interview with Akin 2013”). The response is always the same, “I don’t let it slide.” He calls out these discriminations, and also takes it into consideration with his work. When asked how he responds to forced and negative identities and stereotypes of

Nigerians, he responded, “*Man on Ground*,” his film starring a Nigerian immigrant who is a victim of xenophobic attacks in South Africa (“Interview with Akin 2016”). He found that this also became necessary when being cast for roles. He would reject the majority of them, which cast Nigerians in simplistic roles as drug dealers or criminals. For Omotoso, the simplifying of his identity as a Nigerian and more specifically as one with mixed heritage, becomes a boring encounter and one in which others “fail to embrace the complexity of what it means to be somebody.” However, he finds that there need be moments of empathy regarding these tensions in the South African context, and one must ask the difficult questions, “Where does that stuff come from? What does it mean? And how willing are you to engage...? How much does it define you? And I think that’s a constant journey” (“Interview with Akin 2013”).

Ugah also speaks to the issue of xenophobia in South Africa, as a combination of problems that face people in the country. He attributes misunderstandings and violence between native Black South Africans and continental African immigrants to fact that most South Africans, post-apartheid, are still disadvantaged. If the South African government included the native Africans, it would mean a different story for them.

That means they would have been empowered, that means that they would have been you know, been educated and be part of the economy. You know what I mean? And that means ... the problem with South Africa is because of that, even with liberation, even with the so called 'oh Blacks have now been given free access to everything that whites previously had', many people are still previously disadvantaged. They're still disadvantaged because they don't have access to education. They don't have access to housing. They don't have access to jobs. (Ugah)

Ugah recognizes how the apartheid government revoked access to education and labor to Black South Africans, limiting their potential to grow along with the country, or perhaps even the continent. He also recognizes that in the post-apartheid era, the circumstances for Black South Africans haven’t changed considerably. The influx of continental Africans may mean a deeper

denial of access to their own privileges. During our interview, he explained that from his perspective he had many good relationships with South Africans, especially within the film industry. However, he did observe that the tension between native and foreign Africans in South Africa caused, in part, by the perception that Black immigrants receive jobs more regularly than native Blacks. Ugah indicated that in some cases, South Africans purchased government papers to be considered for menial jobs. He points out how white storeowners use racism to ethnically determine whom they hire, by indicating stereotypes of Black South Africans as lazy, or being full of entitlement, or expectations to equal resources and salaries. That is indicated where he acknowledges that foreign Africans are willing to take any job and salary, because of the struggle immigrants have thriving in a new environment (Ugah).

Ugah's experience with other Nigerians in South Africa is notable. Ugah feels his involvement with the South African film industry has hindered his ability to socialize with Nigerians in South Africa. He describes experiences where he is asked to put a Nigerian in a South African show or direct a script provided by a Nigerian neighbor. However, he notes that without proper training in film or acting, it would be difficult to hire many Nigerians he encounters on the street in South African shows. He says that it happens constantly wherever he goes (i.e. weddings, birthdays, parties) as well as after he casts Nigerians for roles. "But they see you and say 'oh you're Nigerian. Ah! Please can't I get a bigger role? Can't I get a part where I can talk? You know, like I want to act.' 'But you can't act' and then I look like the bad guy" (Ugah). He explained that there aren't many roles for Nigerian characters, and that if they wanted to play South African parts they would have to know some South African languages, especially isiZulu, Xhosa, and Sotho, and most do not. As a result he prefers to attend functions

with Nigerians, where he is unknown, so that he doesn't have to encounter this difficult space when engaging Nigerian people.

Yewande Omotoso, coming to South Africa at the age of 12, was integrated into South African society differently than her brother who entered as an adult. Her childhood was shaped by Nigeria, much as Akin felt that his early years in Barbados shaped him. Then at some point "South Africa became the place I'd lived the longest" and found it significant to her identity as a South African. With grandparents still living in Barbados, and her connection to Nigeria, she has been able to travel back and forth to these homes. Her Barbadian passport, as her brother suggested, allowed her easier entrance into South African borders than his, his brother's, and his father's Nigerian passports (Y. Omotoso).

Cape Town, a location that the Omotosos' father distinctly chose for the family rather than the US and UK, was a place Yewande grew up understanding people constantly asked "how much of the continent is it?" referring to its European-like metropolis. It was called by some "The Republic of Cape Town," however Yewande argued that it is on the continent regardless, that there are dynamics of the city one can always engage, and it is important to stop relating it to something other than African. "So being here means I'm still on the continent" (Y. Omotoso).

It took her three years to make her first friends while in Cape Town when her family arrived in 1992. Her first friends were a Jewish girl and two Xhosa girls. The difficulty came with language. Her limited Yoruba is already a reality that she to this day challenges head on by taking courses and traveling home. She learned Afrikaans in school while in South Africa. However, in South Africa the inability to speak Black South African languages felt like a separation with Black South Africans. Her experiences with white South Africans, or racist white

South Africans specifically, would consist of their othering her as different than Black South Africans.

...taking your side and saying ‘Oh but you are different. You’re special.’ And the problem of that; the racism of that. The wanting to exceptionalize you because you’re not Black South African, and I’ve had that a lot. The more progressive/radical space the South African conversation, the less that might happen. (Y. Omotoso)

She related this to the issue of xenophobia, or as she prefers to call it Afrophobia for the centeredness of the attacks and hatred around continental African immigrants. White South Africans separated continental Africans from Black South Africans through comparisons that situate African immigrants as superior to African nationals. She feels this plays into economic matters, and how whites South African business owners use these stereotypes to privilege African immigrants as having a greater work ethic than African nationals.

As a Nigerian, she felt that her time away at times created fissures in how other Nigerians perceived who she was. When she arrived in 1992, there weren’t many other 12-year-old Nigerian children to get to know. People she met didn’t know where Nigeria was; before South Africa’s referendum vote there was an insular nature about South Africa’s knowledge of other parts of the world. When she eventually did meet other African immigrants, they were originally people from Zimbabwe and Kenya in her college years. She has had experiences of isolation amongst African immigrants who, in one case, considered her a coconut (Black on the outside, white on the inside). That is to say her character at times doesn’t follow the expectations Blacks have of each other. When asked if she has had to assert her Blackness she responded that she considers it a waste of time, like affirming her femininity. She considered the binary determination of who she is as a “coconut” one that “flattens the very complex nature of what it means to identify as something. It so belies the way we lived as Africans, and how we’ve

traveled. It's to deny the nature of our history, all the way from slavery, we know that identity is complex" (Y. Omotoso).

More specific to Afrophobia towards Nigerians, she revealed that after 10 years of arriving there began the stereotyping of Nigerians as drug dealers. The violence towards African immigrants is one based on pathology, in one case the economic factor of unemployment and on the other the negative images of Nigerians (and Africans). It's a complexity of relationships from the history of African nations uniting to combat colonialism to the reality of the contemporary distribution of resources.

The killing of people, the burning of shops, the killing of people, and burning of people, and stabbing... any form of violence carried out that way is abhorrent and I think there's extra layers of sadness of your brothers and sisters. [The] extra layer of sadness is we were joined in a struggle, as nations; we were nations that were joined in the struggle. And so that's, there's a real sadness in that. And it's quite complex. I really don't have an answer. There's a line of thought that it's not just Afrophobia, it's not just this hatred. It's not, 'I just hate you.' It's complex, because 'you have, and I don't.' The resources are limited and so on. ...you gotta look at the context. So there's that. Then there's the line that says, 'No, no excuse me. They're many South Africans who are poor and have nothing, but they're not going out there burning Mozambicans.' (Y. Omotoso)

Yewande gives diverse perspectives of what central themes create these conditions in South Africa. However she highlights that the economic issue is critical to how it manifests versus prejudice that could occur amongst wealthier communities of Africans in other global spaces.

Fabian Lojede came to South Africa as a business professional working free lance in advertising. The initial friends he made were in work related spaces and they were predominately South Africans. It wasn't until he spent more time in South Africa that he met and made Nigerian friends, but still within the advertising industry. On the topic of how Nigerians (and Africans) are represented in South Africa he offered that the issue stemmed from lack of knowledge.

...a lot of South Africans and South Africa [as] a whole is not really informed about what the rest of the continent did for South Africa during the struggle years. And it's a huge

huge huge gap about that. ...It's not about them making those information available, out of a sense of gratitude for whatever African country. That also is part of it, but I think it's more of knowledge. I think it also helps to foster, especially in the area of Black on Black, one African country against another African country, one tribe against another tribe to know that there have been situations where Africans have come together. Africans have basically pulled their resources, whether moral, financial or military to help another African country, to help another African or to help other Africans. I think that's really important. It's really important for kids to know that there were Nigerians that were helping their fathers. There were Mozambicans, there were Angolans. It's really important for Black people to understand that it has not always been Black on Black. I think we all have a responsibility to do that. (Lojede)

Like Yewande, Fabian centers unity of Africans in struggle as a complexity that when understated contributes to the divisions between Black communities. He forefronts knowledge of past encounters of African unity as a responsibility Africans have to teach themselves, as well as to their kids. This perhaps comes a way to close the "huge gap" between communities unaware of the sacrifices of those who came before them in the struggle to see unity amongst African people.

TRANSNATIONALLY DETERMINED 'NAIJA' IDENTITIES

While all cultural producers consider themselves Nigerian, they each have various ways of describing themselves out of a national context while based in the African Diaspora. Adichie's process of becoming Black and African led her to various experiences of self-love as Black, as woman, and as an African that helped to define who she is. She makes it clear that she is a feminist. Who she is as one is as a result of her experiences with sexism, as well as the strength of African women in Nigeria and the United States. In her TED Talk, "We Should All Be Feminists" Adichie provides many examples in Nigeria where her accolades and professionalism were ignored because of her gender. However, she has come to understand herself proudly as a woman, and chose "to no longer be apologetic for my femaleness and for my femininity. And I

want to be respected in all my femaleness because I deserve to be” (*We Should All Be Feminists*).

This has been a process of becoming as she has grown, and due to her experiences in both Nigerian and the United States. That is also true for how she identifies herself ethnically, racially, and culturally.

I think of myself as a writer, but also, I realize that those -- I mean, it depends on who's defining on what the definition means, because two people can say African writer and have two different things in their minds. And, you know, I'm very happily African. I'm Nigerian. I'm feminist. I'm Igbo. I'm all of those things. I'm black, and I'm also -- I'm a writer. (“Interview by Kojo Nnamdi”)

Adichie described that she didn't originally see herself as African, or as Black, but that as a result of her experiences in the United States, she has proudly accepted both titles while also holding onto and articulating her identities of enculturation: Nigerian and Igbo. As a writer, she recognizes that she comes with a specific, and unique perspective that will vary from other writers that she encounters.

Rahman Oladigbolu defined home in relation to his identity. He considers himself a Universalist, because he occupies multiple spatial and physical homes.

...since I moved here what I considered home hasn't changed. Probably that already started before I moved here, because I heard that question a lot, like 'where is home?' Because for me, since I finished secondary school in Nigeria, ... that passion ignited in me to make films. It has just become... that's the world I want to be. That's the only place I want to be. And it doesn't matter where that world is situated. And I think that world, so I feel like whatever, my story, that I have to make a film, whatever it takes me is home for me. So that's the way I see it. So even now, yea, it's still the same. ... I make films not just wanting to make a film for—it's like a fire of a story burns in me, And I just want to see it through no matter how long it takes. (Oladigbolu)

Oladigbolu defines home in relation to the locations that his work brings him, which does not need to be a physical space. It is instead a space in which his is able to create his art, and produce film. For instance, with his current working project, *The Theory of Conflict*, he reveals that this is

the most difficult film for him to make and it's the world he currently occupies. He makes regular trips to Nigeria, but still this project remains his location of home.

While Oladigbolu identifies himself as a Universalist, as described earlier he does identify as Black. He also identifies strongly with his Nigerian heritage. He recognizes that much of what he understands about in the world came from his readings while recovering from his surgeries in Nigeria. He explains it as "stepping away from society," that largely impacted his Universalist identity and making himself "hungry to be part of all this humanity." At the same time he believes that where he was born was not an accident, and it becomes one's responsibility to articulate their knowledge of the world. "I feel like there is a responsibility that you owe, something that you have to which is something I believe that I am striving to still maintain while here... I believe that that Nigerian perspective is important, because that [identity] is how we can do a little as we can to [contribute to] the world, you know?" (Oladigbolu)

When asking Andrew Ogale where is home, he simply stated "home now? Where my parents stay! Nigeria! There's no place like home. We're just here seeking for greener pastures. We will always go back." For Andrew, the United States is a "stepping stone in life" that allows him to gather global perspectives that he can use to positively contribute back to Nigeria. When asked if he able to maintain his Nigerian identity while in the United States he jokingly affirmed that he will always be a Nigerian (Ogale).

Oh everybody knows that I maintain. I cannot even deny it. This is how I talk. So a lot of times I even try to switch accents. Before I'm done talking, "Oh, where are you from? You have an accent?" I cannot hide it. I don't have a choice. I've always been Nigerian. ...I'm still the same o. I'm very much the same. You have to adjust sometimes and I look at, I have earrings now. In Abuja I can't do that. I would be skinned alive. Even my fashion sense. When I cam I used to, at least three times a week, I wear traditional clothes. But now, I like swag. I like the American Swag. Very soon I'll be wearing Kanyezees. (Ogale)

As mentioned in the earlier section, Andrew found himself amongst fellow Nigerians who attempted to fake other accents, like Jamaican, to fit in. He would rather affirm that if someone did not like him because he was Nigerian, they missed out on a good opportunity. He is an always will be Nigerian and cannot hide it, but recognizes that he is a product of his Houston environment. Over time, he began to enjoy various aspects of (Black) American culture, jokingly saying that soon he'll begin wearing the fashion from famous rapper Kanye.

Wale identifies himself by his homes, the DMV and Nigeria. The DMV is where he was born and raised, and the center of his Nigerian American experience.

DMV, it's my affiliation my passion my love for home. Like DC is home, Maryland is home, Virginia is home. I wear it on my sleeve. I carry the flag or whatever you want to call it. I take the shots, I get crucified for it whenever I need to. But it's just a part of being proud of where you're from. (MTV)

His DMV identity is one that he affirms in the context of the rap industry, where many popular rappers come out of New York and California contexts. So, stating his DMV affiliation is to proudly call a place home and speak to its ability to produce world class musicians. When referring to his Nigerian identity, he does so in the same breath as his DMV identity, and in relation to how others perceive it.

I'm Nigerian. You know it. I'm also from DC. You know it. I'm a little bit off sometimes. You know it. So... it is what it is. I talk about it. ...all the Americans tease. I'm not going to be like "Yea, I'm African let's go hunting for lions. O!" You know what I'm sayin? That's what a lot of people think Africa is, like "Oh, where's your spear?" Like "Why isn't he on stage doing a tribal dance?" Yo Nigeria look like New Yo- Lagos look like New York City. (The Breakfast Club, *Wale Interview Breakfast Club*)

Wale asserts his identity here as a Nigerian, Black American and African here through antidotes of American stereotypes of African communities. He denounces them by making a strong connection between Nigeria and the United States by stating how the major metropolitan cities in each place remind him of the other. Tethered to this prolific statement, that a place in Nigeria or

Africa can look like New York City, is the ethos he brings as an African and an American to justify such a claim.

Yvonne, who was also born and raised in the United States, identifies squarely as a Nigerian who was born in America. As mentioned earlier, she often finds she must explain who she is rather than just be who she is amongst others not in the same transnational situation. When speaking to her tailor in Nigeria, who is like a big sister to her...

...she was saying something about, you know, "you're from there." Meaning the US. I'm like, "I'm not from there, I just live there. I'm from Nigeria." So I wanted to say that in this context. And also I don't identify with Nigerian-American. I'm a Nigerian born in America. ... I had a lot of experiences as a Nigerian in this country [United States]. A lot that have been hard, many of them are beautiful as well. (Etaghene)

Where Yvonne lives are places she considers home. However, when she speaks of "home-home" she is referring to Nigeria. She is currently based in Oakland, and that becomes a home, just as New York did as a place she grew up. Home to Yvonne is also found where she can be amongst others who share similar experiences.

With Nigerians who are born here, and have a strong connection to home [Nigeria], they feel like home to me, because they kind of get it. Like us having this conversation, like we know we've had similar critiques. We've had similar conversations. So when we come together, it's like 'ah man, I see you.' I don't have to prove anything to you, you don't have to prove anything to me. ...That's some of the most fulfilling spaces because it's like 'man I can just be myself. We can just make jokes with each other. I can be myself. I don't have to fight for you to see me.' And it's a beautiful thing. (Etaghene)

The space of familiarity, or perhaps the space that lacks isolating indicators or people, becomes a home space created in any place. She also relates this then to the Nigerian queer community, that finding communities of queer Africans, Nigerian dykes, or more specifically Deltan dykes becomes closer to how she understands home through finding those with similar identities and experiences.

To Oladigbolu's Universalist identity, Akin Omotoso may also agree. Omotoso identified both as "Pan-African" as well as, quoting CLAM magazine's tagline "local everywhere" ("Clammag"). He recognizes that his diverse background, Nigerian and Barbadian, as well as multiple locals of living, Nigeria, Barbados, England, and South Africa, have given him a global perspective of looking at the world and imagining himself within it. Similarly, he also suggested that if he were asked to identify where he is from, like the ethos of his film *Man on Ground*, he would respond "I am from Planet earth." When asked if who he was changed as a result being in South Africa, he replied "...my worldview is vast so I never see myself as belonging to just one group. West African and West Indian food is one thing that I do seek out. So I find where these restaurants are and visit them regularly in whatever city I am in" ("Interview with Akin 2016"). While Omotoso can identify globally, he also acknowledges how his own cultural inheritances, West African and West Indian food, contribute to how he engages with the places he travels.

Fabian also identifies himself as a Pan-African, critically aware of his African perspective specifically as a Nigerian.

I really have a Pan-African view of myself. But like I said, my Pan-Africanist view still stems from the fact that I'm Nigerian. So for me being Pan-African does not remove who I am, what my nationality is. What makes me African, is the fact that I'm Nigerian. And what makes me Nigerian is the fact that I'm Yoruba. Remove all those things and someone says 'No you're not Yoruba. I'm not Nigerian.' Then if I'm not Nigerian, then I'm not African. All those things, what defines me as an individual, are things that I can trace back home to my roots. I really have a Pan-African view of myself. (Lojede)

Fabian feels that what's important about how he identifies and goes off into the world is preservation, to make sure that Africans hold on to who they are in order not to have cultures wiped out. "For me that's what it's about. It's about us realizing that the preservation of our history and our culture and our languages should be a matter of national security" (Lojede).

Adze Ugah spoke to Nigeria specifically in reflecting on home, but also considers South Africa home. He suggests that he has a good support system, and people he supports, in South Africa. With his family there as well, South Africa becomes home. He looks at it as embracing what is offered, noting that his experience with Nigerians in South Africa is usually to look negatively on their time in South Africa. He recognizes that while Nigeria is home, what he has been offered in South Africa since coming in 2003 has been much. Yewande, who unlike her brother, Adze and Fabian came to South Africa still as a child, identifies South Africa as an identity. "I must say I identify as South African, Nigerian, and Barbadian. So I claim all three identities, and it's quite important to me" (Y. Omotoso). It also became important for her to travel home to visit family in Nigeria and Barbados, as mentioned earlier, as well as to learn Yoruba as these are all important indicators of who she is.

THE CULTURAL PRODUCTIONS AND REPRESENTING NAIJA DIASPORITY

Once the Nigeria cultural producers made their way to the United States or South Africa, by birth or by travel, they negotiated who they are in relation to the people they engage in both their homeland and hostland(s). As was shown above, determining whether to embrace, reject, or maintain culturally determined as well as imposed identities is a part of their lived experiences. What the artists are also on the precipice of revealing is the desire and in some cases urgency to record and represent their observations of their environments or their own journeys, and that of others in diverse communities. They write, or produce, representations of themselves from their perspectives and therefore write themselves into existence, and into national and transnational contexts. This section reveals how the Nigerian cultural producers imagine their work in relation to themselves, their communities, and target audiences.

Americanah is a novel, that as Adichie describes, is about “race and hair” in America. Like all her stories, it is also a love story focused on Nigerian immigrant to America, Ifemelu (“Interview by Binyavanga Wainaina”). Raised in Nigeria, Ifemelu eventually meets Obinze, her love interest who eventually attempts to migrate to the United Kingdom himself. Specific to race, the novel attempts to provide the critique of race in America from the perspective of a Nigerian immigrant. Adichie reveals that Ifemelu’s blog about race, “Raceteenth or Various Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black” (*Americanah*), provides her as a writer an way to talk about America’s political economy as well as politics of racial identity (Edozie), from her own perspective.

Ifemelu's blog in the novel was my way of wanting to talk about race. And when I say race I should say I mean black, blackness. Because, again, race in America is a multifaceted thing. And Ifemelu discovers that she's black and she wants to write about it. But she writes an anonymous blog. And I think that's important because often when you talk about race, people forget what you said and focus on who's saying it. And so Ifemelu is anonymous so that way she can just say what she thinks. And I hope that it would be funny. I wanted it to be funny. I wanted to say things that I think are important but also things that are quite absurd. I mean, there's a lot about race that's just really absurd. And so that's what the blog -- that's what I hoped the blog would do. (“Interview by Kojo Nnamdi”)

Ifemelu’s discovery of her Blackness, in America, prompts her to create an anonymous blog that allows her to freely critique her experiences of being Black as a non-American Black. At the same time, it allows her to provide critiques to what other non-American Blacks need to do, in order to understand and embrace their Blackness in America while being aware of the inevitable racism that they will face. This blog develops after Ifemelu moves to the United States to complete her degree. The novel is one of transformation, where Ifemelu goes through the process of becoming Black in the United States, marked by her experiences primarily with other non-American immigrants, African Americans, and whites in the country.

When discussing her relationship to the book, Adichie describes the book as “the Nigerian” version of the immigrant story to America. In a 2011 interview with Kenyan writer Binyavanga Wainaina, she gave clues to her new book and describes some of the inspiration behind what would become *Americanah* (Adichie, “Interview by Binyavanga Wainaina”). In her interview on the *Kojo Nnamdi Show*, she also reveals that she felt after being in the United States for 15 years, that she had a few things to say about her experiences. When asked if the book was an ‘American’ book, she answered “It’s about America in many ways, but it’s America through Nigerian eyes. So I consider it still a very Nigerian book” (“Interview by Kojo Nnamdi”).

It becomes clear that Adichie feels that her work is a platform for her to voice her perspectives of the world, through love and articulation of one’s own truth. In a reception speech for “Girls Write Now,” she advised the young female writers to “forget about likeability.” By this she meant that each woman should write her story, from her story, and not be concerned with offending others.

Forget about likability. I think what our society teaches young girls, and I also think it’s something that is quite difficult for even older women, even self-confessed feminists, to shrug off is that idea that likability is an essential part of the space you occupy in the world, that you’re supposed to twist yourself into shapes to make yourself likable... If you start of thinking about likability, you’re not going to tell your story honestly because you’re going to be so concerned with not offending. And that’s going to ruin your story.
(Girls Write Now)

Truth telling, as a storyteller, is central to how Adichie constructs her stories. Her development as a writer has come along with her ability to adhere to her own advice. She and Wainaina discuss this in their interview. This is exemplified when she shares with Wainaina her desire for fiction, to be read through the perspective of non-fiction. She describes her difficulty with writing ‘flat’ characters. For her, not all the people she encounters are ‘well-rounded’ but fiction doesn’t allow for characters to be ‘flat.’ She expressed her wish to find a way to write characters

as she saw them in real life, rather than through an expectation of the genre. And because of this, she feels that perhaps fiction fails reality.

Rahman Oladigbolu also considers his work, *In America: The Story of the Soul Sisters* as connected to the experiences he and others he knows have had in America. Specifically, the storyline is based on the real experiences of a friend of Oladigbolu who was deported shortly after arriving to the United States. Oladigbolu also sees the film as one that attempts to ease tensions between African immigrants and African Americans. This film becomes a responsibility, to share the stories of African immigrants as well as African Americans to correct many misunderstandings that exist.

...strongly, I believe ...that the interracial tension between African immigrants and African Americans, I think, was destructive. And it was coming out of misunderstanding from both sides, ...not only as Africans. ...We would come here and we'd say, it's like we pick up on the white narrative. But also, there's a reason why we tend to pick on the white narrative, simply because many of us are economic migrants. And for us, we grew up in an environment where there was no racial discrimination. We had fought the white people out of our continent, in that kind of role they love to play, you know, for decades. Many of us that were even here today, we weren't even born then. So we are economic migrants and when we get here, we move towards things that would improve us -you know at that level. (Oladigbolu)

Oladigbolu believes that this experience encourages African immigrants to push away from African Americans, as well as to reject a 'Black' identity and assert an 'African' identity. He feels that their experiences of only knowing the white narrative of race, blinds them to the 'social ills' of American society, in this case racism. This also becomes clear as he talks about the title of his film, which has a different title in Nigeria than it does in the United States. Because he understood that Africans would not understand the racial context of America, he found a title that drew them into a common desire: to be in America with African Americans. He suggests that while that is the perception, and they were raised on American media, once Africans arrive, they begin to distance themselves from African Americans.

That experience is important because people didn't know really much about the relationship, which is more important, is equally important here. So that's why I thought to change it to 'In America'. It wasn't just me, it was me with a group of friends... So we came with that name, but we didn't want to just call it 'In America', because there was already a film called 'In America' with Jim Sheridan and I didn't want to lose that relationship to *Soul Sisters*. So we gave it a long name that's common for films, *In America: The Story of the Soul Sisters*. (Oladigbolu)

The title 'Soul Sisters' was also important in its American release, because it projected the relationship between a Nigerian female immigrant and an African American woman. Their friendship and love for one another is a major theme of the film. By adding, 'In America' Oladigbolu tied this diasporic experience to a type of feeling he believes Africans can identify with: wanting to be in America. He calls the film *In America* when he's in Nigeria and *Soul Sisters* when he is in America. He quotes writer Elie Wiesel, to describe his relationship with *Soul Sisters*, "he said 'God must have created the world out of His love for stories' ... I added to his sentence ... 'Without stories, maybe life would have no engine to write on'" (Oladigbolu). To Oladigbolu, his responsibility is to storytelling about his and others' experiences. By presenting the problem, perhaps others understand and contribute to the solution.

Andrew Ogale and his colleague Chukwunonso Ofili are the dynamic comedic duo that makes up the core of the Wowo Boyz. Wowo Boyz, Andrew explained, is a Pidgin term meaning 'ugly.' They took that as a play on words, calling themselves 'ugly boyz' as a way to bring humor to the content of their channel. While they are both stand-up comedians, Ofili also focuses on design where Andrew often provides stories and content for their sketches. Andrew considers himself a storyteller, and the stories they tell are those that "everybody can relate to" and those that they understand (Ogale).

African parents, food. Sometimes we tough on the idea of sex. Because there's things that's going on in the world. Sometimes people don't like the sex part but you cannot dodge it, because it's part of my experience. You know that growing up in an African home, they don't give you sex education and all that stuff. Well we're past that now.

Everybody needs to know because everybody's doing it anyway. We try to educate people on the sex. We also teach people. We have videos called "You sabi Pidgin." We teach people maybe a pidgin word. We have another video with this sensitivity training. That was like bringing African and African Americans together. (Ogale)

The topic of "African parents" becomes a common theme, because as he claims "If you have Nigerian parents, you're a certified comedian." The culture clashes between Nigerian immigrants and their Nigerian American children make up a transnational theme that relates not only to Nigerians, but other Africans, as well as children of immigrants. He said he's been approached many times by Chicanos who not only understand the references, but are major fans of his show. Jokingly, Andrew admitted that perhaps he needed to meet more white people so that he could gather new content for their videos. However, what is clear is that he sees his observations of his environment as the number one contributor to the content of the Wowo Boyz sketches, and a way to teach online communities on topics that may be silenced in physical communities.

Wale's journeys and travels have pushed him towards working with other Black American as well as Nigerian artists. He makes clear that artists such as Jay-Z, Black Thought, and Tupac played into his own rap career. He likes to bring in music and sounds from various spaces to give character to his work. He has also toured with Somali American rapper, K'naan, on a Pan-African tour of sorts. Since visiting Nigeria, he has also worked on projects with Naija mix superstar Wizkid. Who he is poured into his music, and those are the stories he attempts to tell. For instance, the song "My Sweetie" was his attempt to create "the American raised, Nigerian bred perspective of a party" and present it to the world (Sound City TV).

When I asked Yvonne Fly Onakeme Etaghene the inspiration behind writing *For Sizakele* her response was that she was sharing experiences that had yet to be written.

I just started writing it because there were no books that I found like this, that were talking about what I wanted them to talk about. I didn't see... I was looking for books about Black dykes, books about African dykes. I didn't see any, and if I saw them they

were problematic. It would be like some Black woman with some white woman. The white woman was racist. It's like 'It's gay, but this white woman is racist. So, I feel like really alienated in this literary space.' I started writing this book for myself. (Etaghene)

The alienation of one's identity in literary space, specifically as a Deltan/Nigerian/Black/African dyke was problematic enough for Yvonne to feel the necessity to write herself into the space of African queer literature. By suggesting that she writes for herself, she clarifies that she is her main audience and the book *For Sizakele* even offered her space to represent a certain point in her life. "The point of my life is to tell these stories, specifically tell queer African stories, and even more specifically Nigerian dyke stories and I think West African queer stories" (Etaghene).

So while the goal is eventually to reach African queer communities, and African communities in general, Yvonne's experiences and identity is the center of her work. Thus, she finds it important to incorporate themes that resonate with her such as food. "Food is a thing for me. Food is a place where I feel at home" (Etaghene). It connects her to her mother, to her homeland, and to her culture. Similarly, writing about language is important, and thus the book uses multiple languages between the characters. Other themes she found important to represent were heartache and self-love, which comes through stories of survival, strength, reconciliation, sisterhood and love between characters in the novel. With her work, she recognizes the importance of placing herself and her finished project into various African world spaces due to the lack of African queer literature available. As a result she has toured with the book in both Africa and its Diaspora.

Akin and Yewande Omotoso, Fabian Lojede, and Adze Ugah are no less determined to produce stories that provide truth through storytelling. In 2008, the burning of Ernesto Nhamwauve, a Mozambique immigrant to South Africa, was video-taped and broadcasted nation and world over. As a result, Akin, Fabian and Adze, along with other immigrant filmmakers,

created films to respond to the attacks on African immigrants in South Africa. Akin Omotoso's film *Man on Ground* was a product of this, which he put together with other actors and filmmakers Fabian Lojede and Hakeem Kae-Kazim (A. Omotoso, "Interview with Akin 2013").

Omotoso explains this vision further when he discusses that the goal of the film is to focus on the commonality of the characters as human being, rather than on difference, which he believes blinds people of the other's experience.

This is exemplified by Hakeem's character's speech in the film about an astronaut looking down from space at Planet Earth. He observes of Planet Earth that this: "*is our collective home. I only hope people realize the labels 'us' and 'them' are one and the same*". This came from the research. One of the little boy's displaced after the violence was asked what he would tell his attackers if he met them and he said: "*I would tell them I am from here*". For us 'here' meant 'Planet Earth'. This speaks to a bigger concern. The film wanted to portray a diverse range of Africans and ideas of migration. [Omotoso's emphasis] ("Interview with Akin 2016")

For Omotoso, the goal of *Man on Ground* is to smear and erase the lines that divide people as 'us' and 'them' and find a means to focus on the commonality of their humanity. He and his colleagues gathered research about communities of Africans immigrants in townships, or that have faced xenophobia, to use for the texture of the film. They also incorporate a strong theme of language and culture, through a "kaleidoscope of language and experience," including that of Nigerians and South Africans primarily, but also of Ethiopian and Somali immigrants. Once the film was completed, Omotoso screened it publically in four South African communities. The goal is to create a documentary, *Tell them We're From Here*, which articulates their responses to *Man on Ground*. They then took the documentary and exhibited in other communities to continue the discussion. In the future, they hope that from this can come practical means of implicating practical solutions to the problems facing African people in South Africa.

When Fabian considers his work, he thinks of his filmic contributions to the representations of African people the way that Fela eventually of his music—as a weapon. He

recognizes that each artist will have a different story to tell, but for him there must be socio-cultural relevance behind his creative work.

But I also believe that there is this other side of the creative arts that doesn't always have to be politicized. Not every filmmaker, not every artist, has to be politicized or have a political message. Because at times we do need to break free and just forget stress. But having said that for those creative minds that—I can act in a comedy flick, but I don't think I could conceptualize anything that doesn't have a socio-cultural meaning It's not in my DNA. ...In regards to helping to mold and shape our image as Africans and as Black people, creative people can't do it alone. We need like-minded people, in the right positions, to actually help foster the kind of image and the kind of communication we want to put out there. (Lojede)

Working with Akin and Hakeem on *Man on Ground* was definitely one of these collective creative works. He connected the violent attacks in South Africa to other spaces in the continent such as between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria, or between the Tutsis and Hutus in Rwanda, suggesting that their position as Nigerians in South Africa is an important departure to work together. "We felt 'Ok, it's happened in South Africa. We're all Nigerian and we're all connected to South Africa. Let's use this as a platform to talk about these issues and do something'" (Lojede). And from here the storyline was created and the film was shot.

Adze Ugah also responded to the xenophobic attacks of 2008 by creating a documentary about Ernesto Nhamwuave, *Burning Man*. His method was not just to report the story, but to also become part of the story. And to do that, he went around and interviewed people in general to gather their experiences in general of the events and their responses. He also interviewed Nhamwuave's family in Mozambique, focusing proceeds for the film in a way that can support the family. Angus Gibson, film producer who owns The Bomb Shelter production house in Johannesburg, introduced the documentary idea to him. Ugah describes the work of the Bomb Shelter as "already controversial," and thus willing to take chances on portraying real and critical images of African experiences (Ugah).

Gibson also came to Ugah with the opportunity to work on a television series project, *Jacob's Cross*. The television series is a story about the African inheritances of a young man, Jacob, who learns that not only is he South African, but he is also Nigerian. The story, based in South Africa and Nigeria, traverses the experiences of Jacob's families, and eventually a racially and ethnically diverse set of rich and business-centered families who engage each other throughout the series.

Ugah suggests that the goal with *Jacob's Cross* was to create a Pan-African show that shows Africa in a light other than the negative representation presented by the mainstream media.

We lived in Africa, we were not always dodging bullets and running up trees because of a tiger or a lion that basically crossed the street. You know what I mean? We knew that. We knew we lived in Africa. We knew when the [western] producers traveled to Kenya they'd be all over Africa, and we know that this was a place packed full of potential. Powerful people, wealthy people with influence, who despite their wealth decided 'this is still home'. I'm not going to go and live in Manhattan because I've got the money. And they could if they wanted to. They could buy the islands if they wanted to. They can buy the house if they wanted to. I mean I'm sure they do. But they still choose to live in Africa. (Ugah)

This was a major theme with *Jacob's Cross*, the ability to tell a positive and powerful story of modern day Africa. Ugah suggests that Africans themselves know these stories exist, but it is time that the media reflects their reality and potential. In order to affect this in a way that reaches diverse communities, Ugah suggested that his tasks primarily involved developing the texture of the show. Since their budget was unable to support constant travel between Nigeria and South Africa, it was upon him to introduce South Africans to Nigerian cultural contexts, landscape, language, and mannerism that were unknown to them.

It was textual, it was contextual. Names. We would have locations shoots that we could only shoot in South Africa. So it would be about finding that location that looked Nigerian and making sure every element [was] right. Like literally something as simple as a stop sign, we had to change it. ...looking for vehicles that had the steering on the

[left] side as opposed to here in South Africa where they are all on the right side, in Nigeria they are all on the left. It was always about keeping that look. It was textual, that was mostly my responsibility from the production point of view when we started. Writing yes, and then of course directing, same thing. Keeping it all feeling home, Nigerian. Some people still think we shot in Nigerian to this day. Even my dad, "Ah! You guys are coming all the time!" So that was mostly my responsibility. (Ugah)

Ugah was tasked with finding spaces, and props, in South Africa that could effect the perception of Nigeria. His father's response is evidence that he achieved this success. He felt that it was profoundly important that the images of Nigerians be accurate. Otherwise, *Jacob's Cross* could not be believable to a Nigerian. "The elephant in the room has to be addressed. We [Nigerians] do that, because we know it will be an issue." For instance, the production wanted to hire an Igbo man for a Yoruba role however the man had a thick Igbo accent. Ugah refused to allow that position to pass, so instead they created and introduced an Igbo family to the show. He even suggests that this action, of having people native to an ethnicity portray that ethnicity on the screen, was adopted by writers on the show as "the *Jacob's Cross* thing." A few other South African television shows have used this method in determining actors to accurately play roles from various South Africa ethnic groups (Ugah).

Fabian came to the project through Akin, who turned down the show initially because of his busy schedule but later acted briefly in the show's third season. Both Akin and Fabian had collectively lamented negative depictions of Nigerians on South African television and avoided projects that asked them to play into these representations. Knowing this, Akin assured Fabian he would like this role. "I loved the vision of the producers. It was supposed to be the first Pan-African drama series in the context that it was talking about two worlds [South Africa and Nigeria], you know?" And even though his character, Bola, was the bad guy of the series, it represented more than a single man but a "self-destructive force you find across the continent" where one's personal greed outweighs the strength and love of one's family. He felt the impact of

the show was the ability for Africans across the continent to see two worlds come together. He believes the appeal was “that it related to everyone, because everyone could substitute South Africa for Congo, or Nigeria, or Ghana and be able to relate to that world. So I think it's opened up the opportunities to say 'those kind of stories can be told.’” Fabian related the work that he and others like him engage as critical to creating systematic means to pass on knowledge (Lojede).

I just think we need to go back to who we are, not necessarily back to the way we used to do things. Those are the kinds of things I want to be involved in. Not just on a creative level, on a personal and business level if I can find someone who needs help regarding that kind of thing. For me it goes beyond. The problems we have are not necessarily going to be solved by creativity. (Lojede)

While he recognizes that creative work may not necessarily solve the problems that African face alone, it does help to create a contemporary form of knowledge production and preservation.

Yewande's work, in line with the cultural producers already described, creates stories from experiences that she understands. "I would always write about some kind of foreign person in a land." *Bom Boy*, Yewande's first novel, in many ways reminded her of her own story.

It looks like, in some ways it looks like I told my own story, a bit disguised. I talked about somebody who moved from his country, in a way. In this case he doesn't know his parents, he doesn't even know where he was from. He has to discover it. In many ways that's really my story, you know in my own... and his discovery for me, that manifests... It's important to me that I am Nigerian. It is important to me that I am Yoruba. It is important to me that I speak the language. It's important to me if I have children, that they'd know that that's who I am and partly who they are. (Y. Omotoso)

So *Bom Boy* becomes this story of a man who undergoes a journey of self, guided by his father, Oscar, through letters written to him before his Oscar's death. As Yewande alludes, the journey is deeply steeped in a transmission of knowledge from Oscar to the protagonist, Leke, of their Yoruba culture and Nigerian heritage.

Like Yvonne, Yewande writes specifically for herself and thus the themes revolve what she is pre-occupied with at the time. That has led her to the themes of loneliness, isolation and solitariness, as she lives a solitary life. It has also led her to themes of beauty with women, family and motherhood which she explores in her more recent novels. Overall, her characters often have complex identities, because she herself has a complex identity as Nigerian, Barbadian, and South African. She realizes that it would be difficult for her to write characters she cannot identify with, or who have more simple identities (i.e. Black American, Xhosa).

But because I'm not just a Nigerian, I'm a kind of Nigerian and Barbadian living in South Africa. Then, I'm always writing about Nigerians and Barbadians living in South Africa. It feels convoluted, but is my identity convoluted? No. It's kind of naturally what I am. That's my own process and something to grapple with as I write more. (Y. Omotoso)

What she reveals is that grappling with complex identities is as much her personal experience as it is the creative exercise she exerts into her work. She recognizes it is what she can contribute authentically to a narrative, or a character. These Nigerian cultural producers, who make conscious efforts to reveal aspects of their culture and their surroundings through creative works end up toggling between fiction and reality in order to represent diverse perspectives of what it means to be a Nigerian abroad, in all its complex manifestations.

WRITING TRUTH AND THE NIGERIAN DIASPORA EXPERIENCE: RACE, ETHNICITY, AND TRANSNATIONALISM

In their respective hostland Diasporas (United States and South Africa), all of the cultural producers eventually found ways to visit or maintain homes in both Nigeria and their diasporic hostland. They have all learned of racial and ethnic contexts that force them to reconsider their identities, or to reconsider who they are as a Nigerian in the African Diaspora. The 'Naija' identity has a multitude of manifestations that are determined by the collective of individual

experiences, or individual's agency,⁷ depending on where a Nigerian might be in the world. This follows Stuart Hall's determination of cultural identity; the producers' experiences help to visualize the process of becoming and the transformations of 'Naija' identity between Africa and the African Diaspora.

Adichie sees herself as Nigerian, Igbo, African, and Black, the last two she and Oladigbolu eventually proudly came into as a result of coming to America. That is to say, being Black and African were imposed identities that they negotiated alongside their Nigerian and Igbo/Yoruba heritages. Wale and Yvonne spent their childhood combatting negative images of who they are, or imposing definitions of their complex identities as Nigerian and/or African American. Some of them has an added experience that determines their experiences abroad: gender for Adichie, disability for Oladigbolu, gender and sexuality for Yvonne. This becomes critical for the content of their creative work. Yewande and Akin fully acknowledge their Barbadian heritage as who they are, and must find ways to assert this while also perhaps defending or positively representing their Nigerian identity in South Africa. Adze and Fabian also recognize the importance of portraying Nigerians complexly and accurately, to steer away from demeaning and flattening depictions of Nigerians on South African television.

From the cultural producers, it is clear that while negotiating these identities the artists also considered the social implications of their existence within hostland societies and found it necessary to write their experiences, or their truths, into their cultural productions. They do this by reflectively articulating the impact of their own experiences, and that of others in their communities, in ways that may at first resonate with Nigerian diasporic audiences. However, it is clear that these cultural producers hope that their work can resonate with global audiences who

⁷ Smith suggests that assessing one's "individual agency" is a critical way to access an identity-to-politics link and to understand individual, and carefully consider collective, processes of diaspora consciousness (Smith).

may understand the experiences they attempt to portray. They felt a sense of duty to share these stories from their perspectives.

As a result of environmental tensions, many of the artists make an effort to create cultural work that can help to bridge cultural and ethnic divides between African nationals and African foreigners in the United States, South Africa, and around the world. Etaghene wants to share her work to global African queer communities who may not see themselves represented in literature. Ogale wants to learn about other American communities to incorporate into his Nigerian diasporic-based sketches. Ugah still finds himself still going to the townships and recording experiences after xenophobic attacks are nationally broadcasted. Omotoso took his film throughout South Africa to share with various African communities. Adichie runs an African writing workshop in Nigeria. Many of these cultural producers have also been called by public media sources to give commentary on issues facing African communities in their homelands, as well as issues facing Nigerians at home. It becomes clear that the cultural producers find a strong connection between their experiences and their art, as well as to their activism.

This particular group of artists can be considered as Pan-African as a result of their ability not only to relate to their specific Nigerian diasporic communities, but African and other communities globally. Recognizing respective divisions in Black communities, or the special and complex case of their own existence in a diasporic hostland, becomes a motivational source of inspiration to write stories that can cross cultural, racial, and geographical borders. More so, in being able to create work that translates across cultures, they are able to unite African cultures and people across geographical spaces despite systemic issues that African face globally but may not realize affect others in similar ways as themselves.

CONCLUSION

The Nigerian cultural producers' interviews presented in this chapter are first hand accounts about the journeys, encounters, and identities of the Nigerian Diaspora. The stories they shared about who they are, how they identify with home, and their relationship with their hostlands add experiential knowledge about these communities. Their interpretations explain the boundaries and contours of their transnational existence in relation to who they are and the conditions of where they reside. The interviews also report that the cultural producers' relationship to their artwork is centered in the urgency to of create images of their communities that provide real, complex, and accurate meaning about their everyday lives. As a result, writing home for them inevitably will descriptively and correctively generate counter narratives to popular representations of Nigerian Diaspora communities.

CHAPTER 3
Becoming Black and African in America: Racial and Ethnic Identity Transformations within
Literary Narratives

“I must say that before I went to the US I didn’t consciously identify as African. But in the US whenever Africa came up people turned to me, never mind that I knew nothing about places like Namibia. But I did come to embrace this new identity, and in many ways I think of myself now as African.”

- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, “The Danger of a Single Story”

“The only reason you say that race was not an issue is because you wish it was not. We all wish it was not. But it’s a lie. I came from a country where race was not an issue; I did not think of myself as black and I only became black when I came to America.”

- Ifemelu, *Americanah*

Becoming Black and African in the United States are transformative experiences that Nigerian and other African immigrants must sojourner and come to acknowledge their own terms as they learn the socio-political realities of being in their new hostland. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is now a world-renowned Nigerian Diaspora cultural producer whose numerous cultural productions shape meaning about being Nigerian in the world. In the citations above, Adichie achieves this through a public lecture and the journey of *Americanah*’s protagonist Ifemelu demonstrating ways that the imposed racialization and ethnicization of African descendent people’s identities shifts their perspective of the world and their place in it. Experiences of racism and xenophobia, feelings of belonging and community, as well as learning about American history and Black culture provide profound context to empathetically understand how Blackness and Africanness is ascribed to one’s body and one’s every day. In an interview on the 2016 US election, Adichie tells *The American Spectator*’s editor-in-chief “I’m sorry, but as a white man, you don’t get to define what racism is,” when he rejects her objectively evidenced and subjectively supported perspectives of racism during President Trump’s presidential campaign (BBC Newsnight). She understands that someone who benefits from the

effects of white supremacy cannot define the experience of racism. Adichie, a Nigerian immigrant whose work is cited globally by the likes of popular culture artists such as Beyoncé, was invited to discuss her take on the racial dimensions of American politics. Adichie's fourth novel, *Americanah*—which is being produced as a Hollywood movie featuring Lupita Nyong'o and David Oyelowo and produced by Brad Pitt's company Plan B—is well known for its discourse on race, interethnic relationships, and the transnational experiences of Nigerian immigrants to the West.

Within the novel, characters negotiate who they are as they engage interpersonal relationships with various Americans and/or Africans vis-à-vis the intrapersonal unraveling of American racialism. Surely themes such as *Americanah* protagonist's Ifemelu's blog "Raceteenth or Various Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black" presents perspectives of an ethnically distinctive and racially uniting categorization of African diasporic identity in the US, or Adichie's notion of "Non-American Blacks," in which one becomes simultaneously Black and Non-American (e.g. Caribbean or African) rendering the fictional audience unable to gather geographically exact data about the blogger's homeland and forced to identify with her racially ("Soul Train Awards").

Rita Kiki Edozie's review "African Perspectives on Race in the African Diaspora: As Understood by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*" helps to assess the blogs as "overtly political discourse" on race in the United States, the United Kingdom and globally, from an African perspective. She argues that *Americanah's* analysis of racialism reveals how it is manifest—against popular opinion—in the lives of Africans within the continent as much, albeit differently, than those in the Diaspora (Edozie). Globalization and transnationalism play important roles in understanding the patterns and circumstances that transform racialized

neocolonial identities between cosmopolitan spaces. In Arethi Phiri's analysis of *Americanah* in relation to works by Toni Morrison, Phiri also discerns how the strong parallel theme of race is revealed in coming to terms with one's Blackness, but is manifest ontologically in *Americanah* as coming to terms with one's Africanness in comparison to Euro-Americanness (Phiri). Adichie's viral TED Talk "The Danger of a Single Story" echoes such a transformation as Adichie admittedly became African, versus Igbo or Nigerian, or even Black, once arriving to America (Adichie, *The Danger of a Single Story*).

Like *Americanah*, US Nigerian American artists' cultural productions assessed in this chapter as well as Chapter 4 offer dynamic perspectives on becoming in the African Diaspora—racially, ethnically, and culturally—in light of the shockingly difficult conditions created by racialism in America. Nigerian immigrant characters, through interactions with people in this hostland, become present to the faux nature of Americans gleamingly post-racial state. In the cases of Nigerian immigrant artists Adichie (*Americanah*), Rahman Oladigbolu (*In America: The Story of the Soul Sisters*), and the Wowo Boyz' YouTube channel, their cultural productions engage this shock of the falsehood of a post-racial America (and the UK in *Americanah*) and the reality of the struggles caused by being racially, as well as ethnically discriminated against. For instance, a recurring theme in each of these is immigration affairs as Nigerian immigrants in these works must fight impending deportation after painstaking efforts to arrive in the first place (Adichie, *Americanah*; Oladigbolu, *In America*; Wowo Boyz, "Wowo Boyz").

In the case of second generation Nigerian Americans, or American-born children of Nigerian immigrants, Wale ("My Sweetie" and "God Smile") and Yvonne Fly Onakeme Etaghene (*For Sizakele*), their cultural productions beyond the shock of American post-racialism and depart from a nostalgia for connecting to local and global symbols of Nigeria and Africa.

This is characterized through reference to food, clothing, minimal but distinct usages of Nigerian languages, and references to and use of Nigerian cultural artists and art forms (e.g. Wale–Highlife, Fela; Etaghene–Nollywood) (Wale, *My Sweetie*; Wale, *The God Smile*; Etaghene, *For Sizakele*). In all productions, we see how connections to especially Nigerian and/or African as well as American racial and cultural identities play diversely experienced roles in how characters are transformed and grow into self-determined transnational Black Africans.

This chapter focuses on the literary productions of the US-based Nigerian cultural producers where Chapter 4 focuses on the media-based cultural productions (online, TV, music, film). The literary artists, Adichie and Etaghene, are able to provide meaning through descriptive detailing of external and internal experiences. They use descriptive imagery of physical or auditory spaces and events in order to provide substantive character to their work. The racial, cultural, ethnic, and transnational representations that emerge in both the literary and media-based body of art will be discussed through four overarching themes. First, as mentioned earlier, the theme of coming to terms with racial identity is rooted in learning about Blackness and Africanness with regard to immigrants. Perhaps their commentary on race is more profound than that of the second generation Nigerian Americans for the role discovery plays. However, Nigerian Americans are able to incorporate racial themes into everyday life as a continuum of their existence.

In a second overarching theme, negotiation of cultural heritage provides spaces for the immigrants and second generation artists to use cultural knowledge as a control in determining, attaining, or returning to one's Nigerian identity. It also perhaps becomes a tool or weapon to protect oneself against racial or ethnic discrimination, in light of cultural hegemony that renders unequal cross-cultural interactions. For instance, Ifemelu picks up the American accent quickly

after being harassed for her heavy Nigerian accent, but after a sickening feeling when complimented by a stranger decides to kick the accent to the curb and stick with her Nigerian accent. Alternatively, Etaghene uses strong imagery of Nigerian food, poignant uses of Pidgin and Nigerian accents, and conversations that paint a lovely nostalgic yet consciously aware of neocolonial realities. Her views of Nigeria are a way to show how one crosses borders beyond American cultures to include global Nigerian, or global African cultural identity.

The themes of race and culture play into the complex overarching themes of pan-ethnic tensions and reconciliations representing a third theme. We see in most cases quick alliances with other African and Black immigrants (immigrant artists) and other African diasporas (2nd generation artists). For instance, in *For Sizakele*, pan-ethnic alliances are a normative as the Nigerian American protagonist, Taylor, has friends that are Black American, Afro-Cuban, Puerto Rican, and Cameroonian. However, especially with the Nigerian immigrant artists, we find that alliances with other African Diasporas, especially with African Americans, they can begin with tensions born of ignorance of African American cultural perspectives (and at the same time vice versa ignorance of African cultural perspectives by African Americans) that are overcome through platonic and romantic relationships, as well as lessons from other African immigrants or African diasporans (*For Sizakele*).

This leads us to the fourth and last theme, the identity trope that is transnationalism. Transnationalism plays a significant role in all cultural productions as artists create characters with global and hybrid identities across geographical spaces, and in light of processes of racial globalization. The criminalization of illegal, or expired, immigration status as well as the strong desires to connect with the African world culturally create in the artworks themes of Pan-African unity and alliances. In some cases, members of other African Diaspora gather together to help

immigrants avoid deportation, or to teach African American cultural competency to the new members of the African Diaspora, and as the characters transform they become agents for Pan-African unity (e.g. Ifemelu with her blog). For all cultural producers, the theme of longing to return to Nigeria, or to come to the West (United States) is an added theme that emerges as the reality of the capability to be transnational becomes clear in their individual contexts.

CULTURALLY PRODUCING NIGERIA IN THE UNITED STATES: THEMES AND SELECT WORKS

Americanah

Americanah is, as Adichie once foreshadowed, a Nigerian immigrant story in America (*Americanah*; “Interview by Binyavanga Wainaina”). The title evokes the idea of a Nigerian immigrant who goes to the West, and as a result voluntarily loses their Nigerian language and culture.

So “Americanah”...it’s actually a Nigerian word so it’s a kind of playful word that’s used for people who have been to the U.S. and who come back to Nigeria with American affectations, or who go to the U.S. and come back and pretend they no longer understand Igbo or Yoruba or Hausa. Or who come back to Nigeria from the U.S. and, you know, suddenly won’t eat Nigerian food and everything is about ‘when I was in America.’ And also often it’s used for people who are genuinely Americanized. (Fresh Air)

The novel spends time to unfold various perspectives of the Nigerian who moves to the West, and unfold how these characters choose to identify as they return home as Nigerian returnees, serious Americanahs, or something in between. The themes of race, culture and love are central to the unfolding story of Ifemelu, the protagonist, and Obinze, her childhood boyfriend. The theme of race shifts from a neocolonial present in Nigeria, where life for Ifemelu and Obinze is constantly about eventually moving to the United States but in the meantime connecting over love for British and American novels, or Obinze’s efforts to teach Ifemelu about African

Diasporic music. Many other characters provide deeper context to diverse lifestyles in Nigeria, including their childhood friends who they eventually meet again in America and the United Kingdom, and the strong roles of Obinze's mother and Ifemelu's aunt Uju as their most trusted mentors, respectively.

Ifemelu is the first to leave Nigeria for the West—the United States. Her journey is one of becoming Black as well as African as she encounters racism or learns about America's race relation, experiences cross-cultural clashes, and encounters sexism in her friendships, relationships, and communities. From these spaces, Ifemelu is also able to gain confidence and self-love during her own transformations. Her Blackness comes to bear as she must negotiate how she identifies with her body, hair, language/accent and complexion in light of both affirming and negating encounters with others. Her hair and accent, for instance, shift from being a non-issue for Ifemelu while growing up in Nigeria to becoming a heavy burden of her status as Black and African in the US. They must be changed in order to cope with America's expectations of Black women. However, in each case there is a significant moment when Ifemelu resists these conformations and decides to speak in her Nigerian accent and cut her treated hair for a natural style.

Ifemelu's friendships and communities provide a telling backdrop of the United States through the lens of their own experiences and perceptions of Ifemelu. Her love interests perhaps become catalyst into each community: Curt—white, liberal, rich; Blaine—Black, intellectual, educated; Obinze—Nigerian, childhood friend; and Nigerian returnees to Nigeria who did so without becoming 'Americanah.' Ifemelu's experiences prompt her to create a blog called *Raceteenth or Various Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black*. The blog serves as a reflection on her experiences becoming

Black in the United States, while creating a mystique behind her own identity as “Non-American Black.” This mystique seems to create a sort of pan-ethnic unity among the audience, who are left to relate to her and her experiences with only the knowledge that she is Black, and not born in America. It serves as something like a survival guide, encouraging Black people in America to positively identify with their Blackness, and also provides commentary on how public figures, such as President and Mrs. Obama, do the same.

Eventually, Ifemelu decides to return home. Obinze, who has since been to the United Kingdom, faced racism and xenophobia there, had already returned home and become a successful businessman. Eventually, Ifemelu is also able to gain success in Nigeria, and with Obinze they contradict the notion set in the beginning of the novel—that you must leave Nigeria to be successful. Ifemelu returns to a vibrant Nigeria, proudly Black and African, now negotiating her existence as one of those who have ‘been-to’ the West and back.

For Sizakele

This novel focuses on the stories of Taylor, a Nigerian dyke (born in the United States) poet, who must navigate love, relationships, and her queer African culture whilst being an upstanding college student in a university in New York City. Her poetry allows the audience to understand how she understands herself, and other African Diasporans’ exiled reality between a post-racial America and a neocolonial Africa, as she evokes a “Nigerian Goddess” whose powers can effectively take “back lands from conglomerates/ that stole our essence/we taking our natural resources back” (*For Sizakele* 2). Taylor is also part of a student organization called “Diaspora Soul” that aims to support queer immigrants from Africa and the African Diaspora. Through this organization, the audience is introduced to AC—an Oakland-based queer Nigerian—who performs at the school, but then acts as a big sister and mentor to Taylor throughout the novel. As a

Nigerian-born and raised in America, her cultural connection (as Nigerian and lesbian) is a rarity that Taylor often seeks out.

Taylor's current relationship with Lee, an African American basketball-playing pianist, is revealed to be a strong and loving one, but one where they must constantly negotiate of their cultures as Black women to see each other eye to eye. Taylor, at times, does not feel that Lee understands or respects her African as well as queer identity while Lee doesn't feel Taylor values her own priorities—especially basketball—nor can she understand her struggles at home that haunts her and keeps her from visiting home. Their relationship begins to move from loving to distant, as an incident of sexual assault by Lee onto Taylor creates a fissure in their friendship and intimacy. They spend much of the book moving further and further from each other, unable to address the elephant in the room: Taylor unwilling to speak about the incident, and Lee unwilling to address her trigger—her own experiences as a survivor of rape.

During their relationship, Taylor meets Sy, a Cameroonian photographer who immigrated to the United States as a child. Their relationship as friends blossoms quickly as they are able to connect culturally on their memories of 'home-home' (Nigeria/Cameroon), their ability to speak Pidgin and French to each other, cooking their mother's African food for each other, lamenting on the difficulties of living in an African neocolonial present, and enjoying similar past times such as watching Nollywood films. Eventually Taylor reveals to Sy that she feels like home to her, a testament to finding someone who can empathize with her culturally. Eventually, as Lee and Taylor mend their relationship and go their separate ways, Taylor and Sy find their way to each other.

While Taylor, Lee, and Sy are the main characters of this novel, there is constant interaction with Black lesbians from various parts of the African Diaspora. We meet Taylor's

friends who include African Americans and Afro-Latinas. With each friend, Taylor is able to communicate through diasporic references to either of their homes. She speaks Spanish with some friends, English or French with others. Through visualizing descriptors, we also learn about the Afrocentric hairstyles or clothing that each of these women wears, and we also learn more about their own struggles with love and asserting their queer identity.

RACE

The encounters of race in the United States play a transformative role in the cultural productions from Nigerian immigrant cultural producers. Like Ifemelu's discovery of her Black identity, learning to be Black involves insight to one's cultural identity in light of an oppressive hierarchy of racialized cultural hegemony. However, at some point, especially within *Americanah*, we see the self-determination of oneself as part of a larger Black community then transposed onto how the Nigerian immigrant images systems of racialized oppression at home in the aftermath of colonialism. They join the Nigerian American cultural producers in their critique of the impact the transatlantic slave trade and colonialism has on African people, cultures, and spaces. Learning to be Black is thus a recurring theme, interwoven in and followed by critiques on neocolonialism in Africa and critiques on post-racialism and liberalism in the United States. Instances of racial discrimination, especially based on body image and African ethnicity are catalysts for this transformation, and representation of cultural differences becomes a form of resistance within most of the cultural productions.

The story of Ifemelu and Obinze, in *Americanah*, begins in Lagos during their childhood (*Americanah*). Amongst their classmates, identity is tethered more closely to one's affiliation to Western countries (especially the United States and England), be it trips, living within temporarily, or eventually moving permanently. It is seen as a desirable means of moving

forward, and without having gone Ifemelu and Obinze often dream about their travels west together. Obinze spends much of his time trying to convince Ifemelu of the values of the United States, and specifically African American cultural productions, while Ifemelu tends to prefer British culture and English language over American culture and English language. This Nigerian image of the West becomes like the shadow of a once brilliant vision upon their return; they begin recalling their dreams that have become demystified by the racialized realities of Nigerians' preference to Western languages, education, attire, style, and culture over their own in Nigeria.

This demystification process begins as soon as Ifemelu and Obinze arrives to the West, the United States and the United Kingdom respectively. While both must contend with instances of racism that is general to their race, and specific to their ethnicity, Ifemelu's process of becoming Black is also tethered to her female body. Racism is gendered due to the imposition of integrative-toward white American norms-expectations of not only how one looks, but how one defines herself. For instance, the first friend Nigeria home Ifemelu meets in the US is Ginika, a bi-racial woman. Ginika explains to Ifemelu, that she had to learn that she cannot call herself 'half-caste' as was normal in Nigeria. She must pretend to be offended by this term, and self-identity as 'bi-racial' (*Americanah* 125).

Ifemelu, as a dark-skinned African, finds herself subject to discrimination based on her body size, style of her hair, and Nigerian accent. Ginika preemptively warns her that the racism she will face is different than her own as bi-racial. Ifemelu learns that, in America, one is either thin or fat (positive or negative attributions) versus slim or big (descriptive attributes) in Nigeria. As her body matures and she ages, she finds herself still judging her own body based on these American norms, even when she returns to Nigeria. It is not until Obinze tells her she has filled

her body nicely, that she stops thinking of herself as ‘fat.’ Ifemelu must also contend with her Nigerian accent, and suppressing it for an American accent, after a shockingly discriminatory encounter during her first year of college (discussed later in Culture).

Perhaps more vividly present in this novel is Ifemelu’s hair transformations. When the novel begins, we find her in a Francophone African hair salon, confidently defiant and resistant to idea of using hair relaxers. However, this is the full circle moment of a long struggle to accept her natural hair. Once she receives her first job post-graduation, she is told by a friend that she must “lose the braids and straighten your hair” in order to fit in (*Americanah* 204). She thought of it initially as a new adventure, but once her hairstylist gloats on its length she realized she does not recognize herself anymore and mourns the “organic” death of her hair (205).

Eventually, her hair does not take well to the chemicals and begins to fall out, and another friend, a Kenyan woman named Wambui, convinces her that the relaxer has held her imprisoned and captive. She must cut her hair to free herself and Ifemelu, now comfortable with her hair, feels that to cut her hair back into an Afro is a form of scarification. “I look so ugly I’m scared of myself,” she comments (210). She is humiliated by her white colleagues’ comments, clearly tentative to her now African hairstyle. Even her Black colleagues are concerned asking her if she’s cut her hair because she’s a lesbian, seemingly confused why someone with such beautiful relaxed hair would ever choose an Afro.

It’s only when she finally visits an online natural hair sight, HappilyKinkyNappy.com, that she finds a community of Black women with natural hair who “were done with pretending that their hair was what it was not” and generous with natural hair care tips. Within this community of Black women, Ifemelu finally loses her trepidation and comes to love her hair.

On an unremarkable day in early spring—the day was not bronzed with special light, nothing of any significance happened, and it was perhaps merely this time, as it often

does, had transfigured her doubts—she looked in the mirror, sank her fingers into her hair, dense and spongy and glorious, and could not imagine it any other way. That simply, she fell in love with her hair. (*Americanah* 215)

This sequence of events is similar for Ifemelu in regard to her hair, body, and accent—she feels she must transform to conform into something alien to what she knows and then at some point radically and pointedly rejects integration for a version of herself that is familiar.

Ifemelu eventually creates a blog that reveals her observations of race in the United States, *Raceteenth Or Various Observations About American Blacks (Those Formerly Known as Negroes) by a Non-American Black*. However, a firm ability to describe race only comes after years of various interactions with white Americans, American Blacks, and Non-American Blacks.⁸ Ifemelu's experiences at a predominately white institution, living in white communities, observations of her cousin Dike's depression from encounters of racism at home and at school, and her relationships with white liberals Kimberly, Laura, and Curt are significant contributors to her observation of race relations and racialized encounters amongst white Americans. Her experiences are rarely divorced from her own identity as Nigerian, or African. For instance, her growing disdain for her white American roommates is born of their denigrating demeanor towards her. In one situation, a jobless and struggling Ifemelu finds her carefully crafted sandwich subject to the hunger of her roommate's dog. Her roommate find this humorous, unconcerned, and when Ifemelu laments her roommate says, "You better not kill my dog with voodoo," referring to her simplistic and ignorant imagination of Ifemelu's African culture as taboo (*Americanah* 154).

However, more intimate is her relationship with Kimberly, Laura, and Curt who help her to see various perspectives of white liberalism. Ifemelu is employed by Kimberly, despite Laura's skepticism, as a nanny for her children. Kimberly, who Ifemelu thinks of as *obi ocha* or

⁸ "American Black" and "Non-American Black" are terms that Ifemelu uses in her blog.

clean hearted (and as a result never intentionally racist), finds herself constantly apologizing for Laura's passive aggressive and demeaning references to Black or Nigerian cultures. Laura constantly denounces African cultures or people, often by creating the scenario of an exceptional Black who doesn't fit in with the inferior norm. Ifemelu finds that Laura constantly researches facts on Nigeria, to test on Ifemelu. In one case, she declares that Nigerians are most educated immigrant group, with a caveat that the statistics doesn't speak to the millions that live on a dollar a day. In another, she tells Ifemelu how many remittances Nigerians send back to Nigeria, with the caveat that 419 scams are run by Nigerians. Ifemelu felt her actions an "aggressive, unaffectionate interest; strange indeed, to pay so much attention to something you do not like." She felt it was a way to denigrate Nigeria, and Ifemelu, to her sister Kimberly.

Ifemelu's relationship with Curt is perhaps the most intimately precarious in her analysis of his vacillating consciousness or disregard of how racism affects her in their daily encounters. Reflecting on their relationship, and his love for her, she realized this was what bothered her more "how he grasped one thing but was completely tone-deaf about another thing" (291). He would on one hand be dismissive of her lamenting racism in his "tone-deaf" situations. On the other hand, he may find a way to unabashedly swoop in like a white savior to lift her from her plight of racism without regard to how his whiteness was seen as authoritative rather than corrective in any discriminatory encounter. When describing her understanding of liberal spaces and relationships with liberal whites Ifemelu argues:

The only reason you say that race was not an issue is because you wish it was not. We all wish it was not. But it's a lie. I came from a country where race was not an issue; I did not think of myself as black and I only became black when I came to America. When you're black in America you fall in love with a white person, race doesn't matter when you're alone together because it's just you and your love. But the minute you step outside, race matters. But we don't talk about it. We don't even tell our white partners the small things that piss us off and the things we wish they understood better, because we're worried they will say we're overreacting, or we're being too sensitive. And we don't

want them to say, Look how far we've come, just forty years ago it would have been illegal for use to even be a couple blah blah blah, because you know what we're thinking when they say that? We're thinking why the fuck should it ever be illegal anyway? But we don't say that stuff. We let it pile up inside our heads and when we come to a nice liberal dinner like this, we say that race doesn't matter because that's what we're supposed to say, to keep our nice liberal friends comfortable. It's true. I speak from experience. (*Americanah* 293)

This critique of an impenetrable vision of a post-racial America, from her experience with white liberals, is a turning point in how she understands racial relations in the United States. Lamenting about discrimination based on race is quelled by the white imaginary of progress, which requires one to remain uncritical of the everyday experiences of racism, especially in a country moments away from its first Black president.

These critiques, or observations, eventually become concentrated into a highly successful blog, *Raceteenth*, that provides Ifemelu a platform to reflect on her transformative experiences since arriving to the United States. During her relationship with the African American Blaine, the blog also allows her to openly discuss her ongoing experiences with her new group of friends, primarily African American, people of color, and a few white Americans unafraid to discuss race, deepening the blog into non-American Black perspective of race. She recognizes that the way racism affects her can align with that of American Blacks, but at times diverges based on identity-based or experiential-based differences between pan-ethnic Black communities. She provides her analysis of various American communities' responses to racialized situations: WASPS or White Anglo-Saxon Protestants, non-Christian whites, Asians, Latinos, American Blacks, and non-American Blacks. Here she is able to unveil racism of whites as well as self-hatred or misunderstandings amongst Black communities by creating blog posts such as those that reveal the nuances that allow certain groups to strive to maintain a society that aspires to reject racism by claiming one's alternative oppression in "Friendly Tips for the American Non-

Black: How to React to an American Black Talking About Blackness” (Adichie, *Americanah* 326–8). “Obama Can Win Only If He Remains the Magic Negro” expose how Barak Obama can only win if he remains a safe Black in the eyes of white Americans (322). “To My Fellow Non-American Blacks: In America, You Are Black, Baby” teaches non-American Blacks of their mandatory Blackness in the US and “Traveling While Black” reveals how racism emerges within the global Black experience (222, 331).

For Sizakele’s protagonist Taylor, continuously searches for Black and African queer communities that reflect her own cultural identity. The critiques on post-racial America, and a neocolonial Africa, come in conversations with those who understand her perspective or through poetry written to reveal the connections between the transatlantic slave trade, and the United States today. For instance, the opening poem is dedicated to:

to peoples indigenous where they lay
to Nigeria
to those in exile
to folks who ain't been home in a long, long while
because amerikkkan-funded governments support genocide.
this poem is dedicated to the unnamed
unfamous freedom fighters
to prostitutes and bus drivers
to the unemployed
underpaid
uninsured,
to those in search of cures to kkk-manufactured diseases:
I send this poem to us
on breezes
to keep us cool on the hottest of days
in the belly
of the beast. (*For Sizakele* 3)

Taylor interweaves the experiences of Nigerians, to Africans (and others) in America due to exile, and to members of older African Diasporas who suffer and fight back against the same fate of American imperialism due to “amerikkkan-funded governments” that produce “kkk-

manufactured diseases.” By dedicating this poem to “us,” she ties together the fate of a diverse array of Africans in the United States, or “the belly of the beast.”

Throughout the novel, the majority of Taylor’s encounters are amongst other African queers (African and African Diaspora), regardless of the fact that they are at a predominately white institution. In doing so, the novel evokes an imaginary of Black spaces, where characters like Taylor can engage and bond with others whose cultures align as, in most cases, Black, queer, and female. The intersections of racial and cultural identity will be detailed later, but what is evident is the growth of her relationship with Sy as it relates to their shared experiences of the effects that colonialism has had on their identities, as well as that of their homes in Nigeria and Cameroon. They share their frustrations with loss of culture, language, and the infusion of Western culture into African spaces.

The authors’ themes that engage the racial identity of Nigerians in the US Diaspora often also use cultural differences as a way to distinguish who one is as a Nigerian, and how who they are is challenged, opposed, or repressed by standards of the United States’ racialized cultural hegemony. As we will see more vividly in future sections, cultural and ethnic descriptions and experiences of Nigerians and other African communities in the US play a role in deepening the representation of transformative ‘Naija’ identities.

CULTURE

Detailing the differences between Nigerian and Nigerian American, African Diaspora (US or otherwise), and white American cultural norms is a significant theme that is present in the majority of the cultural productions. As a result, the representation of cultural identity often intersects with the racial and ethnic identities of Nigerian diasporans. Perhaps the Nigerian immigrant cultural producers find cultural differences the easiest way to comment on the starkly

divergent realities between Nigerians and Americans. This is evident in Adichie's juxtaposition of American versus Nigerian physical descriptors (e.g. thin-fat/slim-big) as well as the conflicting culture of Americanahs—a type of Americanized Nigerian returnees to Nigeria. Both cultural productions focus more on the differences as well as similarities between Black pan-ethnic communities, often a space of contention or community building. Other themes that become evident also in all of the cultural productions is the representation of Nigerian languages, food, clothing, art, as well as traditional and contemporary cultures within comparative or normal contexts. The novels each descriptively reference Nigerian or Nigerian diasporic cultural productions (i.e. Nollywood, Fela).

Americanah's representation of differences between Nigerian and US American cultures follows the pattern of discovery, as Ifemelu learns American clichés and catch phrases, inflection of the English language, and mannerisms along with those mentioned earlier relating to body size, complexion, and hair. Initially, it is Ifemelu who curiously learns how Americans respond to different situations. She notices, in one example, that American students were prepared not with the content of the course, but with how to *be* within the classes.

They never said “I don't know.” They said, instead, “I'm not sure,” which did not give any information but still suggested the possibility of knowledge. And they ambled, these Americans, they walked without rhythm. They avoided direct instructions: they did not say “Ask somebody upstairs”; they said “You might want to ask somebody upstairs.” When you tripped and fell, when you choked, when misfortune befell you, they did not say “Sorry.” They said “Are you okay?” when it was obvious you were not. (*Americanah* 135)

Here she reveals the variances in how Americans and Nigerians respond in daily interactions, revealing Americans' contradictory tendency towards confident deference. There is the desire to be perceived as knowing or potentially knowing (ambled demeanor; “I'm not sure”), but all the while not assuming one knows (direct instructions; “Are you okay?”). In contrast, she reveals the

stark difference in response by Nigerians as direct, and unabashedly honest about whether one has knowledge about a subject matter.

She also discovers how Nigerian immigrants' shift from a direct and honest demeanor to one of ambiguity and deference. She witnesses aunt Uju transform around a white American clerk in a grocery store, revealing a new persona that is "apologetic and self-abashing" when her young son Dike attempts to have her buy a cereal brand he wants (109). These discoveries of cultural contrasts and attempts to transform oneself in front of white Americans, shift from observations to desires as Ifemelu begins to feel she too must change to survive in the US. Ifemelu's own shifting accent is perhaps the most detailed example of this. The desire to pick up an American accent was not gradual, but traumatically pointed. She meets a fellow student, the white American Cristina Thomas, who upon hearing Ifemelu speak immediately speaks her English slowly in a way that is patronizingly demeaning. At first, Ifemelu is sympathetic assuming Cristina has a speech impediment. However, she quickly realizes this is not the case.

But when Ifemelu returned with the letter, Cristina Tomas said, "I. Need. You. To. Fill. Out. A. Couple. Of. Forms. Do You. Understand. How. To. Fill. These. Out?" and she realized that Cristina Tomas was speaking like that because of *her*, her foreign accent, and she felt for a moment like a small child, lazy-limbed and drooling.

"I speak English," she said.

"I bet you do," Cristina Tomas said. "I just don't know how *well*."

Ifemelu shrank. In that strained, still second when her eyes met Cristina Tomas's before she took the forms, she shrank. She shrank like a dried leaf. She had spoken English all her life, led the debating society in secondary school, and always thought the American twang inchoate; she should not have cowered and shrunk, but she did. And in the following weeks, as autumn's coolness descended, she began to practice an American accent. (134-5)

The embarrassment of the situation, that someone could assume she did not speak English, a language she's known all her life, shook her enough to feel that she must immediately change the

way she speaks. Later in the novel, Ifemelu will criticize the use of an American accent by Nigerian returnees, but not without completely transforming her own tongue for years in the US. It was not until she found herself later embarrassed by a compliment on her American accent in a phone conversation with a call center employee that Ifemelu, as quickly as she began, decided to forever forgo her American accent for her Nigerian accent (175-6).

These types of interactions provide context to the cultural differences, and attempts to integrate into American cultural norms, that Ifemelu observes and participates in both in the America and Nigeria. She finds herself paying attention to moments when her friends in Nigeria determine if she is an Americanah or not. When she arrives, her friend Ranyi is surprised to find that she hasn't picked up an American accent and Ifemelu doesn't offer an explanation. However, in interactions with Obinze, he provides an honest perspective of her 'American' moments, such as asking a waiter whether potatoes used for fries were real or previously frozen (385). Ifemelu finds herself in a contradictory balance between wanting to fully blend (back) into Nigerian culture, but begrudgingly finding solace within communities of Nigerians returnees from the US and the UK. Her self-awareness of this contradiction is made evident in her Nigerian blog, *Small Redemptions of Lagos*, when she details the Nigeropolitan Club that consists of "a group of young returnees who gather every week to moan about the many ways that Lagos is not like New York as though Lagos has ever been close to being like New York" (421).

Like the other cultural productions, *Americanah* is laced with use of Nigerian food, clothing, and languages, specifically Igbo and pidgin, which Igbo characters speak to each other. For instance, readers are able to learn a few Igbo proverbs when Ifemelu and Obinze meet and proudly recite the ones they know (62). However, in the context of the United States, we also see efforts to lose Igbo language, when Ifemelu speaks Igbo to Dike to aunt Uju's dismay. She tells

Ifemelu not to speak Igbo to him, that it would confuse him. When Ifemelu rebuttals that they both grew up learning two languages, English and Igbo, aunt Uju only offers that America is different. *Americanah* also gives reference to Nigerian cultural producers such as the work of musicians Fela and Onyeka Onwunu or cultural productions like Nollywood.

For Sizakele makes reference to a Nigerian diasporic culture as is perceived by Taylor, a Nigerian dyke (Etaghene, *For Sizakele*). As such, her cultural identity as a Nigerian is interwoven in her gender-based and sexual identities. For instance, the poem referenced earlier is led by a Nigerian goddess, who Taylor envisions as a savior of colonized Africa by returning what was taken to the continent. This Nigerian goddess perhaps is a metaphor for Taylor's determination to celebrate as well as protect her own culture. More so, she seeks relationships with people who understand her own perspective, which causes tension between in her current relationship.

Taylor makes plantains, and Lee asks if she's making "plátanos," which is the Spanish term for plantains. Taylor emphasizes that she's making "plantains." She clarifies that it's not the same, since she's not Latina or Xicana, and that Lee should be careful with misnaming. She asks "Why do Black folks always wanna say plátanos? Why not say it in Twi? Or in Yoruba?" In rebuttal, Lee asks Taylor if English is the language of the Urhobo (Taylor's) people. Taylor is dumbfounded into silence and Lee asks what the difference is between saying it in English versus Spanish (colonizer languages). She asks why doesn't Taylor say the name in Urhobo, and Taylor sadly responds that she doesn't know how to say the word in Urhobo (*For Sizakele* 29–30). Her inability to derive an Urhobo word for "plantain" leaves her to remember how little of her language she understands. She later tells Lee that what's important is she wants her to respect her perspective of her African and queer culture.

I just get tired of feeling like I have to prove I'm a dyke and I can't really deal with having that between us. I am so fiercely protective of the parts of my culture that I know about, that something that seems as simple as plantain is...not so simple to me. It's the heartbeat of who I am. Whether we're talking about plantain or language or colonizers fucking with my people's land, it's all the same to me. Every injury is a big one or is connected to something else, and that's why something that seems so small to you upsets me so much. (36)

This contention with the loss of culture is a recurring theme, and Taylor seeks understanding from other Africans born and/or raised in the United States. For instance, when the performer AC arrives to her school, Taylor reveres her traditionally male Nigerian attire: “golden designs embroidered into a deep red agbada that came down to the middle of her calves. She wore a matching red sokoto underneath” (43). Her perhaps controversial yet brilliant display of her gender expression, along with conversations with Taylor about loving Nigeria but often feeling like a stranger at home, and the regular use of Pidgin in their conversations, makes AC a prime example of the cultural community Taylor finds herself a part.

Taylor finds these similar themes of cultural identity with Sy, a Cameroonian, who also speak Pidgin, watches Nollywood films, cooks traditional (her mother's) food, and can speak to her disappointment about the neocolonial realities of Africa. Sy, who's heard Taylor perform, shares her photo collection called “1884.” The collection reveals the contemporary realities and the aftermath of the Berlin Conference, or scramble for Africa, which divided the African continent into European colonies. The images are of Africans using adornments from Western companies (e.g. Coca-Cola), which along side a Cameroonian backdrop creates the vivid imagery of Europe's insurgence in Africa. Examining the photos, Taylor makes connections to Brooklyn, suggesting that it reminded her of liquor stores on “every other Brooklyn corner. Colonization through intoxication” (78).

ETHNICITY

This section focuses on the inter-ethnic relationships between Nigerians and other members of the African Diaspora in the United States. Each of the cultural productions represents the pan-ethnicity of Black communities in one way or the other, often revealing causations for tensional or cohesive relationships. In all cases, it can be argued that a theme of Pan-Africanism emerges in attempts to find similarities in experiences or cultures, mend tensions or misunderstandings through communication, or make statements that call for unity. However, some go further to create strenuous character relationships that are never resolved to exemplify some of the culture clashing and the derogatory or misinformed perspectives Nigerians may have of other Black ethnic groups, or vice versa. The major themes for this section are advocating for Pan-African unity and building Black pan-ethnic communities; Black immigrant perspectives of Africans and African Diasporans (and vice versa); diverse Black perspectives of the Black experience in the US; and Black pan-ethnic relationships of cohesion and/or tension.

Americanah offers a dynamic representation of the relationship between, as protagonist Ifemelu puts it, non-American Blacks and American Blacks. They bring to the table various perspectives of similarities and differences in perspective of the “Black” experience. Surely, creating an ambiguous blogger identity “herself as non-American Black” makes it difficult for any onlookers to know exact which non-American country she originates from, and forces the reader base to identify with her in a Pan-African sense. It becomes a point of departure to share her experiences in the United States, and a major point of conversation when she’s around her African American boyfriend Blaine and his American friends.

Ifemelu’s entry to the United States is layered with experiences with African Americans and other Africans immigrant communities, as well as experiences learning how non-American

Blacks perceive African Americans. For instance, her aunt Uju constantly laments her son's potential relationship with African Americans by suggesting they must leave the community for the suburbs (with white children). Ifemelu is observant in these conversations, also noting how her aunt describes their relationship to a neighboring family from Grenada suggesting that they "are like us; he [husband] has a good job and has ambition and they spank their children" (*Americanah* 112). She says this as though her expectation of other Black populations contrary to this notion. Ifemelu finds a fast friendship with the wife, Jane, due to the similarities of Anglophone colonial countries (English/Western teachers and fathers who worship BBC). However, she is pensively aware when the woman from Grenada tells Ifemelu that she must pay close attention to her daughter because "if you're not careful in this country, your children become what you don't know," which she later clarifies means that they will "start behaving like these black Americans" (113).

Reversely, Ifemelu is also subject to the stereotyping and misgivings about African by African Americans. Perhaps most surprising to her is a moment in a college course when Black women in the class give their perspective whether the word 'nigger' should be bleeped out of films. After back and forth comments, to a terrified into silence white professor, a Kenyan student suggests "But it's like being in denial. If it was used like that, then it should be represented like that. Hiding it doesn't make it go away," to a response by an African American "Well, if you all hadn't sold us, we wouldn't be talking about any of this" (Adichie, *Americanah* 139). This moment goes unaddressed, and the professor shyly changes the subject. Not only is there a missed moment to perhaps speak on different perspectives of the legacy of slavery, but also this reveals that there are clearly unaddressed tensions in the relationships between African immigrants and African Americans.

Ifemelu's relationship with Blaine perhaps is the most significant inter-ethnic relationship in the novel. Through their relationship, the reader is able to see how they relate or disagree on topics pertaining to being Black in America. Their first major fight, and make-up, was due to their different perspectives on issues facing Black people in the United States. They learn that Mr. White, a long time security guard at the school's library, was seen by a white library employee giving his car keys to a Black friend and the friend returning money lent to him. The employee assumed this was a drug deal, and called the police leading to Mr. White being taken from work to be questioned. Blaine, upset about the nonchalant response by the university, planned a public demonstration and expected Ifemelu to be there. Ifemelu, decided not to go and opted to go to a luncheon instead. Upset by this discovery, Blaine accuses Ifemelu for failing to practice (through the demonstration) what she preached (her blog). In this accusation she recognized "in his tone, a subtle accusation, not merely about her laziness, her lack of zeal and conviction, but also about her Africanness; she was not sufficiently furious because she was African, not African American" (346).

The moment when they return to each other is over their perspective of then Senator Barack Obama becoming the Democratic nominee for President of the US. After Ifemelu reads his book, *Dreams from my Father*, she determines that he is an obi ocha-clean hearted individual—and wonders aloud if the Barry she met in the book would be the same Barry if he became president of the United States. Blaine is surprised by this assertion from Ifemelu, prompting him to stop and look at her. "... eyes lit, as though he had not dared hope she would believe the same that he believed, and she felt between them the first pulse of a shared passion" (Adichie, *Americanah* 355). From this point onward, the hope of a Black president would

become a major point of unity between the two, allowing them to find similarities in their beliefs rather than being divided in their differences.

Perhaps two moments reveal the novel leanings towards building Pan-African unity and pan-ethnic communities in the United States: the African Students Association meeting and her blog post “To My Fellow Non-American Blacks: In America, You Are Black, Baby” (222). In the first, Ifemelu is invited by Wambui, the Kenyan woman who was shut down by her perspective of the use of the word ‘nigger,’ to the African Students Association meeting. This is one of the first places that Ifemelu finally feels she can be herself. The organization was a mix of Nigerians, Ugandans, Kenyans, Ghanaians, South Africans, Tanzanians, Zimbabweans, one Congolese, and one Guinean who “sat around eating, talking, fueling spirits, and their different accents formed meshes of solacing sounds,” mimicking ignorant comments by Americans, and mocking Africa in a way “born of longing, and of the heartbroken desire to see a place made whole again” (140). What made this experience more profound, was the ‘welcome talk’ that was given by a Tanzanian, Mwombeki. The welcome talk is a guidebook for Africans to the United States and at one point he states:

Try and make friends with our African-American brothers and sisters in a spirit of true pan-Africanism. But make sure you remain friends with fellow Africans, as this will help you keep your perspective. Always attend African Students Association meetings, but if you must you can also try the Black Student Union. Please not that in general, African Americans go to the Black Student Union and Africans go to the African Students Association. Sometimes it overlaps but not a lot. The Africans who go to BSU are those with no confidence who are quick to tell you ‘I am *originally* from Kenya’ even though Kenya just pops out the minute they open their mouths. The African Americans who come to our meetings are those who write poems about Mother Africa and think every African is a Nubian queen. (*Americanah* 141–2)

Mwombeki suggests to the newcomers that they should not avoid, but develop relationships with African Americans as well as Africans during their time in the United States. He breaks down the cultural difference between the groups, and the overlap by Africans perhaps wanting to be

‘African American’ and African Americans wanting to be ‘African.’ Here there is a playful criticism of the generalization of each cross-over group, while at the same time advocating unity through friendship. He later suggests that relationships may come more easily with non-Black immigrants who understand the “trauma of trying to get an American visa” (142).

As a more mature, and definitely more critical revision of this welcome talk, Ifemelu’s blog post echoes a message of shared experiences amongst Black people in the United States. The blog post is meant to quell the belief that a non-American Black is anything but Black in the United States, criticizing the moments when Black immigrants attempt to distance themselves from the Black experience.

Dear Non-American Black, when you make the choice to come to America, you become black. Stop arguing. Stop saying I’m Jamaican or I’m Ghanaian. America doesn’t care. So what if you weren’t “black” in your country? You’re in America now. We all have our moments of initiation into the Society of Former Negroes. Mine was in a class in undergrad when I was asked to give the black perspective, only I had no idea what that was. So I made something up. And admit it—you say “I’m not black” only because you know black is at the bottom of America’s race ladder. And you want none of that. Don’t deny now. What if being black had all the privileges of being white? Would you still say “Don’t call me black, I’m from Trinidad”? I didn’t think so. So you’re black, baby. (222)

Using herself as an example, she reveals how one may not initially understand what it means to be black, but argues it doesn’t deny one’s Blackness anyway. It is also a satirical yet candid and plainspoken racial guidebook for non-American Blacks’ solidarity with African Americans, providing context to terms and situations that are justifiably offensive to American Blacks. Its satire is in its ability to mock white liberals’ desired perspective of Blacks as weak (versus strong), and passive and agreeable in the face of racism (versus assertive and angry). She calls out the dangers and ignorance of perceiving oneself as non-Black, while at the same time being forgiving of the process one must undergo to understand their Blackness.

For Sizakele creates a Pan-African space of Taylor's Black pan-ethnic lesbian friends who come from various parts of the African world. Her closest relationships, as mentioned earlier, are with Lee (African American) and Sy (Fulani/Cameroonian) who provide different perspectives of the Black experience in the United States. Taylor is able to use conversations with them to flesh out the similarities and the differences in how they understand their cultures, from their cultural or ethnic perspectives. Taylor, a Nigerian, identifies as African and is protective of how this is represented and seeks others who identify with this identity in some way or another. This becomes one of multiple reasons that Taylor and Lee eventually part ways, but more importantly is a reason why Taylor and Sy bond quickly and intimately as friends (*For Sizakele*).

Taylor's community is vibrantly displayed by descriptions of different hairstyles and clothing representatives of African diasporic styles to adorn their self-described ethnic identities. There is a mix of African American, Afro-Latina, Afro-Cuban, Nigerian, and Cameroonian friends who Taylor depends on for various parts of who she is. In a sense, her own African identity is reflected in some way by each of the people she engages, and for this she feels a sense of sisterhood with her friends. With AC, another Nigerian, they are able to speak about the difficulties they have with the generalization of Africa, or not being considered as African (or Nigerian) when they go home. They were both born and/or raised in the United States, and while they identify as Nigerian they find that in Nigeria they are seen as outsiders. However, in the United States they deal with the difficulties of their Africanness. They speak about their experiences with others generalizing their Nigerian identities as Ijaw and Urhobo women, or turning to them as the representatives of Nigeria or Africa.

Taylor: ...like how to pronounce my name and 'no I am not Yoruba or Igbo or whatever you read about in your Intro to Black Studies class.' I love my Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo

folks, but there's hundreds of other ethnicities in Naija besides those three.

AC: Exactly! I'm Yoruba because I'm Nigerian is like assuming every Latina I meet is Mexican or Puerto Ricans. (45-6)

AC went as far in college, while obtaining her African Studies degree, to create a minor in 'Nigerian Delta Studies.' She found the major was liberating, but an overgeneralizing of Swahili, Zulu and Yoruba culture (*For Sizakele* 46). Similarly, in the courses and other spaces they agreed that they had a shared experience of people referring to them as the African/Nigerian expert just because they are from those general communities.

In the epilogue of the novel, Etaghene writes a poem to dedicate it to Sizakele. Mirroring the African queer identity of Taylor, she reveals the inspiration of her work through the potential lived experience of this Zulu South African dyke.

I imagine a young Zulu South African dyke
who will discover my work in 2076.
I imagine her name will be Sizakele,
that she will feel alive and loved
because she will read her reflection
in these words. (237)

This dedication, along with the novel's various representations of African dykes from various parts of the world, reveals a call for a Pan-African union that comes from an African's ability to relate to and be liberated by Taylor's story. If it can be understood by someone in South Africa, and perhaps other African lesbians, then the work put forth was worthwhile.

TRANSNATIONALISM

The transnational identities of the Nigerians in the selected cultural productions are perhaps an amalgamation of the diverse ways they make contact with their homes. Their movements across the world vary, especially across the Atlantic Ocean or Mediterranean Sea: telephonic and online communications, short visits with valid visas, choosing to return or being

deported home, choosing or feeling forced to leave home, providing remittances or receiving money, and longing to go to the West or longing to return to Nigeria. In *For Sizakele*, while in her New York home Taylor tells AC on the phone distraughtly tells her that she wants to go home. When AC asks if she's away from New York Taylor replies that she means 'home-home,' or Nigeria (*For Sizakele* 148). 'Home-home' becomes a reference to a homeland, versus the spaces that home is replicated in the hostland—the United States. These cultural productions each represent home and 'home-home' relationships in a dialectical relationship where 'home-home' becomes the center of which branches of communications protrude creating links between Nigerian and various diaspora spaces.

Ifemelu and Obinze spend their childhood dreaming about the United States or the United Kingdom with their childhood friends. The longing to travel or relocate to these spaces is ingrained by images of happy 'been-tos,' or those who have been to the West and back, who return with new styles, accents, cultural references, and stories. Sometimes they come back with so much Western culture that it's at the expense of their Nigerian cultural norms, making them "serious Americanahs" (*Americanah* 65).

The first part of the novel spends time revealing their friends who travel back and forth, such as Kayode, or friends like Ginika who moves permanently to the United States. On her last day in Nigeria, Ifemelu, Ginika and friends laughed that she would return a "serious Americanah like Bisi," "a girl in the form below them, who had come back from a short trip to America with odd affectations, pretending she no longer understood Yoruba, adding a slurred *r* to every English word she spoke" (65). From the perspective of Nigeria, the Americanah effectively is one who longs to go to the West, and when they do go they come back as if they are coming to Nigeria for the first time—devoid of knowledge of their Nigerian culture. This type of character is

also revealed years later when Ifemelu works for a Nigerian women's magazine company, and finds her colleague treating others as inferior and attempting to create a clique with Ifemelu isolating out others who cannot quickly reference American colloquialisms.

Ifemelu's aunt Uju, having also been a 'been-to' and then relocating to the United States, becomes a link to facilitate Ifemelu's journey to the United States with a college scholarship. She receives a visa with no problem, and uses her aunt's home in transition to school. This is also a method Obinze uses when he stays with someone he knows in the United Kingdom before getting a job. They both find themselves using other's green cards or working permits in order to gain their first employment. Ifemelu, as a student, is able to remain in the United States during her education and eventually gets a job through networks made through her American boyfriend Curt. However, Obinze runs into serious immigration issues and is forced to organize an expensive wedding to a Black British woman to legitimize his stay in the United Kingdom. Their experiences are vastly different, where on one hand Ifemelu is able to stay with little problem and sees her friends struggle to find jobs after graduation so they can remain in the US. Obinze, on the other hand, is arrested just as he is about to get married and "removed" from the UK like a criminal (281).

There he was, in handcuffs, being led through the hall of Manchester Airport, and in the coolness and din of the airport, men and women and children, travelers and cleaners and security guards, watched him, wondering what evil he had done. He kept his gaze on a tall white woman hurrying ahead, hair flying behind her, knapsack hung on her back. She would not understand his story, why he was now walking through the airport with metal clamped around his wrists, because people like her did not approach travel with anxiety about visas. (283)

As an undocumented resident, Obinze's exposure rendered him an evil criminal who must be contained and returned immediately to where he once came. He reveals the lack of empathy

caused by never having to “approach travel” with anxiety, and perhaps never having to live with the fear of deportation.

When Ifemelu first comes to the United States, she frequently calls home to her parents, friends, and boyfriend. However, she finds limitations because of the cost of international calls. She and Obinze also send letters back and forth, and at one point when Ifemelu is unable to pay rent, Obinze sends her \$100 to her dismay as she believes she, the one in the West, should be sending money and not the other way around. However, once Ifemelu finds herself in the desperate position of making a sexual exchange for money, her communications abroad come to a halt. Ginika, who is based in the US, must physically locate Ifemelu because no one has heard from her. It isn't until she finds a job again, with Kimberly, that she is able to begin communicating with her parents again. However, in her embarrassment and guilt of disloyalty to Obinze, she did not continue to communicate with him. Letters, emails, and phone calls were ignored or deleted. They only spoke again years later in a short series of emails always initiated by Ifemelu during movements of feeling intense feelings or memories of Obinze, and controlled by her due to the scarcity of her replies to his responses.

Ifemelu, successful in her career, makes the decision to return home longing to do so even while tentative about how she will be received. Her aunt Uju expresses that she would not be able to cope in Nigeria, and that Dike would not either when Ifemelu suggested that he should visit. When Ifemelu first came to the United States, Dike expressed that he would not like Nigeria, but he finally visits Ifemelu as a teenager and find that he falls in love with his homeland. Ifemelu's return home is met with surprise and intensity which lessens over time.

At first, Lagos assaulted her; the sun-dazed haste, the yellow buses full of squashed limbs, the sweating hawkers racing after cars, the advertisements on the hulking billboards... ..and the heaps of rubbish that rose on the roadsides like a taunt.
(*Americanah* 385)

She points out what in Lagos is vastly different than her time in the United States with a tone of derision. However, as Ifemelu reacclimatizes herself to Nigeria, she finds that “Lagos became a gentler version of itself” and falls in love with her life there (420). Perhaps it is at this point that her longing ends. She has made Nigeria again, yet without the same desires to be in the West.

Lastly, *For Sizakele* offers many themes of transnationalism and primarily in the form of longing for home-home, questions about one’s relationship to that home, and historical references to Africans’ journey to Amerikkka. Taylor’s poems are incorporated intermittently into the novel and each reveal strong imagery of trans-Atlantic journeys of oppressed Africans, perhaps specifically Nigerians, to the United States. In the chapter “i & i,” Taylor poetically converses with the mirror image of herself, a more confident image who wonders “Why won’t you let me dance?” while the real Taylor looks on motionless. In her dismay she says to mirror Taylor.

if I could describe to you
what’s inside of me,
maybe then you could call me a poet–
wrap up my people,
send us to amerikkka
then watch time unfold it. (*For Sizakele* 70)

Taylor references the feelings she holds within, that of time unfolding after being sent to Amerikkka, which can reference any of the involuntary nature of Africans’ movements (wrap up my people) to the United States and the oppressive realities (Amerikkka) one faces as time elapses from generation to generation (time unfold). It is such that it can refer to any point in which Africans involuntarily were brought across the Atlantic, tying the fate of all generations of the African Diaspora together.

In other scenarios, as was mentioned at the start of this section, Taylor spends time dreaming about going to Nigeria, especially in her darkest of moments. This longing is something she is able to seek in friends who also can imagine home-home in physical parameters (i.e. Nigeria, Cameroon). The longing in this case is tied to the reality of how and why they had to leave, their parents had to leave, and ultimately why any African has had to leave Africa. Cultural affectations in the United States become more salient links to home-home. For instance, in a declaration of love to Sy, Taylor tells her that she feels at home when she is with Sy and wants to cook her mother's food for her. The first time Sy makes food for Taylor, it's Egusi soup to Taylor's surprise. She asks where she got it and Sy replies "Brooklyn, USA" (74). When Taylor eat it she thinks poetically

Fufu glided down my throat.
The poet has no words.
Tastes like home. (74-5)

Connections to home (Nigeria), combined with a longing, can be temporarily satisfied and recreated by a taste that can be purchased, cooked, and consumed in Brooklyn, USA. 'Home-home' for Taylor is also recreated in Harlem's Blackness with Nigerian restaurants, "African imports," "African hair-braiding salon" and on Malcolm X lined up with vendors selling "oils, incense, cell phones cases, purses, jewelry, shea butter, and soap" and music playing all along (52-3).

With that longing also comes the feeling of displacement even when they do return, as Africans who grew up in the United States. In a conversation with Taylor, AC admits that she feels like a tourist when she returns home.

"It was beautiful, but there were times when I felt like a tourist in my own country and that broke my heart."

"What made you feel like a tourist?"

She sighed. "Well, I felt like I had to fit everything I wanted to do into a month, which was hard. Spending any time away from Naija, in the States and then returning, it's like people see you as American or Americanized just by virtue of the time you've been away." (44-5)

The longing for home is quelled the disadvantages of time: the short time she is in Nigeria and the long time between visits to Nigeria. Time becomes a factor in one's ability to be seen as a Nigerian, versus a Westerner, regardless of one's cultural heritage or even the fact that one is the home their parents, or grandparents still reside. This dialectical relationship of feeling away from home in both the hostland and homeland renders them a perpetual outsider, seeking home in various ways no matter where one resides.

CONCLUSION

While dynamically different approaches to expressing the Nigerian Diaspora experience in the United States, each of the cultural productions contributed to a range of overlapping themes and intersecting identity tropes. While racism is used to detail experiences of exclusion, embarrassment, and depression, more often than not race is represented in juxtaposition to Nigerian culture. That is to say, the differences between especially white American culture and Nigerian culture are pronounced in order to provide detail of differences (i.e. *Americanah*) or as a means to denounce and reject structural racism (i.e. *For Sizakele*).

In similar ways, cultural identity also crosses over into ethnic identities as perceptions or knowledge of other African Diasporas' cultures can create united pan-ethnic spaces or sharp divisions. Race and ethnicity also overlap as we find that diverse Black pan-ethnic communities experience race and racism differently. For instance, running into the theme of transnationalism, *Americanah* reveals the racism that is derived of being an African (Black) immigrant seeking legal status in the United States. Becoming Black and African, in relation to the struggles of

integrating into America, becomes a journey to developing a pluralized consciousness of who one is and who one is made to become. The 'Naija' characters, though vivid fictive lived experiences, unveil the reality of these voluntary and imposed, rejected as well as embraced, and above all transformative identities. These contributions become critical perspectives of the nature of the Nigerian Diaspora, and provide complex texture to the African Diaspora experience at large.

CHAPTER 4

Becoming Black and African in America: Racial and Ethnic Identity Transformations in Popular Culture (Film, Media, and Music)

"I want to thank the creator, my family, my tribe, my generals, Fear and Fancy, Wondaland Records, and our partners in crime, Epic Records. You know I grew up in a family where excellence was the expectation. I remember bringing a math test home to my father and said to my dad, 'Hey dad! I got a 98%, do you want to put it on the fridge?' And my father in true Nigerian fashion said, 'Ah Ah! Where are the other two points? Go and get them and then bring them back to me!' So dad, I think I found the other two points!"

-Jidenna, BET Soul Train Awards 2015

Nigerian American rapper Jidenna made a distinct effort to acknowledge his Nigerian heritage while accepting the 2015 BET Soul Train Award in the "Best New Artist" category by retelling a story where his father demanded "two points" to make a good moment excellent ("Soul Train Awards"). However, he doesn't just tell the audience this story but shifts from a Black American accent to a Nigerian accent to represent his father's "true Nigerian fashion" with deep inflections of his voice to pointedly ascertain the importance of receiving 100% versus a 98% on an exam. Additionally, true to his self-defined 'swanky' style as a 'classic man,' Jidenna received the award wearing a suit and an Ankara cloth printed tie giving the image of a perhaps Western man with African accents. He is known to represent his own negotiation of his Nigerian and Black American identity through his attire and music.

When in an interview with popular hip-hop DJ hosts of The Breakfast Club, he responded to their lament of his dressed down attire. He explained that it was dressed up, and that "in Nigeria they call it an 'up and down'" or a long shirt, saying 'up and down' in his Nigerian accent (Breakfast Club). He took the opportunity in the interview to share his own perspectives of race and culture in the United States and the influence this has in creating his new rap album *The Chief*. The album is one of self-discovery, an "African Diasporic story," from his background as

Nigerian but also growing up in Black, Caribbean, and African hoods in California. When the DJs jokingly referred to the 'chief' as meaning President Trump, Jidenna clarifies that the chief he hails is first former President Obama but more specifically his deceased father and grandfather who were both Igbo chiefs. The album, like Jidenna, makes strong commentary on race relations in America while also grounding the songs in stories of his Nigerian and American cultures. The song and video 'Chief Don't Run' is an excellent example of this, with strong images of strong Igbo men transplanted, physically and through past and present representations of Jidenna himself, into the over-policed streets in Californian Black communities as they combat police brutality (JidennaVEVO).

Jidenna, like the 'Naija' cultural producers in this and the previous chapters, illustrate new African Diasporic connections, as they are embodied in US popular culture. They do this by finding ways to layer meaning between their cultural and racial heritage as a part of the African Diaspora in the United States. However, the artists in this chapter are able to distinctively use illustrative visual and auditory media to characterize their narratives. For instance, The Wowo Boyz depend on the use of Nigerian accents, Nigerian attire, Naija mix music, and expressiveness representations of Nigerian parents to portray the Nigerian experience in America and carry comical meaning to their audiences. This is also true of Wale's videos, where images provide vivid Nigerian cultural representations through the use of Nigerian cultural artifacts between Nigeria and the United States geographically. In "My Sweetie," the use of Highlife song, "Let Me Love You" can only be accurately incorporated through the use of sound to create a nostalgic imaginary.

Keeping this audio/visual media in mind, this chapter presents the works of Wale, Rahman Oladigbolu, and the Wowo Boyz which follow the same themes introduced in Chapter 3

in relation to cultural, racial, ethnic, and transnational identities. Additionally the chapter shows how film represents and reproduces Nigerian diaspority. For example, in the film *In America: The Story of the Soul Sisters*, like *Americanah*, the narrative captures and illustratively idealizes the subjective experiences of a new Nigerian immigrant to delve into the themes of learning to be Black in America while dealing with immigration issues and forming pan-ethnic relationships with African Americans. The negotiation of Nigerian cultural heritage is a major thematic in the Wowo Boyz videos, where a number of the videos' themes focus on juxtapositions or conflicts between Nigerian culture and white American culture as well as between Nigerian culture and Nigerian American (2nd generation) cultures. Relationships with African American and other members of African Diaspora are also prominent in each of these cultural productions, and in all cases in an effort to foster Pan-African unity by overcoming differences (i.e. *In America*, Wowo Boyz) or realizing commonalities between African cultures (i.e. *Wale*, *In America*). Lastly, transnationalism by physically crossing geographical borders in order to bring visual representation of Nigeria into these diasporic productions.

With the current chapter, popular representations of Naija through music, film, and video social media in the US will like the previous chapter, reveal the evolving Nigerian Diaspora identity that navigates being black as well as African in its Diaspora hostland. The chapter's popular representations of Nigerian Diaspora experiences in the US in the context of the Black immigrant experience demonstrates the enlarging, expansion, and pluralization of Blackness in the US.

CULTURALLY PRODUCING NIGERIA IN THE UNITED STATES: THEMES AND SELECT WORKS

In America: The Story of the Soul Sisters

This film, which was released in the United States as well as Nigeria and other parts of the continent, is a story about two friends –one African American and the other Nigerian–whose friendship is forged through cross-cultural conversations that teach them about each other’s African cultures and highlights the similarities between them (*In America*). The title, as Rahman Oladigbolu mentioned in his interview, was devised to appeal to both African and African American audiences (Oladigbolu). Sade is a Nigerian immigrant who leaves medical school for an opportunity to come to the United States. Her arrival is met with an urgency to find work within three months, so that she can stay, gain a work permit, and continue her education. She works for a Nigerian storeowner, who pays her less than half minimum wage under the table. She stays with her uncle, a man who has survived alone in the United States and must contend with his difficulties getting along as a Black immigrant man. A drunken and forceful sexual advance on Sade leaves their relationship broken, and sends Sade to live with her African American friend Sonya and her family (*In America*).

Sonya’s family is extremely welcoming to Sade, and her father offers her a job with Sonya as a waitress in their restaurant “African Soul Kitchen.” A Pan-Africanist at heart and in practice, Sonya’s father explains that it is his goal to create ‘Africa towns’ akin to China towns across the nation in order to bring diverse African food more visibly into the nation’s cultural fold. Sonya is clearly a product of her Afrocentric father, and critically analytical and observant mother who often becomes a motherly voice of reason for Sade as she learns to become Black in America. Sonya and Sade’s friendship grows from their willingness to learn

about each other and overcome stereotypes each has had about the other's culture. Together, they are able to navigate hardships that they both encounter, such as Sonya's desire to bring her divorced parents together, Sade's relationship with her African American husband, and later her impending deportation (*In America*).

Wowo Boyz YouTube Channel

The Wowo Boyz YouTube Channel is one of multiple social media platforms that this group of comedians use to post comical sketches about being African in America. As a video platform, YouTube houses the majority of their comedy sketches, promotional videos, and dance videos. However, shorter versions can be found on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. The Wowo Boyz, Andrew Ogale and Nnonso Ofili, often feature other local comedians in their skits and also produce video for these local comedians. For instance the comedian Evangel Okafor, or Evangelocol, plays the recurring character of a dramatic evangelical African (Nigerian) mother who constantly clashes with the cultural norms of her American raised children. Many of the videos attempt to reach a larger African audience, but specifically uses Nigerian Diaspora experiences since all of the comedians are in fact Nigerian.

In a video "Back to School!" the Wowo Boyz explain to the audience that "Wowo" means "ugly"; it is a pidgin word and using it becomes a comical play on the content of their videos. The content of the videos fall into five major themes: relationships with women, intergenerational relationships between African immigrant parents and their Americanized children, juxtapositions between American and African cultures, or addressing current issues (i.e. Black Lives Matter, domestic violence, immigration issues). The sketches chosen for this study fall into the first four categories: "Mom You're the Shit," "Ben Down Select," "Oyibo Wife," "Sensitivity Training," and "419 Immigration."

“Mom You’re the Shit” and “Ben Down Select” focus on intergenerational cross-cultural differences between Nigerian immigrant parents and their Nigerian American kids. In “Mom You’re the Shit” a young man, Ogale, asks his mother, Okafor, if he can invite his girlfriend to the house. She happily agrees, to her son’s surprise and delight. He responds to his mom by saying “Mom, you’re the shit” meaning she is awesome, or great, for agreeing. However, once he leaves his mother thinks harder to understand what her son said. She comes to the conclusion that he called her “a shit” meaning feces or something foul. This leads to a series of phone calls to other Nigerians in the community (friends, husband, priest) who continue to take the statement further out of context. At one point, one Nigerian tells another that the son has called him mom a “double shit and a witch.” They hold an intervention for an unaware son, who returns with his girlfriend, to severe punishment by his parents and their community (*Mom You’re the Shit*).

“Ben Down Select” also stars Evangelocol with her daughter in Wal-Mart. The mother asks her daughter the price of a purse, to which the daughter impatiently points out that the price is on the bag. Once an African American clerk comes to help, she asks the same question to the same answer. She attempts to bargain, asking him if he can sell it to her for less than half the price. The clerk, confused, says he is unable to do that. When her impatient daughter attempts to indicate she already told her this, she speaks Igbo to her as well as to the clueless clerk upset that her daughter has interjected. The clerk, before leaving, attempts to flirt with the daughter, which only upsets the mother more. She asks the daughter if she wants to marry someone from Wal-Mart, aware and unapologetic that the clerk is still within earshot (*Ben Down Select*).

“Sensitivity Training” focuses on cultural differences between Africans and African Americans. An African American psychologist hosts a workshop for Nigerian immigrants who have negative perceptions of African Americans. She brings in individuals one by one, and asks

the audience to share their first impressions. The Nigerian immigrants immediately assume that the individual cannot be Nigerian based on taboo indicators: dreadlocks, pregnancy, tattoos, and earrings on men. In each scenario, they unabashedly insult the individual based on these indicators and the psychologist reveals their misconceptions, which either points to the marital or educational success of the African American or to the failures of an individual who is in fact Nigerian. In a final attempt to help them empathize with the effects of their stereotyping, the psychologist dresses in African attire and begins mimicking a Nigerian through her accent, reciting phony “voodoo” prayers to God, and finally asks them if she will be rich in Nigeria with \$100. The Nigerians are clearly shocked and insulted and begin to leave. She finally tells them that they all, African or African American, need to all come together because they are all the same. She uses an analogy of how each community cooks chicken differently (i.e. fried, with Fufu), but all eat chicken at the end of the day (*Sensitivity Training*).

“Oyibo Wife” deals with stereotypes of white women who marry African men. A mother, Evangelocol, has just arrived to America to reprimand her son for marrying an oyibo, or white, wife. She tells him she has already married him a wife, Nkechi, from the village. Her son, Nnonso, responds in frustration that he never wanted to marry Nkechi. Then his wife appears, wearing a Nigerian wrap and asks her mother-in-law how she is doing, but in Igbo. Instantly Evangelocol smiles and asks her son in Igbo, “She speaks Igbo?” The oyibo wife then indicates that she has prepared her favorite Nigerian soup for her. Excitedly Evangelocol takes to liking her daughter-in-law and they unite by hugging and dancing to Naija mix music (*Oyibo Wife*).

Finally, “419 Immigration” is about a Nigerian immigrant, Peter, who got into a fight with his girlfriend. In response, she called immigration on him and now his deportation process is underway. His male friend, Obinna, suggests that they can get married since it’s “legal here”

and have him avoid deportation. They dress the part of how they imagine a gay couple would look and go to the immigration office. The immigration officer, making them aware that he needs to question them on the validity of their love and marriage, asks them intimate questions about their relationship. They are unprepared, and find ways to make some generalizations while also using Nigeria as a destination for both their wedding and honeymoon. Finally, the immigration asks them to kiss which becomes a dramatic final scene before they leave frustrated and swearing to tell no one of that occurrence (*419 Immigration*).

“My Sweetie” and “The God Smile”

Wale, as a Baltimore-based rapper, often makes clear in his songs that he represents the DMV and raps about his experiences growing up there. The general themes of the songs that are made into music videos are: women, love, and relationships; questioning life and prayers to God; memories of the DMV and his experiences as a Black man; and the constant use of his Yoruba names, Olubowale or Folarin. The music videos used in this study are the only ones of their kind—they focus on representing Wale’s Nigerian heritage visually. That is, they each have evidence of both his American and Nigerian heritage.

“My Sweetie,” which was a part of his first album *Attention Deficit*, is a song and video about an Igbo love interest, who knows how to take care of Wale, a ‘Naija’ man. It then goes onto speak about different parts of Wale’s Nigerian/African culture, by revealing the vitality of the party scene he’s created. The song is also meant to create the likeliness of a Nigerian or African (in America) party, but while keeping tempo with a nightclub scene. The song is a remake of the 1981 popular West African highlife song “Let Me Love You” by Bunny Mack, a Sierra Leonean singer. Using the same chorus, Wale raps over the instrumentals infused with bass and mixed by a DJ. The song points to cultural queues that prove his authenticity as a

Nigerian, such as respect to his elders. He also expands the reach of his song to other Africans, such as by suggesting that “this is for Ghana and Nigeria. You know what it is” (*My Sweetie*). The song, he says, is dedicated to anyone with “13 letters in their name or more.” Visually, we see a nightclub scene with Black people dancing and wearing a variety of Afrocentric clothing from hip-hop culture to modern Ankara cloth outfits to natural hairstyles and Africa related accessories. The people in the club are waving flags from various African countries.

“The God Smile,” was released in 2015 and it is about Wale’s come up from the DMV to his life today as a successful rapper. The theme “Go shine, go shine, go shine your light one me” and “we gon’ hold this city down ‘til we see the whole city up” echoes this upward trajectory, encouraging others to do the same but warning them of the sacrifices that come with fame. In the second verse, he details some of his experiences growing up in the DMV, the suburbs, and being Black metaphorically referencing famous Black figures such as Jay Z, Marion Berry, Barack Obama and Lil Wayne (*The God Smile*).

The music video is juxtaposed to the DMV-based lyrics with a backdrop of Lagos, Nigeria and visually laced with images of the city’s skyline, cultural heritage spaces (i.e. Afrika Shrine, Ojuelegba Rd, Arometa statues). The video stimulates the audience with a variety of traditional dancers, and he amongst them dancing along side with children, elders, and other locals. The video moves back and forth between these scenic spaces seemingly revealing that his DMV lyrics apply also to his home in Nigeria. God smiles on the DMV and God smiles on Lagos—go shine your light on me.

RACE

Sade, the protagonist of *In America: The Story of the Soul Sisters*, must like Ifemelu learn to be Black in America through a series of encounters of racism, as well as through critical

discussions of race with African Americans. Sade's personal encounters of racism are always tied to the discrimination she encounters being an undocumented immigrant. From the moment she arrived to the United States, she was detained and questioned about the legitimacy of her entrance. While this will be described later, along with issues of immigration that arise within other cultural productions, it's important to recognize that this is Sade's major point of departure for understanding racism personally. Her coming into Blackness is deepened and more clearly visualized by learning the racialized experiences of her African American families: Sonya and her parents, as well as her husband Curtis (*In America*).

When Sonya meets Sade, she quickly brings her into their family as a sister. The two spend time with Sonya's friends, and frequent a Black club that features African American artists who rap, sing, or recite poetry about the Black experience in America. While they don't speak about these open mic sessions, they become a recurring theme and perhaps an important one for Sade as she learns the reality of being Black in America. There is also a point where Sonya and Sade have conflicting views on America, versus Africa, as a dreamland. Sonya shares her dad's experience after tracing their African heritage to Senegal, and first visiting Africa.

Sonya: He said when his feet first touched Africa, he kissed the ground.

Sade: When my feet touched America, I kissed the ground.

Sonya: Why would you do something like that? American soil is not made of gold.

Sade: But you don't know that when you're first coming here. (*In America*)

Here we see that Sonya and her father understand the hardships that befall African descendent people in America, and as a result seek to make genetic and physical connections to their homeland. Perhaps Sonya's understanding of the fallacy of the American dream is so intimate as a Black woman, that she cannot understand how Sade does not see it that way. Sade instead reveals that this dream is quite real from a Nigerian perspective, and only the reality of being in

America can teach one of the hardships a Black individual must face in order to survive and thrive.

It is Sonya's mother who helps Sade to understand the different ways Black people in America experience race. She tells Sade that it's not easy being a woman anywhere in the world, and especially a Black woman in America. She says it is not easy to be a Black man either. She reveals that Curtis is working in a system that won't look beyond his skin, and her uncle (who attempted to sexually assault her) is a stranger (foreigner) in an alien world (America). She clarifies that this is the context in which they live, but that doesn't excuse their action. She needs to understand their world, but know her own world better. When speaking to Sonya about Curtis, Sade finally confesses her own revelations and misgivings about America, in relation to her African American brothers and sisters.

Sade: I remember one of my teachers used to say that in the past they were forcing us into slavery, but today we are voluntarily selling ourselves into it. I fought hard to come to America in search of freedom, but what I did not realize was that to be free in America, fighting takes twice as hard.

Sonya: I wouldn't look at it that way. I mean people are still being forced, except now only in different ways. The buying and the selling, it still goes on.

Sade: But today we have a choice.

Sonya: What choice did you have?

Sade: Curtis is right. We leave our problems, to come and put our nose in someone else's problems.

Sonya: Sade, you didn't leave your country because you needed to come and meddle in someone else's problems. You came because you wanted to find a solution to your own. Now what Curtis said is crap. We may have come in on different ships, but we are in the same boat. (*In America*)

Like many of their pleasant conversations, they also come to the conclusion of shared experiences between Africans and African Americans. Sade comes to terms with, and even reprimands herself for, unknowingly and voluntarily "selling" herself into slavery, or the oppression that awaits Black immigrants to the US. Sonya reminds Sade that her choice to come to America was not in fact a choice, but a solution to a problem (lack of job security) that she

faced at home. She ties their experiences together, when she reveals that they may have come on different ships (phases of the African diasporic experiences), but they remain in the same boat (Black in today's America).

The comedy sketches of the *Wowo Boyz* spend less time on race relations, and focuses more on cross-cultural differences between Nigerian immigrants and African Diasporans (African Americans, Nigerian Americans). Sometimes cross-cultural differences are racialized when white American culture is jokingly compared to Nigerian culture. This is the case with the "Taken (African Version)," which plays on an American film with a predominately white cast, by juxtaposing Nigerians for Americans in a kidnapping situation and allowing humor to arise from the stark differences in the response to a ransom request. A couple skits highlight the perspectives that Nigerian immigrants have as a result of racial expectations. In "Oyibo Wife," Nnonso's Nigerian mother comes all the way to the United States to scold him for marrying an oyibo, or white woman. It is clear that she believes she will be unable to provide culturally for her son. However, as soon as his wife speaks Igbo, his mother is instantly gratified and optimistic about their union. In "Sensitivity Training," a racial component of the pan-ethnic tension is perhaps more latent, imbedded in the question, where do the Nigerian immigrant gather their perspectives of African Americans? Their hasty criticism and judgment of African Americans is coded in stereotypical and media-based images of this Black pan-ethnic group. In both skits, it's clear that the initial racialized expectations of white or Black Americans arrives prior to their actual interactions.

Shifting to the second generation Nigerian cultural producers, or children of Nigerian immigrants, we find that race relations are less about discovery and more focused on everyday experiences of individual and structural racism. The majority of Wale's music, and music videos

speak about the Black experience in Baltimore, openly critiquing and calling out instances of racism in the suburb where he grew up. This theme is consistent in his track and music video, “The God Smile.” As mentioned earlier, the lyrics focus on his experiences in the United States, while the video is based on his cultural experiences in Nigeria. One verse reveals:

Hit licks in Baltimore
Gettin' Hip-Hop chicken in like Kevin Liles
Uptown, I learned a lot
Suburbs taught me good
The white girl destroyed the black neighborhood
So white boys can run the world
White cops is goin' to war
I write thoughts and put 'em in songs
And the devil around the corner
It's all good cause the God is livin' in you. (*The God Smile*)

His reference to “white girls” destroying the black neighborhood, in order for “white boys” to run the world doesn’t indicate a specific scenario. However, it can be inferred that he is referencing, like the mother in ‘Oyibo wife,’ the outcome of white women’s encounter with Black men (Wale’s personal experience) or people in general. The effect is an insurgence of white boys (e.g. cops) going to war, presumably in Black neighborhoods. Wale’s personally interprets this verse, and makes it clear that what he is doing is putting his own experiences (thoughts) into his songs.

CULTURE

Similar to the cultural identities represented in the literary pieces, the media-based cultural productions are able to create imagery to represent their transformative Nigerian heritages. However, given the opportunity to use actual images, video, and audio, the representations are made latent and obvious through layering of music, signs, and images of people that allow the words to carry one meaning and the ambiance to create another. For

instance, in “The God Smile” the lyrics are able to focus on Wale’s experiences in the DMV, while the video produces imagery that strictly represents parts of Lagos vividly through cultural heritage sites, traditional performances, and even Lagos’ city skyline.

The film *In America: The Story of the Soul Sisters* is able to incorporate Nigerian, Nigerian diasporic, African and African diasporic music into the background of the movie. The most recurring musician is the Nigerian-French singer Asa, whose album *Beautiful Imperfections* is sung in both Yoruba and English. At times, the scenarios in the music line up to the real situations of the characters. Other music comes from Black artists from places like the United States, Jamaica, Cameroon, and Benin.

While Nigerian languages are not used in the film, there are references to Nigerian food and use of Nigerian attire. Nigerians in the film may at times wear Nigerian attire, such as Sade’s boss as well as her Nigeria-based mother who we see when Sade makes calls home. The discovery of cross-cultural differences emerge here, where Sade slowly notices the cultural differences between Nigeria and the United States. For instance, Sade cooks Nigerian Egusi soup for her uncle. He is shocked, having become accustomed to ordering delivery. When he expresses this shock, Sade simply asserts that many of the dried ingredients she found in his kitchen. Sade too comes to learn some of cultural differences between America and Nigeria, such as her Nigerian versus African Americans’ perspective of an ‘American Dream’ mentioned in the previous section (*In America*).

Pointing out cross-cultural difference between Nigerians and various Americans is a regular theme in the comedy sketches by the Wowo Boyz. In doing so, they heavily reference Nigeria culturally. Igbo, Yoruba, and Pidgin are often spoken between friends, parents and children, and in some cases to Americans who do not understand. Characters also where

Nigerian attire, eat/cook Nigerian food, and listen or dance to Nigerian music. Popular Nigerian music (Naija mix) is also used regularly in the sketches, as well as in dance videos they post to the YouTube Channel (“Wowo Boyz”).

The caricature of a Nigerian mother, played more recently by Evangelocol but at times by men cross-dressing as women, plays an important role in exposing the cross-cultural differences between Nigerian and Nigerian Americans. In the sketch, “Mom, You’re the Shit,” Andrew finds himself in a gross misunderstanding between his mother and himself. As mentioned in the summary, Andrew meant the phrase, “Mom, you’re *the* shit” as an endearing American term. However, his mother, father, and their local community of Nigerian immigrants interpret this as an insultingly demeaning response—something akin to “Mom, you’re *a* shit.” Similarly, in “Ben Down Select,” we find a Nigerian American girl embarrassed by her mother’s audacity to ask a store clerk to come ‘ben down’ on the price of a purse. There perhaps is not any miscommunication in this situation, since her mother chose to ignore the daughter’s initial insistence that the written price was steadfast.

The sketch “Taken (African Version)” and its parody of the film *Taken* comically suggests that Nigerians may have a different response than Americans when learning that a child is kidnapped. In *Taken*, Liam Neeson’s character is on the phone with his daughter when she is kidnapped, and has an opportunity to speak to her kidnappers. They don’t request a ransom, since they plan to sell her into a human trafficking ring. However, Neeson threatens: “If you let my daughter go now, that’ll be the end of it. I will not look for you, I will not pursue you. But if you don’t, I will look for you, I will find you, and I will kill you” (Morel). Our Nigerian mother, on the other hand, receives a call that her son has been kidnapped and she must pay ransom, a

situation more akin to real kidnappings that do occur in Nigeria. Rather than insisting to get her child back, like in *Taken*, she first asks which son is taken.

Mother: Is it the doctor?

Kidnapper: Ay! Are you the doctor?

Son: [shakes head]

Kidnapper: No, it's not the doctor.

Mother: Oh! Is it the lawyer?

Kidnapper: Are you the lawyer?

Son: [shakes head]

Kidnapper: No.

Mother: No? Which one?

Kidnapper: Which one- who are you bro?

Son: The entertainer!

Kidnapper: He say he the entertainer.

Mother: The entertainer?! Hey! [smacks lips] And you're scaring me? Ah ah! One million?! For one person?! Ah ah. A go kill him. (*Taken(African Version)*)

When she learns it's not her doctor or lawyer son, but the comedian, she insists that they should kill him. Urgently and angrily speaking Pidgin and Yoruba to a kidnapper who doesn't understand, she reprimands them that she had yet to hear the gun shoot. She then offers if they give her one million, she will kidnap them, still shocked at the prospect that she would pay a ransom for this son. It's clear that for her, paying ransom is only an option if it is for a child who is worth something, which she indicates is not the case for a son who is merely an entertainer. This comically speaks to the expectations of Nigerian American children, valuing careers such as medicine and law over those in the arts.

Shifting to the Nigerian Americans, cultural representations take similar forms such as the representation of Nigerian languages, food, clothing, and cultural styles. However, we find less cross-cultural critiques and more of a celebration, and at times protection, of their diasporic manifestations of Nigerian cultures. In Wale's videos "The God Smile" and "My Sweetie," Nigerian culture is a celebration in a Nigerian and US spatial setting, respectively. "My Sweetie" is a remake of Bunny Mack's highlife song "Let me Love You" creating a nostalgic scene. Wale

lyrically sets up an imaginary of a Nigerian (African) party within an American club. He even uses footage of Nigerian women preparing food for a party to establish that his party understands the values of a typical party. When he speaks of his “sweetie,” she is an image of an Igbo woman who knows how to take care of a him, ‘Naija’ man.

Make my jollof with lots of pepper
God has blessed her, prada dresser
Mix my Guinness with a Dr. Pepper
I’m so Naija, she so Igbo
She so sweet, shortie feed my ego
Me bold dude, Oladipo Olu
Whole crew, roll through, got more green than Whole Foods
African queen got what you need
Said my name Wale, bawo ni? (*My Sweetie*)

She, as an Igbo woman and African queen, is blessed with the ability to cook him spicy jollof rice, also knowing that he would want Guinness beer, mixed with Dr. Pepper. This verse also infuses references to Nigerian culture within hip-hop clichés such as “got more green than Whole Foods.” This could reference money, but in the context of Nigerian food it most likely also mean the greens used in Nigerian soups. This treatment inspires him to assert who he is, by his name Wale/Olu, and using Yoruba to assert his pride. “Me bold dude, Oladipo Olu” references him, Olu, as a confident man with plentiful wealth. He ends the verse again proudly stating his name, then asking “how are you?” (*My Sweetie*).

“The God Smile” references Nigerian cultures visually, by moving between scenes of Lagos imbedded with colorful references to Yoruba culture. Cultural heritage sites are shown, including Ojuelegba Road, Afrika Shrine (Fela’s nightclub in Ikeja), and the statue Arometa or the three chiefs that welcome people to Lagos. The video is also filled with a variety of dancers, singers and masquerades performing in full traditional attire. Wale places himself in the center of

this, rapping to the camera with his crew—local Nigerians in the area. Again, there are hints of a hip-hop scene, but squarely set within Nigeria (*The God Smile*).

ETHNICITY

The imagery of inter-ethnic relationships is made prominent by the ability, as well as the inability to physically tell the difference between Black people culturally. In the case of making cultures visible, Wale, in “My Sweetie” creates a Pan-African scene where partygoers carry the flags of their various African homelands. Without referring to them specifically in his lyrics, Wale is able to speak broadly to the African experience and allow imagery provide detail of what he means. The Wowo Boyz, in “Sensitivity Training,” uses the physical inability to tell the difference between African immigrants and African Americans as a tool to heal the discrimination between the two groups.

In America: The Story of the Soul Sisters centers the story of Sade and Sonya, and in the very name of the film attempts to bring Pan-African unity through the story of an unbreakable sisterhood that formed between an African and an African American. From the onset, their relationship is about being willing to listen to each other’s perspectives about being Black as well as being African. As mentioned in the culture section, each sees their place of enculturation (born and raised) as somewhere to leave, and the other space as a potential utopia for the soul. Sonya is even able to reveal the different perspective of being African that her parents have. Her father, a Pan-Africanist, sees Africa as a solution for African Americans. His efforts to trace his family’s roots back to the continent, and his Pan-African business plan for Africa towns throughout the United States is evident of that. He believes "Paradise lies at your mother's feet,

and your mother is Africa," while her mother's rebuttal is "We sorry to tell you honey but your motherland can't even afford to feed its own children" (*In America*).

In other cases, they are able to find points of similarities between their cultural perspectives. In one of their first conversations, they speak about the mannerisms of men, trying to determine which country has better Black men. Sonya asks Sade what African men are like, and she tells her that they are forward, brash, and presumptuous. Agreeably, Sonya quickly tells her that Black men are the same in America. They are able to laugh together at this similar discovery in their own perspectives of men.

The similarities between Black pan-ethnic groups is also made clear in a joke that Curtis tells Sade. In this joke, a plane has malfunctioned and is losing altitude. The pilot suggests that they rid the plane of cargo, then personal affects and heavy clothing, and finally people. In an attempt to seem fair in the determination of martyrs for this cause, he decides to begin alphabetically. He begins with 'A' for Africans, and while there are two Black people onboard, a man and his son, they remain frozen in their seats even as the rest of the plane looks on. When they don't leave, the pilot continues.

Curtis: [Pilot] "Ok let's move on, letter 'B,' any Blacks on board?"

Sade: You've got to be kidding me.

Curtis: [Pilot] "'C' uh any Caribbeans on board?"

Sade: That is racism up in the air.

Curtis: So after a little while the son asks, "But Dad, aren't we Africans?" Dad says "Shhh! No son, tonight we are Zulus!" (*In America*)

This racially charged scenario, and the father's decision to make ambiguous their ethnic identity, can be read as the inability for others to distinguish where in the African world they are from. Regardless of where they are from, and how they identify, the father has determined a way to beat the system by temporarily identifying by a nuanced ethnic group (Zulu) rather than the generalized identities given to Black people by the United States (i.e. Black, Caribbean, African).

Curtis and Sade's intimate relationship is also another example of pan-ethnic cohesion, and much of their relationship is built by their conversations about each other's experiences being Black in the United States. However, as the racism at Curtis' work becomes more unbearable, Sade is unable to empathize with his condemnation of systemic racism's affect on him, as well as his ability to succeed in America. They have two different perspectives of what it means to be Black in America, and how they should overcome these struggles.

Sade: I do not want anyone to screw your life, but you do not want to screw your life either. You do not have to keep holding onto race to hold yourself back. You've got to rise above it!

Curtis: What the fuck you talking about? I'm using racism as an excuse?

Sade: I didn't mean it like that.

Curtis: Then how the fuck you mean it? Huh? Tell me!

Sade: I am not saying no one is discriminating against you Curtis. But you can ignore it, and just move on, and be the best that you can be. Then you will be too important for anyone to disrespect.

Curtis: You know what? I am getting tired of your bullshit - coming here and thinking you know how to fix my problems. What the fuck do you know about racism anyway? huh? Because they treat you differently? Making you one of them?

Sade: No one treats me differently. And I have the same Black skin as yours.

Curtis: Not like mine you don't.

Sade: I live through my share of discrimination. (*In America*)

Sade believes that racism is something that one can rise above, where Curtis recognizes the effects of its permanence in the United States. Sade's perspective is that Curtis is allowing race to "hold him back," where Curtis feels that Sade cannot possibly understand racism because she, as an African, is treated differently. Sade and Curtis—one coming from Nigeria and the other born and raised in the United States—are two people from two different legacies and everyday experiences of white supremacy. They cannot see eye to eye. In this instance, it leads to the end of their relationship. As mentioned in the race section, it is Sonya and her mother who frame the Black experience in the United States as multiple, insisting that other parts of one's identity (i.e. gender, national origin) will change their individual lens.

The Wowo Boyz' "Sensitivity Training" features a workshop led by the African American psychologist, Dr. Rebecca Jones, who provides sensitivity training for Nigerians who have an overtly discriminatory perspective of African Americans. The workshop's method—present an ambiguous Black individual and allow the Nigerians to share their first impressions—challenges whether a Black ethnic identity or one's lifestyle can be attributed by physical features and attire alone. The participants use tattoos, pregnancy, dreadlocks, and men wearing earrings as negative indicators, prompting offensive responses that in each case end up being incorrect snap judgments. The first African American is a male with a tattoo on his shoulder, prompting the immediate responses:

First respondent: "tattoo? on this campus? He's crazy"

Second respondent: "If my daughter brings a man like this home I will kill her. I'll kill him too. Look at him" [knocks on table]

Third respondent: "I remember that tattoo because when I saw it I was thinking to myself what kind of parent would allow their child to carry that kind of thing on their body?"

Fourth respondent: "This one? He's a vagabond. A lost soul. Akata. You know that is the mark of the beast? You're going to hell. One way ticket!" (*Sensitivity Training*)

Already, they have determined his tattoo means that he is crazy, a vagabond, and a hell-bound Akata—a term that negatively refers to the cultures of Western Blacks. In two cases, he made an example of what not to do as a parent with criticisms to his potential parents and threatening daughters who would potentially date him. Dr. Jones reveals that the student is 16 years old and a near 4.0 senior in the university. His tattoo is in homage to his grandfather, Nelson Mandela. The participants are shocked into gasps and silence by this revelation.

The final African American is male, has dreadlocks, and wears earrings. The participants become more confident that he cannot be Nigerian, and that his decision to wear locks and earrings must be some mark of insanity. One participant says to him, "You are the madness that has progressed to the level that tries to bite people or what because the only people I know who

have isi dada⁹ are crazed people. Are you one of them? Ah?" Finally, Dr. Jones reveals that he is in fact "kinda bummy" and did not complete school, then tells him to reveal where he is from—Nigeria. All the people throw their hands up, and one even goes as far as to yell, "It's a lie! You're from Ghana!" In both cases they are unable to distinguish the African Americans by their physical appearances, even when one is from their own country. The commentary in the second instant reveals how unwilling one participant was to ascertain the African American to Nigerian culture, to the point that he makes an insult to suggest the only place he could come from is Ghana (*Sensitivity Training*).

When Dr. Jones feels that the participants still don't understand the harm their negative perceptive of African Americans, she decides to dress in West African attire and dramatically perform stereotypes of Nigerians. She starts singing the opening song for the movie *The Lion King* and then speaks in an exaggerated Nigerian accent, praying "Ey God! Jesus!" She asks them if they practice Voodoo, and when they respond she says she can't understand what they say when they "click click click... maybe write it down in English, so I can read it and know what they're talking about." This characterization was clearly unnerving to the point that the participants got up to leave. Dr. Jones closes by stating that workshop should inspire them to get to know each other and come together as one suggesting they should do away with hard segregation of their cultures: "Oh you eat curry, and I eat Fufu, and you eat regular fried chicken... It's all chicken!" She offers that chicken, like their African identity, is the core of who they are and should be the uniting factor, regardless of stylistic preferences and differences (*Sensitivity Training*).

Wale's video "My Sweetie," in attempting to recreate an African party, can be read as setting a Pan-African scene with obvious references to other African countries. He starts off by

⁹ Isi dada is Igbo (isi-hair) and Pidgin (dada-dreadlocks/unkempt hair)

dedicating the song to perhaps African immigrants in the US by saying, "If your last name has more than 13 letters—this one's for you—or more!" The people at the party dancing while waving or wearing pins of flags from Nigeria, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, South Africa, and Ghana. Then we see close-ups with each of these partygoers as they dance. Lastly, he makes specific reference to the fact that the only person he feels worthy of co-touring with is K'naan, a Somali American rapper (*My Sweetie*).

TRANSNATIONALISM

The use of imagery allows the cultural producers to use, or to create, actual images of Nigeria to represent this homeland and communication between it and their hostlands. For instance, Sade constantly makes calls to her mother and family in Nigeria. Rather than seeing Sade merely on the phone, we are able to see the receiving end of these conversations. In each call, Sade's family sits in their living room eager to receive news of Sade's progress and travels.

In *In America: The Story of the Soul Sisters*, the story of Sade focuses on her experience "In America" and trying to stay there. Her immigration issues begin when she arrives and is unable to verify her housing for a conference. This is because the conference was a front for the travel visa, and she planned to stay with her uncle. Like Ifemelu and Obinze, she scrambles for a job so that she can receive a work visa, but to no avail. She eventually works at the store of her uncle's friend. Knowing she cannot complain about her pay rate because she has no work visa, he offers her half of minimum wage. She remains in this situation until Sonya's father offers her a job at his restaurant (*In America*).

Like Ifemelu, Sade makes many calls home to Nigeria. The audience is able to see Nigeria as she speaks to her mother and sister who are always by the living room phone when they speak. She does not stop communication like Ifemelu, after her traumatic experience with

her uncle. She is committed to the remittances that she has promised to help her family. When her mother falls sick, we see Sade call the doctor in Nigeria, offering him whatever he wants in order to help her mother. It is clear “whatever he wants” will be challenging, yet she is committed to making the necessary plans.

She finally decides that marriage is an option to obtaining a green card in the United States. She tells Sonya early on that she does not plan to marry for love, but for a realistic partnership that will result in her green card. However, she marries for love. Once Curtis leaves her, she is left unable to produce an American husband necessary to finalize her documents. In this precarious state, she faces deportation in the light of xenophobic discourses and events against immigration. It is in this moment that Sade reflects on the relationship between the Transatlantic Slave Trade and her own migration process—she voluntarily sells herself into slavery versus the involuntary migration of Africans in the slave trade. This dissenting view of the American dream shifts her initial desires to be in the United States to a willingness to leave, defeated by the immigration process like Obinze (*In America; Americanah*).

The Wowo Boyz’ videos do not focus on transnational experiences as much as they do on cross-cultural experiences. This does crossover however in “Oyibo Wife,” where the mother is arriving from Nigeria to scold her son. More substantially the sketch “419 Immigration” is centered on the immigration issues of Peter (Nnonso), whose girlfriend angrily calls immigration on him knowing that his papers are not in order. His friend Obinna (Andrew) offers to marry him in order to receive a green card, since same sex marriage is legal in the United States. However, they run into a diligent and thorough immigration officer required to verify the legitimacy of their love and marriage, and who warns them about the consequences of fraudulent actions. In a comical back and forth, Peter and Obinna fumble through the questions, attempting to be

perceived as a gay couple, but failing to corroborate intimate details of their “loving” relationship (*419 Immigration*).

Wale’s videos both have strong transnational themes, as each video attempt to make reference to Nigeria as a homeland, as well as other African countries. In “My Sweetie” Wale makes constant reference to Nigeria and other countries through the use of flags, and references to “Nigerian” and “African” parties. However, “The God Smile” makes a larger commentary on cross-national engagements where the entire video is set in Nigeria, while the lyrics are more tailored to the United States. The juxtaposition of the sound/visual creates an imaginary where one is simultaneously in Lagos and the DMV. And with vibrant images of Lagos’ skyline, cultural heritage spaces, spaces with people and dancers, and Nigerian American rapper Wale in the middle of it all—the Nigerian return home imaginary is made real and consistent.

CONCLUSION

Like chapter 3, the cultural productions reveal overlapping and intersecting representations of all four identity tropes. Racial identity is often described in relation to one’s Black cultural identity(ies), or in contrast with American cultural norms. We see in Wale’s “The God Smile” the juxtaposition of a song about the struggle and rise of a man from the DMV against a welcoming image of him in his homeland embracing his Yoruba culture. Transnationalism is made evident here in this layering, where two spaces are made simultaneous using Wale as the link between the two. *In America: The Story of the Soul Sisters* constantly overlaps in themes of race and pan-ethnicity, giving evidence of how diverse Black communities can experience and respond racism differently. Additionally, what the Wowo Boyz demonstrates is how accents can also be used as indicators of ethnic identity, and especially in the case of cultural differences between African parents and their children and/or African Americans. All

cultural productions use music as a way to create added layers of meaning, using Nigerian and global African artists to deepen the messages behind the dialogue and visuals. Regardless of the medium, it is clear that all cultural productions in this chapter, and Chapter 2 were able to find a means to distinctly and precisely tell their stories, and represent Nigerian and African diasporic identities.

CHAPTER 5

Post-Colonial Transformations of Race and Ethnicity, and the Preservation of Nigerian Culture in South Africa

“People say ‘Is that you?’ You know, because he does all these weird things. You know it’s [Leke] not me. But it's a story that I think is a common one, with a lot of people moving to South Africa and living here and struggling with apparently being different and not fitting in—identity and culture clashes. So that is something that's familiar.”

- Yewande Omotoso, Morning Live Interview on SABC 1

Nigerian Barbadian South African, Yewande Omotoso's debut novel *Bom Boy* is an example of the newly emerging body of migrant fiction in South Africa and focuses on its representation of migratory linkages between Cape Town, South Africa, and Nigeria. In “‘Nigeria’ in the Cape: Afropolitanism and Alienation in Yewande Omotoso's *Bom Boy*,” Rebecca Fasselt argued that the novel registers the continuous history of South Africa's othering of the African continent while at the same time highlighting moments of relation between South Africa and Nigeria and their respective peoples. The novel envisions Cape Town as an inherently ambiguous place of intersection and cross-cultural contact, as well as of alienation. Fasselt says that the co-presence of Afropolitanism and alienation particularly comes to the forefront in the author's juxtaposition of the figure of Rhodes with the legendary heroine Moremi of Yoruba myth, as well as in her exploration of the theme of transnational and transracial adoption (Fasselt).

Omotoso's novel is one of three cultural productions by Nigerian Diaspora artists resident in South Africa examined in this chapter. As Fasselt's literary analysis of the novel demonstrates, analysis of Omotoso and other Nigerian cultural productions serve to deepen the dissertation thesis, concerning the experiential representations of modern Nigerian Diaspora identities (Naija) and experiences within the African continent. The chapter presents South Africa as a continental

diasporic space whereby the transnational transformations of ethnic, racial, and cultural identity are vibrant and dynamic in producing Nigerian Diaspora communities. Surely the post-apartheid migration of continental Africans—Nigerians in this case—and their experiences reveal the collision and cohesion of cultural practices in relation to their newly endured racialization and nationalized ethnic distinctions. This chapter queries how Nigerian diasporas experience transnationality, displacement, and relations to home as well as how specifically racial, ethnic, and cultural identities are represented in their cultural productions. Like Chapters 3 and 4, the objective is to gather contextual data about the ‘Naija’ identity (in South Africa) by observing how global and national processes affect various aspects of a diaspora community’s identity and are manifest in their creative productions.

While the study called for the coding of transnational, cultural, ethnic, and racial instances in the cultural productions, there emerged certain productions whose focus more vividly represented a few in paralleling or intersecting ways. Yewande Omotoso’s novel *Bom Boy* tells the story of the orphaned bi-racial Nigerian-South African—Leke’s—journey towards self-discovery. There is more pointedly a critique on race in South Africa and an exhibition of transnational Yoruba cultural identities represented through his biological father’s memories of Nigeria written in letters to Leke. Akin Omotoso’s film *Man on Ground*, on the other hand, focuses on themes of extreme ethnic tensions as well as cohesions, which can be read latently through the lens of the legacy of racial domination in South Africa. Set with a backdrop of violent attacks of foreigners, Nigerian characters must constantly negotiate friend from foe. Like *Bom Boy*, there are emergent themes of transnational Yoruba cultural practices as friends are determined and conversations are had about differing ethnic backgrounds. Lastly, the television show *Jacob’s Cross*, directed in association with Adze Ujah and with actors Fabian Lojede and

Akin Omotoso, provides global representations of race, ethnicity, and culture between Nigeria and South Africa, and in relation to other parts of the world. The protagonist, half South African half Nigerian heir to a Nigerian oil empire Jacob Makhubu, is constantly met with threats from the West as he attempts to develop a model for a 100% African owned oil refinery, which if expanded would effectively shift power from Western strongholds to African and other globally southern countries. Transnational Nigerian cultures are also represented as the show's narrative takes place both in Lagos and Nigeria, and Nigerian cultural identities are vividly displayed whenever a segment is focused in Nigeria. In order to report the findings of content analysis from these cultural productions, their storylines and major emerging themes are first presented to provide a framework for understanding the detailed narrative provided thereafter.

CULTURALLY PRODUCING NIGERIA IN SOUTH AFRICA: THEMES AND SELECT WORKS

These narratives tell vastly different stories, but still there are many cases of super themes that overlap between the identity tropes as between the cultural productions. For instance, the use of Nigerian languages is a consistent theme in all the cultural productions, however are used in distinct ways. In *Bom Boy* Yoruba is a language to be learned by a bi-racial Nigerian diasporan, where in *Man on Ground* it a language to teach a Zulu partner, and a regular language of conversation—along with Pidgin—in *Jacob's Cross*. Other super themes include the use of letters to communicate across diasporic spaces, transferring cultural knowledge through memories between senders. These transferals also become bridges for estranged family members to find each other across diasporas or to maintain strong familial bonds. This is a major theme in both *Bom Boy* and *Man on Ground*, where letters can be read as a critical link to the journey of the

protagonists through inter-generational dialogues. This section provides an overview of the cultural productions, before detailing distinctively and commonly emerged themes.

Bom Boy

Bom Boy is a story of an outsider, Leke, who is born of a bi-racial Nigerian-South African (Afrikaner) father, Oscar, and Afrikaner mother, Elaine, but was adopted as an infant by an Afrikaner couple, Jane and Marcus, in Cape Town. Bom Boy is an endearing Nigerian slang that translates to ‘baby boy’ often given by parents to a child. It is a nickname given to Oscar and passed down to Leke. Passing knowledge from one generation to the next is a major theme of this novel, as it centers the story of both Leke and Oscar, and the communication between them across time and space via letters written to baby Leke in 1992 by Oscar. Leke does not read these letters until 2012 as an independent. The reader reads these letters throughout the novel, because they observe the journey of Oscar and Leke simultaneously. Until Leke reads the letters he is oblivious to the details of his cultural, ethnic or even racial background (*Bom Boy*).

Leke is an awkward and laconic introvert and as he grows up he chooses to become more distant with the world around him. This seemingly permanent disposition is born out of his inability to befriend his adopted father, Marcus, after his adopted mother, Jane, passed away. His story is a journey to cure himself of an ‘invisible itch,’ by surrounding himself of memorabilia of Jane (her car) and Elaine (self photo), wandering through malls and stealing small items from people, and eventually going to various doctors to evaluate his invisible and hard to describe pain. The story does not become one about a journey of self until Leke finally decides to accept and read the letters from Oscar, kept for him by Marcus. Once the letters are given to Leke, a sense of accomplishment overcomes Marcus that he has finally passed off an important part of

his wife's legacy: loving and caring for Leke. Leke's true journey begins as he finally recognizes all his grievances have been described in detail, culturally, by his Nigerian father (*Bom Boy*).

Oscar's story moves between Nigeria and South Africa, the home of each of his parents. Oscar unravels his lived experiences through memories, letters to and from Jane, and letters to Leke. He shares stories about his time with his parents in Nigeria, his cultural heritage as a Yoruba man, and especially the weight of a family curse, the Darkness. This knowledge was passed on to Oscar by his father who taught him through proverbs and stories such as "Babalawo Mo Wa Bebe." Oscar's narrative allows the reader to witness the love between his parents, as well as the love he has for Elaine. However, it also reveals the burden of the family curse, which promises familial demise as long as the deal made to the Babalawo is not met (*Bom Boy*).

"Babalawo Mo Wa Bebe" is the story of the tortoise, Ijapa, and his wife, Yannibo, who consulted a Babalawo, or Yoruba spiritual healer, for a concoction to make his wife fertile. However, against the Babalawo's strict instructions, the tortoise selfishly eats the tasty aseje, or porridge, rendering his own belly to grow. The song tells of the tortoise returning to the Babalawo in shame, unsuccessfully asking for a cure to his new and old problem ("Reparations").

Like the story "Babalawo Mo Wa Bebe," and the sacrifice of Moremi, the family curse deals with the consequences for requesting a child from the Babalawo, but ignoring great sacrifice requested of the Babalawo in turn. Moremi, a woman of her people in Ife, was captured and the King Ugbo married her. She then learned the secrets and then returns to Ife. She told the people of Ife the stories and they defeated the Ugbo family. She went to Esinmirin, the Goddess of the river, to make a sacrifice of thanks. She gave animals, but Esinmirin wanted her son.

Moremi gave her son to the river, and the people of Ife cried. To comfort her, all children of Ife took Moremi as a mother (*Bom Boy* 16–8).

Moremi comes to represent the upstanding image of sacrifice expected of Oscar and his family. However, that sacrifice was not made by Oscar's family, which created a burden of a curse for all their descendants. Oscar attempts to rid the family of the curse, when he learns of Leke's birth. A local Babalawo told him he must kill an evil man. He kills Malcolm—a man who has presumably abused Elaine in the past. However, the shock of the killing renders him unable to escape, and he is imprisoned and later dies in jail. Elaine, a poor woman dependent on Oscar, eventually is unable to care for Leke and leaves him with Jane and is never seen again (*Bom Boy*).

The letters are significant because they not only teach Leke about the family curse, or his 'invisible itch,' but they are also a way for his father to teach him about his Nigerian cultural heritage and pass down stories that his own father told him. Leke is able to use this knowledge to finally begin a new journey to cure his future family of the curse. He begins to have dreams that provide additional context to the complexity of the curse, including the fact that there were two curses on the family with which he must contend. Leke receives help from his girlfriend Tsotso, a Black South African, as well as his former Zimbabwean nanny, Lightness, to consult a South African sangoma, or spiritual healer, who passes the instructions to cure the curse from Leke's ancestors. His future child must give herself to the practice, as a Babalawo, and Leke must donate and be charitable to give back what was taken (items stolen from people) (*Bom Boy*).

Man on Ground

Man on Ground is the story of two estranged Nigerian brothers, Femi and Ade. They grow up together in Nigeria, but eventually Ade migrates to the UK and marries a Black British

woman. Femi becomes a refugee in South Africa after leading students against Nigeria's education system and ultimately being captured and tortured by the Nigerian government. Ade visits South Africa with his wife for her business meeting and plans to meet his brother, only to find out from Femi's fiancée that he has gone missing. Ade, unaware of the severity of the riots against African immigrants in South Africa, ventures out to learn about what happened to his brother. Throughout the film, he is haunted by a past incident that is the cause of their separation. As the elder brother in school, he was unwilling to intervene when other schoolboys were beating Femi. This backstory is a metaphor of Femi's experiences in South Africa, and perhaps motivation for Ade to find him. Ade makes unlikely friends in the midst of his search for Femi who teaches him of the danger he is in due to the tension of the socio-economic conditions in townships; that is the fact or perception that African foreigners receive resources over locals. These friends also help to uncover what happened to Femi (*Man on Ground*).

Femi came to South Africa as a political exile from Nigeria and struggled to survive in South Africa by taking up jobs such as selling movies, hair extensions, and being a dishwasher. He also makes South African friends throughout his journey, often having to combat generalized or discriminatory images of Nigerians. He and his fiancée, the Zulu woman Zodwa, spend time learning about each other's languages and cultures as their love and friendship buds between them. Femi finally takes a job at "Extension 29" so that he can support a pregnant Zodwa, and finally marry her, but becomes a subject in the violent attacks against foreigners. The job is set in the townships, and the leader of the local riots, Vusi, plans to have Femi killed. The head of the police, Timothy, and Ade spend time trying to figure out how to proceed and their bond saves Ade who is eventually on the run from Vusi's wrath (*Man on Ground*).

This film is created in memory of Ernesto Nhamwuve, a Mozambique immigrant to South Africa, whose burning was video-taped and broadcasted nation and world over. Akin Omotoso underscores that the goal of the film is to focus on the commonality of the characters as human being, rather than on difference, which he believes blinds people of the other's experience.

Jacob's Cross

Jacob's Cross is a South African and Pan-African television show about a young South African businessman, Jacob Makhubu, who eventually learns that his father is Chief Abayomi, the founder and CEO of a lucrative Nigerian oil empire. His mother was an exile to Nigeria during apartheid, and Jacob was the product of the love between her and Chief Abayomi. Chief Abayomi seeks Jacob to make him the heir of the empire, knowing that his legitimate son, Bola, cannot carry on the family name on his behalf due to his irresponsibly arrogant playboy status and that his trusted daughter, Folake, cannot lead the family traditionally as a woman. Jacob finally takes on this role as the head of the empire, and of the family, with the help of his sister and is thus tossed into reconciling with his past, while learning about who he is as a Nigerian and the son of Abayomi. Chief Abayomi's dream was to create a model that can work for all of Africa, and as a result had been resistant to foreign support especially from the West. Eventually, Jacob gratefully takes up this responsibility by endeavoring to create a "100% African-owned" oil empire that trades within the continent and gives back to small companies significantly more than Western countries (i.e. French, Americans). This attempt to internally control African resources, oil in Nigeria and eventually nuclear energy in South Africa, creates many enemies, especially from the United States and Europe, willing to kill to take out the Abayomi empire (*Jacob's Cross*).

The episodes chosen, the first episodes of season 1 and 2, reveal the storyline with this synopsis in mind. In season 1, episode 1, Jacob learns that Chief Abayomi is his father. Before he learns this, Chief Abayomi had offered Jacob the CEO position of the South African branch of the company. He sends Folake to South Africa to convince him, and when he agrees and visits Nigeria, Chief Abayomi tells him that he is his father and he wants Jacob to run the family business. Shocked by this message, Jacob returns home to South Africa to confront his mother. In the meantime Mama Bola, Bola's mother, overhears the story and tells Bola. Bola, who has already proven willing to kill as a means to an end, attempts to suffocate his father as a result of this knowledge. It is revealed earlier in the episode that Americans attempted to kill Chief Abayomi when they learned of the company's growing stronghold over oil in the Niger Delta. Bola has their representative killed in South Africa as an act of revenge. Both American and French investors and oil companies are seeking to quell the growth of the Abayomi empire (*Jacob's Cross*).

The first episode of season 2 begins with Jacob's success in pushing forward on the Pan-African model of the Abayomi empire. During the episode, which is primarily set in Nigeria, Jacob also is forced to contend with his family who sees Folake's upcoming wedding to the representative of a partnering company as a threat to the stability of the Abayomi empire and family. His success with the Abayomi empire leads the American company Globex into espionage to convince Jacob to sell the company over to them. They also bring a bomb into the Abayomi home, during Folake's wedding, which kills Jacob's niece. The growing proximity and severity of danger forces Jacob to reconsider his decision not to have bodyguards. His success and constant faith in humanity, or perhaps denial of a need to change his methods, keeps him at

the receiving end of threats. Instead he uses his business savvy to continue to build the empire, and his trust in finding new partnerships to do so (*Jacob's Cross*).

RACE

Each of the cultural productions provides a critique of the race in three different ways that span national, multinational, or global geographical spaces of racialized social, economic, and political neocolonial power. This is narrated for instance through multinational contexts of racial identity in *Bom Boy*, a national context of violent struggles for resources in a post-apartheid South Africa in *Man on Ground*, and a global context of neocolonial powers that visibly act against Africans' attempts to achieve socio-economic success through goals of Pan-African unities in *Jacob's Cross*.

Oscar and Leke's bi-racial identity, Yoruba and Afrikaner, is the most recurring racial theme in *Bom Boy*. Each man must negotiate his identity in light of his social conditions: Oscar's in Nigeria among Nigerians and South Africa amongst white South Africans; and Leke's in South Africa amongst mainly Afrikaners. This story makes visible representations of interracial cohesion between Nigerian men and Afrikaner women, and the everyday realities of their bi-racial children. Their complexion is a major thematic and point of conversation throughout the novel, especially with Leke who receives a slew of nicknames that capture this point. Inevitably, this comes with its dose of racist interactions geared towards Leke and Elaine, Leke's mother, especially in relation to the reality of her miscegenation. Yewande Omotoso uses a perhaps more latent theme of vivid color imagery through names and the physical colors of living and inanimate items (*Bom Boy*).

Oscar's racial identity is tightly bound to the questions of his Nigerian identity. He grows up in Nigeria with his parents, but his father constantly laments that he isn't gathering enough

knowledge of language due to his excessive English lessons by his mother. Her lack of knowledge of Yoruba culture is revealed in how she enacts the cultural lessons she does learn. For instance, although hair plaiting was regarded in their town as a practice for young girls, to the horror of the other mothers she found the practice a useful way to contain Oscar's hair. These constant cultural, yet racial, clashes are evident in Oscar's own memory of his identity. In perhaps the only mention of his complexion, he asks his father and mother why his mother looks different than them and who he is a result.

'Am I Nigerian?' I asked my dad.

He nodded.

'And I'm South African too?'

My mother nodded.

'How come we don't go down there? And how come your skin is like that but Daddy and me are like this?'

'Daddy and I.'

'If you're really my mother how come you're oyibo?' (*Bom Boy* 59)

This reenactment is revealed in a letter from Oscar to Leke, along with Oscar's memories of his father's concerns, stories, songs, and proverbs related to their Nigerian heritage. However, without these letters till the end of the story, Leke is left with little more than his own feeling of being a perpetual outsider. His mother's love/hate relationship with her situation, having a bi-racial son and no father/partner to support them, is born in part by the constant teasing and hatred sent towards her by her peers. By 1992, when Leke was born, apartheid was yet to come to an end and the Immorality Act, or the act rendering miscegenation illegal, was only repealed in 1985 (*Immorality and Prohibition*). She's constantly told that Leke doesn't look like her, and she overhears conversations accusingly denouncing her failed relationship and its colorful fruit. After having Leke, Elaine overhears the gossip about her and Oscar. She is in the bathroom stall and they don't know she's there:

'He's a black. He's from Rwanda or somewhere.'

'Rwanda? Where's that?'
'Were the married?'
'No. No marriage.'
'I heard he was a client of hers.'
'A client? You mean...?'
A snort. (*Bom Boy* 98–9)

Her ultimate decision to leave Leke with Jane, but with the letters from Oscar, leaves him in a space of unknowing until he finally reads the letters 20 years later.

In this world, void of a true sense of identity, Leke is given names by others to distinguish him from everyone else. Elias, the Afrikaner owner of his favorite store calls him “my China”; his classmates called him “Brownie” after he let his hair grow and they noticed his complexion, hair color, and eye color were all flush. Yewande Omotoso goes further by making this use of color, and color/complexion based naming, a major thematic that represents contradictions, mixtures as well as vivid distinctions of color. For instance, the curse is often referred to as “Darkness,” and “Lightness” is the name of the Black Zimbabwean woman who raised him who eventually leads him to the cure to his curse. “Red” is a major character, that is Jane’s car which was passed down to Leke. Red is a constant reminder of their bond. The storeowner’s jet black dog with a small barely visible patch of white spots is named “Whitie.” Red and Brownie represent descriptions, where names such as Lightness and Whitie seemingly represent contradictions but also metaphorically represent Leke and his journey. Throughout the novel, Omotoso also constantly drops quick color descriptors such as the “multicolored flowers” Leke grows, the creme roles of a women’s neck, the grey walls of Leke’s compound, or the brown surface of an envelope with white letters (from his father) within protruding from it to add a complex layer of metaphors to Leke’s journey (*Bom Boy*).

Man on Ground and *Jacob’s Cross* take a different approach to examining race. *Man on Ground*’s examination of race is more latent than the other two cultural productions, because the

story focuses on the violent attacks by Black South Africans onto African foreigners in South Africa. Racialized economic disparities turned ethnic tensions are imbedded into the formation of ethnic identities. The film makes a strong statement about why the attacks happen to foreigners: inadequate post-apartheid allocations of promised resources (housing, healthcare, jobs). This is made vividly clear twice. The first is a news report that Ade watches in his hotel room, where protesters state that in 20 years since the ending of apartheid Black South Africans haven't seen any changes and they are treated as pigs. The news source then turns to the major topic that Black South Africans are now "hunting down foreigners." However, this is done without making a direct correlation between the racial injustices and the ethnic tensions. We get this confirmation when Vusi, in a township town hall meeting, reiterates to his neighbors that they must drive out foreigners because the government are selling their promised free housing to the foreigners for cheap prices (*Man on Ground*).

Jacob's Cross perhaps reveals the most globalized representation of racial identity through the repercussions of developing African agency, through African owned businesses. Chief, Jacob, and Folake Abayomi's dream of a "Pan African business giant" is meant to be 1) a model of a 100% African owned business and 2) one that gives more power back to farmers and small business owners. The growing success of their multi-industry (oil, nuclear power, hotels) company, and attempts to expand their businesses geographically were met violently with assassinations (guns, bombs) and espionage by 'the Americans' and 'the French.' In season 2, episode 1, the Boston-based company Globex's representative, Gloria, laments that in giving back 20% in shares of revenue small business owners in Africa and India, Abayomi is undercutting many Western models. Like season 1, this becomes a reason to find various ways to attack the family's stronghold. For instance, Gloria calls Jacob to critique his business partners

and business model calling it a "very admirable ideological position, but not really viable for those in the business of making profits." She offers to buy 50% of Abayomi, encouraging that money is all they need to make that deal, and is visible upset when Jacob turns her down. She takes more drastic measures to send a spy, and to bomb the Abayomi home (*Jacob's Cross*).

There are other less mentioned, but important racial themes that emerge. For instance, Jacob's best friend is an Afrikaner named Prospero Bratt. Their longstanding interfamily friendship, and ongoing professional relationship, can be read as an instance of racial cohesion which is unlike any professional interracial relationship in the episodes. However, Prospero is not without his own racialized perspectives of how things should be run, which brings us to the final racial theme: references to apartheid. Often, non-Nigerian characters will reference the history of apartheid, such as Jacob's mother's exile to Nigeria. However, in the pilot episode, when Prospero challenges that Jacob cannot create an empire akin to his own family because Prospero's grandfather "built his empire with his own two hands," Folake interrupts to jokingly remind Prospero that she knows "no white man that has built anything with his own two hands." Here she points to the colonial history of apartheid, but within a greater context of the global colonialisms of Europe and the nature of their imperial success being at the expense of those they enslave or exploit (*Jacob's Cross*).

CULTURE

The cultural producers all use distinctive motifs to represent national or ethnic-based Nigerian cultural identities. In some cases, it is clear that the representations are distinct to a Nigerian ethnic group, especially Yoruba. In other cases, cultural representations, such as references to Nigerians by non-Nigerians, take a nationalistic approach to their cultural identity. Here, stereotypes reign as most of these references generalize Nigerian people, cultural practices,

or how they are perceived to act in South Africa. The most prominent cultural themes are the representations where Nigerian characters visually reveal lifestyle practices (i.e. language, food, dress, cultural and spiritual traditions), and especially when set in Nigeria. When in South Africa, cultural practices are often communicated, transferred, and learned through writing letters, storytelling, teaching Nigerian languages, and imparting important proverbs from one generation to another.

The letters to Leke from his father, Oscar, perhaps is the most intricate example of this intergenerational transfer of cultural knowledge. Oscar, burdened by his lack of knowledge of the Yoruba language (and perhaps culture) as well as of his family curse, uses letters to urgently transfer what little he knows to his son. The letters themselves are memories that serve as historical knowledge that Leke can receive no other way. Oscar, who dies before meeting his son, understands that he will perhaps die as a result of the curse and thus has a duty to leave Leke with some link to his lineage. Oscar's letters take at least three forms: telling Yoruba stories, fables, and proverbs; memories of interactions with his father and learning about his heritage and of the curse; and dreams he's had that often tie stories to the curse for potential cures. Less occurring, but also important, are the letters from Oscar to Elaine, Leke's mom, that provide her with some knowledge of Yoruba culture. This is especially important for Leke's name and meaning, which is given to Elaine by Oscar after she told him of a dream she had about their unborn son (*Bom Boy*).

Perhaps the most significant stories are that of the Yoruba heroine Moremi, and the greedy tortoise who tried to cheat a Babalawo. Moremi's story, that of her rise and great sacrifice of her son to the river goddess for her people, is interwoven into the novel as she is a major inspiration to Oscar. As a student Oscar would use his knowledge of Moremi to pit her historical

character against his colleagues' respect for the colonialist Cecil Rhodes. Moremi represented a force stronger than colonialism, and Oscar was relentless to establish this point. Letters to Leke show that Oscar's fondest memories are learning about Moremi, and her suku style hairstyle meant for queens. Moremi perhaps represents the sacrifice Oscar's family has not made, which led to their curse. On the opposite end, Oscar's father restlessly uses the song "Babalawo Mo Wa Bebe" as a way to teach Oscar about the curse.

Babalawo mo wa bebe	Babalawo I have come to beseech you
Aluginrin	Aluginrin
Ogun to se fun mi lere kan	The potion that you gave me the other day
Aluginrin	Aluginrin
Oni nma ma fowo kenu	The one you said my had musn't feed my face with
Aluginrin	Aluginrin
Oni nma fese kenu	The one you said my legs musn't feed my face with
Aluginrin	Aluginrin
Gbongo lo ye mi ge ere	A root tripped me and I fell
Aluginrin	Aluginrin
Mo fowo kan obe mo fi kenu	My hand touched the potion, then touched my mouth / Aluginrin
Aluginrin	Next thing, I look at my stomach and it's expanded / Aluginrin
Mo boju wo kun, ori gbendu	Babalawo, I have come to beseech you
Aluginrin	Aluginrin (<i>Bom Boy</i> 11, 251)
Babalawo mo wa bebe	
Aluginrin	

The turtle's disregard of the Babalawo's instructions left him and his family in disarray. This story most reflects that state of their family, and perhaps is even an intimately comforting song that Oscar's dad was dedicated to teaching his son, who knew little Yoruba beyond the song. In turn, Oscar teaches this song to Leke, by recalling his time with his father. Often, he uses various stories and proverbs to share his world with Leke, and more often than not he uses that knowledge to connect Leke to his grandfather.

The dreams are a final frontier used to communicate cultural knowledge between Oscar and Leke, Oscar and Elaine, and Leke to his ancestors. Elaine tells Oscar that she had a dream

where her son came to her as a white bird, but then flew away. She dreams of a sitting on the branches of a tree, and giving birth to a strange bird who says "I knew it was you." Then it spreads its wings and flies away. When she tells Oscar, he says there is nothing bad about the dream, that the child recognized her. However, in flying away it may mean that he leaves them. When she protests such a response, he tells her that his father used to tell unhappy stories that make him feel safe. When she asks what to name him, and considering the dream, Oscar says "lekeleke gbami leke" which is a song he and his classmates sang when a white bird (dove or swan) flies across the sky (53-56).

Lekeleke gba mi leke white swan, help me
Eye adaba gba mi leke dove, help me (56)

He explains to Elaine that they ask the bird for help with good luck. He decides to call the child Leke. When Elaine thinks that means bird, Oscar corrects her and says the whole name is Ifaleke—the creator is the victor. Oscar gives Leke a strong name that is related to the circumstances of his birth, the curse, and Elaine’s dream. He does this in hopes that it will lead him to the end of the curse.

As the novel deepens, and Oscar becomes more desperate in prison, he imparts many of his dreams to Leke who now has the basis of Oscar's cultural knowledge. Oscar tells him about the nightmares he has about the Babalawo, seeing things from his eyes. He notes that he cannot speak Yoruba so his Babalawo speaks in English too. He is "yellow like me—omo pupa—with curly hair that springs up after I push it down." The Babalawo informs his grandmother that they are caught up in a "forgotten curse" which is harder to remove than remembered ones, and then becomes part of the family's DNA (162-3).

Once Leke finally reads his father's letters, the dreaming is seemingly passed on to Leke who is now given knowledge about how to end the curse. Finally, as a step towards redemption,

Leke seeks a sangoma who acts as a conduit between his ancestors and the living to give Leke the final information necessary to end the curse: his first child must commit itself to becoming a Babalawo and Leke must return the things he has stolen. This knowledge seems to free Leke, as the novel closes with signs of his eternal relief after attempting to go to multiple medical doctors he finally has alleviated the issue of his invisible itch, the Darkness.

Man on Ground and *Jacob's Cross*, as a film and television show versus a novel, are able to use the visual and audio as a means of representing Nigerian cultural identities. For instance, both use Nigerian music, from Naija mix to African Diaspora-based artists, as part of the scenic background. *Man on Ground* uses music from various African artists from Nigeria, Cameroon, and South Africa to name a few. Music from Nigerian-French artist Asa's album *Beautiful Imperfections* is used often with its heartfelt messages of love, pain, and circumstance. Like the film, the variance of musical choice also reflects the strong Pan-African cultural motif exemplified to sharing visual and audio representations of African music and food. For instance, we find in one moment Ade waiting in an Ethiopian restaurant for his brother, drinking tea as the owners prepare food in the background. In another example, Timothy and Ade bond while trying to learn of Femi's whereabouts over whiskey and the Bob Marley song, Rastaman chant. Singing the lyrics together, they find middle ground between cultures in their knowledge of and love for the song, and the artist, and perhaps a common respect as African men (*Man on Ground*).

References to Nigerian culture are limited in this film, but the way it is used is profound. They take three forms: letters, learning Yoruba and stereotyping Nigerians. Letters are used between Femi and his mother about Femi's time in South Africa, his fiancée, and to ask for money for the wedding. The letter is read with images of what Femi needs for his wedding and is

spoken between English and Yoruba. Two examples of learning Yoruba and stereotyping Nigerians come from scenes between Femi and Zodwa.

When they meet, the two have a telepathic conversation, heard by the audience but communicated between characters using non-verbal queues.

[Verbal]

Femi: Hi, I'm Femi. What' your name?

Zodwa: Zodwa

Femi: Zodwa, What does that mean?

Zodwa: It means, the only one...

Femi: ...for me.

Zodwa: [scoffs] I don't think so.

[Telepathic]

Zodwa: You're too tall.

Femi: I can cook.

Zodwa: You're too smooth.

Femi: You're beautiful.

Zodwa: Are you a drug dealer?

Femi: [scoffs] No!

Zodwa: Are you married?

Femi: [scoffs] No!

Zodwa: Are you legal?

Femi: Legally refugee. (*Man on Ground*)

Zodwa's caution of his immigration status and profession shows the concerns she has about his intentions of hitting on her, based on her own perspectives of Nigerians. Femi's honest and forward replies disarm her shield, by proving his intentions legitimate and atypical. Later, sitting at a park in a loving embrace, Zodwa and Femi share a moment where they use locations of kisses to teach other what the facial body part means in their respective languages, Yoruba and Zulu. Finally Femi touches Zodwa's belly and says in Yoruba, "ikun," or stomach, to which Zodwa shakes her head and replies "Femi," indicating that she is pregnant. This interaction reveals a subtle way they are able to simultaneously teach and communicate with each other in their own languages.

Lastly, *Jacob's Cross* perhaps provides the most vivid representation of Nigerian landscapes, spaces, and traditional clothing. Like *Man on Ground*, there are references to Nigerians by non-Nigerians. For instance, in the pilot episode, as Jacob decides to travel to Nigeria for the first time Prospero jokingly reminds him to bow referencing perhaps the Yoruba cultural practice—*dobaleh*—of greeting elders especially as he closes this immense business deal. The use of Yoruba languages, references to cultural and family traditions, and wearing Yoruba and Igbo attire by Nigerian characters is also a distinctive representation of Nigerian cultural identities. For instance, the use of Yoruba attire is also represented in Jacob's transformation from a South African man, to a both Nigerian and South African man with great responsibilities on both sides of his family (*Jacob's Cross*).

Most of the use of Yoruba in both episodes takes place while the characters are in Nigeria. Yoruba is very often spoken between the Abayomi family members, often infusing English into the conversation. The characters also speak in Pidgin English when speaking to some non-Yoruba Nigerians. It is only amongst South Africans, and professional non-Yoruba Nigerians that English is spoken. As a note, Black South Africans also speak multiple languages amongst each other, including Zulu. They also must speak English when amongst non-Black South Africans.

Scenes set in Nigeria become a platform for representing Nigerian culture in various ways. Primarily, the scenes are in a lavish Abayomi mansion where family members and professionals of the Abayomi empire wear Nigerian clothing. Mr. Emeka, a trusted advisor of Chief Abayomi, is Igbo. He and his family wear Igbo attire, where the Abayomis wear Yoruba attire. After accepting his responsibility to the family, Jacob also wears traditional attire whilst in Nigeria, but returns to Western dress in South Africa.

These themes mentioned thus far are very consistent, but there are details of Nigerian lifestyle woven into the narrative. In the opener of Season 2, Folake's wedding is met with an omen of a dead bird warning her against the marriage. The wedding itself is elaborately displayed with Nigerian bands playing music, attention to the detail of the table settings, and mention of Nigerian food. Perhaps most notable is the reference to Chief Abayomi's ways as traditional, versus modern and contemporary in Season 1. Chief must fight with his son Bola to get this message across. He warns his son of his behavior, killing an American, with a proverb: "when elephants fight, it is the weeds that get hurt." Bola's quick dismissal of this seems to show the audience why Chief Abayomi has turned to Jacob. Jacob takes up this responsibility, and in doing so Chief Abayomi passes him a cross that is a representation of their family's heritage. He transfers knowledge to Jacob by telling the story of his own father using the cross to the family's success, his own success with the cross, and the expected success Jacob will have in carrying on the family business (*Jacob's Cross*).

ETHNICITY

With the exception of *Bom Boy*, perhaps because Leke and Oscar are two of few Black characters in the novel, we find many examples of both tensions as well as friendly relationships between Nigerians and Black South Africans. *Man on Ground* and *Jacob's Cross*, in using main characters of both nationalities in the backdrop of modern day South Africa, tackle the notions of Afrophobia and interethnic divisiveness with examples of it but also with strong examples of Pan-ethnic and Pan-African alliances between characters.

Man on Ground, a film created in remembrance of Ernesto Nhamwuve, a Mozambican immigrant killed in South Africa by necklacing,¹⁰ revolves around the disappearance of Femi who has been killed by a similarly violent fiery end. As mentioned in the section on race, we see a continuation of the oppressive state of economic affairs of Black South Africans taken out on immigrants in township areas. The most evident theme representing this is the motif of fire, used not only in Femi's demise, but also throughout the film through images and exaggerated audio of matches striking, cigarettes burning, and objects burning. As mentioned in the cultural section, there is evidence of stereotypes against Nigerians, but more prominent is the discussion of attacks on African foreigners. In this case multiple African diasporas are represented including an eastern African business owner who is told to pack up his business and go, or else. In Femi's journey, we see that he has previously been a victim of attacks as he nearly dies after sustaining burns to his arm and being refused access to the hospital by a Zulu security guard (*Man on Ground*).

However, on the other hand the film reveals strong themes of bonds between Nigerian and South African characters. Surely Femi and Zodwa's love is a representation of this, as well as of a Nigerian dispelling a South African's stereotype of Nigerians. Femi also eventually befriends Lindiwe, Timothy's wife, through a mutual exchange of support during critical times. However, Lindiwe's help by giving him a job ends in Femi's death by another of Lindiwe's friends, Vusi. In a slightly different case, we see that Ade is married to a Black British woman, revealing another example of interethnic bonds.

Lastly, Ade also creates a short yet strong bond with Timothy, as mentioned earlier. This relationship perhaps the most profound because it reveals to the audience some of the most

¹⁰ Necklacing refers to placing a tire around one's neck and killing him/her by lighting the tire on fire.

important motifs of the film: a commonality and unity between people as part of the human race.

Timothy says to Ade:

I saw an interview once with an astronaut who said that when in space one realizes while looking onto planet Earth that we have mistakenly constructed these narrow borders of geography in order to mimic the narrow borders of our minds. However, when looking upon planet Earth from space the truth that this is our collective home becomes blatantly obvious. I only hope that we realized that the labels "them" and "us," are one and the same. (*Man on Ground*)

Beyond the bonding over whiskey and Bob Marley, Timothy reveals a story that acts as the icing of the cake that is their respect for each other.

Jacob's Cross focuses on examples of interethnic cohesion between South African and Nigerians, as well as Pan-African relationships between those partnerships and other African countries. As mentioned earlier, this a major point of contention with Western competitors. Jacob himself is perhaps the greatest motif of this cohesion, given that he is the son of a Nigerian and South African exile to Nigeria. Jacob's mom attempted to keep the relationship a secret to Jacob, since his birth was outside her marriage. However, once she reunites with Chief Abayomi it is clear their friendship has not faded after all the time passed.¹¹ The topic of exile itself is spoken of fondly, as South Africans recount their positive experiences in Nigeria despite the reasons for their arrival.

More prominent to the television show is the theme of a "Pan African business giant," a legacy and innovative vision left to Jacob and Folake by their father. Jacob is passionately creating a business model that empowers the small businesses it works with, and provides African resources through 100% African business owners revealing that Africans can support themselves and be extremely successful. Jacob constantly uses this platform as a way to unite African business owners in Nigeria, South Africa, and across the global south. As mentioned

¹¹ This representation of their current day friendship is revealed in the second and third episodes of season 1. However, their relationship to Jacob is revealed in the pilot episode.

earlier, its power is perceived by Western powers as crippling to their historically exploitative business models. However, the power of a united front allows Jacob to prevail, grow, and expand (*Jacob's Cross*).

TRANSNATIONALISM

The mobility and movement of Nigerians through physical and communicative means, in these cultural productions, act as vessels for transferring and representing cultural, ethnic, racial and other forms of diasporic identity. No trope has as many interwoven and overlapping representations as this one of transnationalism. They all include scenes in Nigeria, although not always in a time current to the main narrative as memory serves as a transnational vehicle more often than physical travel. The historical references, through dreams and memories, serve as a temporal return home often steeped in nostalgia or burdened in regret.

The letters mentioned in *Bom Boy* and *Man on Ground* are excellent examples of this. *Bom Boy* uses letters throughout the film and thus Leke and the reader are taken to Nigeria, where Oscar's stories are almost always set. His own memory of Nigeria reveal the deep nostalgia he has for home, and sense of duty he has to himself and his family as a Nigerian man. It can be read as a temporal return home, where home is brilliantly remade in the present in the image of the past, with the desire to return and pass on knowledge of their culture. He speaks to Leke of moving to Nigeria after both his parents died, because he is, after all, a Nigerian. Perhaps this is, and the other stories of Nigeria, are meant to inspire Leke to visit home. The letters have already provided a willing Leke the ability to dream and connect with his ancestors in order to end the family curse.

Man on Ground uses the letters as one of the major reasons why Ade is visiting South Africa. His mother has given a letter to him to pass on to Femi, in response to Femi's letter

indicating he will marry Zodwa. However, Ade and his wife are also there from the United Kingdom for her to give a presentation. His presence, and lack of knowledge about interethnic tensions, represents multiple Nigerian diasporas in South Africa: UK-based and South African-based. The potential of Ade missing his flight back home is another topic, and Ade must make a decision finally to stay and locate his brother and pass on the letter. Here the film uses travel as a theme, revealing the temporary nature of his visit. Another major representation of transnationalism is an example of a temporal return home in the form of Ade's memory of his brother's torture as a child. Visually, we see younger versions of Ade and Femi in a schoolhouse in Nigeria. The audience sometimes hears isolated screams, and at other times sees Femi's misfortune and eventually Ade's inaction, a moment in history that Ade is burdened with until now.

Femi's arrival to South Africa is very different, because he comes as an exile from Nigeria. Much of the beginning of the film reveals his student activism and subsequent imprisonment and torture in Nigeria, arrival by water to South Africa, and settlement as a refugee with the support of the International Organization for Migration. These two very different entries, but within the same family, reveal the varying reasons Nigerians, or other Africans, come to South Africa (*Man on Ground*).

Jacob's Cross, in the episodes analyzed, has less examples of temporal returns home. Perhaps the only example is when Jacob's mother and friends recall their time exiled in Nigeria during apartheid. Crossing tropes, the theme of building a Pan-African business model introduces other continental and African spaces into the television show. Season 2's Globex have meetings in Boston, plotting their attack on the Abayomi family and sending a representative to do the dirty deed. Communication between Gloria and Jacob are done over the phone, as are

other conversations between countries. Telecommunication is frequent as Jacob uses the phone to communicate with family in Nigeria, as well as to his lawyers and advisors based there.

This television show's narrative is set in Nigeria as well as South Africa. This is represented in the recurring opening sequence, where images of the Abayomi plane landing suggests frequent travels to and from South Africa. This image is also used throughout the show, and definitely in both episodes to represent characters' travels between Nigeria and South Africa. Separate from physical travel to Nigeria, we also see scenes in South Africa and other countries occurring without evidence of travel. For instance, episode 1 of season 2 is primarily set in Nigeria. As Folake prepares for her wedding, it is clear she has been in Nigeria the entire time and we do not see the traveling plane until Jacob arrives with his family. Additionally, Bola is now imprisoned and communicates often to his lawyer. Scenes flash between South Africa, the Abayomi home, and Bola's jail cell. This multinational setting, which includes Kenya towards the end of the series, provides a consistent reference to intercontinental travel and a normalcy of Nigerian-South African relationships (*Jacob's Cross*).

CONCLUSION

The themes discussed in this chapter reveal overlapping identity tropes, making up substantive representations of the 'Naija' identity in South Africa. The themes that cross between cultural productions often tie into stories of events of movement and mobility, such as the theme 'temporal return home.' The strong theme of transmission of cultural knowledge through memories, letters, and dreams also ties in to this physical and imagined border crossing that characters such as Oscar, Leke, Femi, and Ade experience. The recurring use of Nigerian languages, spiritual and cultural traditions, and attire are also themes that constantly point to a diasporic cultural identity, often in contradiction to domineering stereotypes or racialization of

Nigerians. We can see throughout all cultural productions a critique of racialization and racism in a post-apartheid South Africa, and post-colonial global reality, which provide strong commentary on the current status of racial domination and its effects on various Black communities in South Africa. Some of those effects, as we see in *Man on Ground* lead to interethnic tension, but in *Jacob's Cross* leads to interethnic cohesion against Western global powers. *Bom Boy* focuses more on race through the lens of colorism and bi-racial identities.

CONCLUSION

"Naija, No Dey Carry Last": Pluralizing and Strengthening the African Diaspora

"When I go home, I would talk like this [in African American accent] and so everybody there is like 'Oh you have lost your identity completely. Lost.' And I was like 'Ah, nah, I'm found. I'm here.' [in Nigerian accent] So I made sure that I got to learn Igbo, and I got the accent back... ..I had to like play this balance of, walking the fine line of being both. And so I switched it on and off. So when I'm here I'm like "Hey what up, what up?" And when I'm back home it's like 'my people.'"

- Yvonne Orji, The Breakfast Club Interview 2016

Yvonne Orji, a 2nd generation Nigerian Diaspora actor and comedian born in the United States, shares her experiences as both a Black American and a Nigerian in an interview about her culture, faith, and work on the HBO Series *Insecure*, where she plays the African American young up and coming Molly next to lead actress and director Senegalese American Issa Rae (Issa Rae). Like David Oyelowo, Uzomamaka Aduba, Jidenna, and many of the cultural producers introduced in this dissertation, Orji reveals the balance (maybe the dexterity by which she both synthesizes while separating the manifestations of her plural Black identities—like a DuBoisian twoness—dual consciousness) she's established between her Black identities (i.e. African American and Nigerian).

The Breakfast Club DJ, Charlemagne the God, responded to this comment that she was frontin', or faking one of or more of her identities. Orji pointedly responded "It's double consciousness! I'm Molly!" (Breakfast Club Power). In this case she is referring to her two Black identities, as well as W.E.B. DuBois' notion of double consciousness being the warring in one's soul between the pressure to assimilate into white American society and one's culturally determined Black identity. In an episode of *Insecure*, Orji's character Molly attempts to teach a new Black employee in a law firm to, in a sense, tone down her Black expressions to be replaced for expressions more normative to white Americans (Issa Rae).

Orji's comment reveals a multi-consciousness that she must contend with between the places she considers home racially, culturally, and ethnically. In this excerpt, she reveals the intersectional experiences of her transnational identity—that of time and frequency to Nigeria—and of cultural expectations to be able to speak Igbo and with an Igbo accent along with her experiences as a Black American. In an effort to explain this in translation, she shares how she would greet her people in each space "Hey what up, what up" (in her African American accent) and "my people" (in her Nigerian accent). This is a translation of a greeting from one African language to another, and thus having similar meanings. And more so, in the greeting is embedded an expression of Pan-African unity by referring to African Americans or Nigerians as her people regardless of the distinctiveness of her 'Naija' identity.

Later in the interview Orji revealed some of the motivation that pushed her to her success as a comedian and actor during her lowest point, where she felt that she'd failed at her dream and ready to return to her parents' domain of expecting her to become a medical doctor. "There's a saying we say in Nigeria said 'Naija, no dey carry last,' which means we don't finish second place. We always win." Acknowledging this for herself, along with her Christian faith in God, pushed her to persevere in order to become a writer, comedian, and actress. She wears the phrase and a scripture as tattoos a constant reminder. Orji speaks into existence a common culturally determined phrase that while is a Nigerian saying, clearly permeates into the cultural identity of Nigerians in the African Diaspora. She has made a regular hashtag on her social media pages—#NaijaNoDeyCarryLast—to denote examples of Nigerians winning and succeeding ("Yvonne Orji"). There are different ways this can be applied, but the sheer fearlessness and boldness of expressing the term is evidence of a type of ethic and certainty in achieving one's goals. For Orji,

this mantra became a way to motivate her to persevere in the face of isolation, and becomes for her an example of how she succeeded in becoming a writer and actor.

To conclude the way that the current study began, Yvonne Orji, like Uzomamaka Aduba, is a part of the Nigerian cultural diaspora doing the work of cultural production by representing the transformations of their Nigerian diasporic identities. In some cases, there is evidence of success in creating home or finding one's personal or professional passions. However, as is consistent and distinctive about the African Diaspora, there also represent instances of trauma due to violence, discrimination, isolation, and micro aggressions. Pierre Bourdieu's definition of cultural producers also rings true for Orji and Aduba as they are representative of Nigerian cultural diasporas whose transnational cultural productions and industries have emerged as a result of the evolution and transformations of the New African Diaspora. Orji is consciously doing culture by intentionally considering the social conditions that influences the texture of cultural spaces in the US (i.e. cultural norms, "invisible rules that guide our behavior"), and then actively reflecting about the effects these conditions have on situating cultural practices of Nigerian diaspority aka the 'Naija' identity when she underscores "Naija No Dey Carry Last." Aduba also revealed the traumatic experience of isolation and not belonging she felt in her environment, and her solution was to change her Igbo name to an American one. Her mother's confidence in the importance of her name was a mechanism Aduba uses now in the future when asked about changing her name or ultimately parts of who she is a member of the Nigerian Diaspora.

Throughout this dissertation, using Bourdieu's cultural production framework and Stuart Hall's analyses of Black popular culture and representation, the dissertation study has presented Nigerian Diaspora artists like Orji as cultural producers who frame the social conditions and

structures of the Nigerian Diasporic experience through their works. The findings have shown how these artists present these works symbolically as critical tools for understanding the perceived meaning and global societal impact of what it means to be a Nigerian in the diasporic Black world. On one hand, there are the experiences of trauma that comes from discrimination, violence, and everyday encounters that is a particular constant in the African Diaspora. For the Nigerian Diaspora this includes expectations of success, immigration status and xenophobia, media broadcasted misrepresentations of Nigerians or African immigrants, and the shock and experiences of racist encounters. These experiences influence how members of this diaspora understand and survive the environments of their hostlands. On the other hand, artists reveal how they and members of their diaspora come to resist cultural hegemony that can push against their traditions and beliefs and attempts to erase and malign the power they have to represent themselves on their own terms. Such cultural productions are situated in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's resistance tradition; in this regard they become counter narratives that powerfully and forcefully challenge false yet widely spread Western representations of Africa and Africans. They are agents of resistance simply by producing meaning about Nigerians in the world through representations of personal and community-based first hand experiences.

Drawing from Hall's notion that Black popular culture is constitutive of its Black cultural repertoires (cultural productions) directly linked to its community (cultural producers and their Nigerian Diaspora), the dissertation study's research design is unique. It puts the Nigerian Diaspora cultural productions in conversation with the lived experiences of the Nigerian cultural producers who created them in order to denote their relationship to the cultural representations that emerge from both spaces to form the content of Nigerian Diaspora popular culture. This last chapter centers these two components, Nigerian cultural productions and their cultural

producers' experiences and identities, in order to provide rich context about cultural representations and how they contribute textual data about not only Naija identities but of diverse African Diaspora identities. These Nigerian Diaspora cultural representations, in being able to signify Nigeria diasporic communities, satisfy Hall's contention that "good" Black popular culture. It is not only derived from that community, but must be accepted by thus in order to pass the test of authenticity. The case of Nigerian cultural diasporas provides an example of how one global African Diaspora community effectively self-determines who they are through processes of self-identification.

This concluding chapter will bring together the themes that the dissertation began with in its opening chapter around cultural diasporas, cultural productions, the New African Diaspora, and Nigerian diasporic identity. The Nigerian cultural producers in this study have integrated their own unique identity and experiences into how they represent themselves publically. That is to say that they are telling the story of their diaspority artistically and complexly (into homeland/hostland; identities: transnational, culture, racial, ethnic; among black diasporic communities). For instance, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie shared her own experience in proudly becoming Black, stemming from the shock of racism from teachers, the emotional reaction it created in her of expected inferiority, along side welcoming yet surprising instances where Black Americans referred to her as 'sister' (Fresh Air). These real experiences play into how she represents the character Ifemelu in *Americanah*, who undergoes similar transformations of self through her US American journey. This interplay between real experiences, and the related represented experiences in cultural productions contributes rich data about the Black immigrant experience into the databank, so to speak, of the African Diaspora.

This chapter analyzes the literary and media-based representations of racial, ethnic,

cultural, and transnational identities and experiences that were extrapolated from the content analyses of the select Nigerian diasporic cultural productions. The cultural producers use encounters and relationships with members of older generations of the African Diaspora, as well as experiences with non-Africans to represent their socio-cultural realities and transformations. They descriptively reveal conditions that lead to feelings of belonging, exclusion, discrimination, and cross-cultural differences, and how those feelings emerge from their cultural contexts. For instance, *Man on Ground* complexly details Femi's journey from racial, cultural, ethnic, and transnational perspectives. This includes happiness from the belonging he felt with his eventual fiancée Zodwa that grew from their cultural enmeshing—or learning about each other's traditions, languages, and perhaps beliefs. At the same time, he deals with the trauma from the reality of his exile from Nigeria also created a space of isolation, at times desperation for life provisions that leads him to dangerous or hostile areas, cultural clashing born of the existing desperate conditions of many Black South Africans, and ultimately multiple accounts of violent attacks against him leading to his murder.

The chapter then assesses how the diasporic, 'Naija' identity of New African diasporas has been socially constructed distinctively from older African diasporas as a result of how transnational and global forces distinctively influence the way in which Nigerian immigrant are able to culturally create community and nation worldwide. Nigerian diasporas create global platforms, or transcultural communication networks, to transmit perspectives and perceptions of self and community in home and hostlands experiences. They use artistic visual, written and auditory imagery, stories, knowledge, and traditions through telecommunications, media, and literature. Transnational representations of self, community(ies), or nation are grown through these networks and nourished by other Africans globally who continuously incorporate, adopt, or

expanded upon these notions and return their responses back to the community. Additionally, how Nigerian diasporic experiences of transnationality, displacement, and relations to home play important roles in understanding the texture and globality of the ‘Naija’ identity. They experience transnationality through transcultural community networks, and then for some there is a physical component of being able to easily return home, or visit other parts of the world. At the same time, they may experience displacement and isolation at times as a result of the conditions of dispersal such as discrimination within hostland or homeland communities, or being unable to return for monetary, security, ethics of responsibility to those at home.

FORGING, REPRESENTING, AND NEGOTIATING IDENTITY: CULTURAL, RACIAL, ETHNIC AND TRANSNATIONAL INFUSIONS

The Nigerian Diaspora can be seen as similar, but distinctive from the collective African Diaspora given that it is made up of its members’ experiences and behaviors exhibited in their hostlands through race, culture, ethnicity and transnationality. This amalgamation of identities, along with others specific to each cultural producer (e.g. gender, sexuality, ability), is what I call the ‘Naija’ identity. These identity markers, when expressed by any African diaspora, provide complex evidence of how that community defines itself in relation to the society and communities of their hostland, and in relation to African homelands. For instance, Yvonne Fly Onakeme Etaghene, along with the protagonist of her novel *For Sizakele*, Taylor, center their ‘Naija,’ or Nigerian Diaspora, identity but while complexly expressing it through experiences and notions of returning home to Nigeria, artistic efforts to call out racism and imperialism in a post-racial America, assertion of sexual identity as dyke or queer, use of cultural artifacts (i.e. food, clothing, language), and inter-ethnic relationships with women from varying African diasporas. Each Nigerian Diaspora cultural producer, and their production, reveals diverse

expressions of the Naija identity by demonstrating how they understand themselves and the social realities that surround them.

There are several ways transnational Nigerian cultural norms clash and/or enmesh with the conditions of South African and US American structural and community-based societal norms of ethnicization and racialization. How do their daily encounters relate to the conditions of their diaspora, and how they respond to such conditions? The data from Chapter 3-5 show narratives of a surviving, thriving, or failing to exist in the African Diaspora, with commonalities that cross most protagonists regardless of how their journey ends. That is to say that the Nigerian Diaspora, like the distinctive condition of the African Diaspora, will have experiences of victimization, trauma, and abuse that add to the reality of how they exist in their hostland. As these conditions exist to allow for these experiences, the study also reveals how Nigerian diasporas mitigate such events and negotiate who they are and who they wish to become as a result of them.

For instance, the stories of Ifemelu (*Americanah*), Jacob (*Jacob's Cross*), Leke (*Bom Boy*), and Taylor (*For Sizakele*) offer many vignettes of hardships and traumas experienced as a result of speaking a different language, realizing and experiencing racism or xenophobia, and the isolation created by lacking economic resources or the ability to travel. However, in each of these cases, the strength of their Nigerian diasporic cultural traditions and beliefs through their ideas, careers, art, and spiritual journeys become weapons that allow them to process these experiences and come out victors and survivors in their hostlands. This is not to suggest that all are able to meet such ends. Characters such as Sade (*In America: The Story of the Soul Sisters*), Obinze (*Americanah*), and Femi (*Man on Ground*) go through similar journeys, but their stories either end in deportation or death. These complex experiences offer experiential knowledge

about how the Nigerian Diaspora is formed similarly, albeit distinctively, in relation to the greater African Diaspora. This section gives context to various experiences and expressions of the ‘Naija’ identity by revealing how the identity tropes coded for in Chapters 3-5 are made real primarily within Nigerian Diaspora cultural productions as well as through the experiences of their cultural producers.

Race and the Postcolonial Black Immigrant

In the post-racial United States and non-racial US and South Africa, the study of Nigerian diasporas demonstrates the persistence of race regardless of each country’s social positioning as having moved beyond racialized hierarchies of power and oppression. The experiences of the Nigerian Diaspora, a new African diaspora, expose not only the modern day existences of racial projects and their subsequent experiences of double consciousness, but also especially the distinctive ways that they as Black immigrants understand and represent racial identities. My dissertation renders ‘un-invisible’ the reality and fact that new African diasporas experience race, have something to say about race, and combat racism.

Jemima Pierre, in *The Predicament of Blackness: Post-colonial Ghana and the Politics of Race*, places racialism into a global context by considering not only how race affects Black communities in diasporic hostlands but also Black communities in post-colonial African countries. She recognizes the process of racialization—what she calls racecraft—in post-colonial Africa as coevals to the experiences of racialization in the diaspora, and uses Ghana as a case study to extrapolate continental African perspectives of race to contribute to the global discourse of race and racialism (Pierre). Similarly, Nigerian diasporic experiences of race will be similar, albeit different, than that of members of other African diasporas in the United States and South Africa.

As mentioned in the United States chapters, learning what it means to be Black is a common theme among characters like *Americanah*'s Ifemelu and *In America: The Story of the Soul Sister*'s Sade. Their learning comes from both warmly welcoming and traumatically shocking experiences related to Blackness, beauty, and discrimination. They are eventually able to use their experiences within Black Studies courses, Black organizations, or interactions with white Americans, African Americans or African diasporans to create their own Black perspectives of race in America. They then join the other cultural producers in critiquing the nature of race in the United States, South Africa, or even how it is emergent in Nigeria through global structures of racism.

In *Americanah*, Ifemelu spends a great deal of the novel experiencing racism through blatant racist incidents as an African immigrant (i.e. Cristina Thomas' denouncement of her accent), experiences of racism explained by African Americans (i.e. her Black boyfriend Blaine being told she must straighten her hair), but also through more latent experiences of racism in her critique of American liberalism (i.e. her white boyfriend Curt). Adichie goes further to push Ifemelu to a point where she feels inclined to write a blog on race to reveal the realities of race from a non-American Black perspective. This fictional blog is received by diverse Black communities in the United States and around the world, and its topics speak to various communities. Becoming Black was a major experience for Ifemelu she transmits her observations to non-American Blacks through, for example, creating stories of the normalcy and persistence of race as Black Americans see it but may be unclear to new Black immigrants, as well as incorporating public commentary about how the Obamas are received as the first Black 1st family. The blog post "To My Fellow Non-American Blacks: In America, You Are Black, Baby" portrays the differing experiences of race and racial identity of non-American Blacks in

an attempt to unite them with American Blacks in combatting daily racism through awareness of how it can and will impact them (*Americanah* 222).

Sade, in *In America: The Story of the Soul Sisters*, learns from her experiences as well as from her African American friends and family what it means to be Black in the United States. Her husband Curtis teaches her by explaining how racism is manifest and made permanent in his work context. The peak of her understanding of racial difference comes in a climactic relationship ending fight with Curtis, where he critically reveals to her how little she understands the structural reality of racism as it relates to Black men in work spaces. At the same time, it is Sonya's mother who supportively helps her to understand that how she experiences race as a Black female immigrant will inevitably be different than his as an Black American man, and her abusive uncle as a Black male immigrant. Sade, like Ifemelu, faces racism through a Black immigrant context and eventually finds herself reflecting on the similarities and differences between the migrations of African Americans versus African immigrants. Sade's reference to African Americans were forced into slavery, but African immigrants voluntarily sell themselves into it is an example of how Blackness is experienced with similar feelings of precarity, danger, trauma, and isolation as historic African diasporas albeit differently in a contemporary reality. This shows the similarities of racism that these Black communities face, but distinctively eludes to the initial lack of knowledge African immigrants may have about the realities of racism in the United States—realities that they will come to eventually learn.

South African racial identity is portrayed in various ways that affect Nigerians in local and global contexts. Leke, in *Bom Boy*, represents an isolated Black bi-racial man within Cape Town, South Africa. Throughout the novel, Leke is unaware of the nature of his racial identity, but has grown up with others giving him nicknames that are attributed to his complexion such as

‘Brownie’ and ‘My China.’ The death of his adopted mother, combined by the rejection of his adopted father, add deeper complexities of racialized as well as cultural isolation. His experiences led him to a life of solitude as a perpetual outsider, and throughout the book he seeks to find solutions to the ‘itch’ that plagues him. He eventually discovers not only a Nigerian father, but one who has left him with knowledge about his Black and white identities and especially his Nigerian cultural heritage as a way to ground his Black identity.

Jacob’s Cross also offers complex representations of Nigerian Diaspora racial identity through the global context of Western imperialism. The Abayomi family constantly battles Western powers throughout the series from places like the United States and France—from assassinations to attempting to undermine or impede business ventures—in order to develop the dream 100% African-owned oil empire. This regular storyline, along with the Abayomi’s ability to constantly overcome these challenges through the power of family, positively represents the possibility of Pan-African efforts to build independently African owned institutions for the betterment of African people and businesses. Adze Ugah and Fabian Lojede offered that this was a major goal, for Africans to be able to see themselves in this united, successful, and persistent light, which helps to offset the image of Africans as constantly in need of Western support.

Pan Diasporic Ethnicity and its Tensions

Nigerians in the homeland often identify ethnically, based on the 250 ethnic groups that make up the country’s diversity. In the case of this dissertation study, the cultural producers come from Igbo, Yoruba, Ijaw, Urhobo, and Idoma ethnic groups, with the Omotoso’s also being Barbadian. There are important dimensions of Nigerian ethnicities when its members go through the process of diasporization. On the one hand, Nigerians do carry their ethnicities with them to their hostlands, which they reproduce as they represent themselves within their cultural

productions. On the other hand, as Candace Watts Smith argues in the case of the United States, in the hostlands ethnicities tend to converge—especially politically. There are moments where Black ethnicities are divisive and segregated based on cultural affinities. However, they converge because of socio-political conditions that affect diverse Black communities similarly, and in this case racial discrimination. For these diverse Nigerians, they converge nationally to Nigerian identities that at times align with other Black ethnic groups (e.g. African American, Jamaican American). They also converge into a pan-ethnic Black identity made up of the collective African population in the United States or South Africa.

At the same time, there may also be the redevelopment of a Pan-African identity that emerges and is imposed or adopted by members of the Nigerian Diaspora. For instance, Nigerian-Ghanaian American Taiye Selasi has adopted a Afropolitan identity based on her diverse multinational experiences, considering not where she's from but where she is local (Selasi). Fabian Lojede and Akin Omotoso identify as Pan-African, Omotoso also adding “local everywhere” to his identity. The plurality of Black ethnic groups in post-apartheid South Africa has also been a real site of contention, with Afrophobia, or a “the blatant hatred and dislike of Africans from other parts of the continent” creating fissures in the post-apartheid country between national Black and immigrant Blacks (Koenane and Maphunye 85). In this space, Nigerians are also ethnicized nationally as well as within an othered categories such as ‘foreigner,’ ‘immigrant,’ or ‘illegal,’ that they must then contend with politically and culturally.

The study's Nigerian Diaspora cultural productions reproduce these pan-ethnic relationships in each hostland. For instance, in the Wowo Boyz skit “Sensitivity Training,” Nigerians of undetermined backgrounds are grouped together to workshop their negative stereotypes of African Americans. There they pass snap judgment on people they assume to be

African American, based on stereotypes they have of this pan-ethnic group. It is not until the African American psychologist who moderates turns the table around by mimicking Nigerians by conflating stereotypes of Nigerians with that of Africans in general, that they are able to see the impact of their short-sighted prejudice. Further, by using this moment as a way to promote Pan-African unity, we see all dimensions of this pan-ethnic division and cohesion described in one space that uses diverse perspectives as a mechanism to bring people together.

In *For Sizakele*, Taylor's community is composed of queer women from many Black pan-ethnicities. The mix of Afro-Latina, Afro-Caribbean, African American, and African women not only allows their characters to expressively reveal their own cultural realities, but it also reveals how Taylor is able to move from spaces to space and adjust to each friend's culture while remaining centered in her Nigerian identity. This is not to suggest that all relationships were seamless, because discussing differences as women from various or similar African diasporas is also a major theme of the book which gives strength to the sisterhoods that Taylor maintains and grows throughout the novel.

The Nigerian Diaspora cultural productions in South Africa also offer evidence of pan-ethnic tensions and cohesion. Both *Jacob's Cross* and *Man on Ground* promote Pan-Africanism, albeit that the latter focuses on themes of Afrophobia to unveil this theme. *Jacob's Cross*, as a transnational show that eventually incorporates Kenya, centers the development of 100% Pan-African owned businesses a means to empower African business and people. The interpersonal relationships reveal the attempts to learn about each other's cultures, especially Jacob who was raised as a South African man and must learn to also adhere to his Yoruba cultural expectations as the newly appointed head of his Nigerian family.

Man on Ground focuses not only on Afrophobia, but it also lays out an apartheid to post-apartheid timeline of how exclusion and oppression shifted from obvious racialized lines to now one perceived to be based on pan-ethnic differences between Black nationals and Black immigrants. The broken post-apartheid promises of housing and labor provisions, along with the influx of African immigrants receiving these provisions, becomes the centerfold for attacks against foreigners. However, despite this reality, close relationships are made between Nigerians and South Africans who are not plagued with the same sense of divisiveness between Black people. We see this between Femi and his Zulu fiancée Zodwa, but also in the short but intimate friendship derived between Femi's brother Ade and Timothy—the chief policeman in the township where Femi was killed. In these spaces, Pan-African unity is fostered through understanding each other's cultures as well as collective views of a global African or human existence.

Culture: Clashing, Enmeshing, and Reproducing Hybrid in Diaspora Hostlands

In *Representations: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, Stuart Hall suggests that meaning is constructed through systems of representations, which is the meaning process that brings together signs, conceptual maps, and things. For Hall, one's culture is defined in terms of the meanings, or conceptual maps, shared among a group of people. Diasporas produce meaning by linking their conceptual maps, or cultural knowledge, to symbols or things that effectively produce or reproduce their culture through their artists' work. The cultural producers and their productions describe what it means to be Nigerian in the African Diaspora and the world, through examples of assertions and negotiations of cultural identity. They also represent Nigerian cultures by simply exhibiting their understanding of it within their cultural productions. Nigerian Diaspora life styles are revealed through traditional practices, use of

Nigerian food and clothing, and speaking in Nigerian languages. The distinctiveness of Nigerian Diaspora culture is interwoven with how these traditions are able to be reproduced in the hostlands. Cultural clashing as well as cultural enmeshing between Nigerians and Americans or South Africans are represented in a myriad of ways, through experiences of accepting, negotiating, or rejecting a hostland's Westernized cultural hegemony, inevitably showing how Nigerian cultures are transformed as a result.

The assertion and negotiation of Nigerian Diaspora cultural identity emerges in various ways, often intersecting with markers of their pluralistic African identities. For instance, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's cultural identity has been shown in this study to be a combination of her Igbo and Nigerian culture, but then slowly incorporated a Black and African identity through her experiences in the United States (Adichie, "Interview by Kojo Nnamdi"). These transformations have reproduced through her public intellectualism, where she spent time not only to assert her diverse Nigerian identity but by spending time to explain the complexities that becoming 'African' and 'Black' entailed. Ifemelu's character represents some of these transformations of becoming Black specifically by learning about Black American culture as well as encounters of racism that shift her cultural perspectives. Through Ifemelu, Adichie is able to intimately narrate just what that process may look like for a Nigerian immigrant.

Yvonne Fly Onakeme Etaghene's cultural identity as 'Nigerian American' and as a 'lesbian' is aspects she assertively rejects, and in our interview and through Taylor's character she is able to detail what her identity has become. She self identifies as Nigerian, not Nigerian American, because her cultural identity is Nigerian however she happens to be born in the United States. She identifies as dyke, versus lesbian, because the term doesn't quite capture who she is. Dyke, stemming from the Greek Goddess Dike, better captures the essence of Etaghene's

sexuality—at least until she can determine an Ijaw or Urhobo term to describe who she is. Her identity becomes complex, as she sees herself as African, Nigerian, Deltan, Ijaw and Urhobo, and in her life she appreciates finding spaces where she doesn't have to explain who she is. In the novel, Taylor undergoes some of these same experiences of defending her African or dyke identity based on cultural expectations other may impose on her.

In South Africa, Akin Omotoso and Fabian Lojede are both quick to assert their Pan-African identities which stem from their transnationalism. Lojede recognizes that his perspective is centered in his identity as a Yoruba man. He in fact found himself 're-Africanizing' himself after spending time in the UK, by learning the Yoruba language when he returned to Nigeria. However, he is also inspired by artists like Fela whose messages permeated across African cultures. Similarly, Omotoso, as both Nigerian and Barbadian and having lived in the Caribbean, UK, Nigeria, and South Africa and traveled globally sees his identity as a multi-local as well. The film *Man on Ground* does reflect this globalist identity, and is represented specifically in the scene described in the previous chapter where Tim and Ade are speaking. Ade suggests that Africa, or more broadly Earth, is their collective home and that when one say "I am from here," the here is Planet Earth, and this idea effectively dissolves the demarcations of "us" and "them" to a common theme of humanity, but while still acknowledging and representing the cultural diversity between people.

Cultural identity is also revealed through the use of artifacts within the cultural productions. The majority of cultural productions used in this study incorporate Nigerian languages in the artwork, primarily Pidgin, Yoruba, and Igbo. However, the use of a 'Nigerian' accent is also used, and often becomes a way to unite Nigerians or Africans (i.e. *For Sizakele*) and in other moments is used to discriminate based on difference (i.e. *Americanah*). In *Man on*

Ground, Yoruba is used as a way for Femi and his Zulu fiancée to bond as they lovingly teach each other terms from their respective languages. Language is used in very different ways, and in many cases reflects the literacy of the producers themselves. Adichie and Yewande Omotoso not only uses Igbo and Yoruba, respectively, but also incorporates proverbs and stories in their languages into their cultural productions. However, Omotoso has spoken about her own limitations and current efforts to learn Yoruba. So similarly, learning Nigerian languages also becomes a current theme in *Bom Boy* and in *For Sizakele* where characters spend time to express their frustration with their illiteracy of their cultural languages.

Nigerian food and clothing is often used in the background, becoming symbols of Nigerian Diaspora culture. For instance, in the *Wowo Boyz*' "Mom You're the Shit" the main character is eating jollof rice while speaking to his mother and in all sketches Nigerian immigrants wear some sort of Nigerian clothing. In *Jacob's Cross*, every scene in the Abayomi household includes Nigerians in traditional clothing. In these cases, their attire is not discussed but is visually present. *For Sizakele* uses food and clothing as a way to descriptively demonstrate transformations of Nigerian cultures. For example, AC wears traditionally male Nigerian clothing, which pushes against the gendered norms within Nigerian attire. There are many other cultural symbols and objects used such as Nigerian music, which the media-based cultural productions are able to incorporate into the background of their productions. The *Wowo Boyz* often use Naija Mix, where *In America: The Story of the Soul Sisters* and *Man on Ground* use a lot of Nigerian Diaspora musicians such as Nneka and Asa.

The display of Nigerian cultural practices and traditions is also present in these productions. For instance, Nigerian weddings are a major affair which the show *Jacob's Cross* and film *Man on Ground* take time to represent how families communicate about the prospects

of marriage (*Man on Ground*) as well as the preparations necessary to successfully perform a wedding (*Jacob's Cross*). In *Bom Boy*, the transferal of cultural knowledge is a significant theme between Oscar and Leke, where Oscar does so the only way he knows how—through letters written when Leke was a baby. In these letters he teaches him a wealth of knowledge not only about Yoruba history, but about family affairs (i.e. the curse) he will be unable to physically pass down since he is in prison.

Nigerian Diaspora cultural identities are transformed by the way that Nigerian cultural heritage sizes up when coming into contact with other cultures, which will inevitably be the case outside of Nigeria. So moments of cultural clashing and cultural enmeshing are represented throughout the cultural productions. Ifemelu's accent and body image are major points of contestation where she must become aware of the differences by way of discriminatory experiences. Adichie reveals through Ifemelu and her aunt Uju how Nigerians and Africans may attempt to hide their Nigerian accents in place of a more American one. This is not only the case in the hostland, but part of the reality of the “Americanah” persona—one who returns home having lost their Nigerian culture.

Reversely, we see cultural enmeshing in Wale's “My Sweetie” where he creates a Pan-African scene of a Nigerian, West African, and African party. He specifically references the video to represent a Nigerian party. However, he unifies diverse African cultures by incorporating obvious representations of many African countries and referring to the fact that Africans generally and Ghanaians specifically will understand this American-based version of a Nigerian party. *Jacob's Cross* perhaps becomes a bit of both cultural clashing and blending, because Jacob himself must learn to become a Nigerian man and bring together his families all the while respecting both sides of his hybrid identity.

Transnationalism and Mobility: The New Routes of the Contemporary African Diasporas

Part of the distinctiveness of new African diaspority and thus Nigerian diaspority is that it is constantly mobile. This is regularly represented in the cultural productions their multiple localities, when they reveal how they are able to maintain transnational networks. Their mobility is not only reflected in travel and communication, but also in their ability for their cultures to be mobile. In some cases, they are extremely mobile and able to physically move between Nigeria and various hostlands reflecting at times Selasi's theory of Afropolitanism where highly mobile Africans are able to bring cultures and take cultures with them from one space to another (Tuakli-Wonsrnu). However, in other cases mobility is impeded by immigration issues or cultural expectations that make it difficult to conceive of returning. Even in these cases, the characters are highly mobile in that they can still maintain communication (i.e. phone, email, letters) between geographical spaces, and transfer cultural knowledge.

Even more nuanced, yet important to point out, are the ways these conditions create hostile, dangerous, and insecure spaces for Nigerian diasporans. For instance, characters like Ifemelu, Taylor, Sade, Jacob, and Femi are victims of sexual or physical assault, experiences that occur as a result of the precarity of how they survive within their diasporic community. Ifemelu and Femi are made powerless to abuse because of their economic desperation as an immigrant, Sade related to the abuse of power from caretakers, Jacob related to the danger of challenging powerful corporations by creating African owned corporations, and Taylor the breach of trust in partnership within an already small queer African diaspora community. Their mobility for the sake of security or comfort is critically determined both as a result of leaving Nigeria as well as a result of one's condition within the diaspora hostland.

Americanah reveals both sides of this mobility between Ifemelu and Obinze. Ifemelu comes to the United States with an education scholarship and visa, and was able to find a career after school to maintain her legal status with a work visa. She is able to travel across the world with her boyfriend, and returning to Nigeria is a choice she can and chooses to make. Reversely, Obinze travels to the UK and uses other's legal status to work while he attempts to gain residency through an arranged marriage. His travels back home are forced when he is deported. In both cases, they bring who they are to their hostlands and upon return are transformed by their experiences and bring aspects of this hybrid culture back with them.

We see another form of transnationalism and the movement of Wale's cultural identity within "The God Smile." The lyrics reflect his experiences in the DMV, however the video visually represents Nigeria through representations of Yoruba culture and Lagos' skyline. This layering creates an image of a hybrid African culture—one part Nigerian and one part Black American—and in doing so transmits representations of his Nigerian Diaspora cultural between geographical locations. In *Bom Boy* Yewande Omotoso is also able to represent the transmittance of cultural, but without any physical travels. The letters to Leke are a powerful representation of the spatial and temporal transfer of knowledge in that the letters were written and delivered in South Africa, and by the time Leke reads them he is twenty years in the future reading back to who his father was. As a reader, one constantly travels across time and space between the South African present of Leke and the Nigerian past of Oscar. Oscar, who is a Nigerian immigrant to South Africa, is also able to reflect on his travels and transformations of self identity as a result of leaving, as well as returning to Nigeria.

Finally, *Jacob's Cross* and its dual location between South Africa and Nigeria creates a regular theme of transnationalism, with elite Africans who are able to move between African

spaces and choose to do business this way, expanding to other African locations, rather than incorporate Western locations in developing their growing business. The complexities of transnationalism are revealed in these cultural productions to be more than just about physical mobility, but imaged mobility as is the case for many African diasporas. However, Nigeria as a hub for this return makes this diaspora distinct, with various ways that they are able and choose to connect, communicate, and contribute back to their homeland. Regardless of physical mobility, they are in fact able to maintain communication with Nigeria and Nigerians through telecommunication and media-based resources that provide interactive ways to receive and transmit knowledge between their diasporic hostland and African homeland.

THE GLOBALITY OF NIGERIAN DIASPORAS

The power of the cultural representations that come out of the Nigerian Diaspora, or any African diaspora, is not only in their ability to define their reality through cultural productions, but in being able to disseminate this knowledge to their local and global communities. Juan Flores' theory of cultural remittances where members of neo diasporas transmit between homelands and hostlands is made possible by the nature of globalization. Traveling is possible both physically and through telecommunication and media-based networks (Flores). The Nigerian Diaspora has over time created global platforms—transcultural communication networks—that allow members to transmit perspectives of themselves and their communities in geo-circular ways.

Specific to cultural diasporas, on the one hand the increasing publicity of Nigerian cultural productions and public interviews and talks by cultural producers are disseminated through non-African as well as African and diasporic film, literary, and musical networks. For instance, *Jacob's Cross* has aired globally on television networks such as the South African

Broadcasting Channel, the Africa Channel (US), OHTV (UK), and Africa Magic (Nigeria). On the other hand, Nigerian diasporas also use telephones, emails, social media, private messaging applications (e.g. Whatsapp), and more to interact with the content distributed globally and provide commentary, reproduce culture, and submit these perspectives back to the cultural diaspora for others to observe. This is definitely the case with Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's "Danger of the Single Story" which was distributed on Ted.com, an public lecture based website, but gained its popularity by others' redistributing through various online platforms. These Nigerian Diaspora transcultural communication networks contribute to how their members are able to experience transnationality, along with the realities of their ability to physically travel between geographical spaces.

The increasing popularity of Nigerian Diaspora cultural productions find their ways into various literary and media spaces. Nollywood is an excellent example of the globality of Nigerian film. These films are also finding their ways to networks such as DSTV (global), Black Entertainment Television (BET) (USA), iRoku TV (online), and Netflix (online) offering various platforms for the Nigerian Diaspora to access their producers' works. Nigerian literature also finds itself in multinational platforms, where for instance *Americanah* and *Bom Boy* are published in Nigeria, their respective hostland, and other countries. However, online platforms such as Amazon allow for their work to be more widely accessible. Wale, as a popular rapper, is extremely visible as his work is distributed through the popular recording company, Atlantic Records.

Platforms like these provide access to large audiences. However, some Nigerian Diaspora cultural producers have expressed concern with the difficulty and at times unpredictability of distribution. They must also find other ways to disseminate their cultural productions. The

filmmakers enter their films into national and international film festivals. *Man on Ground* has found success through its presence at the Pan-African film festival in Los Angeles and the Toronto Film Festival. The novelists also gain popularity when their novels are entered into national and global competitions, but also through public lectures and readings of their works. Yvonne Fly Onakeme Etaghene is currently touring with her book, and is also making an effort to intentionally organize an African book tour so that African communities who may otherwise be unable to can access her novel.

The global Nigerian Diaspora community, as well as the world, may access Nigerian Diaspora cultural productions these ways, but social media and online platforms also offer dynamic ways for not only productions to be accessed, but also for the audience to respond. For instance, the Wowo Boyz popularity stems primarily from their YouTube channel, which has over 20,000 subscribers who can comment or start conversations on any of the videos uploaded. Since then, they've launched their shows on Instagram and Twitter and their success has generated interest in public performances and requests for them to host various events. They also collaborate with other comedians, sometimes creating combined sketches such as "Mom, You're The Shit" which allows them to intersect with various audiences.

The expansiveness of these transcultural communication networks goes beyond the cultural producers' dissemination of their work, but also the audiences' ability to communicate their own cultural perspectives. The massive twitter response by Ghanaians, Nigerians, and many others in the African world to Jamie Oliver's rendition of jollof rice also shows the power global communication to allow African diasporic communities to determine the authenticity of cultural artifacts. Nigerian Diaspora audiences are also able to respond to cultural productions that make their way to social media streams.

For instance, when the television show *Family Feud* posted a clip of a Nigerian family on the show, the Obus, onto their YouTube page, audiences were able to share their responses to the show. In the show, African American host Steve Harvey learns that the eldest son of the Obu Family's first name is Obu and middle name is Obu. Harvey calls into the crowd for the man who would name his son Obu Obu Obu, and Mr. Obu Sr. proudly stands up and declares his name is, "Obu!" to the visible excitement and pride of his children on stage (evidenced by pointing, hollering, laughing, smiling, clapping). The children then break out into song and dance, announcing their presence on the show and revealing their Naija pride and confidence that they will win the game.

Break it down now. One hand on the buzzer. One hand on the buzzer. The Obus on the Feud. The Obus on the Feud. We came to win this money. We came to win this money. The Obus on the Feud. The Obus on the Feud. The Obus. (Family Feud)

To this Steve Harvey happily announces, "I'm your real daddy" confirming his and the audience's delight in the Obus' performance. The response reflected a collective support of the Obu family and their pride to assert their family name. One comment suggested "Nigerians are the best" and another "No way they aren't Nigerians. Nigerians are always extra." Others expressed their relationship to the family, or further aligned the Obu family to their Nigerian heritage. This and the Jamie Oliver jollof rice failure scenario are just a few examples of how various members of African diasporas, and specifically Nigerian diasporas, are able to receive cultural representations and collectively ascertain the extent to which they do or do not successfully represent their communities.

Transnationalism of Nigerian diasporas reveals Nigerians' globality which is not only significant for understanding the peoples' growing presence in the world. It also helps determine how its community is increasingly able to participate in defining itself through interaction with

its cultural diaspora. The transcultural commination networks allow Nigerian Diasporas to interact and transmit knowledge back to their cultural sphere. At times, isolation or inability to travel may be a reality of their transnational experiences. However, access to various aspects of cultural diasporas allows imagined connections to a Nigerian homeland to become tangible, visible, and accessible.

BEING NAIJA: THE NIGERIAN DIASPORA AND BLACK CULTURAL PRODUCTION

In presenting a study of Nigerian Diasporas experiences with race, culture, ethnicity and transnationalism, we can see the distinctiveness of Nigerians' diasporic cultural formations around the world. What does it mean to be Nigerian in the contemporary African Diaspora? How do Nigerians perceive and experience the African Diaspora? The Nigerian Diaspora is a case of how one African diaspora has forged its identity and experiences in the world in part through the development of its global cultural diaspora using these prisms (race, culture, ethnicity, and transnationalism). The dissertation study has specifically shown the emergence of a Nigerian diasporic identity that I have referred to as a 'Naija' identity, one that is comprised of a myriad of hybrid identity tropes that are made and remade between a Nigerian homeland and various hostlands. What the Nigerian Diaspora offers to the formation of the New African Diaspora is a certain set of experiences that through cultural diasporas Nigerians are able to contribute new cultural, racial, ethnic, and transnational perspectives of what it means to be Black into already existing repositories of African diasporic experiential knowledge. For instance, "Naija no dey carry last" represents a cultural perspective of achievement for the Nigerian Diaspora, one which Nigerian diasporans must contend with along side their conditions of existence in the hostland.

What it means to be a Nigerian in the contemporary African Diaspora is in the constant state of becoming culturally as a result of existing as members of multiple Black communities

between African homelands and diasporic hostlands. They are able to bring their African country-based, or Nigerian, cultures with them to the African Diaspora and must negotiate their identity vis-à-vis the conditions of their hostlands. Further, as a result of their experiences and diasporization, they are able to contribute diverse perspectives of what it means to exist in the hostland (United States and South Africa). In the case of the post-racial United States and non-racial post-apartheid South Africa, they reveal nuanced perspectives of what it means to be Black in these countries, and provide commentary on how systems of oppression affect African diasporic communities.

The dissertation's concluding themes converge to emphasize a single case study contribution of Nigerian Diasporas in the United States and South Africa, while also providing comparative context for understanding African Diaspority in localized hostlands such as the diverse nations of South Africa and the US. Significantly, Nigerian Diaspora identities and experiences are similarly forged within the United States and South Africa, also taking into account the comparative distinctiveness of their emergences. Both are racially plural societies that are founded on racial formation in that they are deeply divided racially and whose legacies in the contemporary arena produce a narrative of post-racialism in the United States and non-racialism in post-apartheid South Africa. Nonetheless, Black pan-ethnic consciousness also brews in both countries. There are tensions among new African diasporas and older African diasporas in the United States, but there also are and have been opportunities and spaces for reconciliations and convergences in creating pan-ethnic diasporic consciousness. In South Africa, on one hand Afrophobia, a racialized version of xenophobia, erupts as a legacy of racial capitalism in this country. On the other hand, strong movements like Pan-African, African

Renaissance, and Africanizing South Africa also creates opportunities to build a collective African consciousness.

The texture of Nigerian cultural diasporas is in the ability to produce work that accurately reflects a community and the Nigerian cultural producers like those in this study tell stories about their and others' diaspora processes culturally within literature, media, and other creative spaces. Referring to the theoretical framings of African Diaspora communities and identities, they do this by referencing their personal transformative relationships to their homeland and hostlands (reasons to leave and socio-political conditions of where they land), their relationships with members of their and other African diasporas, and the complex ways that they negotiate who they are in light of their diasporic realities.

What's more, Nigerian cultural diasporas offer global platforms to expressively represent these perspectives of diaspority. They also provide insight to the cultural identities of Nigerians around the world, and through transcultural communication networks allow members of African diaspora communities to interactively contribute perspectives of the authenticity of these cultural representations. This is to say that Nigerian as well as other African diasporas interact with Naija cultural representations, receiving access to this diverse communities' formations of diasporic identity. The relationship between a diasporic community and its cultural productions is shown to be an interactive one in the case of Nigerian cultural diasporas, in which the community has agency over how it is culturally represented.

Referring back to Hall and Bourdieu, the ability for their works to resonate with their communities as markers of authenticity and accuracy of cultural representation. Nigerian cultural diasporas' cultural representations do resonate with their and other diasporic communities through popularity and/or global reach of industries like Nollywood, Naija Mix, Nigerian

literature as well as through locally and globally broadcasting and publicizing interviews, talks, and debates with and between Nigerian (and other African) cultural producers. The Nigerian Diaspora offers new perspectives of diaspority that pluralizes and strengthens the already diversely represented African Diaspora. In the New African Diaspora, it is a case of how contemporary diaspora communities are formed and how they are able to support global African diasporic identities through practices of self-determination and self-definition.

CONCLUSION: LIMITATIONS AND RESEARCH TRAJECTORIES

The global cultural formation of the Nigerian Diaspora contributes to the pluralization of Black culture in African Diaspora communities in the US and in South Africa. This dissertation is a humanities-based study contribution to African Diaspora Studies, one that incorporates historical and sociological context to more deeply examine identity and representation as it is created by new African diasporas. It has revealed the dynamic ways that Black immigration from Nigeria to the world is both enlarging and diversifying our notion of the African Diaspora. Naturally such a study has its limitations, that can be used in future studies as ways to deepen and expand the study of global African diasporas. The sample collection of cultural producers and cultural productions are small in scope. Incorporating more cultural productions and cultural producers would increase the viability of the study, by offering a larger sample size to draw cultural representations from. The study could also be extended to other sites of locations with racialized hierarchies within societies, such as Brazil and the United Kingdom, which would deepen the comparative study by adding new structures and theories of race, ethnicity, and citizenship to how Nigerian diasporas negotiate cultural identities.

The study's research design examines cultural productions, cultural producers, and the emergent cultural representations. However, the reception of these representations by Nigerian

diasporas as well as Nigerians at home are components necessary to better understand the geocircular component of their cultural diasporas. Future research could include qualitative or quantitative collection of Nigerian and Nigerian diasporic perspectives of the artwork. A sociocultural study of Nigerian ethnicities and cultures provide more nuanced and specific reference points to understand the standpoint from which Nigerian Diaspora cultural identity is produced, and reproduced. Additionally, future studies include other identity tropes not included in this sample. For instance, gender-based and sexuality-based identity tropes were discussed when intersecting with racial, ethnic, cultural, or transnational identities but never on their own. Coding for these identity tropes individually can provide new ways of understanding the Nigerian Diaspora as it relates to the transformations of self and community evident in diaspora making.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
IRB APPROVED SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Background

1. Where were you born and where did you grow up? Multiple countries?
2. When did you move to [host country]?
3. How did you arrive and with whom?
4. Did you choose to move to [host country] or what the decision made for you? If it was your decision, why did you choose to move to [host country]?
5. Where did you arrive in [host country]? How long have you lived in [host country]?

Homeland/Hostland Relations

1. What have been your general experiences with citizens of [host country]?
2. Have your experiences differed between white and black citizens of [host country]?
3. What have been your general experiences with other recent Africans immigrants? Nigerians specifically?
4. Do you return to Nigeria? Other parts of Africa/diaspora? How often do you travel and why/why not?
5. Where do you consider home? Why?
6. Are you able to maintain a Nigerian identity in [host country]? If yes, how so?
7. Does who you are as a Nigerian change as a result of living here? How?

Experiences of Belonging and Discrimination

1. How do you respond, and internalize, the racial/ethnic titles or identities that are attributed to you as a Nigerian immigrant/Nigerian descendent (i.e. Black, African, makwerekwere, etc).
2. Have you experienced instances of racism or xenophobia in [host country]? How do you respond?
3. How do you identify yourself as a Nigerian immigrant/Nigerian descendent in [host country]?
4. How do you identify others like you? How do others like you identify themselves?

On Each Cultural Production

These questions vary based on cultural production. These questions are asked in some shape or form for all of them.

1. What events, idea, or people led to the creation and development of [cultural production]?
2. Why did you decide to work on [cultural production]?
3. What are some of the important themes, motifs, or concepts that you are incorporated into [cultural production]?
4. Do you see find that these themes, motifs, concepts exist in [hostland] and/or relate to Nigerian immigrants/Nigerian descendants?
5. Who is your audience?
6. Where/how was [cultural production] distributed?

APPENDIX B KEY TERM DEFINITIONS

African or African descendent – These terms are generally used interchangeably. African is used to refer to people of African descent across the globe (African world). It is used as an identity marker, specific to a geographical space (Africa), regardless of if the descendent has physically resided or visited any part of it. It recognizes Africanness a socio-politically accepted, imposed, unknown, or rejected identity by people of African descent. African descendent is generally used to distinguish Africans from non-Africans (I.e. European, Asians). Additionally, "African" may be used to refer specifically to African people born and/or raised on the African continent, however this is only used in this way if it used by a theorist, scholar, or cultural producer.

African Diaspora – This term is used formally to generally refer to the movements of African descendent people that result in the formation of communities across space and time. The dissertation uses a combination of Ruth Simms Hamilton's characteristics of social identity formation and Kim Butler's dimensions of diaspora to refer to its conceptual traits: reasons for/conditions of dispersal, geo-social mobility, relationship to homeland/hostland, agents of resistance, and power domination and inequality, and communities of consciousness. It also encompasses the African Diaspora spatially since the beginning of time, referring to the categorizations of larger segments of the African Diaspora as defined by Colin Palmer (ie. Three historic segments and three contemporary segments).

African diaspora (single diaspora) – This lowercase "diaspora" refers to singular conception of diaspora, or community specific diasporas. It refers to Kim Butler's concept of multiple diasporas that exist within the African Diaspora, and specifically that they can be defined by examining their dimensions on a community to community basis. For instance, the Jamaican Diaspora or Somali Diaspora, may be referred to as an African diaspora. In these examples, they are also country-based manifestations of the African Diaspora. A Haitian Christian diaspora in the United States or Senegalese Muslim diaspora to France are more nuanced manifestations of their more general country-based diaspora (I.e. Haiti, Senegal).

Black – This term is used to refer to people of African descent across the globe (Black world). It is used as an identity marker, specific to concepts of racial identity, regardless of if the descendent has physically resided in or visited nations with overt social demarcations of racial hierarchy. More so, specific to Jemima Pierre's notion of the globality of race and Candis Watts Smith's diaspora consciousness, it recognizes Blackness a socio-politically accepted, imposed, unknown, or rejected identity by all people of African descent.

Cultural diaspora – This concept refers to the cultural formations that emerge from *diasporic* communities, and primarily deals with African diasporic cultural formations. This definition stems from Meinhof and Armbruster's study of cultural diasporas that recognizes cultural producers or "musicians, filmmakers, visual artists and other cultural artists" as well as the diasporic networks communities make between homeland and hostland. It also examines the cultural art itself, or cultural productions, from Pierre Bourdieu's notion of cultural

productions. Lastly, and relatedly to Bourdieu and Stuart Hall, cultural diasporas also include the community from which the cultural art is drawn.

'Naija' Identity – This is used as one way to characterize a collective and self-determined identity members of the Nigerian Diaspora. Similar to the way the dissertation begins, it recognizes and uses it as a term that unifies members of the Nigerian Diaspora based on their cultural and geographical relationship to Nigeria. This study codes for some characteristics of diasporic identity (i.e. racial, ethnic, cultural, transnational) in order to provide deeper context to how these traits relate to members of the Nigerian identity.

New/neo African Diaspora – This refers to what Colin Palmer defines as the modern or contemporary African Diaspora, which begins near the end of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and encompasses the movement of Africans thereafter and transnational trading networks created by Africans themselves (e.g. African Americans to Ghana, Haitians to Congo, Somali to USA). Colonialism is the major indicator of this shift. Neo-diasporas take into consideration the movements of contemporary diasporas to and from homelands, and the transfer of cultural knowledge between the spaces. Paul Zeleza defines it more specifically to this dissertation study, which examines the phases of colonial and postcolonial movement of continental Africans citizens to various diasporic hostlands.

Nigerian Diaspora – This concept refers generally to a single country-based diaspora – people of Nigerian descent who forge diasporic communities. The dissertation specifically focuses on the postcolonial Nigerian Diaspora, or the communities forged after the independence of Nigeria from the British (1960). Then more generally, it looks at the Nigerian Diaspora of the contemporary African Diaspora (see New African Diaspora), and even more generally it recognizes older diasporas that were forged from culturally determined communities before the region was named "Nigeria" (i.e. Yoruba diaspora in Brazil, Cuba).

Nigerian diaspora – Similar to the definition of "African diaspora," "Nigerian diaspora" refers to specific manifestations of the Nigerian Diaspora. For instance, the Nigerians in the United States and Nigerians in South Africa would make up two community specific formations of the Nigerian Diaspora. Nigerians who arrived in the United States after the Biafran war could also make up a different diaspora than those who came for education in the 1990s. It at times can also refer to culturally determined diasporas whose communities are descent of the region Nigeria, prior to its establishment as a nation (i.e. Yoruba diaspora in Brazil, Cuba).

APPENDIX C
NIGERIAN DIASPORA CULTURAL PRODUCERS

Table 2: NIGERIAN DIASPORA CULTURAL PRODUCERS

Key: E- Ethnicity; H - born/grew up; J - Journey to Diaspora

Artist (gender) (craft)	Background/ Journey to the Diaspora	Identity and Home	Perspectives on Art and/or Storytelling
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA			
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (f) (novelist)	E: Igbo H: Nsukka J: came to US with student scholarship and to change careers	– Learned to be "Black" and "African" through experiences in the United States – identifies as these identities, plus Nigerian identities, feminist – lives in both US and Nigeria	– believes that (female) writers should write their story, from her perspectives, without caring about offending others – desires to write characters as she sees them rather than through a genre, so as not let fiction fail reality –wrote novel after going through personal journals in the US; thinks of Americanah as Nigerian immigrant story to the US, a novel about race and hair
Yvonne Fly Onakeme Etaghene (f) (poet, novelist, dancer)	E: Ijaw, Urhobo H: Syracuse, NY (raised), Delta State J: parents moved to UK, then to US for her father's job	– identifies as a Nigerian born in US, Nigerian identities, queer/dyke – considers Nigeria "home home," New York is also home – based in Oakland, CA and transitioning to split time 50/50 between Nigeria/US	– writes for herself first, but then for African queer communities, and African communities in general – writes because she doesn't see her experiences represented in literature and realizes that's the case for many queer Africans – novel represented a certain point in her life and eventually became fictionalized
Rahman Oladigbolu (filmmaker)	E: Yoruba H: Ibadan J: left Nigeria for better film school, moved to Boston	– identifies as Nigerian, Universalist, Black – considers home the world he currently exists within (i.e. film project) – based in Boston and transitioning to split time 50/50 between Nigeria/US	– believes that without stories, life would have no engine to ride on – based on a true story he wrote film to provide corrective images of the African immigrant story, and the potential relationship between Africans and African Americans
Wale (hip hop artist)	E: Yoruba H: DMV (Washington DC, Maryland, Virginia)	– identifies as Nigerian, Black, African – home is the DMV, also hails Nigeria as home – based in DMV and first visit to Nigeria was as adult	– influenced by Black American artists, especially from DMV, and Nigerian artists –most of his music tells stories about his experiences in the DMV, and a few incorporate Nigerian/African heritage
Andrew Ogale (m) (comedian, writer)	E: Idoma H: Abuja J: came to Houston for undergraduate study	– identifies as Nigerian Nigeria is home and the US is a way to gain knowledge to take home – based in Houston	– considers himself a storyteller and finds it important to tell stories about his experiences and that everyone can relate to – major themes for Wowo Boyz "ugly boys" are African parents, sex education, food, social issues

Table 2 (cont'd)

Artist (gender) (craft)	Background/ Journey to the Diaspora	Identity and Home	Perspectives on Art and/or Storytelling
THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA			
Yewande Omotoso (f) (novelist)	E: Yoruba, Barbados H: Barbados, Ibadan J: came to Cape Town as child with family when father took position as professor	– identifies as Nigerian, Barbadian, South African – home is Nigeria, Barbados, and South Africa – based in Johannesburg and travels between all homes	– writes for herself first and then anyone who can relate to the story – feels she can only write from experiences she knows, characters with complex identities (Barbados, Nigeria, South Africa), and she is concerned about accurate storytelling – novels themes include her favorite themes solitariness/ loneliness (as outsider) and family
Akin Omotoso (m) (director, actor)	E: Yoruba, Barbados H: Barbados, Ibadan J: came to Cape Town as child with family when father took position as professor	– identifies as Nigerian, Barbadian, Pan-African, "local everywhere" – home is "planet earth" and where he can find West African and West Indian food – based in Johannesburg and travels between Nigeria, Barbados	– believes good film should left you undone by the magnitude of its truth – rejects acting rolls that portray Nigerians as caricatures, flat, or in negative light – conducted research about xenophobia to write film with reality in context – film emerged as a response to 2008 peak of xenophobic attacks and the burning of Mozambican immigrant Ernesto Nhamwave "Burning Man" – used film to create documentary based on public viewings and responses to film and conversations about xenophobia across South Africa
Fabian Lojede (m) (actor, writer)	E: Yoruba H: UK, Lagos J: came to South Africa after traveling back and forth working in advertisement	– identifies as Nigerian, Pan-African – perspective is rooted in Nigerian (Yoruba) heritage – based in Johannesburg, travels between Nigeria and South Africa	– rejects acting rolls that portray Nigerians as caricatures, flat, or in negative light – conducted research about xenophobia to produce <i>Man on Ground</i> with reality in context – film emerged as a response to 2008 peak of xenophobic attacks and the burning of Mozambican immigrant Ernesto Nhamwave "Burning Man" – goal of <i>Jacob's Cross</i> was to tell Pan-African story with positive images of Africa and business success
Adze Ugah (m) (director, actor)	E: Ninzo H: Kaduna J: left for better film schools, came to South Africa after being unable to gain visa to UK	– identifies as Nigerian, home in Nigeria – based in Johannesburg, travels between Nigeria and South Africa	– also created documentary about Ernesto by going into townships to interview and traveling to Mozambique to tell family's story – goal of <i>Jacob's Cross</i> was to tell Pan-African story with positive images of Africa and business success – his job was to accurately portray Nigeria and Nigerians, often by dispelling stereotypes South African writers had of Nigerian cultural norms

APPENDIX D
NIGERIAN DIASPORA CULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

Table 3: NIGERIAN DIASPORA CULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

Race	Culture	Ethnicity	Transnationalism	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Learning to be Black in America/Learning about Black oppression – Racialized observations of post-racial America – Artistic/Public commentary on race in US – Reference to Africana Studies/African Diaspora organizations – Creation of Black/African spaces – Interpersonal interracial relationships – Questions of racial identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cross cultural differences (Nigerian vs. American) – Intergeneration differences (Nigerian immigrant vs 2nd gen Nigerian) – Cross cultural similarities (Nigerian vs. other African diasporas) – Use of Nigerian Language (pidgin, Yoruba, Igbo) – Use of proverbs, metaphors, fables – Reference to/assertion of Nigerian names – Traditional Culture (attire, dance, music, heritage spaces) – Loss of/search for culture (e.g. language, traditions) – Effects of colonialism/ imperialism on Nigerian cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Interpersonal relationships between members of different Black communities – Stereotypes of continental Africans by diaspora Africans – Stereotypes of diaspora Africans by continental Africans – Dispelling stereotypes between Black ethnicities – Building Pan-African unity – References to other Black/African ethnicities/diasporas – Ethnic cohesions – Ethnic tensions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Traveling to America – Choosing to traveling to Nigeria – Desires/dreams of Africa – Desires/dreams of America – Memories/feelings of home – Referencing Nigeria in conversation – Immigration/visa issues or deportation – Sending remittances to/from Nigeria – Communication between Nigeria/US) 	<i>Americandh (novel)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Racialized observations of post-racial America – Artistic/Public commentary on race in US – Reference to Africana Studies/African Diaspora organizations – Creation of Black/African spaces – Reference to legacy of racialism/slavery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cross cultural similarities (Nigerian vs. other African diasporas) – Use of Nigerian Language (pidgin, Yoruba, Igbo) – Use of proverbs, metaphors, fables – Expectations of Educational Success – Use of/reference to Nigerian music, literature, music – Reference to/assertion of Nigerian names – Traditional Culture (attire, dance, music, heritage spaces) – Use of spirituality/religion in addressing life/daily events – Reference to diverse African cultures – Loss of/search for culture (e.g. language, traditions) – Effects of colonialism/ imperialism on Nigerian cultures – Artistic cultural expression of self – Use of Nigerian/West African food – Finding/forging nuanced Nigerian/African Diasporic community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Interpersonal relationships between members of different Black communities – Stereotypes of continental Africans by diaspora Africans – Dispelling stereotypes between Black ethnicities – Building Pan-African unity – References to other Black/African ethnicities/diasporas – Ethnic cohesions – Ethnic tensions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Choosing to traveling to Nigeria – Desires/dreams of Africa – Memories/feelings of home – Sharing immigration story – Referencing Nigeria in conversation 	<i>For Sizatkele (novel)</i>

Table 3 (cont'd)

Race	Culture	Ethnicity	Transnationalism	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learning to be Black in America/Learning about Black oppression - Racialized observations of post-racial America - Realizing diverse experiences of racism (e.g. nationality-based, gender-based) - Experiences/memories of racism - Artistic/Public commentary on race in US - Creation of Black/African spaces - Reference to legacy of racialism/slavery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cross cultural similarities (Nigerian vs. other African diasporas) - Expectations of Educational Success - Use of/reference to Nigerian music, literature, music - Use of spirituality/religion in addressing life/daily events - Use of Nigerian/West African food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interpersonal relationships between members of different Black communities - Stereotypes of continental Africans by diaspora Africans - Dispelling stereotypes between Black ethnicities - Building Pan-African unity - References to other Black/African ethnicities/diasporas - Use of music from various African spaces - Ethnic cohesions - Ethnic tensions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Traveling to America - Desires/dreams of Africa - Desires/dreams of America - Sharing immigration story - Referencing Nigeria in conversation - Immigration/visa issues or deportation - Sending remittances to Nigeria - Communication between Nigeria/USA (e.g. phone, letters, emails) 	<p><i>In America: The Story of the Soul Sisters (film)</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Racialized observations of post-racial America - Experiences/memories of racism - Artistic/Public commentary on race in US - Interpersonal interracial relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of Nigerian Language (pidgin, Yoruba, Igbo) - Nigerian weddings/social events - Use of/reference to Nigerian music, literature, music - Reference to/assertion of Nigerian names - Traditional Culture (attire, dance, music, heritage spaces) - Use of spirituality/ religion in addressing life/daily events - Reference to diverse African cultures - Artistic cultural expression of self - Use of Nigerian/West African food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building Pan-African unity - References to other Black/African ethnicities/diasporas - Ethnic cohesions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Choosing to traveling to Nigeria - Desires/dreams of Africa - Memories/feelings of home - Referencing Nigeria in conversation 	<p>“My Sweetie” and “The God Smile” (music videos)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interpersonal interracial relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cross cultural differences (Nigerian vs. American) - Intergeneration differences (Nigerian immigrant vs 2nd gen Nigerian) - Use of Nigerian Language (pidgin, Yoruba, Igbo) - Use of proverbs, metaphors, fables - Expectations of Educational Success - Nigerian weddings/social events - Use of/reference to Nigerian music, literature, music - Reference to/assertion of Nigerian names - Traditional Culture (attire, dance, music, heritage spaces) - Artistic cultural expression of self - Use of Nigerian/West African food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interpersonal relationships between members of different Black communities - Stereotypes of continental Africans by diaspora Africans - Stereotypes of diaspora Africans by continental Africans - Dispelling stereotypes between Black ethnicities - Building Pan-African unity - References to other Black/African ethnicities/diasporas - Ethnic cohesions - Ethnic tensions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Traveling to America - Referencing Nigeria in conversation - Immigration/visa issues or deportation 	<p><i>Wowo Boyz YouTube Channel</i></p>

Table 3 (cont'd)

Race	Culture	Ethnicity	Transnationalism	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Interpersonal interracial relationships – Questions of racial identity – Experiences/memories of racism – Reference to complexion, color, bi-racial identity – Racialized observations of post-Apartheid South Africa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Use of Nigerian Language (pidgin, Yoruba, Igbo) – Use of proverbs, metaphors, fables – Use of/reference to Nigerian music, literature, music – Reference to/assertion of Nigerian names – Traditional Culture (attire, dance, music, heritage) – Use of spirituality/religion in addressing life/daily events – Loss of/search for culture (e.g. language, traditions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Interpersonal relationships between members of different Black communities – References to other Black/African ethnicities/diasporas – Ethnic cohesions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Traveling to South Africa – Choosing to traveling to Nigeria – Desires/dreams of South Africa – Memories/feelings of home – Sharing immigration story – Referencing Nigeria in conversation – Communication between Nigeria/South Africa (e.g. phone, letters, emails) 	<i>Born Boy (novel)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Racialized observations of post-Apartheid South Africa – Links between Afrophobia and legacy of apartheid – Experiences/memories of racism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Use of Nigerian Language (pidgin, Yoruba, Igbo) – Nigerian weddings/social events – Use of/reference to Nigerian music, literature, music – Traditional Culture (attire, dance, music, heritage) – Use of spirituality/religion in addressing life/daily events – Use of Nigerian/West African food – Reference to Nigerian culture by non-Nigerians 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Afrophobia from Black nationals – Stereotypes of foreign Africans by domestic Africans – Interpersonal relationships between members of different Black communities – Dispelling stereotypes between Black ethnicities – Building Pan-African unity – References to other Black/African ethnicities/diasporas – Use of music from various African spaces – Ethnic cohesions – Ethnic tensions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Asylum seeking – Traveling to South Africa – Memories/feelings of home – Sharing immigration story – Sending remittances to/from Nigeria – Communication between Nigeria/South Africa (e.g. phone, letters, emails) 	<i>Man on Ground (film)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Racialized observations of post-Apartheid South Africa – Reference to racialism/struggle of apartheid – Interpersonal interracial relationships – Links between Afrophobia and legacy of apartheid – Western imperialism as blockade for African capitalism – Experiences/ memories of racism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Use of Nigerian Language (pidgin, Yoruba, Igbo) – Use of proverbs, metaphors, fables – Nigerian weddings/social events – Reference to/assertion of Nigerian names – Traditional Culture (attire, dance, music, heritage) – Use of spirituality/religion in addressing life/daily events – Reference to Nigerian culture by non-Nigerians 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Stereotypes of foreign Africans by domestic Africans – Interpersonal relationships between members of different Black communities – Dispelling stereotypes between Black ethnicities – Building Pan-African unity – References to other Black/African ethnicities/diasporas – Ethnic cohesions – Pan African business ventures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Traveling to South Africa – Choosing to traveling to Nigeria – Memories/feelings of home – Referencing Nigeria in conversation – Communication between Nigeria/South Africa (e.g. phone, letters, emails) 	<i>Jacob's Cross (TV show)</i>

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