

Performing New Afrikan Childhood:
Agency, Conformity and the Spaces in Between

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation employs an ethnographic methodological approach. It explores young people's performance of a New Afrikan subjectivity, their negotiation of a multiple consciousness (American, African-American, New Afrikan and Pan-Afrikan) and the social and cultural implications for rearing children of African descent in the US within a New Afrikan ideology. Young people who are members of the New Afrikan Scouts, attendees of Camp Pumziko and/or students enrolled at Kilombo Academic and Cultural Institute were observed and interviewed. Through interviews young people shared their perceptions and experiences of New Afrikan childhood. The findings of this study discuss the ways in which agency, conformity and the spaces in between are enacted and experienced by New Afrikan children. The findings particularly reveal that in one sense New Afrikan adults aid young people in examining their racial and cultural subjectivity in US America. In another sense New Afrikan adults manipulate young people into performing prescribed roles that are seemingly uncritical of the implications of these performances beyond an adult agenda.

DEDICATION

I dedicate and contribute this project to the living legacy of the PGRNA. I dedicate this scholarship to Alajo Adegbalola, Dara Abubakari, Imari Obadele, and Chokwe Lumumba. To my parents who not only brought me into existence but also fought and prayed for me to survive their struggles and safely arrive in this place that we call life, I say Madase pa! I dedicate this to my six siblings who have nurtured me in many ways throughout my life and throughout this process; I am proud to be the last and the first. I dedicate this work to the countless theatre practitioners who consciously use their practice to transform lives. This work is dedicated to individuals and collectives who engage in political and social activism in struggles to combat various forms of oppression. This work is also dedicated to young people who knowingly and unknowingly bear the burden of dual otherness.

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CHAPTER 1

UTANGULIZI (INTRODUCTION)

Mystory: An Auto-ethnographical mapping of a decolonizing standpoint

i believe in the spirituality, humanity and genius of Black people, and in our new pursuit of these values.

i believe in the family and the community, and in the community as a family, and

i will work to make this concept live.

i believe in the community as more important than the individual.

i believe in constant struggle for freedom, to end oppression and build a better world.

i believe in collective struggle; in fashioning victory in concert with my brothers and sisters.

i believe that the fundamental reason our oppression continues is that We, as a people, lack the power to control our lives.

i believe that fundamental way to gain that power, and end oppression, is to build a sovereign Black nation.

i believe that all the land in Amerikkka, upon which We have lived for a long time, which We have worked and built upon, and which We have fought to stay on, is land that belongs to us as a people.

i believe in the Malcolm X Doctrine: that We must organize upon this land, and hold a plebiscite, to tell the world by a vote that We are free and our land independent, and that, after the vote, We must stand ready to defend ourselves, establishing the nation beyond contradiction.

Therefore, i pledge to struggle without cease, until We have won sovereignty.

i pledge to struggle without fail until We have built a better condition than the world has yet known.

i will give my life, if that is necessary; i will give my time, my mind, my strength, and my wealth because this IS necessary.

i will follow my chosen leaders and help them.

i will love my brothers and sisters as myself.

i will steal nothing from a brother or sister, cheat no brother or sister, misuse no brother or sister, inform on no brother or sister, and spread no gossip.

i will keep myself clean in body, dress and speech, knowing that i am a light set on a hill, a true representative of what We are building.

i will be patient and uplifting with the deaf, dumb and blind, and i will seek by word and deed to heal the Black family, to bring into the Movement and into the Community mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters left by the wayside.

Now, freely and of my own will, i pledge this Creed, for the sake of freedom for my people and a better world, on pain of disgrace and banishment if i prove false. For, i am no longer deaf, dumb or blind. i am, by inspiration of the ancestors and grace of the Creator — a New Afrikan. Free The land! Free The Land! Free The Land!¹

This was my pledge of allegiance,
this was my prayer,
this was my girl scout's creed,
this was my song,
this was the soundtrack for our struggle for Liberation.
We called ourselves righteous soldiers, New Afrikan Scouts and children of the struggle while my passport called me an American citizen.
While at school the kids called me an "Afrikan booty scratcher!"
at home Mommy and Daddy called me an Afrikan Queen.
It was an experiment, sure it was.
They didn't know how we'd turn out,
how we'd fare among the rest of society definin' ourselves as righteous soldiers instead of little black girl or boy, calling ourselves New Afrikans instead of Black American, Afro-American, American at all.²

As the child of prominent social/political activists and freedom fighters from the 1960s Black Power Movement era, I have always sought decolonizing practices in and approaches to

¹ This entire text is the New Afrikan Creed, a major Republic of New Afrika (RNA) document created in 1969 with changes (approved by the Provisional Government of the RNA) in May of 1993. It can be found at www.prairiefire.org/CRSN/creed.shtml. The lower case "i" and "We" with a capital W speaks to the RNA's efforts to explicitly embrace and embody the notion that "the community is more important than the individual."

² This is an excerpt from my self-composed and unpublished play, *Our Liberated Justice*, for which I altered the spelling of America and added three phrases of "Free The Land!" to adequately capture my childhood experience of reciting/performing the creed.

all that I do. As the New Afrikan Creed (above) illustrates, I was taught to resist and combat various oppressions, not only in the effort to liberate myself psychologically, culturally and spiritually, but to encourage others within my communities to do the same. As a colonized³ person, my journey of decolonization⁴ is and must be continuous. I see decolonization as a process rather than a goal and I choose to walk along a path that enables and supports this process. In both my Undergraduate and Master's degree programs (Africana and African American Studies) my journey of decolonization extended to academia. It was through classes and experiences in these programs that I have come to understand Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (1999, 1) assertion that "research," a term "inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism," should serve a purpose beyond its benefits to scholarship and set out to make a positive difference for the researched.

In this study I will expand my own and hopefully others' understanding of the lived experiences and perceptions of New Afrikan children by using myself in addition to New Afrikan children as research participants. In this study, I occupy both the role of the subject and researcher simultaneously. In addition to these two roles I am also a cultural insider. As a cultural insider I am privy to information that a cultural outsider conducting research would not

³ I use the term colonized to speak to the idea that as a Black person and a woman (and simultaneously a 'Black woman') in the US I belong to a population of people who are doubly marginalized and oppressed by systems of patriarchy and white supremacy or what bell hooks calls "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy," a phrase she coined to speak to the interlocking systems of domination that define people's reality. Through language, culture and thus my very being I always already absorb and assimilate into the culture of those in power (hegemonic forces), which are many and multifaceted, and specifically patriarchy and white supremacy.

⁴ Decolonization simply means to "undo colonization," which is a feat that is not as simple as the wording of the term implies. I use the term primarily in a cultural sense. In the political sense, I use it not so much as in the sense of independence of one country from another but in the sense of systems of the hegemonic state, which have material implications for my reality, as they work on and through me. I reject the term post-colonialism in a temporal sense, as it does not reflect the lived experiences and struggles of people of African descent in the US or throughout the Diaspora for that matter. Postcolonialism, "as an engagement with, and contestation of, colonialism's discourses, and social hierarchies" accurately reflects (at the most basic level) not only the way that I approach and proceed in this research study but the ways in which people of African descent have engaged/resisted colonialism since its mass and violent introduction to the African continent centuries ago.

have. I am situated within the culture and community in ways that a researcher outside the culture could not be. In addition to providing uniquely rich insight into the culture and the study itself, this layered relationship to the study is analogous to the multifaceted socio-cultural identities and consciousness of New Afrikans (the researcher and research participants), which are the subjects of this dissertation project.

Throughout the first two years of my doctoral program my ability to “successfully” critically analyze my own work has been challenged by some of my professors and colleagues. My research has been called “weird,” “too personal” and “propaganda rather than scholarship.” Their challenge of my work caused me to contemplate the nature and academic legitimacy of my research. As I write papers that seek to analyze aspects of my personal life as counterparts to larger research questions and interests, I find myself, time and time again, hesitant to begin an analysis and troubled with the following questions: How do I write about myself in a critical way? Do I displace myself to talk about myself? How would displacing myself hinder my ability or enable me to write critically as opposed to self-indulgently? Is displacing myself even possible and what does it mean to do so?

To begin answering these questions I return to the Afrocentric idea, through which Africana Studies scholar Molefi Kete Asante (1998) discusses critical analysis involving people of African descent. One aspect of this idea particularly examines the difference between an Afrocentric ideology (of subjectivity) and a Eurocentric ideology (of objectivity), noting that the latter masquerades as a universal view which creates and promotes the inability of conceptualizing and accepting the former, or any other alternative way of producing scholarship (Asante 1998, 1-2). In other words, the idea that someone who is writing critically about a given subject is most effective when writing objectively is a Eurocentric and masculinist notion, not a

universal given that must apply to all critical approaches. While there are many responses to these questions, that I have both discussed with others and pondered in my own mind, what I am currently comfortable with is the idea that *an* answer emerges when I begin to write. I have also found that the “right way” to do this work is to be honest, critical and thorough in my approach and open to the emergent nature of qualitative inquiry. I will not attempt to distance myself. I will instead embrace my relationship to this work and furthermore call on a fundamental New Afrikan⁵ principle which promotes the idea that “the community is more important than the individual.”⁶ I will also call on the African proverb which similarly states, “I am because you are, and because you are therefore I am.” With these principles I will simply begin with the understanding that, through talking about myself and my family, I am simultaneously talking about the community from which we stem. I am writing with the intention to offer an analysis which is not self-indulgent nor only personally useful but one that illuminates a New Afrikan experience, the ways in which culture works in this community and particularly how this community uses this culture to challenge dominant culture/ideology. Thus, the action to present my standpoint as a researcher, and the aspects of my personal life that are narrated within, my research seeks to add understanding and mutually inform the fieldwork for the purposes of raising awareness and increasing understanding of concepts specific to New Afrikan culture and experiences.

I was reared as a New Afrikan. My family members were not only citizens of the Republic of New Afrika (RNA) but leaders within the movement. My grandfather served as

⁵In his text, *From Plan to Planet* (1973), poet and writer Haki Madhubuti identifies “four reasons to spell Afrika with a K.” Two of them include: 1) Most vernacular or traditional languages on the Continent spell Afrika with a K. K is germane to Afrika. 2) The 'K' symbolizes a kind of Lingua Afrikana, constituting one political language, although coming from more than one Afrikan language.

⁶ New Afrikan Creed. See note number one for additional information.

Minister of Defense in 1970 and First Vice President from 1971-1972. My mother served as the People's Center Council Chairperson in 1981, and started the New Orleans Chapter of the New Afrikan Scouts (NAS) in 1985, which she led until 1987. At the age of six, I became a member of the Atlanta Chapter of the NAS. I attended Camp Pumziko⁷ summer camp and other annual events held in and around Atlanta, GA such as (New Afrikan) Nation Day and the Malcolm X festival where my New Afrikan identity was reinforced through lectures, street rallies, cultural-games/activities and performance (I performed — drilling, chanting, etc. — for the community and watched performances by other community members). Because of my relationship to the RNA and my experiences growing up as a New Afrikan child, I have many assumptions about the ways in which New Afrikan children perform their identities. In my research I intend to identify these assumptions to move forward in a way that remains open to where the study takes me. I also lay out my assumptions and experiences in the effort to avoid allowing these notions to foreclose any meaningful study of the social and cultural worlds of New Afrikan children (i.e., how New Afrikan children experience and perform their identities *now* vs. how my peers and I experienced and performed our New Afrikan identities as children).

While I identify with New Afrikan ideology, I am constantly exploring what it means to be a New Afrikan and to call myself a New Afrikan, both personally and through the academic exercise that is my dissertation project. Although I problematize New Afrikanity, there is no doubt that growing up as a New Afrikan and being embedded in that culture will continue to shape my identity. Culture is often defined and understood as “learned behavior” or a way of life, of behaving or understanding reality. In his text, *Navigating World History: Historians Create a Global Past*, Africana Studies scholar Patrick Manning (2003, 233) argues, “culture is ‘the

⁷ The NAS annual seven day sleep-away and survival camp

semantic space, the field of signs and practices in which human beings construct and represent themselves and others and hence their societies and history.” Culture is thus the conduit through which life is understood and experienced by human beings. It can be understood as “both a means of domination, of assuring the rule of one class group over another, and a means of resistance to such domination, a way of articulating oppositional points of view to those in dominance” (New Afrikan culture/ideology is an example of the latter) (Rivkin and Ryan 2004, 1233). Culture constitutes “not only the sense of the world for us, but also our sense of ourselves, our sense of identity, and our sense of our relations to other people and to society in general” (Fiske 2004, 1270). Thus, the ways in which I approach this study, understand the emerging concepts and relate to the research participants are inevitably linked to New Afrikan cultural ideology.

Background

This study explores the ways New Afrikan children perceive, experience and make sense of their identities, in addition to the interlinking of their performance of New Afrikan identity and agency. This exploration and the questions raised within exist along a continuum of inquiries surrounding cultural and physical displacement of North American born Blacks, particularly through discourses on identity and issues of citizenship.

Displacement on a large scale for people of African descent, or what scholar Colin Palmer (1998, 1) identifies as “the fourth major African diasporic stream,” began over five centuries ago at the onset of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. From the early 1500s to the 1800s, hundreds of thousands of Africans were transported to various countries in Europe, while as

many as 12 million were delivered to the Americas. This long history of continuous displacement is inextricably tied to Black people's equally extensive and constant struggle to find and/or create place — spiritually, culturally, and physically.

Not only were enslaved Africans continuously displaced *during* the slave trade (i.e., being sold numerous times in a lifetime and having to consistently adapt to new spaces) but also *after*. When chattel slavery ended in the Americas, newly freed Africans experienced more displacement and mass migration. Large groups moved from the US South to the North and West for better opportunities. Some, like Marcus Garvey, raised questions of citizenship. He argued that Africans should have been given a choice after slavery as to whether they wanted to go back to Africa or stay in the Americas. Garvey believed that newly freed Africans should go 'back to Africa, their homeland.' Through his organization, the United Negro Improvement Association, he reignited the Back to Africa Movement, which mobilized thousands of Black people to leave the Americas and resettle in Liberia in the 1920s. This movement was supported by both US government officials and white supremacist groups like the Ku Klux Klan, with whom Garvey personally met. While many Blacks were influenced by Garvey, others felt that they were entitled to "all the land in America, upon which [they] have lived for a long time, which [they] have worked and built upon, and which [they] have fought to stay on . . ." (New Afrikan Creed 2013).

Decades later, on the 31st of March, 1968, during the height of the US Black Power Movement, hundreds of African-descended people living in the US gathered at the Black Government Conference in Detroit, Michigan. At the conference, several members from various organizations in the Detroit area, as well as the Malcolm X Society, discussed reparations, citizenship, and the need to establish an independent nation-state within the US. They felt that

Black people were merely “paper citizens” of the US and not granted the human and civil rights of white citizens. By the end of this gathering, a constitution as well as a declaration of independence was created that declared five states (Mississippi, South Carolina, Alabama, Georgia, and Louisiana)⁸ as New Afrika. A President, Vice President, Minister of Culture, Minister of Defense, and others were chosen as officers within *The Provisional Government of the Republic of New Afrika*.

Kujichagulia and Ujamaa are the major principles promoted by the government. These Swahili concepts, meaning self-determination and cooperative economics, inspire New Afrikan citizens to define themselves and their destinies as well as work together to build economically independent and stable communities. Unlike other organizations created during the Black Power Movement, the RNA seeks to provide the Africana⁹ community with a physical and ideological space where possibilities exist for the positive transformation of their realities. This philosophy teaches people of African descent to think critically about their living conditions and to exercise their right to determine their own destinies. As the Declaration of Independence states, “ours is a revolution against oppression — our own oppression and that of all people in the world. And it is a revolution for a better life, a better station for all, a surer harmony with the forces of life in the universe” (New Afrikan Declaration of Independence). To date, the Republic of New Afrika has not been granted sovereignty by the US; however the RNA remains an ideological space for many throughout the African Diaspora. This space is what Lefebvre (1991, 53) would call a

⁸ This proposed territory has been referred to as the Black Belt since the 19th century because of its high percentage of people of African descent and their agricultural development of this land. According to the US Census, as of May 2010, these states still have the highest percent of Blacks in the US.

⁹ Africana is an umbrella term for people of African descent throughout the diaspora

“social existence” aspiring to be and declaring itself to be real, producing its own (physical) space to escape the ideological and cultural spheres of the dominant group.

While Lefebvre (1991) argues that the production of a social *and* physical space is equally necessary in escaping cultural and ideological hegemony, in this study, I am primarily concerned with the RNA as a “social existence” rather than a physical place. The issue of land ownership (physical space) is at the heart of the RNA as a concept. Yet, without being granted sovereignty, a discussion with a focus of the RNA as a physical geographical space will surely lead us into the Baudrillardian abyss of the “hyperreal” and “hyperreality.” I agree with Baudrillard’s (1989, 28) ontological notion that reality is reached through the imaginary and is thus “real and pragmatic, yet all the stuff of dreams too.” His notion has interesting implications for this community and their performances of New Afrika. However, this study aims to explore New Afrikan cultural ideology and identity (social existence)¹⁰ and how this social existence impacts New Afrikan young people’s performances of identity, and finally the relationship between these performances and their agency.

Statement of the Problem

Childhood Studies scholar Nick Lee (2001, 1) posits, “children can be marked out as a social group, distinguished by the visibility of their low chronological age. Their points of view, opinions and desires have often been ignored because their age has been taken as a sign that they are not worth listening to.” In the introduction to *Childhood and American Society*, Karen Sternheimer (2001, vi) similarly identifies childhood as a social category and construction “largely created by and for adults.” “Our construction of the meaning of childhood,” she continues, “is based on many factors: the economic needs of society, beliefs about gender, one’s

¹⁰ See Chapter 2 for further discussion on “social existence.”

socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religion, and where we live” (Sternheimer 2001, vi). Although childhood is a social construction to which we constantly ascribe meaning, like race, childhood is not “merely an illusion; it is a very real experience that we view through the lenses of specific ways of seeing children and childhood itself” (Sternheimer 2001, vi). Widely perceived as incomplete beings, children are treated as incompetent, dependent, ignorant and innocent. Conversely, children are also associated with positive terms such as pure, special, delicate, honest, naturally inclined to be moral, closer to God, hope for the future, etc. In *Huck’s Raft*, Steven Mintz (2004, vii) argues that childhood has never been “an age of innocence” for all children. Nor are all children “insulated from the pressures and demands of the surrounding society, and each generation of children has had to wrestle with the social, political, and economic constraints of its own historical period.” He further argues “for more than three centuries Americans have believed that the younger generation is less respectful and knowledgeable, and more alienated, sexually promiscuous, and violent, than previously” (Mintz 2004, vii). One of the major goals of his book, he says, is to “strip away the myths, misconceptions, and nostalgia that contribute to this pessimism about the young” (Mintz 2004, vii). All of these notions are at play when it comes to Black youth. These negative notions of childhood coupled with negative conceptions of Blackness constitute what Kenneth Nunn (2002, 680) identifies as a “dual otherness.”

As children of the Other, Black children have historically been “the bearers of a dual otherness. They are Others both due to their Africanness and their status as ‘dependent’, ‘wild’, and ‘uncontrollable’ youth. As children of the Other, they gain none of the positive benefits of childhood” (Nunn 2002, 680). As a result, young Black people are largely viewed as threats, burdens, and competitors to “deserving” (white) children. As children, they gain no protection

from the ravages of racist oppression. In his article “The Child as Other: Race and Differential Treatment in the Juvenile Justice System,” Nunn (2004, 679-680) states:

When adolescence began for white children in 1830, African American children remained slaves. *African American children's only socially recognized function was to work at hard labor for the economic benefit of whites.* Even after the end of slavery, the social distinction between white and Black children remained. [...] *The different perception and treatment of African American children thus has deep historical roots in the United States.* (emphasis added)

Nunn’s discussion historically contextualizes the ways in which young Black people have and continue to negotiate the intersecting constructs of childhood, identity and power. While all young Black people do not have the same socio-economic and cultural lived experiences, this history of dual otherness exemplifies a narrative that has been, and continues to be, applicable to an overwhelmingly large sector of the population of young Black people throughout the world, particularly in the US. In the forthcoming chapter I explore gender and socioeconomic status as part of the intersectional play of power, childhood, identity, and social construction.

Statement of Purpose

While problematic and controversial, New Afrikan ideology continues to serve as a conduit through which meaning and direction are given to Black lives in the US, particularly the lives of Black children (New Afrikan and non-New Afrikan alike). The primary purpose of this study is to explore the ways in which young New Afrikan people’s performance of New Afrikan identity interlinks with their agency. I particularly examine New Afrikan identity as a counter narrative which serves as a resistance strategy to the dominant narrative of Black children’s existence and

status in the US. The secondary aims of this study include examining how adults within this community negotiate these two narratives while reimagining a new socially constructed identity for their children within the constituted nature of US cultural identity. I examine how adults construct, manipulate and respond to the ways in which young people engage in these multilayered performances. This study aims to add to the existent bodies of literature in the fields of Childhood, Performance and Africana Studies. In addition, I hope to provide participants with an opportunity/space to reflect on their lived experiences and perceptions. As Biggs (1999, 6) posits “[a] reflection in a mirror is an exact replica of what is in front of it. Reflection in professional practice, however, gives back not what it is, but what might be, an improvement on the original.” Reflection is thus a process of transformation where one looks at who they are being as well as who they want to become. As such New Afrikan young people’s reflection on their experiences and perceptions may lead to a greater sense of self, a deeper understanding of their social/cultural environments and of their ever transitional status as simultaneous beings/becomings.

Research Questions

Principal research question:

In what ways do New Afrikan children perform and perceive childhood experience?

Additional research questions:

- How/Where is a New Afrikan Ideology enforced and reinforced for children?
 - What are the dynamics shaping New Afrikan ideology?
 - How does it differ from African-American ideology?
 - How do New Afrikan children navigate the classroom and traditional/nontraditional pedagogies of teaching and learning?
- In what ways do New Afrikan children experience multiple consciousness?
 - How do they make sense of these identities?

- How do they negotiate friendship and other relationships inside/outside of New Afrika?
- In what ways do these relationships serve to reinforce or weaken their cultural and ideological New Afrikan-ness?
- How can school teachers (outside of New Afrikan culture) honor the culture and consciousness of New Afrikan children?
 - In what ways would they need to alter their curriculum and ways of relating to their students?
- What are the implications for rearing children this way?
 - How does such a counterculture enrich lives of the dually othered Black child?
 - In what ways do performances of New Afrikan identity empower or disempower those who are silenced, invisibilized and often seen as disposable in their own societies (from Emmett Till to Trayvon Martin)?
- In what ways do New Afrikan adults engage young people in their community as full beings with agency?

In summary, my dissertation project aims to explore three major areas:

- 1) Young people's performance of New Afrikan subjectivity
 - a) What are they *doing*?
 - b) How do they take ownership of it?
 - c) How do they perceive it?
 - d) What *happens* when they perform New Afrika?
- 2) The negotiation of multiple consciousness (American, Afro-American, New Afrikan, Pan-Afrikan)
- 3) The social implications for embodying the concept of New Afrika
 - a) How does the performance of New Afrikan identity into being relate to the dominant culture, the normalization of white supremacy and the popular contemporary notion of "post-race?"
 - b) What does it produce in/for the child? (spaces between agency/conformity)

Value and Significance

It is my hope that this study will foster cross cultural, racial and inter-generational dialogue about the varied perceptions and experiences of/with concepts of New Afrika, New Afrikan identity, African liberation and Black Power in relation to the normalization of white

supremacy and the popular contemporary notion of “post-race.”¹¹ Another aim of my research is to bring a largely invisible yet growing segment of the “American” population to the attention of teachers, scholars, social workers, community organizers and the like in hopes that the cultural capital of New Afrikan children can be recognized and explored. My research is a push to move beyond the usual discussions and discourse surrounding Black and other marginalized, oppressed or minority children, and to move beyond the dichotomy of simple black and white. I desire to illuminate the ways in which Black children inhabit multiple identities and realities in their multi-shaded bodies.

Finally, through this project, I offer a space for adults within New Afrikan/African-centered/Black Nationalist communities to stand in Pumziko¹² and reexamine their engagement with young people, particularly inside of their communities. This reexamination would hopefully then lead to alternative ways of being, ways of being that question their constructed notions of childhood (particularly as they intersect with notions of Blackness, Africanness, New Afrikanity etc.).

Key terms

In the following section I provide descriptions and definitions of key terms used throughout the study. These terms, which are also socio-political identifiers, were constructed and continue to be constituted by people of African descent as tools of resistance to white hegemony.

¹¹ Post-race refers to a space where racial prejudice, bias and/or discrimination does not exist. Some Americans, of varying races, view the election of Barack Obama, who is of mixed race, as a signifier that America entered into this space.

¹² A place of rest or a moment of pause.

New Afrikan- In a section on their website entitled *Why We Say "New Afrikan,"* The Malcolm X Grassroots Movement¹³ states the following:

The term "New Afrika" designates us not just as a group or a collective but as a Nation. We claim nationhood and sovereignty at this time and in this place!

1. because we aspire to independence, self-determination and self sufficiency
2. because our culture and interests are not just distinct but in opposition to that of the North American empire
3. to highlight the conditions of colonization in which we currently live
4. as a grounds on which to demand the recompenses – such as reparations due to all nations whose international and inalienable human rights have been unjustly compromised
5. to affirm our connection to the landmass on which our ancestors toiled and bled; to affirm our connection to land from which all wealth and health flows.
6. because we recognize that people [who] do not control their own affairs, who do not control the institutions by which they participate in public life are open to disenfranchisement, marginalization, and genocide
7. to be able to act as a resource, example and sanctuary for oppressed people everywhere

The term "New Afrika" reflects our Pan African identity, our purpose, and our direction. Although we come from distinct ethno-linguistic groups in Africa and the African Diaspora, our shared oppression and the interdependence of our liberation redefines our borders. (Malcolm X Grassroots Movement)

¹³ Identified on their website as "an organization of New Afrikans whose mission is to defend the human rights of our people and promote self-determination in our community."

African-centered-The term African-centered is commonly used interchangeably with Afrocentric, Afrocentricity, and Africentricity. Africana Studies scholar Molefi Asante coined the term Afrocentricity in the 1980s and has revised his definitions over the years. In his text, *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change*, Asante (1980, 1) asserts “Afrocentricity as a theory of change intends to re-locate the African person as subject, thus destroying the notion of being objects in the Western project of domination.” Asante applied this idea to both academia and everyday lived experience of people of African descent.

Black- People of African descent. Used interchangeably with African-American. I have come to spell the word Black with a capital “B” when referring to people of African descent. Black, spelled with a capital B in this sense, speaks to claimed identity, history and ideology.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I introduce my research project including overarching and specific research questions, research background, my standpoint as researcher/cultural insider, the statement of the problem, the statement of purpose, as well as the value and significance of the research. It concludes with a description of key terms used throughout the study. In the forthcoming chapter, *Pouring Libation*, I unpack additional key terms, which are also major concepts guiding and grounding this study, including *culture, identity, race, child/youth, performance/performativity, and agency*.

CHAPTER 2

POURING LIBATION (CONCEPTS AND CONTEXTS)

“Oh Ancestors”

Oh Ancestors

Blacker than the skies at midnight

Pyramid builders

Great ancient priests, warriors, and mystic scientists

Give us the inspiration to fight a thousand lions

Give us the enlightenment to unravel the mysteries of the universe

Give us the sustenance to travel through the trackless swamps of disharmony

Praised be your Black African names

Help us in our time of need

Oh Ancestors

Umoja¹⁴ (Hodari 2009, 321)

For New Afrikans, pouring libation is a conscious act to pay homage to their ancestors.

While water is poured either into the ground or a plant, a prayer, similar to the one above, is recited followed by the calling of (community and personal) ancestors' names. This calling of ancestors is more than the conjuring of dead spirits, it is the invitation of the energy and passion concerning Afrikan liberation that these (now dead) people exuded while living. In New Afrikan tradition, as well as many African traditions from which this New Afrikan practice stems, libation *must* occur *before* the commencement of any communal or private event. For example, libation is poured at the beginning of events such as Kwanzaa,¹⁵ graduation ceremonies, academic conferences, protests, or before embarking on a family road trip. In her text, *The African Book of Names*, Hodari (2009, 321) notes “the libation is not intended to be a solo

¹⁴ Swahili term meaning unity.

¹⁵ Kwanzaa is a holiday created by Africana Studies scholar and culture nationalist Maulana Karenga. Karenga once served as the Minister of Culture within the RNA. He created this holiday to celebrate, reaffirm and restore “the best of” African culture, “to strengthen community and to reaffirm common identity, purpose and direction as a people and a world community.” It is celebrated December 26-January 1. For more information visit The Official Kwanzaa Website, <http://www.officialkwanzaawebsite.org/origins1.shtml>, frequently updated by Karenga.

performance. Rather, there is a call and response as attendees verbally compliment the libation” by saying “ashe.”¹⁶ Libation practices are observed and respected, regardless of the individual religious beliefs/practices among a large group of New Afrikans. I pour libation to my scholarly predecessors in the forthcoming contextual mapping of the concepts that ground my research. I enter the conversation at this place and time because of their scholarship. This chapter, therefore, is at once an homage and a situating of my research within the larger and historical conceptual discourses surrounding this study.

In applying the theory of social constructionism, which argues that the ways in which phenomena, people and ideas are perceived is through an ongoing social context rather than natural law, I contend that the ways in which people experience and understand New Afrikan childhood depends upon historical and present intersections of social constructions of culture, identity, race, and childhood in the US. In this chapter I unpack the aforementioned concepts in addition to the terms performance, performativity and agency to simultaneously mark their socially constructed nature and (conversely) ground the principal subject of this study. As the figure below illustrates, I understand and conceptualize New Afrikan childhood through these intersecting concepts. This chapter also includes a discussion of Black childhood in the US and the construction of New Afrikan childhood. It concludes with a discussion of the intersecting notions of performativity, race, culture, identity, agency and childhood as a conceptual framework for the study.

¹⁶ Ashe, which can be also spelled “ase” is a Yoruba term meaning “so be it.” It is comparable to “Amen.”

Unpacking the Concepts

“Concepts do not transcend this life-world, mirroring its essence or revealing its underlying laws. They cannot get us above or outside experience, only move us from one domain to another, making connections” (Michael Jackson 1989, 1).

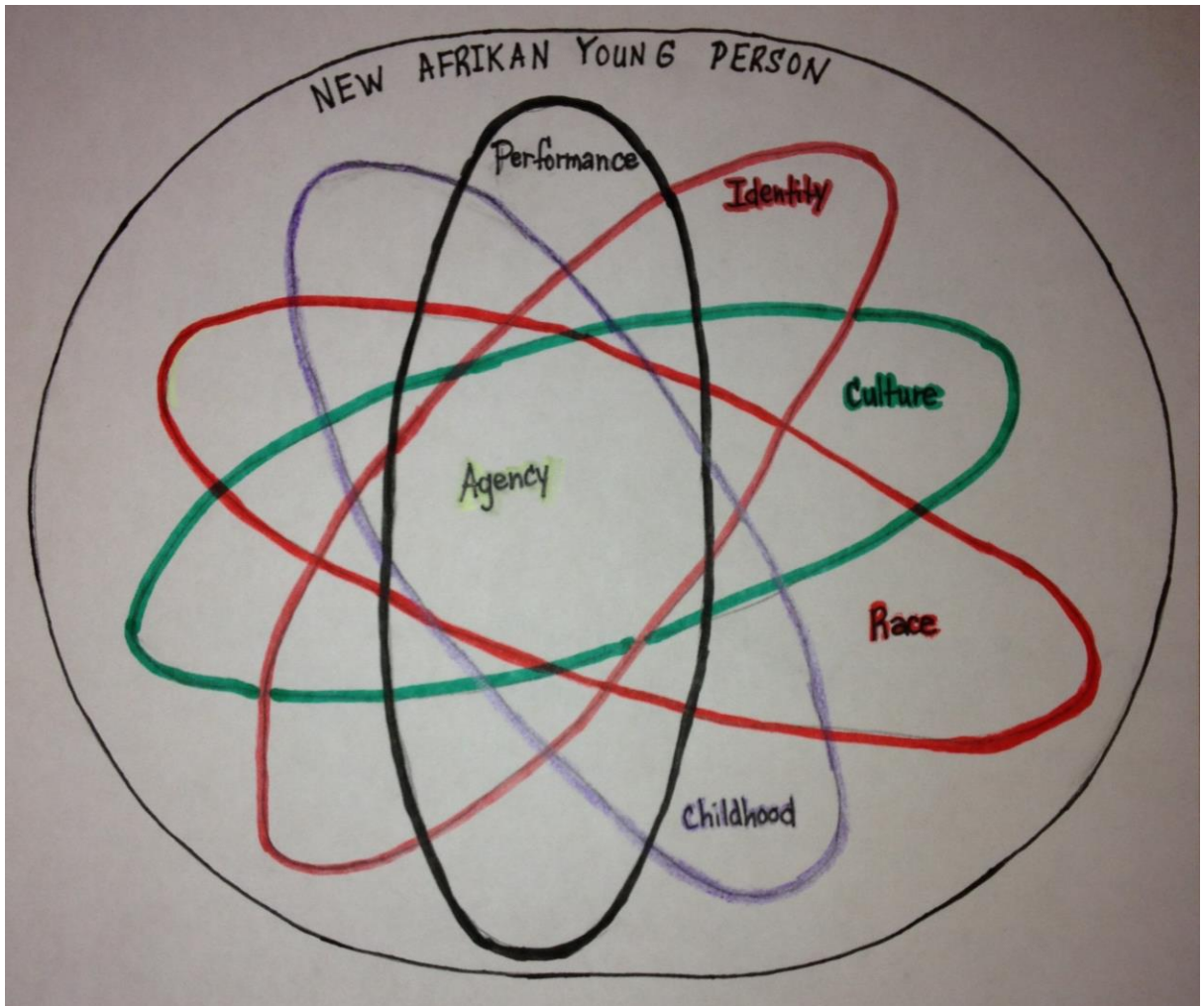


Figure 1. Conceptual Map

Culture

Culture is often defined and understood as “learned behavior,” way of life, or of behaving and understanding reality. In *The African Diaspora: A History through Culture*, scholar Patrick

Manning (2009, 19-20) moves beyond this definition and discusses culture in two contexts: “macro culture” of civilization (“the old definition”) and “micro culture” of cultural production and representation (“the new definition”). In his text, *Navigating World History: Historians Create a Global Past*, Manning (2003, 233) argues:

[T]he old definition treated “a culture” as an identifiable entity, a “complex whole” of beliefs, institutions and artifacts

[T]he new definition of culture focuses on the activities of cultural production and transformation. It centers on the struggles and ideas of individuals and groups of peoples and the interaction of their contradictory ideas. In these terms culture is ‘*the semantic space, the field of signs and practices in which human beings construct and represent themselves and others and hence their societies and history.*’ (emphasis added)

In this study I employ Manning’s idea of micro culture, the new definition. In discussing the ways in which culture is conceived in the discipline of cultural studies, John Fiske (2004, 1268) similarly argues that “meanings and the making of them (which together constitute culture) are indivisibly linked to social structure and can only be explained in terms of that structure and its history.” It is safe to say then that the RNA, a “semantic space” in which New Afrikans construct themselves, is “indivisibly linked” to America’s social structure and history. Thus, both the dominant and RNA culture are conduits through which identity and childhood are defined and understood for New Afrikans. Embedded in culture is ideology, described by Louis Althusser (2004, 693) as “the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence.” Like culture, ideology operates as a space in which meaning is made, yet, has a “material existence” that always manifests itself through actions and “practices” such as rituals and other repeated behaviors “inscribed, within the material existence of an ideological state

apparatus”¹⁷(Althusser 2004, 693). At this juncture culture intersects with performativity, identity, and agency (which I discuss in further detail below) as notions involving repeated creative actions that construct the self and groups (and the self as it relates to groups).

In regard to culture and domination, notions which lay at the heart of this study, Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (2004, 1234) assert:

mass culture [. . .] television, radio, film, and the like [are] instruments of economic, ethnic, and gender domination. Owned by large corporations and largely run by men, the media and entertainment industry in general cannot help but assist the reproduction of the social system by allowing only certain kinds of imagery and ideas to gain access to mass audiences.

Thus, mass culture in conjunction with ideological state apparatuses “produce in people the tendency to behave and think in socially acceptable ways” (Fiske 2004, 1269). “That which is socially acceptable,” Fiske (2004, 1270) argues, is “of course neither neutral nor objective; they have developed in the interests of those with social power, and they work to maintain their sites of power by naturalizing them.” With culture and ideology constituting “not only the sense of the world for us, but also our sense of ourselves, our sense of identity, and our sense of our relations to other people and to society in general,” largely negative and limited constructions of Blackness, and more specifically the naturalizing of white supremacy in the US, pervades (Fiske 2004, 1270). Moreover, Black people’s development of the RNA as “a means of resistance to such domination” and the construction of New Afrikan identity to make deeper, more balanced meanings of themselves and their reality have been crucial in their overall struggle to combat cultural hegemony.

¹⁷ Ideological state apparatuses include social institutions such as the family, the educational system, language, the media, the political system and so on.

Identity

Hummm

Identity—

It, is, uh... in a way it' sort of, it's uh...

It's a psychic sense of place

It's a way of knowing I'm not a rock or that tree?

And it's a way of knowing that no matter where I put myself

That I am not necessarily what is around me.

I am part of my surroundings and I become separate from them

And it's being able to make those differentiations clearly that let us have an identity

And what is inside our identity is everything that's ever happened to us.

Everything that's ever happened to us as well as our responses to it

'cause we might be alone in a trance state, someplace like the desert

and we begin to feel as though we are part of the desert—which we are right at that minute—but we are not the desert—and when we go home

we take with us that part of the desert that the desert gave us, but we are still not the desert.

It's an important differentiation to make because you don't know what you are giving if you don't know what you have

And you don't know what you are taking if you don't know what's yours and what's somebody else's. (Shange 1997, 11-12)

In their article, "Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory," Jan E. Stets and Peter Burke (2000, 225) posit "a social identity is a person's knowledge that he or she belongs to a social category or group." An individual, "over the course of his or her personal history, is a member of a unique combination of social categories; therefore the set of social identities

making up that person's self-concept is unique" (Stets and Burke 2000, 225). Stets and Burke go on to identify four major social identities: core identity, group based identity, role identity, and person identity, which, as they note, cannot be easily disentangled. The theories associated with each of these levels of identity are useful in my overall understanding of how identity functions; however, what I find particularly useful is their discussion of role based identity. Role based identity theory directly relates to this study; through roles played within the group New Afrikan young people come to make meaning of and simultaneously construct who they are. Role identity, according to Stets and Burke, concerns "the individual meanings of occupying a particular role and the behaviors that a person enacts in that role while interacting with others [and] if each role is to function, it must be able to rely on the reciprocity and exchange relation with other roles" (Stets and Burke 2000, 227). Being New Afrikan (young or old) is tightly bound to playing a very specific role within the New Afrikan community itself and within Black communities at large. The "speech act"¹⁸ of reciting the New Afrikan creed, pledge, and/or oath,¹⁹ is essentially a promise to the group (the RNA) to *perform* a role, in concert with other New Afrikans that positively contributes to the mission and goals of the Provisional Government of the RNA. Role identity, in this sense, directly correlates to performativity and Allison James' (2001, 41) discussion of agency as a process that involves "perceptions and actions that accompany a role as it relates to counter-roles."

As mentioned above, the various levels of identity laid out by Stets and Burke (2000) are not easily disentangled, and therefore cannot be used to adequately attend to the varied nuances associated with one's identity. Thus, the authors ultimately suggest "a merger of identity theory

¹⁸ In his text, *How to Do Things with Words*, J.L. Austin discusses language as performative utterances. He maintained the idea that "by saying something, we *do* something"

¹⁹ These documents can be found in the Appendices.

with social identity theory” which would “address agency and reflection, doing and being, behaviors and perceptions as central aspects of the self” (Stets and Burke 2000, 234). Similarly, Elizabeth Birr Moje and Allan Luke (2009, 416) maintain “identities are the outward, visible manifestation of the self and are always fragmented, partial and often in conflict, particularly with the subjectivity — or sense of self — that one builds over time.” Identities, they argue, “are not inherent in individuals but are only brought into being when recognized within a relationship or social context” (Moje and Luke 2000, 419). Identities consist of multiple dimensions, particularly social identities associated with ideology, ethnicity and race.

Race

In his article, *The Social Construction of Race*, Ian López (2004, 966) defines “‘race’ as a vast group of people loosely bound together by historically contingent, socially significant elements of their morphology and/or ancestry.” He goes on to argue that

Black and White are social groups, not genetically distinct branches of humankind

[R]ace is neither an essence nor an illusion, but rather an ongoing, contradictory, self-reinforcing, plastic process subject to the macro forces of social and political struggle and the micro effects of daily decisions (Lopez 2004, 966).

Equally significant are the ways in which people are perceived because of their race and in the Duboisian²⁰ sense how they perceive themselves through the lens of the dominant group. López argues that while “race must be viewed as a social construction,” it must not be seen simply as an illusion. It has real implications and “mediates every aspect of our lives” (Lopez 2004, 965).

²⁰ In the first line of his text *Souls of Black Folks* (1903) W.E.B. Dubois poses the question “How does it feel to be a problem? He goes on to talk about the ways in which “Black folk” in America experience the tensions within a double consciousness — seeing themselves through the lens of their own culture as well as through the dominant culture.

In the introduction to their text, *Critical Race Theory* (CRT), Delgado and Stefancic (2001) speak to this. In explaining the basic tenets of critical race theory they state that the first proposition is “that racism is ordinary, not aberrational—‘normal science,’ the usual way society does business, the common, everyday experience of most people of color in this country” (Delgado and Stefancic 2001, 7). This ordinariness, they explain, “means that racism is difficult to cure or address,” leading people to believe that racism does not exist and that being color-blind is a possibility (Delgado and Stefancic 2001, 7). They argue that color-blind conceptions of equality can “remedy only the most blatant forms of discrimination” (Delgado and Stefancic 2001, 7). Thus, covert forms of racism, which have been embedded in US American culture, are perceived as “normal” and are therefore not addressed. Since the 2008 election and 2012 re-election of Barack Obama, coined as “the first Black president of the US,” academic and nonacademic discourse regarding the notion of post-race has tremendously increased. While many oppose this notion, the idea that US society has moved beyond race is met with a substantial amount of support. Given my earlier discussion concerning the real implications of the social construct of race, I agree with Manning’s (2003, 233) assertion that “racial identity is not about to disappear.” Furthermore, as poet, activist and scholar Audre Lorde posits “too often, we pour the energy needed for recognizing and exploring difference into pretending those differences are insurmountable barriers, or that they do not exist at all” (2001, 316). Since the days of chattel slavery a disproportionate amount of Black people in the US have been in a perpetual cycle of worsening conditions, regarding employment, prison, education, disease, etc. While desires to move beyond race may seem well meaning, the current construction of a “post-racial” America goes hand in hand with the normalizing of racism. Thus, the notion of “post-race” supports the dominant ideology, which continuously oppresses and denigrates Blacks and

others who are Othered by virtue of their race. In her article, *Twenty Years of Critical Race Theory: Looking Back To Move Forward*, Kimberlé Crenshaw, a leading scholar on critical race theory for over twenty years, examines the myriad intersecting circumstances out of which CRT developed in the 1980s and its eerie resemblance to contemporary narratives of race and racism in US America. She writes

certain dimensions of this moment rehearse dynamics that produced CRT in the 1980s. Then, as now, racial constituencies were confronting doctrinal and political retreats that severely limited the scope of civil rights advocacy. Then, as now, both liberal visions of race reform and radical critiques of class hierarchy failed in different ways to address the institutional, structural and ideological reproduction of racial hierarchy. Then, as now, the collapse of racial barriers convinced many advocates and laypersons alike that fundamental transformation was at hand. Then, as now, racial progress was associated with an accommodationist orientation to the terms of racial power rather than a sustained collective contestation of it. (1262)

Crenshaw goes on to discuss the ways in which the contemporary moment provides opportunities within and outside of the academy for “interdisciplinary, intersectional and cross-institutional” counter-narratives to post-racialism that not only illuminate systemic racial power but that also offers an account of the critical tools that have been developed to potentially dismantle and weaken the post racial narrative up to this moment. In the forthcoming discussion of the major observations within the research sites I examine how New Afrikan adults utilize the contemporary moment in ways that parallel Crenshaw’s assertion.

Child/Childhood

The term ‘child’ is socially constructed primarily through the categorization of age. Therefore, a child is generally understood as a young person, a person under seventeen, eighteen or twenty one years of age, depending on the society. In many societies, particularly those of the West, young people are understood as incomplete beings due the idea that they have not had ongoing years of life experience. In *Childhood and Society: Growing Up in an Age of Uncertainty*, Lee (2001, 5) cites Qvortrup who critically captured the nature of the division consistently drawn between adults and children

. . . as one between adult ‘human beings’ and child ‘human becomings.’ The human being is, or should be, capable of independent thought and action, an independence that merits respect. The human becoming, on the other hand, is changeable and incomplete and lacks the self-possession and self-control that would allow it the independence of thought and action that merits respect. The division between beings and becomings is that between the complete and independent and the incomplete and dependent.

He goes on to argue, later in his text,

[T]he plausibility of the being/becoming distinction rests on the social and economic conditions that gave rise to the standard adult and to the developmental state. Essentially then . . . The being/becoming division is a product of historical development and that, as such, it is open to change.” (Lee (2001, 5)

Recent “global economic, political and social changes” have caused these categories to come widely under question, particularly with regard to adults. However, it is important to note that the historical category of being and becoming has not been the reality for many people of color, women, same gender loving, and lower class people in the US. Dark skinned adults (regardless

of ethnicity) are and have been treated consistently as becomings by the larger society that views them as incomplete because they do not fit within one or a combination of the aforementioned identity constructs. Children of color, in particular, are not treated as innocent or in need of protection. Historically, they have had to take on “adult” responsibilities, and have been fully immersed in/at the forefront of “adult” activities. These children are concurrently treated as “adults” and constructed as incomplete beings. The notion of “becoming” has some advantages. As my discussion of performance and agency reveal young people and adults alike by the very nature of existing, simultaneously being and becoming, are at every moment presented with opportunities to change. New Afrikan young people in particular can utilize the framing of “becoming” to reinvent identity and locate themselves in opposition to oppressive structures of domination that view them as incomplete.

In *Childhood and American Society*, Sternheimer (2010, vi-vii) identifies three central themes concerning children, childhood and the social constructions of childhood: 1) What is the preferred meaning of childhood? 2) Children are not simply sponges; and 3) Children are not always passive, innocent and vulnerable. These themes are explored throughout this study and particularly in the remaining discussions of Black childhood, New Afrikan childhood, and agency. In this study I explicitly use the term “young people” or “young person” in the effort to embrace the notion of regarding young people as full beings and to reject the limited and often negative connotations associated with the term “child.”

Black Childhood

“The concept of a group of young people who were entitled to special treatment because they were impetuous and immature was never extensive enough to include African American children” (Nunn 2002, 679). In fact, the very being of Blackness itself for both adults and young

people is a complicated concept described by Critical Sociologist Jared Sexton (2010, 12-13) as “the strange experience of ‘being a problem:’ not *causing* a problem with one’s act or even *posing* a problem with one’s demand, but *being* a problem in one’s very existence.” In his articles “The Social Life of Social Death” and “The Curtain of the Sky,” Sexton unpacks several of Fanon’s major ideas from his text *Black Skin, White Masks*. Sexton writes that Fanon “not only extends” but “radicalizes the DuBoisian concept of ‘double consciousness.’” In the Fanonian sense, Sexton posits, Black people experience “more than Black inferiority [or “negrophobia”] but a feeling of not existing” (2010, 12). For Black children this feeling of non-existence extends to their status as children, making them, as Nunn argues, “bearers of a dual otherness.” Concerning the being of non-existence, Sexton (2013, 7) poses a series of questions:

What is the nature of a form of being that presents a problem for the thought of being itself?

More precisely, what is the nature of a human being whose human being is put into question radically and by definition, a human being whose being human raises the questions of being human at all?

What is the being of a problem?

The existence of being Black and a young person is complicated further by myriad interlocking identity constructs, including but not limited to: ability, sexuality, class, and gender. With regard to gender, adults (of diverse ethnicities) often construct and treat Black girls as more “deserving,” less “wild” and less threatening than Black boys which simultaneously renders Black girls less cool and less desirable by their peers. In his article “Black Boys Have an Easier Time Fitting In at Suburban Schools Than Black Girls” Aboubacar Ndiaye (2013) explores how “urban signifiers” translate, serve and disserve Black young people in suburban environments. He contends that Black boys are rewarded and accepted by peers (boys and girls of varying ethnic backgrounds) for

playing into stereotypes about Black males such as being angry, tough and outspoken, while Black girls are considered “ghetto” and rejected for displaying aggression and/or openly expressing their feelings. In addition, Black girls, particularly in these settings, are measured against white standards of beauty and femininity which further complicate Black girls’ ability to integrate socially and to see themselves healthy and whole, beyond the constructs against which they are measured. While Black boys’ suburban experiences include some challenges, they obtain valuable skills in code switching and benefit socially from performing stereotypical Blackness for their peers and adults.

In urban and predominately Black environments Black young people are constructed by others and see themselves through the lens of dominant (white) culture, which plays out in innumerable ways. Through culture, or as Althusser argues, through ideological state apparatuses, both adults and young people receive messages about their existence (or non-existence) that are so embedded in the culture that they cannot see their beginning, end or underlying causes. For many Black people, white bias and “negrophobia²¹” are normalized “business as usual” and ordinary. This very reality created the RNA, and particularly youth organizations and programs such as the NAS and Camp Pumziko, which function within the RNA to demystify and call attention to the ordinariness of white hegemony and redefine Black identity.

New Afrikan Childhood

Providing *the* definition of a New Afrikan child and/or New Afrikan childhood is a slippery and ultimately impossible endeavor. Of course, I could provide a definition or even list

²¹ Developed in Fanon’s (1952) work *Black Skin White Mask*, negrophobia refers to the ways in which Europeans within systems of colonialism associated negative attributes with Black people. Fanon examined negrophobia as a phenomenon that impacted Black people as well, as they would internalize the colonialists’ view. Fanon explored how negrophobia extends beyond internalized thoughts and is thus actualized and used as a justification for the colonization, oppression, and marginalization of Black people).

a set of characteristics. However, what I find to be a more fruitful and interesting endeavor is the exploration of the ways in which New Afrikan childhood is constructed (by adults) within the New Afrikan community. While I have consulted and cited various texts throughout this research process, what I present here does not — and for the purposes of this project, cannot — include the varied notions expressed in the extensive body of literature concerning the RNA and New Afrikan/African-centered children. Furthermore, I do not attempt to explain and/or describe the lived experiences of the countless New Afrikan children in US America. This discussion reflects my examination of written documents such as the Declaration of Independence, the New Afrikan Creed and statements written about New Afrikan children on the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement website.

While there are various documents and texts that have been written by and about citizens of the RNA since its inception in the late 1960s, I narrowed my field to the Declaration of Independence, the New Afrikan Creed and the New Afrikan Oath. These statements of intent were written in the late 1960s and as such have particular resonance in the history and current state of the RNA. Although these texts speak to the importance of seeking to “promote the personal dignity and integrity of the individual” and “self-respect and mutual understanding among all people in the society,” they do not explicitly talk about children (New Afrikan Declaration of Independence). When young people *are* discussed they are constructed as in danger, victims of a chaotic system and incomplete (See Chapters 4 and 5). These notions are not specific to the construction of New Afrikan children but extend to Black children in general. This is particularly evident in texts such as *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys* (1992), *Developing Positive Self Images and Discipline in Black Children* (1984), *Awakening the Natural Genius of Black Children* (1991) and *Understanding Black Adolescent Male Violence:*

Its Remediation and Prevention (1991). These texts, written by prominent Afrocentric scholars Jawanza Kunjufu and Amos Wilson on the subject of Black children in US America use the term Black and Afrikan interchangeably when referring to children and adults of African descent. What they have in common is that they construct the Black child in a state of crisis, and stress not only the importance of positive Afrikan cultural reinforcement in the home but also a culturally relevant school curriculum.

While these scholars attempt to have a careful discussion of the ways in which white supremacy impacts Black childhood, others, such as Dr. Frances Cress Welsing (1991) and Dr. Laila Afrika (2009), principally view and construct the Black child as future saviors of the Black race. Welsing (1991, 239) argues, “Black children are our most valuable possession and our greatest potential resource. Any meaningful discussion of the survival or the future of Black people must be predicated upon Black people’s plan for the maximal development of all Black children.” While these notions are not unique — children are viewed and treated as hope for the future in many societies — it is highly problematic to view children primarily as “possessions” and foot soldiers for Afrikan liberation. In their texts, *The Isis Papers* and *Handbook for Raising Black Children*, Welsing and Afrika construct Black children as victims, in trouble, needing to be saved from poverty, drugs, abuse and violence. In addition these scholars contend that Black children are prone to a future filled with all things negative if we (adults) do not save them. While these texts (Welsing, Dr. Afrika and the like) are not a part of the Africana Studies academic canon, they are very much a part of the nonacademic Afrocentric community/household texts that many use as guides for teaching and/or rearing children of African descent. What I also find problematic is the fact that in his text, Dr. Afrika positions Black children as superior to all other children and throughout the text juxtaposes Black

children's cognitive and cultural development with that of white children. Doing this seems to be a way of projecting onto youth the opposite of what has been projected onto Black people since the days of chattel slavery. This narrative of Black child superiority is also a projection of his romanticized idea of what Africans were in "ancient" pre-colonial Africa (e.g. *all* Africans were exceedingly intelligent kings and queens). His analysis does not take into account the accuracy of historical accounts of pre-colonial African life, the cultural diversity within the continent of Africa, as well as the hundreds of years, circumstances, etc. that have and continue to reshape what it means to be African/Afrikan.

New Afrikans and African-centered scholars actively seek to challenge cultural hegemony and Western socially constructed notions, however the project of the scholarship has neglected to include an acknowledgement and/or challenge of socially constructed notions of childhood. In embracing Childhood Studies' ontological claim that children must be viewed in fullness as human beings I am interested in the following:

- New Afrikan young people's perceptions of the Republic of New Afrika (and that which it is in opposition to, white supremacy/cultural hegemony/capitalism etc.)
- The ways in which New Afrikan young people's perceptions of the RNA differ from and/or coincide with how it is constructed by adults
- What lies between the binary oppositions of (or in what ways does performing New Afrikan identity into being produce) a culturally competent child who is a critical thinker with high self-esteem, and/or a child who has a bias toward whites and America?
- How New Afrikan young people embody the sometimes narrow and strong perspectives of their adult teachers and/or merge these perspectives with their lived experiences with concepts and people outside of New Afrikan ideology.

- The spaces in-between agency and conformity for New Afrikan children.

I proceed in this research with an understanding that there is no *one* New Afrikan child, thus there is not *a* New Afrikan experience of childhood but rather experiences that vary from child to child, household to household, and state to state. While erasing socially constructed notions is impossible, particularly those of childhood, awareness is fundamental to fully exploring children's experiences and perceptions. Opening up the ways in which we think about children, how they experience their worlds (and the complexity with which they experience and make sense of their experiences) allows for a more nuanced approach to and understanding of New Afrikan childhood.

Performance and Performativity

Within and certainly outside the field of Performance Studies, performance is “referred to as a “contested concept” because as a concept, method, event, and practice it is variously envisioned and employed” (Madison and Hamera 2005, xi). Definitions and descriptions of performance include, but are not limited to, a dramatic piece of art, a theatrical presentation, and any repeated act and/or embodied practice ranging from acting in a stage play to engaging in one's nightly dinner ritual. Many “Performance Studies scholars see all of social reality as constructed by ‘Doings’ — actions, behaviors and events” (Komitee 2011, 2). As it relates to this study, and identity in particular “performativity,” a term closely related to performance and derived from J. L. Austin's notion of “speech acts” and “performative utterances,” refers to the ways in which identity is constructed through repeated expressive actions. Performativity, in this sense, is identity performance. Judith Butler (1990), a pivotal scholar in this school of thought, applied this notion to gender, arguing gender is socially iterated and therefore a performed identity. According to Butler, fixed notions of how to do things are inculcated from one's

cultural environment and women “play the part” of scripted roles already operative in their societies; thus, gender is a performative act. The same can be said for other socially constructed identities including childhood and race.

Komitee posits “race is a performative act whereby cultural narratives are branded, removed, and reimposed on bodies that do not of themselves possess specific meaning. The body is a stage on which socially-determined meanings are formed, practiced, repeated, changed and passed on” (2011, 13). Hence, similar to Simone de Beauvoir’s (1949, 283) assertion that “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman,” one is not born Black or New Afrikan for that matter; one becomes Black, one becomes New Afrikan. Therefore, New Afrikans are in a continual state of being and becoming and are only New Afrikan, Afrikan or African-centered to the extent to which they perform those roles into being. At the same time, New Afrikan identity performance is rooted in a culture in search of scripts of liberation, a culture through which performances of New Afrikan identity are an explicit act to move beyond socially constructed notions of Blackness and, in the case of New Afrikan young people, of childhood as well. In his article, “Black Performance Studies: Genealogies, Politics, Futures,” E. Patrick Johnson (2005, 446) explores Black performance as a mode of resistance and interrogates the notions of Black and performance, arguing “these terms are both degenerative in that to a degree, they represent a double bluff — their face value always promising more than they can provide. They are also generative forces, pressed into service to create and demarcate cultural meaning.” Thus, “Black performance” (i.e., New Afrikan identity performance) “has the potential of simultaneously forestalling and enabling social change” (Johnson 2005, 446). In this study, I am concerned with this very notion: how does New Afrikan young people’s performance (repeated expressive actions within the cultural and ideological space that is New Afrika) forestall and enable social

change, particularly the change that New Afrikan ideology claims to seek (self-determination, critical thinking, liberation from oppression, etc.)? In attending to this question, I briefly trace the history of Black performance as a site of resistance and a conduit for expression and change.

Performance in the African context, particularly in precolonial African societies, was “couched in action-centered ceremonies, rituals, and incantations told through storytelling or dance-drama” (Kennedy 1973, 73). Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o (1999, xiii) notes that “pre-colonial African performances were always communal,” taking place at festivals, rites of passage ceremonies, as well as arenas where “there was a constant exchange between those performing at the center of the arena and those watching at the edges.” It was “a meeting ground for ideas and sharing community culture through performance” (Byam 1999, 231). Various elements of performance served “as an act of remembrance and celebration” helping “to unite the community by reminding it of ancestral beliefs and shared history” (Hill 1992, 16).

Drama, like any other art form, is created and executed within a specific physical environment. It naturally interacts with that environment, is influenced by it, influences that environment in turn and acts together with the environment in the larger and far more complex history of society. (Soyinka 1976,134)

Given this understanding, colonialism and especially colonial capitalism, inevitably changed theatre/performance for Africans on the continent and subsequently throughout the Diaspora. On the continent and throughout the MAAFA,²² “African theatre in the colonial period reveals itself as largely a history of cultural resistance and survival” (Soyinka 1976, 134). During

²² Swahili term meaning “Great Disaster,” also known as African or Black Holocaust which refers to the enslavement and ongoing effects of colonialism and chattel slavery on people of African descent throughout the Diaspora. Dr. Marimba Ani introduced this term to Africana communities and scholarship in her book, *Let The Circle Be Unbroken* (1989).

the Middle passage²³ voyage from Africa, enslaved Blacks were forced to act, dance, and entertain their captor crews on the decks of the slave ships. Upon their arrival in the “New World,” enslaved Africans continued to involuntarily provide amusement for white spectators “on plantations, city squares, and riverboats throughout the South” (Anderson and Stewart 2007, 322). Africans “despite the disjuncture of slavery, had retained aspects of inherited African traditions, adapted to their new environment and conditions of livelihood” producing a new “performance culture” (Hill 1992, 216). This performance culture included traditional aspects of African performance as well as carefully strategized performances of resistance and survival, which ranged from entertaining themselves by mimicking the mannerisms, walking, and talking styles of their enslavers to feigning illness to escape harsh working conditions.

Post emancipation, minstrelsy²⁴ lost popularity and Black performance, more specifically known as “black theatre[,] evolved as a reappropriation and redefinition of white-controlled theatrical images of African Americans” (Krasner 2002, 15). This evolution carried on through the Harlem Renaissance,²⁵ the Black Arts Movement,²⁶ and the contemporary moment. Like their Black and African performance artist predecessors, New Afrikan young people use performance in a theatrical way to express, dialogue, and facilitate community unification. In

²³ The forced voyage (across the Atlantic ocean) of enslaved Africans from Africa to the Americas.

²⁴ A style of performance in which whites (and Blacks) would apply black makeup to their faces (Blackface) and engage in stereotypical imitations of Blacks as lazy, shiftless, simple, dialect-speaking people with kinky hair, big eyes and large lips.

²⁵ A cultural movement centered in Harlem, a predominantly Black community in Manhattan, New York from the 1920s to late 1930s.

²⁶ A movement pioneered by Larry Neal and Amiri Baraka and a host of other Black scholar activists and artists in 1969. Starting on the northeast coast and spreading throughout the US, it was known as “the aesthetic and spiritual sister of the Black Power concept” “The Black aesthetic” Neal and Baraka argued, has a motive, which is “the destruction of white ideas, and white ways of looking at the world.” (*Fire and Ice*)

addition, New Afrikan young people employ a Black performance of survival and resistance against oppression via the research sites of this study.

Agency

In their article “What Is Agency?” Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische (1998) seek to do what “many theorists have failed to,” which is to distinguish and show the interplay between different dimensions of agency. Emirbayer and Mische (1998, 963) aim to “reconceptualize human agency as a temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented toward the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment).” Agency, much like Black performance and New Afrikanity, is therefore always in development and contingent upon previous experiences and anticipated potentialities of the intertwined present and future.

As it relates to young people, Allison James (2011, 42) identifies “children’s agency” as “their ability to act creatively and to make things happen.” She goes on to say that “the agent is someone who does something with other people, and, in so doing, makes things happen, thereby contributing to wider processes of social and cultural reproduction” (James 2011, 41). Thus, New Afrikan young people do not merely inherit a structure that they passively live within but actively engage with and change at every turn. Young people and adults within New Afrika always already act in conjunction with each other. Given the (temporal) circumstances and standpoint of the co-constructors, New Afrikan young people have the capacity to co-construct New Afrikan childhood and an identity performance that responds to, changes and reproduces the structure at the same time. In this regard New Afrikan young people, through their role based identities, have the ability to “creatively act” and co-construct their reality. In Chapters 5 and 7, I

inquire of young people's access to their capacity and/or ability to act. I specifically discuss the ways in which adults influence this capacity and the need for alternative models, which recognize young people's agency, promote their autonomy and create "space and opportunity for children to act responsibly, rather than simply follow directions" (Smith 2009, 259).

Chapter Summary-Conceptual Framework

In this chapter I review existent literature of concepts — culture, identity, race, childhood, performance, performativity, and agency — which together serve as the framework through which I approach this study. Individually, none of these concepts could be applied to fully explore the myriad of nuances inherent in a young person's New Afrikan identity performance. *All* of the concepts, as they intersect, interact and overlap, guide my research questions and the ways in which I observe, understand and analyze New Afrikan identity performance. In the next chapter I discuss my research methodology, participant demographics, interview processes, in addition to data collection and analysis procedures.

CHAPTER 3

MBINU (METHODOLOGY)

My methodological approach to this research is guided by the Afrocentric Idea, which is “a moral as well as an intellectual location that posits Africans as subjects rather than as objects of human history” (Asante 1998, xiii). In his text, *The Afrocentric Idea* (1998, 1-2) Asante describes Afrocentricity as “a theory of change that intends to re-locate the African person as subject, thus destroying the notion of being objects in the Western project of domination[,] placing African ideals at the center of any analysis that involves African culture and behavior.” While I believe it can be useful to examine African culture through a Eurocentric lens and through concepts developed within European contexts, in this analysis I explicitly employ a decolonizing research methodology and privilege texts written by people of African descent that place people of African descent at the center of their analysis to illuminate aspects of New Afrikan experiences which are not and cannot be accounted for solely through Western lenses.

Research Method and Study Design

I employ Amira De la Garza’s (2001) Four Seasons of Ethnography (Four Seasons) methodological approach. Similar to and deriving from grounded theory and other qualitative ethnographic methodological approaches, Four Seasons methodology does not seek to study phenomena or people through a particular theoretical and/or conceptual lens, but rather to allow the study’s findings to reveal how a particular phenomenon or cultural group works. The Four Seasons includes all phases of research from preparing to enter the field (spring), to gathering and experiencing data (summer), generating meaning of data (autumn), and documenting the

findings (winter). During each season the researcher is encouraged to be guided by an organic research process and find order in the signs and signals existent in the research environment.

In exposing and exploring “taken-for-granted ontologically rooted structures” popular in academic research and discourse, Four Seasons “acknowledges the *human instrument*, the researcher as a whole person, as the means of collecting, synthesizing, and analyzing data” (De la Garza 2001, 635). Unlike traditional Western research methodologies and approaches Four Seasons recognizes that “a profound awareness and understanding of the nature of the constructed boundaries of one’s own identity and personal experience is critical to being an effective ‘human instrument’” (De la Garza 2001, 635). As a member (‘cultural insider’) of the New Afrikan community that I am studying, I embrace this awareness as a necessary component of the research process. Employing this approach particularly aids me in my efforts to lay out my experiences, assumptions and preconceived notions as influences on the ways in which I view, experience and interpret the data so closely related to my own identity and personal experiences. I also employ Four Seasons as a decolonizing methodology due to the fact that the population I study has always and continues to operate within a decolonizing ideology. In her text, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Smith (1999, 3-4) argues that research should be deconstructed and decolonized, not only to retell or give “voice to things that are often known intuitively” but also to explore the in between of the binary oppositions of acquiescence and resistance to which many colonized people subscribe and/or are placed within by researchers (inside or outside of the given community). A decolonizing methodological approach or what Asante (1998, xiii) would call “a moral as well as an intellectual location that posits Africans as subjects rather than as objects of human history” is most appropriate for my research interests

and population. The Four Seasons methodology not only stems from Asante and Smith's thought but builds upon it.

De la Garza (2001, 628) contends:

The Four Seasons methodology does not assume to introduce new methods, per se, but rather to demonstrate the application of a variety of already familiar ethnographic methods, along with other familiar methods from introspective and analytic traditions, *when rooted in a wholistic ontology of circular order*. What results is a research process and outcome that is intentionally and necessarily both personally and academically tentative and dynamic.

Results, or the study's findings, are thus conveyed "with *tentative certainty*, a paradoxical term which" shows "respect for the power of nature to determine circumstances or 'facts' of our human experience." When engaged in the Four Seasons research method "'new ideas,' are only 'new' in that they revisit where we have already been . . . Theory is not to be refuted or disproven, but contextualized and amplified" (De la Garza 2001, 628).

My study design, and consequently the design of this entire document from start to finish, exemplifies De la Garza's articulation of the Four Seasons research processes. This is particularly evident in my conceptual mapping and framework section and in the naming/framing of my "conclusions" section as *Pumziko*, which means a moment of pause, as my study's findings will not enable me to draw conclusions but instead to further "contextualize" and "amplify" the theoretical concepts that guide the study, as they relate to young people's performances of New Afrikan identity.

In designing this study I constructed a recruitment survey (Appendix D) which asks a series of identifying questions and an interview questionnaire. In the survey I ask participants to

disclose their racial /ethnic identity. In the interview I remind them of how they identified and ask to them to “tell me more about that.” From this discussion I compiled a list of identities, which I placed on the blackboard for focus group interview participants to define/discuss. Our discussion reflected *their* naming and understanding of themselves and thus their performances of that naming and understanding. In addition to interviews I observed classes and NAS meetings with the agenda to allow what lies at the heart of this community to naturally emerge. The study participants include members of the Atlanta, GA chapter of the NAS and students at Kilombo Academic and Cultural Institute (Kilombo). I chose the NAS organization and Kilombo as primary sites for this study due to the fact New Afrikan ideology and identity are produced and reproduced for children within this community through this organization and institute. I recruited approximately twenty five students from 2nd through 8th grade, all four of the lead teachers, and one assistant teacher. The recruitment letters I gave to students also included an invitation for their parents to participate. Two of the lead teachers, also the co-directors of the institute, collectively have four children attending the institute and therefore, for the purposes of this study, count as parents as well.

Data Collection: Methods, Procedures and Analysis

I collected data through individual and focus group interviews, surveys, observations, and participant observation. I conducted fieldwork from June 2012 to August 2013. The three sites through which research data were collected included Camp Pumziko, Kilombo and the New Afrikan Scouts Organization which were physically housed in Atlanta, Lithonia, Rutledge, and/or Pine Mountain, GA. During the months of June and July 2012, I attended the NAS weekly meetings, held every Saturday morning in Lithonia, GA. I attended Camp Pumziko, the

NAS' annual outdoor sleep-away survival camp, August 2-4, 2012. From August to December I observed meetings and classes at Kilombo and conducted both individual and focus group interviews with students, parents and teachers. During this time I conducted twenty-three interviews (twenty individual interviews and three focus group interviews). On May 27, 2013 I returned to Lithonia, GA and conducted three one hour Theatre for Social Change (TFSC) workshops, through which participants further explored the identities they previously defined/discussed. These workshops included the completion of identity wheels (by 6-8th grade only), theatre games and discussion which was audio recorded (see Appendix M). Adding TFSC games and techniques such as Image and Forum Theatre provided alternative spaces for expression. It allowed participants who were previously reluctant to speak to share, as well as participants who spoke to the complexity and struggle of verbally articulating their feelings (particularly regarding their identities). I observed end of school year events on May 29 and 30 and I returned to Camp Pumziko from July 22 to 25.

Participant Demographics

Thirty one individuals from Kilombo and the NAS organization were screened to be interviewed and observed for this study. Twenty one individuals were interviewed while over fifty individuals were observed in all three sites (Kilombo, NAS and Camp Pumziko). The ten individuals, which consisted of one teacher and nine children, were absent during interview times and/or did not have parental consent to be interviewed. The following information was collected through "adult" and "child" demographic surveys.

Participant gender breakdown:

- 13 males (5 adult and 8 children)
- 8 females (4 adult and 4 children)

Participant age breakdown:

Adults were asked to choose one of the following: “18-25,” “26-40,” “41-55” or “55 or older.”

There are nine adult participants in this study.

One participant is between the ages of 18-25

Six participants are between the ages of 26-40

One participant is 55 or older

Young people were asked to list their age.

There are twelve young participants in this study.

Young people’s ages are as follows:

four 9-year-olds, two 10-year-olds, two 11-year-olds, two 12-year-olds and two 13-year-olds.

Participant racial/ethnic identity breakdown:

Young people and adults were asked to list their “racial/ethnic identity.”

Four participants listed “Afrikan”

Four participants listed “Black”

One participant listed “Tanzania”

One participant listed “Smart Kid”

Six participants listed “African”

Two participants listed “New Afrikan”

One participant listed “New African”

One participant listed “African American” and

One participant listed “Africoid.”

Participant Profiles

These details (e.g., ages, number of years teaching, etc.) reflect the time of the interviews (Fall 2012). With the exception of two adults, all participants chose pseudonyms to protect their identity at the time of their interview. Identifiers and other self-descriptions listed by participants on the demographic surveys are included below as direct quotes to capture and honor the participants’ voices.

Adult Participant Profiles

Blessed Beloved is an Academic Advisor who lives in Decatur, GA. She has two children, one of whom attends Kilombo. She is single and in between the ages of 26-40. She identifies herself racially and culturally as an “Afrikan” and ethnically as a “New Afrikan.”

Mama Masharike is one of the founders of Kilombo. She recently took on the role of co-director of the school and has served as a lead teacher for the entire eight years of Kilombo's existence. She teaches "all core subjects" for grades six through eight. Three of her four children attend Kilombo. She is married, between the ages of 26-40 and lives in Lithonia, GA. She identifies as "African."

Mama Nehanda is in between the ages of 26-40. She identifies as "New Afrikan" and resides in Lithonia, GA. Her mother, Mama Imani, founded Kilombo, along with Mama Masharike and recruited her to join the teaching staff two years later. For the past six years Mama Nehanda has taught kindergarten through second grade RLA, Math, Science and Social Studies. She is married and has two children, who not only attend Kilombo but are her students as well.

Ngolo is Mama Masharike's husband and father of their four children. Although he taught Afrikan language at Kilombo for a short while he currently teaches at a charter middle school in Atlanta, GA. He identifies as "African," is in between the ages of 26-40 and resides in Lithonia, GA.

Night Bird who identifies as "Black" resides in Atlanta, GA with his wife and infant child. He is a lead Mathematics and Science teacher at Kilombo and, although he has only taught there for one year, he has eight years of teaching experience in both African-centered and public school systems. He is in between the ages of 26-40.

Baba Ras Kofi, an Atlanta resident, is in between the ages of 26-40 and identifies as an "African." He is married with five children and has been teaching for sixteen years. For the past year he has taught Language Arts, Social Studies, Math, and Gardening at Kilombo. His son, Kutu Kafatulu, attends Kilombo.

Star is a teacher and served as leader and organizer in the relaunching of the Atlanta chapter of the NAS Organization, which had been functionally nonexistent for over ten years. She is married with two daughters, identifies as “New Afrikan” and is in between the ages of 26-40. At the time of the interview her daughters had recently attended Camp Pumziko and were members of the NAS Organization.

Zayd Malik is a local Atlanta rap artist and musician. He is in between the ages of 26-40, identifies as “Black” and is married with two sons. His eldest son attends Kilombo. He and his family reside in Decatur, GA.

Baba Kwame is “55 or older,” identifies as “Africoid” and is one of the founders of Camp Pumziko. For the past fifteen years he has led the overnight survival portion of the Camp Pumziko experience. Proudly wearing the title of “New Afrikan Womanist,” Baba Kwame makes it his priority to combat patriarchy and does his best to ensure that leadership and responsibility is equally divided amongst adults and young people who attend and/or work with the camp in any capacity. He has one son who also volunteers at the annual camp events. He is a consultant who resides in Decatur, GA.

Young Participant Profiles

Addison McKnight is a nine year old fourth grader and identifies as “Black.” He has four siblings and outside of Kilombo likes to “practice skateboarding.”

Ase Kuumba is an eleven year old sixth grader who takes seventh grade math. She identifies as “Black” and resides in Lithonia, GA with her parents, Mama Masharike and Ngolo, and her three siblings. In response to the survey question “Are you a member of the New Afrikan Scouts?” she responded “no, I go to camp, my mama was.” Activities that she is involved in

outside of Kilombo include “soccer, AHAP Afrikan Heretige after school program, capoeira and sometimes dance.”

Daughter Intellect is a sixth grade eleven year old who identifies as “Afrikan.” She resides in Stone Mountain, GA and has five siblings. She says “I like to dance and take performing arts classes. I also teach my sister how to dance.”

David Stohl Von is a thirteen year old eighth grader. He identifies as “Afrikan” and lives in Jonesboro, GA. He has seven siblings and enjoys “swimming, talking, facebook, twitter, hangin’ out, being awesome, and other stuff.”

Faze Kraazy is ten years old and in the sixth grade. He identifies as “Afrikan” and lives in “DeKalb, Georgia.” He has been a member of the NAS Organization for three years and is also involved with “FTP, MXGM, Guerilla Republik, and Faze,” other grassroots organizations in the Atlanta area. He has four siblings.

Hershy’s Chocolate is a nine year old fourth grader. When asked about her racial/ethnic identity she replied “I don’t know.” She resides in Atlanta, GA with her parents (her mother is Star) and her sister (Rainbow Dash). She has been a member of the NAS Organization for one year.

Jaylan is thirteen and in the seventh grade. He identifies as “African” and lives in Lithonia, GA. He has “3/2” siblings and enjoys “all sports.”

Kai is a nine year old fourth grader. He resides in Atlanta, GA and has three siblings. When asked about his racial/ethnic identity he responded “Tanzania,” which is the East African country of his birth. In addition to his studies at Kilombo he takes guitar lessons.

Kutu Kafutolu is in the seventh grade and is twelve years old. He racially/ethnically identifies as “black/Native American/Muslim” and resides in Atlanta, GA. He has five siblings

and in relation to activities outside of school he says “I gonna start doing rugby, ultimate Frisbee, and swimming.”

Lil-E is in the fourth grade and nine years old. He identifies as “African” and resides in Stone Mountain, GA. He has one sibling and enjoys “soccer, acting, kung fu, and basketball.”

Rainbow Dash is in the second grade and seven years old. She says “My Family” is her racial/ethnic identity. Like her sister, Hershy’s Chocolate, she has been a member of the NAS Organization for a year. Outside of the Scouts she enjoys activities such as “jump rope,” “hool a hoop,” “slide,” and “running.”

Smart Kid is a ten year old fifth grader who resides between “NYC” and “Ga.” He has two siblings and racially/ethnically identifies as a “smart kid.” Other activities he is involved in outside of Kilombo are “studying and becoming more smart to help society in a better way.”

Zakiya is twelve years old and an eighth grader. She identifies racially/ethnically as “New-African.” She resides in Atlanta, GA and has two younger brothers. In addition to attending school at Kilombo she plays soccer.

Water Power is in the fourth grade and is nine years old. When asked about her racial/ethnic identity she wrote, “African Ifa Practices, Albang and Indama.” She has four siblings and enjoys “going out of town, going to ceremonies, painting, [and] going to the store.”

Interviews

Individual Interviews

At Kilombo I conducted the interviews of young people in the hallway between two classrooms and two bathrooms during regular school hours. This was the only space available to me since the building only had three rooms and a kitchen. There were some distractions when

students went in and out of their classrooms yet the interviewees maintained a level of focus and professionalism throughout the interview process. Before each interview participants read and signed their consent forms and were given the opportunity to ask questions if they had them. At this time they were also given the opportunity to choose a pseudonym that was *not* the real name of anyone working at or attending Kilombo. I also informed them that I could choose a pseudonym for them if they wanted. No one took me up on the latter offer. They excitedly chose their pseudonyms and double checked with me, ensuring that I approved. I reminded them that it was *their* choice and that I was fine with whatever they felt comfortable with. All of the interviews lasted between thirty minutes and two hours. Interviews with the adults took place in the classrooms during lunch breaks and after school. I interviewed Mama Nehanda and Mama Masharike together on their lunch break at a Ruby Tuesday's restaurant close to the school. I also interviewed one parent, Ngolo, Mama Masharike's husband, at their home.

Focus Group Interviews

On October 11, 18, and 23, 2012 I conducted focus group interviews with several students from the 6-8 grade group. We met in Baba Ras Kofi's classroom while his students were at lunch. Two participants who joined on the first day expressed that they did not want to participate so I allowed them to leave the interview. This is something I was consistent with throughout the process. I reiterated at each interview that it was not an obligation for them to be there, and that they could tell me when and if they were uncomfortable talking about certain things. I had two large pieces of white paper taped to the board with the terms that they used to identify themselves written on them. In a highly theatrical manner I stood in front of the room and told them that they had all just been hired by Webster's dictionary to come up with collective definitions for the terms on the board. These terms included: *Afrikan, African, African-*

American, New Afrikan, Pan-Afrikan, Black and American. I begin the next phase of our conversation with “what is an African?” with follow up questions like “What makes one an African?” In our first focus group interview we developed working definitions for *Afrikan* and *African* — they clearly and deliberately made the distinction between the two: New Afrikan and African-American. During our second interview we defined the remaining terms Pan Afrikan, African-centered, Black and American. In our last session I asked the students: “Does anyone feel that there is another term that identifies them?” To which one student answered “Nuwabian” which she defined as “an Egyptian culture/religion which could also be described as Afrikan and/or New Afrikan.” Another student said “human,” made comments about being human and what that means. This motivated a conversation amongst the group discussing the commonalities that human beings share that extend beyond “just being Afrikan” like having emotions. “How many of these identifying terms relate to you?” I asked them to raise their hands after I called out each term. No one raised their hand for African-American, African nor American. “How can you be more than one of these?” and “When are you one and not the other?” were just a few of the questions that arose during this discussion.

Data Analysis

Participant interviews, which lasted anywhere from thirty minutes to approximately two hours, were transcribed using Digital Voice Software. The transcribing process, completed solely by me, lasted over the course of six months. While I was advised by concerned colleagues, friends and family to hire someone to do “that tedious work” I felt that the experience and process of transcribing provided me another opportunity to immerse myself in the data. When it came time for coding I was able to more easily sort through and anticipate categories based on

what I learned and remembered from the transcribing process. Twenty interviews, which are a large sum of my entire collection of data, were transcribed and analyzed through a process of coding. In *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* Johnny Saldaña (2009, 3) contends “a code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data.”

In his manual Saldaña (2009) provides detailed discussion, description, applications and examples for/of coding and analyzing qualitative data. While there are numerous First Cycle coding methods including emotion coding, values coding and versus coding that could have proved useful in my analytic process I felt that the in vivo coding approach best fit my research needs, participants and overall methodological approach. Saldaña (2009) describes in vivo coding, also known as “literal” and “verbatim coding,” as a method that captures “a word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative data record.” This method, he continues, is “particularly useful in educational ethnographies with youth” due to the fact that young people’s “actual words enhances and deepens an adult’s understanding of their cultures and worldviews” (Saldaña 2009, 74).

First Cycle Coding Methods and Process

I printed each interview and hand-wrote on the side of each line a verbatim quote that seemed to sum up and/or capture the essence of that particular line. After going through all twenty interviews, which all together were over 150 pages, I planned to write each code on an index card. Yet, after considering the next stage of the process which would be categorizing all of the codes I knew that large index cards would not be a good idea since there would be over a thousand of them. I did not have the space anywhere in my home to lay them out to be

categorized. I then decided to retype the codes and code electronically. I was convinced that this would save time and trees and that I could make smaller “cards” which would be easier to shift around and that I could show the process of categorizing. This was *not* the case. Not only did it take up an inordinate amount of time, the “cards” that I created in a Microsoft Word document would shift and overlap as I added new code boxes, and because there were so many of them it was difficult to scroll up and down to actually categorize. Frustrated and desperately wanting to make up for lost time and finally categorize codes that I had now written down and typed, I printed the codes. With the help of colleagues I painstakingly cut approximately 1500 codes from each sheet. After a week of off-and-on cutting I finally began to categorize. Every surface in my kitchen was filled with codes that I initially separated into two major categories: New Afrikan Scouts and Kilombo. Within these categories I created four subcategories: New Afrikan Scouts Adults, New Afrikan Scouts young people, Kilombo adults and Kilombo young people. I then continued the process of categorizing allowing the codes themselves to name and create further sub categories.



Figure 2. Categorization of First Cycle codes

I initially separated codes into two major categories: New Afrikan Scouts and Kilombo. Within these categories I created two subcategories for each: New Afrikan Scouts Adults, New Afrikan Scouts Young People, Kilombo Adults and Kilombo Young People. Within these subcategories individual codes were continuously used to process and create sub-subcategories exploring and reflecting themes, concepts and theories. See Appendix B for Second Cycle coding charts generated from the First Cycle code categorization. Analytic discussion of the most salient categories (developed from Second Cycle coding) are included in the forthcoming chapters dedicated to each research site: Camp Pumziko, New Afrikan Scouts, and Kilombo Academic and Cultural Institute.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I discuss the ways in which the *Afrocentric Idea*, as an intellectual and moral position, guides my overall approach to the research. The *Afrocentric Idea* particularly led me to choose *Four Seasons* as a decolonizing and ontologically based research methodology. This chapter also outlines my data collection methods and procedures at three research sites: Camp Pumziko, New Afrikan Scouts and Kilombo Academic and Cultural Institute. This is followed by a detailed outline of participant demographics, interview processes and data analysis procedures. In the forthcoming three chapters, named for each of the primary research sites, I explore the ways in which young people experience and perceive New Afrikan identity. I specifically discuss key findings related to observations of and interviews conducted with study participants at each site.

CHAPTER 4

CAMP PUMZIKO: “A BEAUTIFUL NATION, A BLACK BLACK NATION IN THIS DESOLATE PLACE”



Figure 3: Camp Pumziko Group Photo

Camp Pumziko History and Purpose

According to New Afrikan leader, organizer, and cofounder of Camp Pumziko, Baba Ahmed Obafemi, youth programming, annual summer camps and youth activities for New Afrikan young people have existed since the inception of the RNA across the five states as well as in New York.²⁷ Camp is usually held in one of the five states, most predominantly Georgia. Campers consist of New Afrikan Scouts (from the Atlanta and New York chapters) and other Black youth from across the nation. As stated on the MXGM website, Camp Pumziko, officially named in 1994 and described as “the annual sleep-away survival camp for New Afrikan Scouts,” was created

²⁷ The Malcolm X Grassroots Movement’s New York chapter is significantly large and growing.

To give youth, particularly from poor communities, an opportunity to expand their knowledge and experience in a wholesome and structured setting geared towards building character and self-esteem; to offer a curriculum that includes Afrikan history, cultural awareness and physical development; to bring them into contact with adults committed to being positive role models, thus filling a void in their lives; to provide a meaningful alternative to summers of “just hanging out” with “nothing to do”; to offer survival skills for functioning in a chaotic system that has seemingly failed them. Camp Pumziko has grown tremendously since 1994 and the progress can be measured by the campers who have returned each year and through the dedication of those that attended as campers and are now returning to be counselors themselves. (Malcolm X Grassroots Movement)

This statement reflects New Afrikan adults’ desire to protect, guide and provide for dually othered youth in their communities. As such, this statement also reveals some of the ways in which New Afrikan adults construct young people as victims of the varying and interlocking effects of systemic white supremacy. In the forthcoming discussion, which fuses thick description of my (non-participant and participant) observations and analytic discussion, I explore the production of New Afrikan youth identity performances and the ways in which adults imagine, facilitate and influence these performances.

When Saying Something Is Doing Something: Doing New Afrikan Identity In An RNA

Heterotopia:

*We're gonna build a nation
a beautiful nation
a Black Black nation in this desolate place
so look out adui²⁸
'cause here we come
aint nothing gonna stop us
yebo²⁹*

It was the first Friday in August of 2012 at approximately 6:30am, and if I had forgotten, hearing this song reminded me, that I was at Camp Pumziko. I was brought back to my own days as a New Afrikan Scout and reluctant attendance at Camp Pumziko. While I enjoyed being with friends and family I hated bugs and was deathly afraid of the possibility of being attacked by wild animals. As an adult I have often gone back to camp to volunteer or just be in the nostalgic midst of the community that shaped so much of who I am. This time I attended camp as a volunteer, participant observer and researcher. In addition to performing the role of security I completed the duties of a camp counselor. Slightly startled, I arose from the top of the bunk bed I was sleeping on and looked out of my cabin window to see what was going on. I could only hear a singing voice, which I later discovered belonged to one of the female camp counselors I met when I arrived the evening before. Serving as a human alarm clock, she repeatedly sang the above verse with high volume and enthusiasm as she opened the door to each cabin on the “girls’ side” of the campground, ushering the girls to the restrooms to “wash up” and get dressed for the day. After all of the girls were ushered out, silence returned and I lay back down.

²⁸ Swahili term, which means adversary, enemy or terrorist.

²⁹ Iya Ire Atiba wrote and introduced the song “We’re gonna build a nation” to the Atlanta New Afrikan community in 1997. It is not published but has since been utilized within the community.

This and other performances of identity and ideology at camp were nods to and extensions of the Black Nationalist and Black Power movements of the 1960s-80s, particularly the RNA. It is the political and cultural ideology of the RNA that laid the foundation for Camp Pumziko and the identity performances at camp that I experienced and now examine. Camp Pumziko, like the RNA, is a produced “social space” which serves “as a tool of thought and of action” to solidify and carry out its interwoven political, social, cultural and ideological aims. Within this space, performative speech acts, described by J. L. Austin (1975) as the instance in which saying something does something are constantly at play, marking and solidifying the produced space. While the entire Camp Pumziko experience overflows with collective and individual performances of New Afrika and what it means to be New Afrikan, I specifically explore the collective recitations of the *New Afrikan Scouts Chant, Oath and Pledge* in addition to the song *Praise the Red, the Black and the Green* as performative speech acts that inherently “do something.” The words of the chant, oath, pledge and song are not being used to merely describe or state what one is “doing,” but being used to actually “do” it. Thus, these performative speech acts serve as an instruction method (pedagogy) to produce and reproduce subjects of New Afrikan ideology and ideal citizens of The RNA. New Afrikan people’s identity performance serves as a way of being, of understanding oneself in relation to one’s reality and as a method of instruction on who and how to be. The recitation of the chant, oath, pledge, and song is a simultaneous performative act and way of learning; through each act one learns anew and reinforces what they always already are. While New Afrikan adults engage in these performances and performative speech acts they (parents, teachers and counselors) explicitly use these performative speech acts as pedagogy for instructing New Afrikan young people. At the same time, the performative speech acts within themselves, independent of a human instructor,

operate as a method of teaching. Thus, in many instances adults simply facilitate and reinforce the work of the performative speech acts.



Figure 4: New Afrikan Flag

Back at camp shortly after my head hit the makeshift pillow that I fashioned out of a scarf and shirt, I heard more chanting. The sound was distant and gradually got closer. It sounded like an army of young people. I heard variations in voice tones, pitches and intensity. I could tell that the bodies from which these voices emerged were in motion. I quickly got up and stood in my cabin door, the view from the window was not enough. Since I had done security the night before until 2am I was dressed enough to grab my shoes and walk closer to the open field to get a closer look at the approaching cadre of children. I saw a large New Afrikan Flag³⁰(see Figure 3) elevated above about twenty young people with ages ranging from ten to seventeen, male and female, marching in unison, and chanting, in call-and-response style. Upon completion of the New Afrikan Scouts chant (see Chapter 5 for lyrics), the scout leader said

³⁰ Also known as the Pan-African flag, this red, black and green flag was created to symbolize the unification and liberation of all African people, by Marcus Garvey, the President of the United Negro Improvement Association and leader of the “Back to Africa” Movement.

“New Afrikan Scouts, ready? Halt!” At this time all of the Scouts stopped in unison. There was no chatter, nor laughter and everyone stood still. I felt the seriousness of the moment from yards away. The other camp counselors and campers who had just woken up all stood around and watched. The leader of the group stoically standing at attention called out “New Afrikan Scouts Pledge!” and the Scouts recited in unison:

*As New Afrikan Scouts
We pledge that
We'll build our minds, bodies, hearts and spirits
For continual liberation, of New Afrika,
the Black nation in North America
As New Afrikan Scouts
We pledge that
National unity, self-determination
and liberation of Afrikans worldwide shall be our goal
As long as the sun shines, the water flows and the grass grows
May our ancestors help us
Umoja*

The pledge is immediately followed by the *New Afrikan Scout's Oath*:

*To the flag of the people,
the culture and the land of New Afrika
To the principles of humanity, liberty and equality,
for which this nation stands
I dedicate myself, to continued study, training & work
in order to find solutions to our problems
I pledge allegiance.*



Figure 5: Camp Pumziko Morning Formation

The *New Afrikan Chant*, *Oath* and *Pledge* were collectively recited at the 7am formation on each day of camp. By engaging in these performative speech acts, New Afrikan young people make promises, pledge and commit themselves to actualize what they verbally express. Not only do they commit themselves to these oaths, pledges and commands but they cause each other, as hearers of the speech acts, to take action. This process is akin to John Fiske's (2004, 1271) description of Althusser's notions of hailing, "the process by which language identifies and constructs a social position for the addressee" and interpellation, "the larger process whereby language constructs social relations for both parties in an act of communication and thus locates them in the broader map of social relations in general." The processes of both hailing and interpellation permeated the entire camp experience. New Afrikan young people were interpellated by camp greetings of "Free the Land" and songs like:

*Praise the red, the black and the green
Brothers and sisters are being redeemed,
Open up your eyes and see
We're on Our way to being free
Because the red is for the blood we share,
The black is for the race (that's us)*

*The green is for the land we need,
So we can take our rightful place.³¹*

The repetition of words like “we,” “our” and “us” constructs the social, cultural, and political relationships amongst those engaged in the singing and locates them collectively as members of a unified New Afrikan community. Through communal performances of songs, chants, oaths, and pledges, which infused the entire camp experience, participants were always-already hailed into a New Afrikan ideology. Participants were consistently called on to embrace New Afrikan identity and envision a space, particularly a nation (The RNA), free from white hegemony, where Black is supreme and at the center. Along these lines the RNA, particularly Camp Pumziko, embodies what Foucault (1967) identifies as a heterotopia:

. . . counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted . . . between utopias and these quite other sites, these heterotopias, there might be a sort of mixed, joint experience, which would be the mirror.

The Northeast Georgia campground is a real site, while New Afrika is a counter-site, a placeless place. Camp Pumziko, within New Afrika, is a mixed heterotopic and utopic site which operates as a mirror. In the mirror New Afrikans individually and collectively see themselves where they are not and cannot be seen outside of this ideological space. The campground served as site upon which New Afrikan ideological concepts and practices manifested. With daily classes and workshops such as Afrikan Dance, Theatre, Survival, First Aid/CPR, Health, and Afrikan history, the camp grounds were an isolated space where participants could easily perform an imagined reality of governing themselves, of having “Freed the Land,” and engaging with one

³¹ “Praise the Red, the Black and the Green” by Yusef Iman has been sung in freedom schools, particularly Uhuru Sasa, since the 1970s. The song’s publication status is unknown.

another without the (explicit) distraction of music, television, and other material reflections of the dominant culture.

Discipline for Survival

In addition to facilitating the recitation of songs and chants, adults reinforced performative speech acts and performances of New Afrikan ideology and identity through discipline, which entailed performing security and having an overall sense of seriousness and self-control. From 10pm-7am there was security of the camp grounds. On an ideological level, performance of security (by both adults and young people) served to cement the ideas of New Afrikan nationhood in the minds of the camp attendees and the idea that their (prescribed) role is to “stand ready to defend” and maintain the RNA. On a practical level, having trained security professionals provided protection in a place that was physically open to varying threats to the safety of all camp attendees (e.g., wild animals, trespassers, severe weather, etc.). In addition, professional security training of this nature provided young campers with what the NAS mission promises “basic survival techniques (both rural and urban).” Dissimilar to the stereotypical idea of summer camp which encourages talking, playing and letting loose, a culture of seriousness and paramilitary security was instilled in the Scouts. Principles of discipline, responsibility, and accountability were enforced in all activities from a buddy system for swimming to cooperative cafeteria etiquette. When children disobeyed camp rules (e.g., talking or playing in class or formation) they had to do a minimum of ten push-ups. Other forms of discipline included jumping jacks, squats and the “Afrikan throne.”³² As the children engaged in these reprimands

³² Similar to wall squats, the Afrikan throne involves placing your back against the wall and positioning yourself as if you are sitting, with nothing below you to actually sit on.

the counselors reminded them that physical fitness was important and discipline would make them *all* stronger.

On my second night of camp we ate “Mexican food” for dinner which consisted of tacos filled with ground meat or a meatless substitute, veggies, and beans and rice on the side. During meal time campers were given a choice as to what (from the prepared options) they wanted to eat and were expected to communicate if they had special dietary needs. At meal time young people conversed freely and/or played. The atmosphere around the various meal times throughout a given day was filled with high energy and a sense of freedom to display and channel this energy through loud talking, hand games, collective singing of popular radio songs, and making musical beats with their mouths or objects in their possession. This time was unique since the atmosphere constructed and expected outside of this and recreation time was one of seriousness and discipline (e.g., in class, formation, etc.). On this particular evening, the campers were louder and more playful than usual. Some of the younger campers had begun to chase each other around the outdoor cafeteria,³³ which resembled a large patio with screened doors and walls. There was not much space for that in the cafeteria and camp counselors felt that it was surely not the time nor place. After not heeding one of the counselor’s request to reduce their play and volume, another counselor called out “Ago!” to which the campers responded “Ama³⁴.” At this time all activity and talking ceased and attention was given to the counselor. The counselor reminded the group that they had just been asked to reduce their volume and to stay seated and as a consequence for not listening they would all have to do push-

³³ The younger campers would often eat first and thus would be finished before the older campers. While the older campers were still sitting down to begin eating or finishing their meals play and talking would ensue among the younger ones.

³⁴ The literal meaning of this Ghanaian call and response phrase is “can I have your attention?” and “yes, you have it.”

ups. Some of the older campers took issue with this and expressed that it was unfair for them to do push-ups when it was the younger group that produced most of the noise and were playing outside of their seats. The counselor, who by this time was standing in the middle of the cafeteria was joined by another counselor who reminded the group that they are each other's responsibility, and that they must all face the consequences together for not collectively following directions. All of the campers, through mumbled grunts and bowed heavy heads, got into push-up position. They counted in unison "one-free the land, two-free the land, three-free the land," and if one person was not doing the push-up correctly (purposefully or otherwise) the entire group had to restart.

As I observed the campers doing push-ups I reflected on my own experiences as a scout. I had mixed feelings. On the one hand, I felt bad that *all* of the campers had to do push-ups and that their voices did not seem to be heard. I wrote a few questions in my notes including: *Are there any other ways to address their perceived misbehavior? Could this form of discipline be alternated with discussion or some other form of acknowledgement/reflection? How does this disciplinary action impact each child? Does it work? Who does this serve? Is anyone in physical discomfort or pain?* On the other hand in my nostalgia for how the Camp Pumziko experience once was, it was satisfying to see the disciplinary acts that I felt were strict and intense as a young person being reproduced. It was satisfying to see the campers challenged by discipline because this type of discipline provided *me* with necessary tools for survival I implemented as a young person and continue to use as an adult. While I recognize it is problematic to view what I deem as positive outcomes of my experiences with discipline as measurement for what young New Afrikan people today should experience, I feel that the embodiment of camp (and RNA) principles of solidarity, seriousness and discipline offers much to Othered, particularly dually

othered, people as they navigate spaces they are not meant to survive. As I reflect on my feeling of satisfaction I think of the ways in which discipline, which entails the ability to have self-control, the practice of critical thought before and within action, and the aptitude to endure personal challenges, prepared me for the wide-ranging struggle of being Black in America. My experiences with discipline within the RNA has particularly been an invaluable asset in dealing with various forms of adversity. My experiences equipped me with tools for traversing the simultaneous burden and alienation of being the only Black person in the room, knowing that my very being in addition to words spoken must be carefully performed as to not perpetuate stereotypes of my race. Discipline allows me to focus my energy on the responsibility of existing and educating others of my existence. Discipline enables me to hold a plank position and breathe through frustrations, to be quiet and observant, to pick and choose battles and to channel emotions knowing that certain spaces are not safe outlets for my expression. The skills in self-discipline that I learned as a young person and continue to practice in adulthood facilitate my survival as a Black woman with a working class background in a system of what bell hooks (1989) calls “white supremacist capitalist patriarchy.”

Performing Their Own Identity Scripts

Outside of deliberate identity performances associated with RNA performative speech acts (such as the oath, chant, pledge and songs) and discipline, campers performed themselves and related to one another in various ways. Although highly encouraged and led to operate as a complete unit, the campers were divided into the following groups according to age: Panthers, Simbas, Pakas, Chuis, and Cubs.³⁵ The Panthers were between the ages of thirteen and seventeen, Simbas were eleven and twelve, Chuis were nine and ten, Pakas were six to eight

³⁵ Simba, Paka, and Chui are the Swahili terms for Lion, Cat and Leopard.

years old, and Cubs were five and under.³⁶ The lodging cabins were separated according to gender and then further divided by age group. Counselors responsible for each group also slept in their group's cabin. Campers stood in formation, attended classes and workshops, and dined according to their assigned group. Within these groups campers were able to relate to one another based on their ages and gender. Since I slept on the girls' side of the campgrounds I observed more of their "behind the scenes" performances of self. The Panther girls in particular exhibited maturity, responsibility and overall care for the well-being of younger campers. They would volunteer to help out with organizing activities, preparing foods, cleaning up, and mentoring both boys and girls in the younger groups. *In the evenings the Panther girls would sometimes collectively sing in their cabin. Although I was in a separate cabin with other female volunteers, in the quiet of the North Georgia woods I could clearly hear their enthused voices. They sang and rapped a number of popular R&B and rap songs, each one followed by sounds of laughter and sighs of comfort. This energy was so inviting that I wanted to go and join or at the least sit in and observe; however, since I wanted to sleep in preparation to perform security a few hours later, I just listened, fascinated.*

I was able to directly observe and participate with boys and girls in the younger age groups. In these observations the ways in which I conceptualized performance as it relates to New Afrikan young people took new shape. I was asked to help the Pakas and Chuis devise performances for Family Day, the last day of camp, when parents, family and friends come to eat and fellowship. The Pakas created scenes, which included dancing, chanting and monologues with the purpose of sharing with parents and other guests what they had learned and experienced at camp. *As I watched the Pakas and the Chuis I wondered: Are they aware of/connected to what*

³⁶ Cubs were few in number and most often were the children of counselors, camp leaders and/or volunteers.

they are chanting and the concept of New Afrika? or are they merely recipients of/manipulated into a New Afrikan identity/subjectivity? Are they like an actor who is not connected to what they are saying and just reciting memorized lines? After continued observation I found that some of the young people had a keen awareness of what they were doing/saying. In rehearsing their scenes several of the young people played the role of “adult counselor” and others played the role of “young camper.” In performing “adult counselor,” they were specific with their performance choices and explicitly performed the mannerisms, direct quotes, and strategies that they observed and experienced through interacting with adult counselors. They specifically performed “adult counselor” to call on reactions/performances of those performing “young camper.” In one group’s opening scene one camper sang “we’re gonna build a nation” as she tugged and pushed the “young campers” out of bed. While this role playing caused many of them to laugh, it also reflected what they collectively felt to be a meaningful aspect of their overall camp experience. This performance also revealed their ability to see the role of performance and performative speech acts in producing (and in this case) re-producing the Camp Pumziko experience.

In working with the Pakas and Chuis I found myself giving direction as if I were directing a play. At this juncture, the chant, oath and pledge were not just performative speech acts but dramatic pieces. I would say things like, “*Say the chant like you mean it!*” “*Enunciate your words,*” “*Project!*” and “*really march, don’t just slightly move your feet.*” Up to that point the ways in which I applied performance as a concept referred to performance of the everyday, not in the sense of acting or pretending but in the sense of “the social act of doing.” As the opening discussion of this chapter demonstrates I focused my observations on how that *doing* produces identity, and specifically how New Afrikan identity is produced for young people through the

repetitive acts that they iterate, through performing the everyday roles of what it means to be a New Afrikan. In observing and actively participating in their rehearsal for a theatrical performance of the ways in which they engaged everyday performances of and at Camp Pumziko, I came to see how performance that *is* in the sense of acting and pretending may also serve as a vehicle through which New Afrikan identity is created and sustained and thus, like the performative speech acts I initially explore, are in the Boalian sense rehearsal for the revolution.³⁷

As the performative speech acts (the chant, oath, pledge songs) and the adult constructed camp atmosphere of discipline and survival illustrate New Afrikan young people serve as hope for the future of the RNA. They are reared to carry on in the footsteps of their activist parents and other revolutionaries in their communities. As my observations of young people's performances outside of what was prescribed and constructed for them by adults exemplify New Afrikan young people engage in a variety of interlocking and complex identity performances both in conjunction with and independent of adults. While the purpose of and subsequent activities and experiences associated with camp is designed by adults to enhance the lives of young people, adults pay little to no attention to how New Afrikan young people *want* to experience childhood, their perceptions of the RNA (and that which it is in opposition to white supremacy/cultural hegemony/capitalism etc.) and how they make sense of their layered identities as New Afrikans and "paper citizens" of the United States. The embodiment of New Afrikan identity (or more particularly New Afrikan adults' pedagogical strategies) can serve to enrich the lives of the dually othered Black child and has the potential to empower and positively

³⁷ Boal (2000) argues that Theatre itself is not revolutionary but in the case where those who are usually spectators, or in this case, when young people who usually perform adult prescribed roles begin to consciously engage and transform the performance then it becomes "rehearsal for the revolution," a rehearsal for an alternate relationship with power, and thus, a rehearsal for an alternate existence.

transform those who are silenced, invisibilized and often seen as disposable in their own societies (i.e., from Emmett Till to Trayvon Martin). However, in the New Afrikan spirit of liberation struggle the community must “open up their eyes and see” that a more nuanced approach is both ethical and crucial in honoring New Afrikan young people’s experiences and agency. In discussing children’s agency Allison James (2001, 41) posits, “the agent is someone who does something with other people, and, in so doing, makes things happen, thereby contributing to wider processes of social and cultural reproduction.” Following her logic, New Afrikan young people do not and *cannot* passively perform adult prescribed roles but are actively engaging with and therefore co-constructing these roles at every turn. However, how does this understanding of agency take new shape when performative speech acts such as the oath, pledge and chant are scripts written by adults almost fifty years ago? How can New Afrikan young people’s performances of their own identity scripts be similarly honored? According to James young people and adults are always already acting in conjunction with each other to create and recreate identity dynamics. Therefore, with an awareness and careful attention paid to this, New Afrikan young people and adults can collectively construct New Afrikan childhood and performances that respond to, change and reproduce the construction at the same time in ways that not only serve adults in the nation but New Afrikan young people themselves.

While I call for a reconceptualization of relationship dynamics between young people and adults within this community, I do not know what this looks like or what series of actions or scenarios would make it possible. One instance at camp comes close to exemplifying how young people can perform resistance in contradiction of their leaders and elders. On the second day of camp there was one child who expressed that she did not want to participate in any activities, she

did not say that was sick or was not feeling well, she just expressed a yearning to go home. She was allowed to sit out of workshops and other activities, her parents were called and she was picked up that evening. While this individual young person's act of resistance was met with compliance by adults, it would be interesting to see how a similar scenario would play out with a collective of young people.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I discuss the history and purpose of Camp Pumizko followed by an analytical discussion of my research findings particularly related to field observations and analysis of performative speech acts including the New Afrikan Scouts chant, oath, and pledge. I highlight the performative nature of all things New Afrikan including identity, space, place, ritual, and speech acts with a focus on how they interrelate and inform each other. Three major observations of how young people experience and perceive New Afrikan identity at Camp Pumziko include: 1) New Afrikan identity in this space is produced and reproduced through performative speech acts; "saying something is doing something" 2) The performance of New Afrikan identity is directly tied to and dependent upon performances of self-discipline. Self-discipline is instilled in New Afrikan young people as a strategy for dealing with present and future adversities, chiefly as Othered beings; and 3) New Afrikan young people's identity performances are inextricably bound to and shaped by the various spaces they occupy as well as the people they come in contact with in these spaces.

In the next chapter I explore the ways in which the New Afrikan Scouts organization provides culture (in terms of exposure, and values, practices and representation via paramilitary

training) as a means of transformation and transition. I also discuss the themes that emerged from interviews as they relate to field observations and auto-ethnographic reflections of my days as a Scout.

CHAPTER 5

NEW AFRIKAN SCOUTS (NAS): “FREE THE PEOPLE, FREE THE LAND, TAKE THE POWER IN OUR HANDS!”



Figure 6: NAS logo

New Afrikan Scouts Organization History and Purpose

According to the NAS manual (2014) “[t]he Scouts were originally formed in 1979 by Kweli Sobukwe Umoja and Paka Kamu Weusi-Umoja under the direction of the House of Umoja and the Afrikan Peoples Party. The first troop was organized in Los Angeles, California. In 1984, the NAS organization became a program of the New Afrikan People’s Organization”³⁸ and chapters were formed across the nation. Currently, there are active chapters in Atlanta, Georgia and Brooklyn, New York, which come together annually at Camp Pumziko. The NAS organization is divided into two “leagues,” the New Afrikan Scouts (for young people age 6-13) and the New Afrikan Panthers (ages 13-17). On their website the MXGM describes the NAS as:

³⁸ The New Afrikan People’s Organization (NAPO) is an entity separate from yet committed to the ideals and goals of the RNA. NAPO is also the parent organization of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement (MXGM).

a dynamic national youth program sponsored by the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement consisting of youth (male and female) of Afrikan descent who ages range from 6-17 years old. NAS was formed to give identity, direction and purpose to our youth and to combat some of the obstacles placed in the paths of our children. By working with the NAS, we are making a sincere effort to instill discipline and an understanding of what it means to go through the stages of childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood.

As I interpret this description, adults within the NAS organization hope to “give identity” as a means for New Afrikan young people to develop resistant capital (Yosso 2005), or more specifically a sense of self tied to the ideals of the New Afrikan nation and thus in solidarity with Afrikans everywhere engaged in struggle against systems of oppression. This description also reflects the NAS organization’s understanding of discipline in addition to culturally relevant education and activities as vital tools for New Afrikan young people’s immediate survival and further development through and beyond the stages of childhood and adolescence.

Themes

Transition

In my overall experience of observing, conducting interviews and subsequently analyzing my observations and data from interviews, I found *transition* to be a major theme within the NAS organization. Transition emerged as a theme at the onset of conducting my fieldwork, throughout the research process, and throughout my analytical and reflective writing process. Within these research stages I constantly transitioned between the interlocking roles of researcher, cultural insider, and participant observer. From 2012-2014 I observed the NAS organization transition from being active to non-active and active again with new leadership and

expanded membership. With that, I have also observed how the Scouts have transitioned in terms of their engagement with and performance within the organization from 2012-2014. Finally, from my observations and analysis I recognize that the NAS organization is in the business of transition as they seek to change the lives of the young people who enter into the organization and set them on a path of continual positive self-transformation.

During my initial observations of the Atlanta chapter of the NAS in June 2013, the collective body of participants and leaders were a transitory group. While there were as many as fifteen Scouts at one meeting only about four Scouts consistently attended meetings. The NAS was scheduled to meet every Saturday from 10 a.m. until noon. The meeting usually started anywhere between 10 and 10:15 as both Scouts and leaders trickled in. The meetings were held in the main classroom at Kilombo and usually concluded on time. There were four adults who consistently attended and led portions of the Scouts' meetings. Three of these adults were former members of the Scouts and two of these adults brought their own children each Saturday. In a statement about the transitions between active and non-active status, Star, a leader and parent within the NAS organization, said:

Roughly around April of 2013 the re-launch of the New Afrikan Scouts came to a standstill. I believe a number of factors were at play. In my opinion there wasn't a strong enough leadership base, and by strong I mean committed. The location was also not Marta³⁹ accessible. And I would say timing of the re-launch without sufficient outreach was a major factor. I was pleasantly surprised when my mother, a former scout leader, and father told me they wanted to coordinate the re-launch of the scouts. Not only did they want to coordinate it, they had a working committee in mind, including myself. We

³⁹ Marta is the transit system for Atlanta, GA and surrounding cities.

started working feverishly in October with debut date of January 10, 2014. We were able to reconnect with our scouts from the previous attempt and had a provisional troop of 8.

Work committees were formed, uniforms were updated, and logos.

In regard to the second re-launch of the Scouts in the beginning of 2014, Star stated:

Since our debut on January 10th, we currently have 37 scouts registered. I am so proud to be a part of the leadership group and to have both of my daughters stay committed to the scouts. Not only am I working side by side with my parents, my brother is also a part of the leadership committee. The scouts had their debut performance at the Malcolm X banquet this year and their presence and performance brought tears to the crowd's eyes. I feel strongly that the New Afrikan Scouts will continue to flourish under the new leadership.

Adults

While transition emerges as a general and overarching theme within my research analysis, the following four specific themes emerge directly from data collected through an interview with Star:

As a Child I Learned to Balance

We All Afrikan

Restructure for Sustainability

The NAS Provides Culture

With regard to the theme *As a Child I Learned To Balance*, Star discussed her experiences as a New Afrikan Scout and how she related to her peers within and outside of her New Afrikan community. "I saw both sides" and "I learned to balance" were recurring notions that surfaced from the in vivo codes which captured her verbatim quotes about her childhood experience. The theme *We All Afrikan* emerged from our discussion about identity and what a "New Afrikan" is.

With regard to identity, she exclaimed “technically we all Afrikan,” “a New Afrikan is what all African Americans are.” *Restructure for Sustainability* developed from codes that captured verbatim quotes about recruitment, relevance to the community, and incentive for young people to want to be at NAS meetings. As it relates to her reasons for being involved in the New Afrikan Scouts, what was important to her was providing cultural balance for Black young people, particularly her daughters. She expressed “my children needed something,” “my children don’t go to a cultural school,” and “what they know about their culture and their people is what I provide.” While she spoke of the NAS as a need for the entire community, her motivation for beginning and remaining in leadership within the organization was first a personal one. These sentiments are encapsulated by the most prominent theme *The NAS Provides Culture*.

The NAS Provides Culture

Through interviews, participant observations, and analysis of NAS documents I learned that “*The NAS Provides Culture*” in a number of ways. From the context of Star’s use of the term and the MXGM website statement on the NAS’ mission, my understanding and discussion of “culture” that the NAS provides is two-fold. First, I discuss how the NAS provides culture in the sense of exposure to various modes of being, expression (i.e., art, literature, music, etc.) and educational workshops/classes, similarly described on the MXGM website as “basic survival techniques (both rural and urban), drilling, arts and crafts, political education and other cultural/community activities.” Secondly, I discuss culture as in individual/communal values, behaviors, beliefs, and principles. Culture in this sense can also be understood as activities of production, representation and transformation, as it is described in my literature review..

With regard to the first sense of culture I observed, Scouts engage in varying activities in a number of settings such as flower planting in the peace garden at the *Tupac Amaru Shakur*

Center for the Arts, an annual event to commemorate his life.⁴⁰ I observed the Scouts engage in interactive CPR/First Aid training and subsequent knowledge assessments, both for their general knowledge and preparation for Camp Pumziko. Finally, I observed, participated in and facilitated theatre workshops. Over the course of two NAS meetings there were improvisation and theatre workshops facilitated by a local performing artist and actress, Mama M. *She talked to the Scouts about theatre, cultural arts and “how to move people through whatever talents we have.” “We’re very talented, we were just born that way” she said to them. She expanded the notion of theatre to rap, music and dance and asked the Scouts questions such as “Who can think of a play or movie that involves Black people and our movement?” The Scouts respond “Malcolm X,” “Kirikou,” “Roots,” etc.. In closing the Scouts shared one thing they learned that day and Mama M. concluded the workshop with the following quote: “theatre helps us be better people.”*

During the summer of 2013 I led the NAS in Augusto Boal exercises: Enemy and Shield and Colombian Hypnosis⁴¹, which they enjoyed and we briefly discussed the exercises. In February 2014 I facilitated two workshops, one with the Panthers, which for the purposes of the current formation of the scouts includes young people ages 12-17, and another workshop for Scouts under the age of 12. In both workshops I began by asking the Scouts, “What is theatre?” and “What is performance?” to which I received diverse and numerous responses including, “it is drama,” “it’s pretending like you crazy,” “acting like you crazy,” “performing on stage,” “performing off stage,” “acting,” and “being something that you’re not.” In both groups our

⁴⁰ Tupac was also a child of social/political activists. In 1988, at the age of seventeen, he was elected as “the national chairman” of the New Afrikan Panthers, a New Afrikan youth organization created by both former members of the Black Panther Party and citizens of the RNA.

⁴¹ Enemy and Shield involves choosing a person in the room that you pretend is your enemy and another that you will use as your shield ensuring that the shield is always physically in between yourself and the enemy as you move around the space. Colombian Hypnosis involves placing your hand parallel to your partner’s face and leading them to move around the space in ways unfamiliar to their normal body movements. Both of these exercises were followed by discussion around how the activities relate to real life experiences and ways of being.

discussion of performance included an in depth dialogue about what constitutes performance, how one decides and who decides. One Scout from the Panther group said, “being a Scout is a performance” and that “you are a Scout everywhere you go.” “Even at the grocery store?” I asked. She replied “yes, you just perform it in different ways depending on where you are.”

With regard to the understanding of “culture” as individual/communal values, behaviors, beliefs, and principles the NAS manual states, “[t]he goal in creating the "New Afrikan Scout Organization" is to build character, morals, and discipline in our children.” On their website the MXGM similarly states:

We are helping our youth rise to meet the challenges of being young in these times and in this place. [...] Through their involvement in the NAS our youth will develop their sense of self-esteem, community awareness, and overall commitment to the liberation of our people. We also hope to encourage in our Scouts a love supreme for our families, elders, ancestors, communities and all Afrikan people.

One major way that adults within the NAS provide this type of culture is through nationalistic performances by way of performative speech acts and paramilitary training. With an existence that is struggling to merely be, struggling to be seen and to be honored as worthy of being – in pursuit of its own destiny rather than relegated as a commodity to be imbued with culture/values in service of the dominant group – oppressed people must engage in a series of multifaceted struggles in order to develop a sense of self, to be self-determining and self-actualizing. The struggle of existence for oppressed people is thus an ongoing process which cannot be disentangled from the very act of being. This struggle for existence manifests on at least three fronts for New Afrikan young people as they struggle to exist as full beings in their own image in a world that condemns them as nonexistent and less than a full being due to their race *and* age. In

recognizing this multifaceted war, New Afrikans, and leaders of the NAS specifically, envision and understand themselves and young New Afrikans as soldiers on a battlefield engaged in a struggle to transition from unconscious subjects of white supremacist ideology to liberated conscious subjects of New Afrikan ideology. As evidenced in the overall rhetoric of the NAS organization and the following NAS and Panther orientation manual statement, New Afrikan adults borrow, develop and utilize language, strategies, and tactics of war in their work with young people to simultaneously restore a sense of self and combat the enemy (white supremacy):

Through the "Scouts" and "Panthers" our youth will develop a sense of national consciousness, political ambition, and understand the necessity of culture, land and self-defense [...] With the teaching of New Afrikan history and social/political reality we shall build our youth into a force capable of liberating and defending our people, and land as a nation.

The overall militaristic design, language and structure of the NAS organization could not be more exemplary of NAS' performances of themselves as soldiers. The term scout, defined by Oxford's online Dictionary as "a soldier or other person sent out ahead of a main force so as to gather information about the enemy's position, strength, or movements" hails New Afrikan young people into that position and interpellates them further as they are called on to drill, chant, and recite the New Afrikan oath and pledge. Upon arrival at their weekly meeting, Scouts would sit in chairs or stand in pairs waiting for the arrival of their peers and instruction from the leaders. When the meeting start time came, one of the leaders would call out "New Afrikan Scouts fall in," at which point the Scouts would fall in formation and recite the pledge, oath and chant followed by drilling. The practice and purpose of drilling within the NAS parallels military drilling practices and training. According to the online Encyclopedia Britannica, drilling is the

preparation of soldiers for performance of their duties in peace and war through the practice and rehearsal of prescribed movements. In a practical sense, drill consolidates soldiers into battle formations and familiarizes them with their weapons. Psychologically, it develops a sense of teamwork, discipline, and self-control; it promotes automatic performance of duties under disturbing circumstances and instinctive response to the control and stimulus of leaders.

Drilling is also used to ensure movements are executed with order and precision, and for individuals to learn to adapt their own movements to those of the group so the formation moves together on command. The NAS utilizes military drill movement commands (e.g., attention, right (left) face, about face, salute, cover down, etc.) during the drilling section of each week's meeting. Scout leaders intersperse Swahili terms with these commands such as "anza," which means to start or begin. After the Scouts are in formation and have completed the pledge and oath, they are given the command "Anza!" and, beginning with their left foot, they begin to march in place. After ensuring that they are all marching in unison, through their peripheral gaze and listening for the sound of one movement, the Scout leader calls out "We are the Scouts!" to begin the following call and response recitation of the NAS chant:

*We are the Scouts,
The Nation-Building Scouts,
Wherever we go,
People wanna know
Who we are, and what we been doing,
so we tell them, that we are the Scouts
The Nation-building Scouts,
Free the People,
Free the Land,
Take the power
In our hands,
Are we right or wrong? We're right!
Are we weak or strong? We're strong!*

*Sound off, One people,
Sound off, One aim,
Sound off, One Destiny,
Now break it on down
One people, one aim, one destiny
One people, one aim, one destiny
One people, one aim, one destiny*

This military cadence chant has been adopted by many different branches of military service, as well as camp organizations such as the Boy Scouts of America, and even sports teams. In the same way New Afrikans appropriate the structural style and names of United States government documents such as the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution (as they envision The Provisional Government of The RNA), they adapt and re-conceptualize this fairly common marching cadence call. This appropriation at once utilizes the militaristic structure and nationalistic function of the original chant, while the line “nation-building Scouts” reveals the way that nations are constructions of its members. In reciting this chant New Afrikan young people declare and solidify their performances of an adult-constructed and prescribed New Afrikan identity as nation builders. In declaring, “We are the Scouts,” the NAS announce to themselves and others that they are soldiers on the battlefield of Black nation building. The call to “Free the people” refers to their duty to liberate political prisoners and all people of African descent who are oppressed by white hegemony. “The Land” in the phrase “Free The Land!” refers to the physical land within the five states (Georgia, South Carolina, Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi) that The RNA has claimed as its nation. The call to free this land is directed both to the US government and to New Afrikans; it demands that the US government grant the RNA sovereignty and calls on New Afrikans to be relentless in their struggle to win this land. In reciting the chant, they reinforce that they are justified in their struggle, and that despite their conditions of oppression, they are “strong” enough to overcome. The NAS organization's “One

people, one aim, one destiny” is a twist on Marcus Garvey’s popular slogan, “One God! One Aim! One Destiny!” Both phrases promote Pan Afrikan solidarity and call for the unification of people of African descent throughout the diaspora in order to collectively combat systems of oppression. In the militarist activities such as drilling, marching, and chanting, NAS engage in a dramatic performance of their everyday performance of being New Afrikan. While the actions called for within these performative utterances dwell in a near future, and in a process of becoming, New Afrikan youth, as soldiers on a battlefield, engage in immediate performances of nationalism once recitation begins. The preferred everyday New Afrikan identity performance, particularly for young people, is a performance of seriousness, discipline and physical strength. Using their bodies as instruments of call and response, they call to the community and respond to the community’s call to embody New Afrikan ideology; an ideology that is centered within the idea that New Afrikans are “at war.”

Young People

The four themes generated from codes that emerged in the process of coding data from two interviews with young people within the New Afrikan Scouts Organization include:

Identity? I Don’t Know... I Think
I Love Purple and Hershey’s
We Sing and Practice at Scouts
At Camp We Play, Learn, Drill

These themes emerged from a categorization of in vivo codes which captured the verbatim responses of “Hershy’s Chocolate” and “Rainbow Dash” to questions related to their experiences within and perceptions of the NAS and Camp Pumziko. In addition, they responded to questions about themselves, including their identity. In terms of their experiences within the Scouts, both

girls had little to say and even attempted to pass on a large percentage of the questions⁴² I asked. After reformulating questions for their clarity, understanding and comfort, they still had initial responses of “I don’t know,” “What do you mean?” and/or a shrug of the shoulders. It was apparent to me that the girls were unclear as to what was happening. They seemed to want to give me the “right answers” and participate “in the right way” but could not seem to grasp and be comfortable in the interview process. They were timid and soft spoken. In retrospect, I should have pulled them together for a group interview after the individual interviews to see how the comfort levels and thus the outcomes would change. The theme *At Camp We Play, Learn, Drill* was generated from the in vivo codes “learned things,” “played,” and “did drills.” These three codes represent their Camp Pumziko experience and the essence of camp to them. In regards to the NAS the theme that emerged was *We Sing and Practice at Scouts*. They said, “it’s a little bit good,” “I need more practice, ‘cause I mess up sometimes” and “we get to sing.” When they were asked about their racial/ethnic identity, their initial response was “I don’t know.” They expressed that they did not understand the words “racial” or “ethnic” and I deliberately attempted to describe the two identity categories in the broadest terms as to not limit the myriad of possible responses to this question. When it came to Hershy’s, none of my explanations helped her understand the questions so I rattled off a series of racial and ethnic identity constructs (e.g., Chinese, Black, New Afrikan, Mexican) and asked her to say yes or no if she identified or did not identify in that way. She said yes to Black, New Afrikan, Afrikan, American and African-American. Their responses and the in vivo codes that captured them generated the theme *Identity? I Don’t Know... I Think*. The remaining theme *I Love Purple and Hershey’s* emerged from their responses to questions like “tell me about yourself” and “what do you like to do.”

⁴² At the beginning of the interview I gave them the option of passing on any question that they did not feel comfortable responding to.

Identity? I Don't Know... I Think

Much like their discomfort in participating in the interview and displaying an uncertainty about their role in that process, it was apparent to me through my observations and the interview experience that they were also unclear about why they were in the Scouts, what they were doing and what they were supposed to be doing. They seemingly followed directions with a timidity, wanting to obey and do the Scouts “right” with no apparent personal connection to the experience. *During the recitation portion of this formation a given leader might interject with questions or comments like “is that the loudest you can talk?” Scouts would respond by increasing their volume rather than providing a literal answer. Similar to Camp Pumziko, in the event that Scouts did not respond in this way or if the leader was still dissatisfied with their performance in regards to the volume of their voices and/or enthusiasm displayed in their physical bodies they would stop the formation and have them “warm up” with jumping jacks and/or pushups. The amount of each exercise varied each time.* While observing I found myself wanting to interject. I wanted to ask questions of the leaders, three of whom were Scouts with me when we were children. *“The command is “front” not “halt” after dress right dress, right?”* I also felt compelled to directly address the Scouts, *“Sweetheart you cannot talk to your mom while in formation.”* I wrote down in my notes *“. . . things have gotten lax. I guess because they are still learning it's okay. The leaders are also still learning...learning how to be leaders.”*

Scouts Then and Now



Figure 7: NAS, Los Angeles, CA, Kwanzaa Parade, 1982



Figure 8: NAS, New Orleans, LA, 1987



Figure 9: NAS, Atlanta, GA, 1992



Figure 10: NAS, Atlanta, GA, 2012-2013

In reflecting on these notes and on my experiences as a Scout, I recognize two key interrelated differences between the current group of Scouts and leaders and the former group (to which I belonged) and its leaders, which thrived in the late 1980s to mid-1990s. First, when I asked Star to discuss her perceptions on her childhood and New Afrikan childhood in general she replied, “well, it depends on who your parents are.” This statement is spot on as it relates to differences between past generations and the current generation of Scouts. Parents, leaders and guardians of the current group of Scouts include a mix of second-generation New Afrikans, African-centered people and people of African descent seeking spaces that offer

cultural/social/political awareness for their children. On the contrary, when I was a Scout the majority of our parents were active political and social workers in our local-to-international communities, former Black Panther Party members, leaders and founding members within the Republic of New Afrika, former political prisoners, and former exiles. Our parents and elders' different lived experience thus influenced their leadership styles, their level of investment and engagement with the Scouts, as well as their understanding and performance of RNA. Their lived experiences and thus their ways of being directly impacted the way we understood and performed New Afrika as children. Second, as one of the major themes from the interview data analysis reveals, *The NAS Provides Culture* for the current generation. For the majority of us "o.g." Scouts, the NAS was not the sole or predominant space through which we engaged New Afrikan or Afrikan culture in general. The NAS for my siblings, my peers, and me was a space where our New Afrikanity was reinforced and collectively practiced outside of the collective of our households.

"Righteous Soldiers children do not cry
 Had defend of your enemy or your FBI
 They sleep holding their heads up high
 Just as proud as they can be.
 They know they must be strong
 'Cause the time is coming and it won't be long
 when they'll be called upon to carry on
 in place of you and me."

They call her Cynthia Boston.
 HER NAME IS FULANI SUNNI-ALI.

She is the mother of six children.
 And she needs help.

COME AND SUPPORT OUR SISTER.



The R.I.C.O. Grand Jury is planning to separate Fulani from her 6 weeks old baby by putting her in jail on Feb. 21 for non-cooperation.

RALLY TO KEEP FULANI FREE!
Sat. FEBRUARY 12, 1983/5PM
UHURU CENTER
 357 Summer Avenue (between Jefferson & Pufnam).

STOP THE GRAND JURY!
RELEASE ALL RESISTERS!

Figure 11: Rally Flier



Staff photo by Jim Klein

Cynthia Boston, also known as Fulani Sunni-Ali, listens to a question at a Jackson press conference Tuesday afternoon as one of her three children looks on.

Boston: RNA 'struggle' will go on

Boston, from page 1B

as-sailants later fled without \$1.6 million in six money bags removed from the armored Brink's truck.

Three members of the radical Weather Underground have been charged in the Brink's case and police said Brink's suspects who later engaged in shoot-outs in New York are members of another radical group, the Black Liberation Army. The Brink's case spawned the federal grand jury probe of a potential alliance between the groups.

When Ms. Boston was arraigned in Jackson on the day of her arrest, Countiss set a Nov. 5 hearing to determine whether she should be returned to New York to face prosecution.

But late the next day, Countiss' secretary telephoned the secretary for Ms. Boston's Jackson lawyer, Loydis Robinson, and informed her that the hearing had been rescheduled for the following afternoon.

Countiss has given no reason for the sudden rescheduling. He also has not commented on charges made by William Kuntzler, Ms. Boston's lawyer in New York, that he was pressured by the FBI.

Based on the testimony of FBI agent Robert Cordier, who claimed that Ms. Boston was observed cleaning out a Mount Vernon, N.Y., hideout the day after the Brink's robbery, Countiss ordered Ms. Boston returned to New York.

While she was detained in New York, Charles Duplessis, the New Orleans garage manager, told federal prosecutors that Ms. Boston was in his shop the day Cordier alleged she was emptying the house in Mount Vernon. Her lawyers said that Duplessis would have appeared in Jackson if Countiss had not rescheduled her hearing.

The government dropped charges against her, and Ms. Boston has since staged three press conferences to denounce the federal government.

Tuesday in Jackson, Ms. Boston, dressed in blue jogging pants, a powder-blue turtleneck sweater, a bandana around her head and rings in her nose and ears, accused the government of arresting and detaining her to intimidate the RNA.

She said the RNA is not an underground, terrorist group, but rather, an organization dedicated to the liberation of blacks in America.

"I'm part of a fraud, a frame-up" against the RNA, she contended.

The publicity accompanying her arrest and release may have won the RNA more sympathizers among blacks, she added. "I'm sure our support has doubled and tripled because of this," she asserted.

Ms. Boston said the RNA was not crushed by a 1971 shoot-out in Jackson that left one city patrolman slain and resulted in jail terms for several RNA members.

She declined, however, to discuss her role in recent RNA activities.

Ms. Boston, citing the current federal grand jury probe, declined to answer questions about any philosophical ties the RNA may have with the Weather Underground, the Black Liberation Army or other groups.

Figure 12: RNA Newspaper article

Since my parents were political prisoners⁴³ as a result of being targeted and framed by the FBI's Counter Intelligence Program, I had much reason to believe that not only New Afrikans but my immediate family was at war. Growing up with stories of having our homes raided, of being followed by FBI agents and living as "fugitives" in a foreign country, I felt that I had to be mentally and physically prepared for war. I trained with my grandfather, former RNA Minister of Defense, before dawn and was proud that he called me "disciplined" and labeled my push-ups "the best." As a six year old member of the Atlanta chapter of the NAS organization, I was proud to be on the front line, to recite my pledge "to the flag of the people, the culture and land of New Afrika" in a serious dramatic tone and eager to express my pride and readiness through my mastery of military drilling and body/mind coordination techniques. I was a conscious subject of New Afrikan ideology, knowingly performing the role that the adults in my family and community prescribed. I was proud to make the nation proud. In reflecting on my days in the NAS I realized that the Scouts provided a different kind of service to me and my siblings. The NAS was an extension of our home rather than a place we went to get culture and learn discipline. It was a space where the discipline I practiced at home could be rewarded and performed for new audiences (the other Scouts, scout leaders, large festivals, Kwanzaa programs etc.), not just myself and my immediate family. I knew that people would associate me with my parents and grandfather. I knew I had to represent. During and after performances as a Scout I would hear statements from onlookers such as, "that's Fulani and Bilal's daughter," "that's General Alajo's granddaughter," and "that's a serious young sister." I took pride in that,

⁴³ My mother was imprisoned shortly before and after my birth (1981-1983) and my father on various occasions from the late 1960s to early '80s for their leadership and activism within Black Nationalist groups (e.g., the RNA) deemed by the FBI as major "threats to US national security."

believing that my performance of discipline and other survival skills would serve me, my family and my nation well, not only in gaining praise from the community but when “the revolution” (physical war) came.

“Giving Identity”? A Call for a Transition of Youth Engagement Structure

In addition to a seemingly estranged connection to being a Scout, Rainbow Dash and Hershey’s Chocolate seemed to be a little nervous giving their opinions and sharing their perceptions about their experiences. While they could just be shy, new to the interview process, uncomfortable with speaking openly to me, or consciously choosing to be resistant, it is also likely that they had never been asked to articulate their feelings in this way up to that point. Age and exposure also play a part in their understanding and ability to articulate their perceptions and experiences. Given this, it became clear that adults needed to re-conceptualize and restructure the ways in which they engage in “giving identity” to young people. This restructuring would have to begin with a basic openness to young people instilling in *them* an understanding of their (childhood) lived experiences in the effort to collectively devise strategies to help “youth rise to meet the challenges of being young in these times and in this place.” This restructuring would ideally continue with creating space for young people to explore fundamental questions about identity, the purpose of their attendance at the NAS, why the NAS exist, and what their desired/perceived role is in the process. In the 2014 wave of the Scouts, there are scheduled classes and workshops that explore a range of concepts, movements, organized sports, and crafts such as Theatre (which I facilitated), Dance and – what I find most interesting as it relates to identity, community and individual awareness – Citizenship.

In all research, particularly ethnographic research, many transitions within culture, an ever-changing entity, cannot be adequately captured or discussed in print. While I do not explore additional nuances of transitions due to the limitations of this project, there are some fascinating transitions happening with regard to the re-launch of the NAS and the new membership which I hope to experience as researcher/participant observer in future iterations of this research.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I explore the ways in which the New Afrikan Scouts organization provides culture (in terms of exposure and values, practices and representation via paramilitary training) as a means of transformation and transition. I also discuss the theme *I Don't Know, I think...* as a major theme that emerged from interviews with young people as it relates to field observations. The discussion of this theme is then coupled with auto-ethnographic reflections of my days as a Scout. This comparative analysis of how Scouts are presently constructed vs. how Scouts were constructed in the past now reveals the ways in which young people's New Afrikan identity performances and consciousness of their performances are directly linked to "who their parents are" and the surrounding circumstances of their lives. I close with a call for New Afrikan adults to re-conceptualize their idea of "giving identity" to youth and purposefully include young people in processes of planning and constructing the New Afrikan Scouts experience.

CHAPTER 6

KILOMBO ACADEMIC AND CULTURAL INSTITUTE (KILOMBO): “THE EDUCATION OF OUR CHILDREN IS A WHOLISTIC PROCESS; SPIRITUAL, INTELLECTUAL, PHYSICAL, RITUAL, AND DYNAMICALLY COMMUNAL.”

Kilombo History and Mission

Kilombo was founded in Decatur, Georgia in 2007. Kilombo’s mission, according to their website, is to “foster an academically excellent and culturally relevant education that produces students who are equipped to succeed globally and are committed to social justice.” As stated on the website, Kilombo’s founder, Sister Imani, has “been a classroom teacher and professional developer in urban school districts for over 30 years” with a particular focus in equity, culturally relevant pedagogy, and collaborative inquiry. Kilombo’s founding teacher and current co-director, Mama Masharike, a classroom teacher for the past 11 years, sees “the establishment of this institution as an answer to the overwhelming need for African children to have a safe, liberated space to grow, learn, and sharpen their skills.” As such, “[s]he practices a healing pedagogy, believing that the education of our children is a wholistic process; spiritual, intellectual, physical, ritual, and dynamically communal” (Kilombo website). It is important to note that both Sister Imani and Mama Masharike, along with co-director Mama Nehanda, identify as both New Afrikan and Afrikan. They are members of the New Afrikan People’s Organization and the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, which through their missions and practices uphold RNA tenets. The creation of Kilombo and the experiences within therefore extend from and are rooted in RNA ideals.

While the themes outlined in the forthcoming discussion reveal much about how Kilombo operates, the themes also reveal the ways in which co-directors Mama Nehanda and Mama Masharike carry-on and manifest many of the traditions, principles and experiences associated with their own New Afrikan childhoods. Mama Nehanda and Mama Masharike's construction of the Kilombo experience reflects their childhood socialization as New Afrikans and most notably how this socialization evolved into their present standpoints as Africana women. Before discussing specific themes that emerged from the interview and observation data, I want to highlight Africana womanism as an overarching theme and socio-political standpoint guiding the missions and practices developed by Kilombo's founder and co-directors.

Africana Womanism in essence says: We love men. We like being women. We love children. We like being mothers. We value life. [...] We reject the status of victim.

Indeed, we are victors, Sisters in Charge of our own destiny. We are Africana culture-keepers: Our primary obligation is to the progress of our cultural way of life through the stability of family and the commitment to community. (Verner 1994)

As Africana women, Kilombo's founder and co-directors model liberatory ways of being for men and male/female young people grounding the spaces for wholistic healing and education that Kilombo provides. Coined by scholar Clenora Hudson-Weems (1987), "Africana womanism brings to the forefront the role of African mothers as leaders in the struggle to regain, reconstruct, and create a cultural integrity that espouses the ancient Maatic principles of reciprocity, balance, harmony, justice, truth, righteousness, order, and so forth" (Dove 1998, 535). As it relates to RNA ideals, the Africana womanist standpoints described above parallel the following principles of the New Afrikan Creed, which are guiding New Afrikan values embodied by Kilombo's women leaders and passed on to students and the larger community:

I believe in the spirituality, humanity, and genius of Black people and in our new pursuit of these values.

I believe in the family and the community, and in the community as a family, and I will work to make this concept live.

I believe in the community as more important than the individual.

I believe in constant struggle for freedom, to end oppression and build a better world. I believe in collective struggle, in fashioning victory in concert with my brothers and sisters.

I pledge to struggle without fail until we have built a better condition than the world has yet known.

I will give my life, if that is necessary. I will give my time, my mind, my strength and my wealth because this IS necessary.

I will be patient and uplifting with the deaf, dumb and blind and I will seek by work and deed to heal the Black family, to bring into the Movement and into the Community, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, left by the wayside.

Mama Ayo and Mama Nehanda's contemporary practice and utilization of the 1960s New Afrikan creed reflects their belief that the marginalization of Black people's lives in US America continues. These Africana women merge/remix historical New Afrikan practices and contemporary Kilombo rituals, practices and curriculum. This merging presents what Kimberlé Crenshaw articulates as opportunities for "interdisciplinary, intersectional and cross-institutional" counter-narratives to post-racialism that not only illuminate systemic racial power but that also offers an account of the critical tools that have been developed to potentially dismantle and weaken the post racial narrative up to this moment. Within the frame of a liberation pedagogy Kilombo students are invited to discuss, critique, and build upon these tools.

Themes

I conducted participant observations and (individual and focus group) interviews with Kilombo teachers, parents and students from September 2012 to May 2013. In this chapter I discuss the most salient categories that arose from my Second Cycle coding⁴⁴ process as representative themes related to the experiences and perceptions of Kilombo parents, teachers and students. In structuring this discussion I match themes from interview data and participant observation reflections to explore the ways in which these different types of data inform each other. I also examine these data as they relate to and are informed by RNA principles.

Adults

As it relates to Kilombo adults (teachers and parents) ten themes emerged which reflect their perceptions of and experiences within Kilombo. These themes include:

Kilombo Is A Vision To Meld Everything Good
Mission To Change The World
Liberation Pedagogy
Quality Community Continuity
For My Child Kilombo Is Love, Strength And Sense of Self
Public School=Oppression
We Grew Up In New Afrika
Africa As Our Identity
This Country=Racism, Power, Privilege
Being Black In America Is Breathing Death, We Need Strategy

Kilombo Is A Vision To Meld Everything Good

The first theme listed, *Kilombo Is A Vision To Meld Everything Good*, is an in vivo code which emerged from interview data of Kilombo's teachers. In analyzing the observational and interview data from my fieldwork I found that Kilombo is indeed, as co-director Mama

⁴⁴ According to Saldaña, the Second Cycle coding is employed "to develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization from your array of First Cycle codes." (149)

Nehanda says, “a vision to meld everything good.” Both Mama Nehanda and Mama Masharike attended African-centered and public schools and were actively engaged in the NAS as well as Camp Pumziko. Reflecting on their experiences as New Afrikan children, they speak to the idea that as a school they have much more space and authorization (as it relates to parents, the community, and government guidelines) to create a wholistic liberatory and nurturing educational experience for their students. The Kilombo experience is thus a melding of a vast array of experiences associated with Camp Pumziko, NAS, New Afrikan communal practices, and African-centered education. Like Camp Pumziko, NAS, and the RNA in general, Kilombo is a mixed heterotopic and utopic counter-site which operates as a mirror. In the mirror Kilombo parents, teachers and students (as self-identified New Afrikan and Afrikan people) individually and collectively see themselves where they are not and cannot be seen outside of this ideological space. Kilombo serves as site upon which New Afrikan ideological concepts and practices are manifested. At the same time, Kilombo, as an institute of education – an important and often primary agent of socialization for young people – is much more than a counter-site. While the NAS and Camp Pumziko exist primarily as counter-sites providing spaces for young New Afrikan people to develop resistant capital, and to conceptualize themselves and their role in their communities as soldiers and freedom fighters, Kilombo is a site and a counter-site. Rather than countering white hegemony, Kilombo is about centering Africana thought and cultural practices. The countering that inevitably occurs is a byproduct of centering. In this sense, Kilombo moves beyond a paradigm and/or rhetoric of revolution. It *is* revolution. By grounding its curriculum, overall school culture and structure within Africana paradigms, the focus of Kilombo parents, teachers and students is not on the oppressor or the condition of being oppressed, but on healing and strengthening. This healing takes place through cultural centering

and empowerment through knowledge of self. The political rhetoric and militaristic practices of soldier-hood found in the NAS and Camp Pumziko are but one aspect of the Kilombo experience. As such, the ways in which Kilombo students perform New Afrikan identity into being as well as understand oppression and their role in the struggle is uniquely nuanced in this space.

Liberation Pedagogy

Another theme reflecting Kilombo adults' perceptions and experiences that stands out is *Liberation Pedagogy*. Stemming from Paulo Freire's (1970) work in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, liberation pedagogy refers to an approach to/system of educational processes that is culturally relevant and centered around the lived experiences of those being educated. One major aim of liberation pedagogy is social transformation to be obtained through critical thinking, consciousness raising, and questioning dominant narratives. The theme *Liberation Pedagogy* reflects the overall mission and purpose of the institute. As such this theme is inevitably tied to all of the other themes as exemplified in the following ethno-dramatic poem:

Public School=Oppression
This Country=Racism, Power, Privilege
Being Black In America Is Breathing Death, We Need Strategy
Our strategy is Liberation Pedagogy
Places and Spaces where we and our children see Africa As Our Identity
We Grew Up In New Afrika
Therefore Kilombo Is A Vision To Meld Everything Good from our childhoods
In our Mission To Change The World
We construct spaces of Quality Community Continuity
So that For My Child Kilombo Is Love, Strength And Sense of Self.

Liberation Pedagogy is manifested in the classroom, not only in the curriculum and classroom discussions but also in the sense of how classroom spaces are produced. *In Mama Masharika's class there were six boys and four girls. When I walked in they were reviewing vocabulary and*

writing. The students shared their favorite words and did a “free write” session. Accepting Mama Masharike’s inviting bodily gestures, I comfortably arrived in the room and sat in her chair, parallel to the door. While the students continued to write I looked around the room and noted the following: The window curtain is a red, black, and green flag with a white border outlining the shape of the African continent. There is a historical timeline of Africa, “Student of the Month” poster, a white board, maps of the continents Africa, Asia, Australia and Europe and a globe in the top left corner of the room. As I looked around the room I saw quotes typed in blue color printed on white paper and glued to a black piece of construction paper. Some of the quotes included:

“Powerful people cannot afford to educate the people that they oppress, because once you are truly educated, you will not ask for power. You will take it.”
–John Henrik Clarke

“To awaken the African mind we must ensure that the goal of our educational and socialization processes is to understand and live up to the principle of MAAT.”
–Asa G. Hilliard, III

“The thing to do is to get organized, keep separated and you will be exploited, you will be robbed, you will be killed. Get organized and you will compel the world to respect you.”
–Marcus Garvey

“To be Afrikan is to be excellent.” –Unknown

Other posters read “The Future Depends on What We Do in the Present,” and “Putting Black History into Focus.” There was a “Happy Birthday” chart with signed names next to the days under each month. The white board and other bulletin boards around the room were bordered

with Kente cloth⁴⁵ print. In one corner of the room there are two tiny frogs in a plastic container with rocks underneath a poster with “The 42 Declarations of Maat.”⁴⁶”

The above description of Mama Masharike’s classroom décor reveals the ways in which the physical space of the classroom is a performance within itself. In the same way that the RNA is a socially produced space grounded in and reflecting New Afrikan values and everyday practices, Mama Masharike’s classroom is social/political/cultural produced space that at once produces and is produced by (New) Afrikan culture, thought, and action. In the act of choosing performative quotes, images etc. Mama Masharike embodied and performed a number of RNA ideals as well as the Afrocentric Idea. Consequently, in producing this space, Mama Masharike hails her students as the recipients of the figurative and literal messages contained within the quotes, images, etc. strategically placed in the room.

After the students completed the free writing portion of their lesson, Mama Masharike led her class in a discussion about writer’s block. *She asks the students to think about “what inspires you . . . is it a smell, song, sound, place?” Mama Masharike stands at the front of the class with a stack of images in hand. The pictures are images of continental Africans from varying backgrounds. Some images contain one person, while others contain multiple people engaging in a range of activities. Mama Masharike tells the students that they must select an image and then create a poem inspired by image. The poem must begin with “I am beautiful because” she said. Mama Masharike goes first. She holds up her picture of an African woman with a colorful array of beaded braids and twists. She holds it directly in front of her chest and faces it toward the class for everyone to see as she improvises her poem. She spoke with a clear and direct poise,*

⁴⁵ A traditional and spiritual cloth originating in Ghana, West Africa which contains culturally significant patterns and colors.

⁴⁶ The 42 Declarations of Maat are Ancient Egyptian moral principles that promote truth, honesty, justice, etc.

*setting the tone for students to take the assignment seriously and to use their creativity. The students look through the picture stacks she placed at each cluster of desks. After choosing a picture they share really thoughtful and creative poems. One male student who chose a picture with several boys in it refused to say that the boys were beautiful, he insisted on saying “I am handsome because.” Mama Masharike explains the difference between beautiful and handsome. “Beautiful is the essence rather than outward appearance” she said. This activity extends from and lies within a Liberation Pedagogy in several ways. In designing this activity Mama Masharike provides a space for students to see varied reflections of themselves. By using the phrase “I am beautiful because” rather than “She/He/They are beautiful because,” Mama Masharike enables her students to see themselves in the person(s) in the image and to see the person(s) in the image in themselves. In engaging in this activity students saw *Africa As Our Identity*. At the same time Mama Masharike frames continental Africans as beautiful, countering the many negative stereotypes and images about African people, particularly on the continent of Africa, and calls on her students to relate to and positively expound on that framing in their own words, at once seeing themselves and all Africans as beautiful.*

About a week later I observed Mama Masharike’s class the whole day and in between observations I selected students to interview in the hallway outside of the classroom. On the white board that day Mama Masharike had written:

Place your “author’s purpose” homework in the light green tray.

Journal: “What is poetry?”

Learning partners sign up

Teach contemporary poetry

Complete study of your assigned poet

The students followed these directions. They listen to John Coltrane as they move around to sign up with their learning partners. Mama Masharike asks “What is jazz?” One student responds “Xho Xho⁴⁷ always told us it is classical African music.” Mama Masharike reads the objectives:

- Students will be able to define contemporary Black poetry.*
- Students will be able to give 3 characteristics that make contemporary Black poetry unique.*
- Students will be able to gather facts about assigned poets from a biographical source.*

The students excitedly move around the room, the boys gather together and sign each other’s sheets and at one point I heard one boy say “I have too many girls on here.” Zakiya says “this is cool” as she looks at her form. She then takes out a mirror and styles her locs. While they moved around Mama Masharike evaluated the journals. On the board she wrote:

*Poetry is:
Emotional
Spiritual
Feelings on paper
Figurative language
Rhythmic speech
A song on paper
Rap without music
Expressing feelings through words*

The students pair up with their learning partners and “actively read” articles/reading packets together. They read aloud and take notes on a large construction paper sheet which says “main idea and supporting details” in bold letters. David Von Stohl, who is sitting next to me and has observed me taking notes on my laptop asks “Are you writing a summary of our class?” “Kind of,” I reply. The first group moves to the front of the room and teaches from their chart. The second group discusses “the distinctiveness of African poetry.” Mama Masharike interjects “the paper says African American but I’m saying what?” and the class responds “African.” This

⁴⁷ Xho Xho, also known as Mama Imani, is the founder of Kilombo and taught many of Mama Masharike’s students during her time there.

moment was interesting as it begged the questions: What does it mean to replace one term with another? What does it teach the students? What does it say about each term? The students give different cheers after each sharing rather than a simple clapping of hands. Some of the cheers include, the Kilombo cheer, looking good and the roller coaster. Each cheer involves hand movements and sounds. The young people laugh and smile endearingly at their beloved Mama Masharike. As many of them share in their interviews, she is “sweet” and stern at the same time. Many of the students say “she is like my mother.” These sentiments manifest in the themes I Love My Teachers and Kilombo Is Community, Love And Rituals, which I discuss further below.

Within liberation pedagogy, Kilombo, like Camp Pumziko and the NAS, is grounded in ritual and Kilombo teachers prescribe performances of seriousness and discipline for their students. *One morning I came in and the morning ritual did not meet the teacher’s expectations. The young people seemed to have had energy throughout yet ended very solemnly, which the teachers immediately commented on. Mama Nehanda, with a serious tone, says “if you can’t do it with energy don’t do it.” Baba Ras Kofi followed up with “we need to take a walk in the woods, barefoot to wake yall up.”* Similar to yet extending beyond the ways in which schools in general work within structures of discipline and punish (Foucault 1975), students at Kilombo are directed and expected to perform in specific ways regarding New Afrikan ritualistic practices. When engaged in the rituals of recitation, libation etc. the message was clear in each site that I observed (Kilombo, Camp and NAS) that in performing New Afrika and everyday practices of this ideology and identity, one must be enthusiastic, physically present in their bodies, clearly enunciate and project their voice with an air of joy and seriousness simultaneously.

Baba Ras Kofi indeed took the third through eighth graders on a walk in “the woods” behind the school. I stayed behind with Mama Masharike and chatted as she set up the room for

the day. It was cold, and I was not dressed properly to attend the walk. As late students and a volunteer arrive and inquire about the classes they are told by Mama Masharike that “they are out doing physical education” and “in trouble for their lack luster participation in the morning ritual.” After about 15 minutes passed Mama Masharike went to see what was happening in the woods. I still remained in the classroom, taking notes and keeping an eye on the student who had arrived late. When she came back she shared that they were on their way and that “what they were doing was nice.” They were doing “visualization and listening exercises” she said.

In their *Mission To Change The World* through what they instill in their students and to provide *Quality Community Continuity*, Kilombo teachers employ an array of disciplinary actions to produce and reproduce what they deem as strong identity performances among their students. As such, like at Camp Pumziko and the NAS, discipline at Kilombo serves as a tool through which young people develop strategies to deal with adversity and as a reminder of how they must understand and thus perform their (New) Afrikan identities.

Young People

*Kilombo Is Community, Love And Rituals
My Favorite Subject Is Science And...
I Love My Teachers
At Kilombo I learn that Africa Is Powerful
I understand that Afrikan/African Have Impact Because Of Their History
When I think about What Makes Me Afrikan?
I realize that I'm a lot of things
I'm Afrikan, African-American And Black
And my Experiences Represent Who I Am
In living and dreaming The American Nightmare
with Good President Bad President Barack Obama
Sometimes I feel afraid to speak my mind
To say that as individual families and as a world community
Our relations can still be Good, With Differences
because out there Adults Don't Really Listen To Children
However, at the end of the day I don't worry 'cause
My Future Is Being The Best And Freeing Everybody*

A total of thirteen themes, woven in the above ethno-dramatic poem and listed below, emerged from interview data which reflect young people's perceptions of and experiences within

Kilombo:

Kilombo Is Community, Love And Rituals
Africa Is Powerful
I Love My Teachers
My Favorite Subject Is Science And...
Afrikan/African Have Impact Because Of Their History
What Makes Me Afrikan?
I'm Afrikan, African-American And Black
My Future Is Being The Best And Freeing Everybody
Experiences Represent Who I Am
Good, With Differences
Good President Bad President
The American Nightmare
Adults Don't Really Listen To Children

Kilombo Is Community, Love And Rituals

On the first day of my participant observations I arrived at Kilombo at 8:30 a.m. Students and teachers were engaged in their morning ritual and Umoja circle. During the morning ritual the Kilombo prayer and affirmation is recited along with libation, a moment of silence for political prisoners and a closing ritual of drumming and singing. The young people lead and are the predominant participants in this ritual. During the drumming and singing portion they negotiate song requests and the assigned drummers for that day take their place. Songs consistently chosen include Rolihlahla, a song about Nelson Mandela and freedom for those oppressed by apartheid in South Africa, and their remixed version of the Black Power Movement freedom song, Sisi Watu. However, no song was chosen or performed with as much enthusiasm as the following rap, entitled Study Hard, which uses a popular Atlanta rap song melody:

*Same old subjects, just a different day,
I know I'm gonna learn it, so I can get a A,
My mama likes my thoughts, my daddy thinks I'm cool,*

*When times are getting hard, this what I'ma do.
 Study, study, study hard Study, study, study hard,
 Study, study, study hard 'cause closed minds don't get fed on this school yard
 I got pencils in my pocket, I took a test and I rocked it,
 thoughts flowin like a faucet, my power we the socket,
 I represent the bk crew, keep it chillin like jeju,
 oppress us with Black holes while we learn in beast mode,
 we hungry fo that knowledge, why you waitin' for college,
 Martin died we aint reach his dream we rep the red, black and green,
 we tilled in this land, got killed in this land,
 now justice we demand, Kilombo school is where we plan,
 'cause we the same ol people in a different place, born in the oven but not a biscuit base,
 the leaders of the future and liberation schools, they try ta hide our history, what we
 gotta do...
 Study, study, study hard, Study, study, study hard,
 Study, study, study hard 'cause closed minds don't get fed on this school yard
 Mighta had a lot of crooks tryina still my mind, mighta had a lot of luck tryina take
 what's mind, We will win
 Free the people swag, free the people
 We will win
 I got ancestors and the Black Power, there's no way you can defeat us
 We will win
 Free the people swag, free the people
 We will win
 We will fight and we will win
 We will fight and we will win
 We will fight and we will win
 We will fight, we will win*

*The children were “crunk!”⁴⁸ They were connected to and excited about what they were saying.
 They danced in and out of the circle, swinging arms from left to right, jumping up and down and
 nodding their heads to the drum beat. I felt out of place not knowing the words or dancing. Ase
 Kuumba, Mama Masharike's daughter and unofficial leader among the older group of students,
 led all three of the songs. Study Hard – written by a former Kilombo teacher and Kilombo
 students – and the performance of it as a morning ritual exemplifies the leadership's
 dedication/desire to speak the language of the children, to translate RNA and have young people
 carry it forward on their terms and in their own way. This song and the performance of it*

⁴⁸ Commonly used in Atlanta vernacular, this term refers to extreme excitement and joy.

exemplifies the ways in which New Afrikan young people write their own liberation scripts from which they perform. According to former Kilombo teacher Kokayi Cazembe Olugbala:

The song came about as myself and several of the students [...] wanted to make an anthem that would simultaneously motivate the students and connect them to the work ethic of our collective ancestors. The group of students sat together and I led a discussion on what makes a good anthem. We used a song about hustling and repurposed it to spark academic interest and historical reference. As the song was being created the students and I broke down the lines to critically think about their meanings. Lines such as, "Same ole struggle, just a different day" were used to help the students understand that our moment in time is on the continuum of Struggle that African people have experienced in the US context for years. Later lines such as "Born in the oven, this is not a biscuit face" harken back to one of Malcolm X's speeches. The line was used to help students understand that we still live in hot and critical times and that like Malcolm believed being born here does not mean we have somehow become devoid of our ancestral legacy.

The above discussion vividly reflects Kilombo's *Liberation Pedagogy* and the ways in which *Kilombo Is Community, Love And Rituals*. In engaging in this morning ritual, which merges songs sung exclusively in Afrikan languages, African-American rap structures to the beat of African drums, as well as contemporary and traditional dance, Kilombo students truly navigate the interconnected spaces and performances which motivate their articulation that in terms of identity they are "a lot of things," particularly their assertion *I'm Afrikan, African-American And Black*.

At about 8:45 a.m. students dispersed into three groups: k-2nd (Mama Nehanda's class) 3rd -5th (Baba Ras Kofi's class) and 6th-8th (Mama Masharika's class), and went to their

respective multi grade level classrooms. During this transition Mama Masharike informed me that all of the classes have similar schedules and that they begin with a story circle followed by journaling after the morning ritual. I stayed in Mama Nehanda's room, where the Umoja circle took place. Her assistant Mama 'Bike immediately gathered students on the carpet and led their morning story circle. I moved to Mama Masharike's class for journaling and after the mid-day ten minute recess I moved into Baba Ras Kofi's class, which consisted of six boys and three girls. The students sat on the carpet in the front of the class in preparation for another story circle. I sat on the floor close to yet outside of their circle. One of the girls went and got a chair and asked "Do you want to sit here?" I accepted her offer. This gesture was not just a random act of kindness but an act of hospitality and communal care revealing the ways in which this student takes ownership of the Kilombo space with an openness to sharing. Upon entering the class and surely by the time I sat down I could not help but to notice the smell of the classroom. In my notes I wrote "The classroom smells really good! What is it? Lemon grass?" He put peppermint drops into the oil burner. My eyes start to burn and the children share that their eyes are burning also. After cracking the door in response to the children's exclamations Baba Ras Kofi read the story Abiyoyo Returns. He was animated and articulate. After getting lost in his story I became immersed in observation of the physical components of the room. There were three computers along the wall and similar to Mama Masharike's classroom there were world maps, a New Afrikan flag and images of African people. A poster of Muhammad Ali, in full boxing regalia, graced the surface of the classroom door and the white board was filled with literary terms (e.g., conflict-internal and external protagonist, antagonist, themes, plot and setting).

Africa as Our Identity

What equally caught my attention was the ways in which the theme *Africa As Our Identity* was exemplified in this space, particularly the external and material identity performances of Afrika through dress, hair styles and names. None of the girls or boys had straight (chemically processed) hair. They all have locks, braids, afros and/or twists. With the exception of one or two students all of the children had African names. This was true for not only Baba Ras Kofi's class but the other classes and all of the teachers as well. *Teachers wore African clothes or a mix of African and business casual clothes (i.e., a dashiki with slacks or a business casual outfit with a head-wrap made of African material). Students sported red, black or green tops and khaki pants. Mama Masharike informed me that this was the school uniform and that "children can wear Afrikan clothes whenever they want."* Another example of *Africa As Our Identity* in action is the constant use of an African language to communicate ideas, to signal shifts in the day's activities and to manage the classroom. After giving an instruction teachers would say to the students "Nfahamou?" which means "do you understand?" to which children would respond "Yebo." Another example of this is a classroom management strategy to get everyone's attention and bring about silence in the room. A teacher or student would call out "Ago!" and in response the others would say "Amay." As Spolsky (1999) posits "Language is the most central feature in human identity. When we hear someone speak, we immediately make guesses about gender, education level, age, profession, and place of origin. Beyond this individual matter, a language is a powerful symbol of national and ethnic identity (181)." As both speakers and hearers of African languages Kilombo teachers and students use language as a means of *being* African and solidifying *Africa As [Their] Identity*.

The American Nightmare

*It's actually hurtful you know to see how America treats us Black folks,
They wanna kills us, they just wanna kill us
We talk about how young men get killed every day
They don't even care that we're human*

*I don't wanna die
I didn't do anything to anyone*

*I don't want anything to happen to one of my family members
I have two brothers, what if the same thing happens to them?
That's the thing that frightens me the most because I love my siblings*

*If they're going to do it to him, they could do the exact same thing to me
If something like that happens to me it's not like I'm going down without a fight
I hope that people will call my name if that happens to me.*

*America is not a free country
I have nothing against the actual land, but the type of things that America does
Things like COINTELPRO, the FBI
The stop and frisk law in New York
They lock up people who say the truth
Our freedom fighters are in jail, on death row, waiting to get their heads chopped off
These things scare me but at the same time I feel protected
I really don't know
Sometimes it just gets so overwhelming
I wanna leave
But everybody I know and love lives here
It is what it is.*

I arranged the ethno-dramatic poem above solely from in vivo codes which emerged from various students' responses to the individual interview question, "What are your feelings about living in America?" This poem captures New Afrikan young people's perceptions and fears about the various ways in which white hegemony marginalizes Black life. Most notably, the in vivo codes in this poem express how US American systems of white hegemony breed violence and negrophobia often resulting in the targeting and killing of Black people, particularly young Black males. Kilombo students' adverse beliefs about and experiences within US America were

also explored in focus group interviews. Eight of Mama Masharika's ten students participated in a focus group interview which took place over the course of three meeting sessions. During these sessions I led students in a discussion around providing definitions for the following terms: *Afrikan, African, African-American, New Afrikan, Pan-Afrikan, Black* and *American*. Students were able to make clear and supported distinctions between the terms and explain to me that the different spellings of *Afrikan/African Have Impact Because Of Their History*. During the last session I posted the terms, which were written on a large piece of easel pad paper, on the blackboard once more and asked "How many of these identifying terms relate to you?" I asked them to raise their hands after I called out each term. No one raised their hand for African-American, African nor American. While these three terms are different what they all have in common, according to the definitions provided by the students, is that they are all variations of American identity. While African-American and American clearly include "American" as part of the term these students contend African spelled with a c is just like an "American" as it refers to a Black person who is "not free," "enslaved," and/or "colonized." With this understanding and their perceptions of America reflected in the poem above none of the students wanted to identify themselves as American in any way.

*I never asked to be an American citizen
We're not really American because we weren't the first people here
I think you have to put yourself in perspective
I'm an Afrikan in America.*

Chapter Summary

This chapter explores perceptions and experiences of Kilombo students, teachers, and parents by way of twenty-three in vivo themes which emerged from participant observations and

interviews of adults and young people. These themes are discussed in relation to each other and RNA ideals via ethno-dramatic poetry and thick description observation reflections. Africana womanism emerged as an overarching theme/framework through which Kilombo's founder and co-directors construct the Kilombo experience. Emerging as the most salient themes from adults are *Kilombo Is a Vision to Meld Everything Good* and *Liberation Pedagogy* which reveal how Kilombo's mission uses RNA values to guide the development of youth programming associated with Camp Pumziko, the NAS organization, and childhood cultural experiences of Kilombo's co-directors. For young people the theme *The American Nightmare* emerges from individual and focus group interview data and exemplifies their beliefs that US "America is not a free country," but rather a country imbued with white privilege and institutionalized racism. *Kilombo is Community, Love And Rituals* and *Africa as Our Identity* also emerge as significant themes illuminating the ways in which Kilombo's ritualistic practices serve as nurturance as well as a source of pride and belonging for young people. In addition, as discussed in the observation reflections, these themes reflect Mama Masharika and Mama Nehanda's goals to provide a healing space which strategically places the history and culture of its students at the center.

CHAPTER 7

“THE UMOJA CIRCLE” (REFLECTIONS AND DISCUSSION)

Mystory Returned: Auto-ethnographic reflections of a decolonizing standpoint within imperialist/colonialist paradigms.

In this ivory colored castle I walk down long and winding hallways with ivory colored walls. I see all kinds of windows, of varying shapes and sizes in the oddest and most unorganized places. A few people who have walked down these halls before told me which windows to look through, they told me which windows showed really interesting views of whatever it was that I wanted to look at on the other side. They told me about the most popular windows, the windows they were told to look through, and the windows that “people like us” have looked through since “people like us” started walking down these hallways. As I walk and take a gaze here and there I wonder about all the windows “people like us” don’t look through, don’t talk about, all the windows that we/they can’t see, the windows that look like walls or the ceiling or the floor. What can I see if I look through those un-window like places? What do I make of what I see in Other castles with its own hallways, rooms and windows? And how do I convey that to myself/them? How do I make them see? Is it for them to see? Is it for me to see? What happens to what we see after our dissecting, writing, historicizing, interpreting contextualizing, conceptualizing and talking? What do we do in all this space within and outside of gaining from and giving to what we see? What does what I’m seeing make of me/us? What happens when I belong to “people like us” and to that which is being seen? Being “them” and “us” at once what am I doing and to whom am I talking?

Within the complicated layers of my researcher/scholar/cultural insider self, I end this project with as much concern as I began. In the face of my embrace of the Afrocentric idea as “a moral as well as an intellectual location that posits Africans as subjects rather than as objects of human history” (Asante 1998, xiii), I have by the very nature of engaging in this exercise called a dissertation accepted and conformed to Eurocentric paradigms of thinking, writing, historicizing, theorizing, and interpreting. As the end of this project grew nearer and nearer writing became a daunting task. In reflecting on my thinking and reading my own words I saw where I was lost in the dominating language of the Euro side of my double consciousness. I wanted to write myself out of and not further into colonialist ways of knowing. I saw places in my writing and in my interpretation where I completely looked at myself and my community through a Eurocentric lens and was scared out of my wits as I imagined all the invisible ways in which the colonizer within permeated this project. This devastated me. This reality made me sit in my room in silence, cry in the mirror, and wonder what to do, I knew I could not just quit. Given this experience, I “end” with a similar yearning that I began with, a yearning to own my voice, a yearning to speak multiple languages within one, a yearning to speak my inner voice-the voice seeking decolonization, the voice that is always speaking yet simultaneously being judged, quieted, misinterpreted and drowned out by the dominant voice within and outside of me.

I didn't know what to do, what to study, what to deem and reject as imperialist white supremacist agenda and what to read with a fine tooth comb, what to search for in the oceans of forgotten, erased, dead, un-canonized works that reflect and could help me navigate through this experience, tools buried as deep as the millions of African bodies who jumped or were thrown overboard during the Middle Passage. Where is my place? How do I dig in the deep water? What tools do I have to get that deep? Who will accompany me, for I cannot swim? Who will be

my therapist as I enter this world of erasure and pain? To talk me into staying in the place that is representative of this very thing? What will I find? How will I apply what I find? Who will know what these codes mean that I bring back to the surface-that cannot be translated but felt and known?

I find comfort in the inner voices of those whom I poured libation to in Chapter 2, in the inner voices of the New Afrikan young people, teachers, parents and elders that I observed and/or interviewed for this study. In some mysterious way I find motivation in the lingering inner voices belonging to the countless dually othered beings murdered all over the world for occupying their Black and young bodies. I hear solidarity in the inner and outer voices of my loved ones, mentors, advisors and colleagues walking this journey alongside me, asking questions of my questions, listening to and with me as life answers.

“Umoja sister! Umoja brother!”

The Umoja Circle, within the New Afrikan community, represents unity, three hundred and sixty degrees of Blackness, completion, cyclical order, and reciprocity. The Umoja Circle is created in Kilombo’s morning ritual, and at the end of New Afrikan Scouts meetings and Camp Pumziko daily activities. This time is dedicated to collective and individual reflections, constructive criticisms, affirmations, announcements, shout outs, and discussion. In this Umoja circle that is the final chapter of my dissertation, I include individual reflections, observations, and major findings related to my experiences within the three research sites (Camp Pumziko, New Afrikan Scouts, and Kilombo Academic and Cultural Institute) of this study. In the forthcoming discussion I revisit my statement of purpose and research questions posed in Chapter 1 and discuss how I attend to them. This discussion is followed by an overview of the

study's major findings, outlined in Chapter's 4-6, which emerged from the data collected and analyzed from observations and interviews. The chapter concludes with a discussion on implications of the study's findings and possibilities for further research.

Original Research Questions and Purpose Revisited

As stated in Chapter 1, the primary purpose of this study was to explore the ways in which young people perform and experience their New Afrikan identities, as well as the interlinking of their performances and agency. I wanted to examine young people's performance of New Afrikan identity particularly as a counter-narrative and resistance strategy to the dominant narrative of Black children's existence and status in the US. The secondary aims of this study included examining how adults within this community negotiate these two narratives while reimagining a new socially constructed identity for their children within the constituted nature of US cultural identity. In order to directly address my research purpose I posed a series of research questions. My primary research question was "in what ways do New Afrikan children perform and perceive childhood experience?"

Guided by the purpose and primary research question laid out above I created a map of concepts — culture, identity, race, childhood, performance, performativity, and agency — which together served as the study's conceptual framework. *All* of the concepts, as they intersect and overlap, guided the construction of my interview questions and the ways in which I observed, understood and analyzed young people's New Afrikan identity performance. In my efforts to allow the study's findings to reveal how this culture works and to explore young people's New Afrikan identity performance from their perspective rather than through my preconceived notions and existent concepts and theories, I employed *Four Seasons* as a decolonizing and

ontologically based research methodology. In using this methodology I consistently acknowledged my standpoint as researcher and cultural insider laying out my experiences, assumptions and preconceived notions as influences on the ways in which I viewed, experienced and interpreted the data so closely related to my own identity and personal experiences. The *Afrocentric Idea* (Asante 1998, 1-2) which states that researchers should place “African ideals at the center of any analysis that involves African culture and behavior” guided me to choose *Four Seasons*, which together influenced my data analysis methods. In analyzing my research data (interview transcriptions) I utilized the in vivo coding method to capture the verbatim words of my study participants. This choice was particularly significant as I sought to honor and privilege the actual voices and worldviews of my study participants (members of largely marginalized/silenced groups).

My secondary research questions included: “How/Where is a New Afrikan Ideology enforced and reinforced for children?” “In what ways do performances of New Afrikan identity empower or disempower those who are silenced, invisibilized and often seen as disposable in their own societies (from Emmett Till to Trayvon Martin)?” “In what ways do New Afrikan adults engage young people in their community as full beings with agency?” and “How can school teachers (outside of New Afrikan culture) honor the culture and consciousness of New Afrikan children?” In attending to the study’s purpose, the principal research question and the secondary research questions listed above I designed my study to capture the ways in which New Afrikan identity is performed and perceived by young people as well as constructed by adults within three sites (Camp Pumziko, NAS, and Kilombo). Based on my cultural insider knowledge, I identified and strategically chose these three sites as spaces where New Afrikan ideology is collectively produced and reproduced by adults and young people. I chose these sites

because they are primary spaces where New Afrikan adults consciously construct New Afrikan childhood and consciously/unconsciously model New Afrikan identity performance for young people through their organizing and leadership roles within each site. Lastly, I decided that choosing three sites, as opposed to one, would enable me to explore and compare the varied ways in which New Afrikan childhood is constructed and performed in multiple spaces.

In the discussion below of my major findings I specifically address the ways in which I attend to the study's purpose and subsequent research and interview questions. The discussion concludes with an analysis of what the themes and observations say about the construction and performance of New Afrikan childhood and recommendations for the New Afrikan community.

Major Findings

In employing the *Four Seasons* research methodology, I present the study's findings "with *tentative certainty*" showing "respect for the power of nature to determine circumstances or 'facts' of our human experience" (De la Garza 2001, 628). My study's findings are not conclusions nor claims but instead observations through which the theoretical concepts that guide the study can be contextualized and amplified as they relate to young people's performances of New Afrikan identity.

Themes and Observations

In conducting research within the Camp Pumizko site, I observed and highlighted the performative nature of all things New Afrikan including identity, space, place, ritual, and speech acts (the New Afrikan Scouts chant, oath, and pledge) and how they informed each other. The three major observations I made in regards to how young people perform and experience New Afrikan identity at Camp Pumziko include 1) New Afrikan identity in this space is produced and

reproduced through performative speech acts; “saying something is doing something” 2) The performance of New Afrikan identity is directly tied to and dependent upon performances of self-discipline. Self-discipline is instilled in New Afrikan young people as a strategy for dealing with present and future adversities, chiefly as Othered beings; and 3) New Afrikan young people’s identity performances are inextricably bound to and shaped by the various spaces they occupy as well as the people they come in contact with in these spaces.

Within the New Afrikan Scouts research site one of two major observations, by way of the theme *NAS Provides Culture*, which emerged from an interview with Scout leader Star was that the NAS provides culture (in terms of exposure, and values, practices and representation via paramilitary training) as a means of transformation and transition. The theme *I Don’t Know, I think...*, which emerged from interviews with Scouts young people, inspired auto-ethnographic reflections of my days as a Scout. This comparative analysis of how Scouts are presently constructed vs. how Scouts were constructed in the past revealed another major observation within this site. The second major observation within this site is that young people’s New Afrikan identity performances and consciousness of their performances are directly linked to “who their parents are” and the surrounding circumstances of their lives. Given these observations, I close with a call for New Afrikan adults to re-conceptualize their idea of “giving identity” to youth and to purposefully include young people in processes of planning and constructing the New Afrikan Scouts experience.

The themes and observations emerging from the Kilombo site far outnumbered the other sites. Perceptions and experiences of Kilombo students, teachers, and parents were captured in twenty-three in vivo themes which emerged from participant observations and interviews of adults and young people. Emerging as the most salient themes for adults are *Kilombo Is a Vision*

to Meld Everything Good and *Liberation Pedagogy* which reveal how Kilombo's mission uses RNA values which have guided the development of youth programming associated with Camp Pumziko, the NAS organization and childhood cultural experiences of Kilombo's co-directors. For young people the theme *The American Nightmare* emerges from individual and focus group interview data and exemplifies their beliefs that US "America is not a free country," but rather a country imbued with white privilege and institutionalized racism. *Kilombo is Community, Love And Rituals* and *Africa as Our Identity* emerge as significant themes illuminating the ways in which Kilombo's ritualistic practices serve as nurturance as well as a source of pride and belonging for young people. In addition, as exemplified in the observation reflections, these themes reflect Mama Masharike and Mama Nehanda's goals to provide a healing space which strategically places the history and culture of its students at the center.

In analyzing the Kilombo site overall I examined Mama Nehanda and Mama Masharike's construction of the Kilombo experience as a reflection of their childhood socialization as New Afrikans and most notably the evolution of this socialization into their present standpoints as Africana women. From this examination Africana womanism emerged as an overarching theme and socio-political standpoint (congruent with New Afrikan principles) guiding the missions and practices developed by Kilombo's founder and co-directors. In reflecting on how Africana womanism provides a frame for what is happening within this site I reflected on how Africana womanism emerges in the other research sites and within the RNA in general. I became conscious of the fact that the leadership positions within all three of my research sites are held by Africana women. As such, like Kilombo's founder and co-directors, the Africana women leaders of Camp Pumziko and NAS model liberatory ways of being and leadership for men and male/female young people. This reality also serves to counter the

dominant narrative of Black Power Movement politics by black feminists which argues that Africana women were, more often than not, relegated to subordinate positions within that movement. This reading of Africana womanism across all three research sites therefore serves to highlight the ways in which gender has been constituted within the RNA from its inception to the current moment. While New Afrikan community members are all socialized into a white patriarchal culture, the New Afrikan communal culture is a way to counteract those problems of socialized internalization. The gender issues of patriarchy and sexism, as learned in the white mainstream institutions, is relatively challenged, critiqued, and minimized in the New African community. There are more egalitarian duties and purposes in RNA, roles are complementary, and the focus is on women's and men's experiences, underscoring interlocking issues of racism and sexism as a part of the New African culture of community and resistance. In future iterations of this project I would like to explore gender in New Afrikan communities further and examine how the current structure impacts male/female youth identity construction. I am particularly interested in attending to how young girls and boys individually construct and perform New Afrikan identity into being based on how gender roles play out and how gender issues are explored within and outside of the community.

What these themes say about Agency, Performance and Childhood in New Afrikan Spaces

Adults at Kilombo offer a culturally relevant learning space merging Kilombo rituals with NAS and Camp Pumziko practices of self-discipline and commitment to social justice in their efforts to holistically honor and nurture young people. On the other hand, within the NAS and Camp Pumziko organizations adults largely construct/perpetuate narratives of children as victims and within this construction devise programs to meet the needs of the empty, endangered child. As a result the child is not fully met with the fullness of who they are, and the programs

they participate in are not addressing the entirety of their lived experience. Constructed solely as learners as opposed to learners and teachers, New Afrikan young people are not explicitly called on to be active participants in the discussion of how they would be best served. This practice, although different in many ways, is akin to a room filled with privileged whites strategizing about diversity, or a group of men discussing women's agency. The subject cannot be left out of the conversation, they must truly be the subject and not the object/at the margins of the conversations. A whole, healing and liberated nation cannot be built with input solely from one group of its citizens. A re-conceptualized community building model that places adults and young people at the same table in terms of planning and conscious construction of a liberation seeking existence for all will no doubt change the notion of liberation in this community and reframe young people's place in the Umoja circle and the larger community.

In one sense New Afrikan adults (parents and teachers alike) aid young people in examining their racial and cultural subjectivity in US America. In another sense New Afrikan adults manipulate young people into performing prescribed roles that are seemingly uncritical of the implications of these performances beyond an adult agenda. Although New Afrikans actively seek to challenge cultural hegemony and Western socially constructed notions, the ways in which childhood is constructed in the New Afrikan community does not reflect this stance, as New Afrikan adults do not directly challenge, or even acknowledge the ways in which certain Eurocentric notions of childhood influences their engagement with young people. From my own childhood and adult experiences and in my observations as researcher over the past two years, young people are constructed and treated primarily as learners only. While texts like "The Declaration of Independence," the "New Afrikan Creed" and the "New Afrikan Oath," (all written in the late 1960s) speak to the importance of seeking to "promote the personal dignity

and integrity of the individual” and “self-respect and mutual understanding among all people in the society,” they do not explicitly talk about children. Though such documents, in any nation, rarely contain explicit discussion of children, particularly as subjects, not treating young people as full humans contradicts the purpose of this nation, which is to engage in struggle against (various and interlocking) oppressions for *all* people. In devising strategies for our liberation we must be aware of the constructs of childhood that influence how we engage with our children and do away with or at the very least be conscious of concepts concerning children that do not serve our goals. Energy invested in perpetuating and responding to age-old narratives about children, particularly Black children, as victims only would be better served in devising more nuanced approaches to nation-building which include the honoring of New Afrikan young people’s experiences, perceptions, and ability to individually and collectively (with each other and adults) affect change.

Implications for the New Afrikan Community and the Academy

Through participant observations and interviews, as well as academic conference presentations and publications, the findings of this study have begun to foster cross cultural and inter-generational dialogue about the varied perceptions of and experiences with concepts of New Afrika, New Afrikan identity, African liberation and Black Power in US America. This research contributes to the existent bodies of literature in the diverse fields of Childhood Studies, Performance, Theatre, and Africana Studies, uniquely interweaving them to construct conceptual frameworks and windows through which to view marginalized cultures. This research expands my own and others’ understanding of the lived experiences and perceptions of New Afrikan and African-centered young people and highlights alternative ways of knowing regarding the

intersecting concepts of agency, theatrical performance, performance of the every-day, Blackness and childhood. As such, my research moves beyond the usual discourse surrounding Black and other marginalized young people. It explores ways in which Black young people house complex identities and realities in their young bodies.

Finally, this research offers a space for adults within New Afrikan, African centered, and Black Nationalist communities in general to stand in Pumziko⁴⁹ and reexamine their engagement with young people, particularly inside of their communities. This reexamination has the potential to lead community members to alternate states of consciousness, to critically interrogate their participation in constructing New Afrikan and Black childhood, and enable adults to see young people as teachers as well as learners.

Possibilities for Further Research

In addition to theatre I am also trained in Africana Studies. In this field we feel that research should have service beyond scholarship and that it should positively impact those researched. As such, I returned to Camp Pumziko last summer, and was inspired by my previous observations to facilitate Theatre for Social Change workshops in which we engaged in serious dialogue about identity, agency and oppression. During and after those sessions campers expressed their excitement and gratitude for having taken the workshop and frustration that they had not had those experiences before and that I would only be conducting one workshop with each group. It quickly became clear to me that beyond making batches of kale salad in the kitchen that brought campers back into the kitchen for second and thirds and performing security from 5am until day light, my necessary role at camp going forward is as Theatre Practitioner.

⁴⁹ A place of rest or a moment of pause.

Through theatre we (adults and youth) were able to engage in games and activities allowing us to explore complex notions and have difficult conversations referenced above. Also, in my effort to move this research beyond solely scholarship I plan to devise an ethnodrama, using the collected data and experiences in my fieldwork, to create a theatrical performance which will be performed before the New Afrikan community in hopes of sparking mere beginnings of intergenerational dialogue about constructions of childhood, agency, Black power and other pertinent notions that will surely rise to the surface.

Other possible future iterations of this research include conducting a more in depth analysis of New Afrikan identity performance by narrowing the research sites and questions. An example of this would be designing a research project around two questions: How do we prepare New Afrikan young people for culturally diverse spaces? How do we transform dominant spaces into culturally inclusive spaces? Finally, I recognize that the ways in which childhood is constructed as it specifically relates to gender, class, and sexuality is a limitation of this study therefore future iterations of this work could attend to questions around childhood construction and New Afrikan identity formation within these intersecting identity constructs.

Pumziko

In the Umoja Circle participants stand in Pumziko, which is what I stand in as I share my reflections and observations. Again, I do not propose that my closing discussion is a conclusion but as the term *Pumziko* suggests, a resting point. I cannot make “conclusions” about an ever-changing culture and the individuals within that culture. I will stop here, yet as the discussion

reveals, all of the findings and multiple future research trajectories are still to be explored. The Umoja Circle concludes with a collective vocalizing of the term “Nationhood!” at which time everyone in the circle disperses. Nationhood!

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APPENDIX A
IRB APPROVAL LETTERS

To: Johnny Saldana
GHALL

From: Mark Roosa, Chair
Soc Beh IRB

Date: 06/25/2012

Committee Action: Expedited Approval

Approval Date: 06/25/2012

Review Type: Expedited F7

IRB Protocol #: 1206007898

Study Title: Performing New Afrikan Childhood: Agency, Conformity and the Spaces In Between.

Expiration Date: 06/24/2013

The above-referenced protocol was approved following expedited review by the Institutional Review Board.

It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval before the expiration date. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without approval by the Institutional Review Board.

Adverse Reactions: If any untoward incidents or severe reactions should develop as a result of this study, you are required to notify the Soc Beh IRB immediately. If necessary a member of the IRB will be assigned to look into the matter. If the problem is serious, approval may be withdrawn pending IRB review.

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of this study, such as the procedures, the consent forms, or the investigators, please communicate your requested changes to the Soc Beh IRB. The new procedure is not to be initiated until the IRB approval has been given.

Please retain a copy of this letter with your approved protocol.



To: Johnny Saldana
GHALL

From: Mark Roosa, Chair
Soc Beh IRB

Date: 07/10/2013

Committee Action: **Renewal**

Renewal Date: 07/10/2013

Review Type: Expedited F7

IRB Protocol #: 1206007898

Study Title: Performing New Afrikan Childhood: Agency, Conformity and the Spaces In Between.

Expiration Date: 06/24/2014

The above-referenced protocol was given renewed approval following Expedited Review by the Institutional Review Board.

It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval of ongoing research before the expiration noted above. Please allow sufficient time for reapproval. Research activity of any sort may not continue beyond the expiration date without committee approval. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the expiration date will result in the automatic suspension of the approval of this protocol on the expiration date. Information collected following suspension is unapproved research and cannot be reported or published as research data. If you do not wish continued approval, please notify the Committee of the study termination.

This approval by the Soc Beh IRB does not replace or supersede any departmental or oversight committee review that may be required by institutional policy.

Adverse Reactions: If any untoward incidents or severe reactions should develop as a result of this study, you are required to notify the Soc Beh IRB immediately. If necessary a member of the IRB will be assigned to look into the matter. If the problem is serious, approval may be withdrawn pending IRB review.

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of this study, such as the procedures, the consent forms, or the investigators, please communicate your requested changes to the Soc Beh IRB. The new procedure is not to be initiated until the IRB approval has been given.

Please retain a copy of this letter with your approved protocol.

Performing New Afrikan Childhood: Agency, Conformity and the Spaces In Between

PARENTAL LETTER OF PERMISSION

Dear Parent:

My name is Asantewa Sunni-Ali, and I am a graduate student in the Theatre for Youth doctoral program at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to explore the ways in which New Afrikan children experience childhood and make sense of their layered identities as New Afrikans, members of a global Pan Afrikan community, and as "paper citizens" of the US.

I am inviting your child's participation, which will involve a survey and an interview, both of which will not exceed 1 hour. Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to have your child participate or to withdraw your child from the study at any time, there will be no penalty (it will not affect your child's grade, treatment/care, etc). Likewise, if your child chooses not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. The results of the research study may be published, but your child's name will not be used.

Although there may be no direct benefit to your child, the possible benefit of your child's participation is the opportunity to reflect upon his/her experiences and perceptions, which may result in a greater sense of self and community awareness. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your child's participation.

All names and responses in this study will be kept confidential. The results of this study will be primarily used for my dissertation. Results may also be used in reports, theatrical presentations, or publications but your child's name will not be used (they will have the opportunity to choose a pseudonym or one can be chosen for them).

If you have any questions concerning the research study or your child's participation in this study, please call me at (404) 914-6903 or email me at Asantewa.sunni-ali@asu.edu. You may also contact my advisor on this project, Professor Johnny Saldaña at (480) 965-2661 or johnny.saldana@asu.edu.

Sincerely,

Asantewa Sunni-Ali

By signing below, you are giving consent for your child _____ (Child's name) to participate in the above study.

Signature

Printed Name

Date

If you have any questions about you or your child's rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you or your child have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

ASU IRB
Approved
Sign DM
Date 7/10/2013 - 6/24/2013

CHILD ASSENT FORM

I have been informed that my parent(s) have given permission for me to participate in a study concerning New Afrikan children's experiences and perceptions.

I will be asked to fill out a survey and participate in an interview which will take approximately 1 hour.

My participation in this project is voluntary and I have been told that I may stop my participation in this study at any time. If I choose not to participate, (it will not affect my grade or treatment at school) in any way.

Signature

Printed Name

Date

ASU IRB
Approved
Sign DM
Date 7/10/2013 - 6/24/2014

APPENDIX B
SECOND CYCLE CODING CHART

New Afrikan Scouts Adults (perceptions & experiences)		
Categories (in bold caps)	Concepts	Themes
Experiences as a child (Relating w/ non-African-centered & non-New Afrikan young people. Relating within the community) AS A CHILD I LEARNED TO BALANCE	1 "I saw both sides" 2 "I learned to balance"	1 Both sides 2 Balance
Reasons for NAS THE NAS PROVIDES CULTURE	3 "my children needed something" 4 "my children don't go to a cultural school" 5 "what they know about their culture and their people is what I provide"	3 Children need it 4 Culture void 5 Providing culture
Identity WE ALL AFRIKAN	6 "technically we all Afrikan" 7 "we started off in Afrika we were brought to these five states" 8 "when we came here we not Afrikans anymore" 9 "a New Afrikan is what all African Americans are"	6 We all Afrikan 7 Started in Afrika 8 Not Afrikans anymore 9 All African Americans are New Afrikan
Sustainability: "How do we produce a program that people think is relevant year-round?" RESTRUCTURE FOR SUSTAINABILITY	10 "Incentive for your kids to want to be there" 11 "Try to get our people to understand" 12 "We have to restructure"	10 Incentive for Kids 11 Understanding 12 Restructuring

New Afrikan Scouts Young People (perceptions & experiences)		
Categories	Concepts	Themes
Experience at camp	1 "we played" 2 "we learned things"	1 Played 2 Learned

PLAY, LEARN, DRILL	3 “in the morning we did drills”	3 Drilling
Experience in Scouts SING AND PRACTICE	4 “it’s a little bit good” 5 “I need more practice ‘cause I mess up sometimes” 6 “we get to sing”	4 It’s good 5 More practice needed 6 We sing
About me PURPLE AND HERSHEY’S	7 “my favorite color is purple” 8 “I like Hershey’s and the way it taste.”	7 Favorite color purple 8 I like Hershey’s
Racial/ethnic identity I DON’T KNOW, I THINK	9 “I don’t know” 10 “I’m from America, I think some people are Afrikan in my family so I’m African-American” 11 “my color skin is Black and I go to the New Afrikan Scouts and that’s all I know”	9 I don’t know 10 I think I’m African-American 11 That’s all I know

Kilombo Adults (perceptions & experiences)		
Categories	In Vivo Codes	Themes (Focused Coding)
Teachers		
“A place like Kilombo” A VISION OF MELDING EVERYTHING GOOD	1 “it’s a vision coming into being” 2 “there’s a clear stance” 3 “it’s not without it’s challenges” 4 “less students more attention” 5 “Kilombo melds everything good that I’ve learned in my life about who we are”	1 Envisioning 2 Clear Stance 3 It’s Challenging 4 Students Get More Attention 5 Melding Everything Good
“Our mission is about our children changing the world” MISSION TO CHANGE THE WORLD	6 “build character” 7 “grooming children who fight for social justice” 8 “we’re teaching children who they are” 5 9 “push them to their best” 10 “establishing a nation” 11 “prepare our children for a tomorrow that we can’t imagine”	6 Building Character 7 Fighting For Justice 8 Teaching Children Who They Are 9 Pushing Them To Their Best 10 Nation Building 11 Preparing

	12 “we wanna groom children who can do whatever it is they want” 13 “our children are the answer we’ve waited for”	Children 12 Grooming Children 13 Children Are Our Answer
“An educational experience” LIBERATION PEDGAGOGY	14 “liberation pedagogy” 15 “nurturing pedagogy” 16 “culturally relevant pedgaogy”	14 liberation pedagogy 15 nurturing pedagogy 16 culturally relevant pedgaogy
Parents		
Why Kilombo QUALITY COMMUNITY CONTINUITY	17 “An alternative for myself and my children” 18 “cultural continuity” 19 “Important to have him in an African-centered environment” 20 “community” 21 “excellent quality education”	17 Alternative 18 continuity 19 African-centered environment 20 community 21 quality education
“My experience at Kilombo has been very good” LOVE, STRENGTH AND SENSE	22 “My children are loving and open-going to Kilombo is a big part of that” 23 “They have a sense of who they are” 24 “My child found a lot of his strengths at Kilombo” 25 “things I didn’t know as an adult my son is learning as a child”	22 My children are loving and open 23 sense of self 24 my child found strengths 25 learning “adult” things
“Public School, it’s a complete difference in how they deal with their children” PUBLIC SCHOOL= OPPRESSION	26 “oppressive pedagogy” and “clear racialized agenda” 27 “children are under siege” 28 “what’s really going on with this child?” 29 “given drugs to alter behavior” 30 “[teachers] memorize this program” 31 “parents [have] competent and legitimate authority complex” 32 “a lack of continuity” 33 “somehow help them through this”	26 oppressive pedagogy/racialized agenda 27 children under siege 28 what’s going on 29 behavioral drugs 30 teachers memorize programs 31 parents have complex 32 no continuity 33 help them
Parents and Teachers		
“I remember as a child” WE GREW UP IN	34 “we grew up in New Afrika” 35 “I love everything about the way I was raised”	34 grew up in New Afrika 35 I love everything

<p>NEW AFRIKA</p>	<p>36 “lessons from my grandfather” 37 “rawness of how I grew up” 38 “afrikan-centered academic program was better than programs in public school” 39 “we’re so much the composite of our parents” 40 “Africanisms”</p>	<p>36 lessons from grandfather 37 rawness 38 african-centered school was better 39 composite of our parents 40 Africanisms</p>
<p>“Africa as our identity”</p> <p>AFRICA AS OUR IDENTITY</p>	<p>41 “I absolutely identify as New Afrikan” 42 “I’m Afrikan” 43 “I’m definitely not African-American” 44 “Culturally I’m a proud Black man” 45 “dynamics in this community are diverse and open ended” 46 “how do you spell Africa” 47 “what language is you speaking?” 48 “in the larger scheme of things” 49 “when I think about my ancestry” 50 “traveled to Africa”</p>	<p>41 “ I’m New Afrikan” 42 “I’m Afrikan” 43 not African-American 44 I’m Black 45 Community dynamics 46 spell Africa 47 language 48 larger scheme 49 ancestry 50 traveled to Africa</p>
<p>“This country” “the society we call Babylon”</p> <p>RACISM, POWER AND PRIVILEGE</p>	<p>51 “intentional racial violence” 52 “institutionalized structural racism” 53 “afrika is under attack in popular culture” 54 “good things came from slave labor” 55 “president obama” 56 “idea of post-racial” 57 “I don’t trust white folks” 58 “the powers that be” 59 “the privilege”</p>	<p>51 racial violence 52 structural racism 53 Afrika under attack 54 slave labor 55 Obama 56 post-racial 57 don’t trust white 58 powers that be 59 privilege</p>
<p>“Being Black in America”</p> <p>BREATHING DEATH STRATEGY</p>	<p>60 “a walking breathing death” 61 “influenced by the culture of America” 62 “Black people gotta work on strategy” 63 “reflect choices I want for my people in my actions” 64 “rbg but gangsta” 65 “life in itself it’s just a whole classroom”</p>	<p>60 breathing death 61 cultural influenced 62 strategy 63 choices and actions 64 rbg 65 life class</p>

Kilombo Young People (perceptions & experiences)

Categories	Concepts	Themes
Feelings about school overall COMMUNITY LOVE RITUALS	1 "I love this school" 2 "It's been great" 3 "morning rituals" 4 "collaborating"	1 love 2 great 3 rituals 4 collaborating
Feelings about teachers LOVE SKILLS	5 "I love the teachers" 6 "They teach us a lot" 7 "Teaching skills" 8 "better teaching"	5 love 6 teach us a lot 7 skills 8 better
Favorite subjects SCIENCE AND	9 "math" 10 "science" 11 "spanish, capoeira and science" 12 "langage arts"	9 math 10 science 11 spanish, capoeira and science 12 langage arts
"Feelings about (living in America)"		
"He's a good president and he's a bad president" GOOD PRESIDENT BAD PRESIDENT	13 "Obama is a white man in a Black man's body" 14 "Obama is the president of everyone" 15 "Barack Obama aspires to do his best" 16 "He's the only Black leader we have"	13 white man Black body 14 everyone's president 15 aspires 16 only Black leader
"Being Black in America is hard" THE AMERICAN NIGHTMARE	17 "It's a stereotype" 18 "The American nightmare" 19 "I feel nervous" 20 "It's confusing"	17 stereotype 18 nightmare 19 nervous 20 confusing
"There are pros and cons" "I have a long list of cons" THE AMERICAN NIGHTMARE	21 "I don't wanna die" 22 "I'll just get fed up" 23 "I kinda feel safe here" 24 "the foundations it was built on" 25 "I really don't know" 26 "the government makes no sense to me" 27 "I'm not a fan of what America does" 28 "They say it's a free	21 don't wanna die 22 fed up 23 kinda safe 24 foundations 25 don't know 26 government makes no sense 27 not a fan 28 say it's free but it isn't

	country but it isn't"	
<p>"Adults don't really listen to children"</p> <p>ADULTS DON'T REALLY LISTEN TO CHILDREN</p>	<p>29 "Adults think they are high and mighty"</p> <p>30 "it's more dangerous as a child"</p>	<p>29 high and mighty</p> <p>30 dangerous as a child</p>
<p>Feelings about Africa</p> <p>AFRICA IS POWERFUL</p>	<p>31 "Africa is a powerful place"</p>	<p>31 powerful</p>
<p>Identity</p>		
<p>"I'm a lot of things"</p> <p>I'M AFRIKAN, AFRICAN-AMERICAN AND BLACK</p>	<p>32 "You can call me New Afrikan"</p> <p>33 "Just Afrikan"</p> <p>34 "I don't necessarily call myself African-American"</p> <p>35 "I feel like I'm an African-American"</p> <p>36 "I do think I'm Pan-Afrikan"</p> <p>37 "I know I'm not American" 38 "I'm Black"</p>	<p>32 call me New Afrikan</p> <p>33 Just Afrikan</p> <p>34 not African-American</p> <p>35 I feel African-American</p> <p>36 I'm Pan-Afrikan</p> <p>37 I'm not American</p> <p>38 I'm Black</p>
<p>"What makes me Afrikan"</p> <p>WHAT MAKES ME AFRIKAN</p>	<p>39 "What is a New Afrikan?"</p> <p>40 "Being Afrikan"</p> <p>41 "How I'm Afrikan?"</p> <p>42 "There's a difference between African-American and New Afrikan"</p> <p>43 "people can get in the American mindset and it's hard to get out"</p>	<p>39 What is New Afrikan</p> <p>40 Being Afrikan</p> <p>41 How I'm Afrikan</p> <p>42 difference between African-American and New Afrikan</p> <p>43 American mindset</p>
<p>"My plans for the future"</p> <p>BEING THE BEST AND FREEING EVERYBODY</p>	<p>44 "Try to be the best I can be"</p> <p>45 "Travel"</p> <p>46 "I'm all about freeing everybody: help others"</p> <p>47 Career: The Arts, Sciences, Academia, Family Life</p>	<p>44 Be best</p> <p>45 Travel</p> <p>46 Freeing everybody</p> <p>47 Career</p>

<p>“Things that represent who you are”</p> <p>EXPERIENCES</p>	<p>48 “What I like to do”</p> <p>49 “I feed off a lot of social experiences and other people’s energy”</p> <p>50 Where I’ve been</p>	<p>48 like to do</p> <p>49 experiences and energy</p> <p>50 Where I’ve been</p>
<p>At home (Family Life)</p> <p>GOOD, WITH DIFFERENCES</p>	<p>51 “we can exist in one place with differences”</p> <p>52 “we have a good relationship”</p>	<p>51 exist in one place with differences</p> <p>52 good relationship</p>
<p>“I think words have an impact because of their history”</p> <p>AFRIKAN/AFRICAN</p>	<p>53 “Afrikan spelled with a “k” spells unity”</p> <p>54 African spelled with a “c” doesn’t really explain how great Afrikan people were”</p>	<p>53 Afrikan with a “k”</p> <p>54 African with a “c”</p>

APPENDIX C
RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Performing New Afrikan Childhood: Agency, Conformity and the Spaces In Between

RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Johnny Saldana in the Department of Theatre for Youth at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to explore the ways in which New Afrikan children experience childhood and make sense of their layered identities as New Afrikans, members of a global Pan Afrikan community, and as “paper citizens” of the US.

I am recruiting individuals to fill out a survey and participate in an interview which will take approximately one hour. I will observe classes, rehearsals and performances at/associated with Kilombo Cultural and Academic Institute. In addition, I will observe weekly meetings of the New Afrikan Scouts at Kilombo Cultural and Academic Institute on Saturday mornings as well as their rehearsals and performances at local community events.

Your (and/or your child’s) participation in this study is voluntary. If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call me at (404) 914-6903.

APPENDIX D

PARENT CONSENT/PARENT PERMISSION FORM- KILOMBO AND NAS

Performing New Afrikan Childhood: Agency, Conformity and the Spaces In Between

Parent Consent/Parent Permission Form- Kilombo Academic and Cultural Institute

Dear Parent:

My name is Asantewa Sunni-Ali, and I am a graduate student in the Theatre for Youth doctoral program at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to explore the ways in which New Afrikan children experience childhood and make sense of their layered identities as New Afrikans, members of a global Pan Afrikan community, and as “paper citizens” of the US. The purpose of this form is to provide you with information that will help you decide if you will give consent for you and your child to participate in this research.

I am inviting you and your child's participation in this study, which will involve a survey and an interview, both of which will not exceed 1 hour. I will also observe some of your child's classes, rehearsals and performances at/associated with Kilombo Cultural and Academic Institute during the months of August and September of 2012. You and your child's participation in this study is voluntary. You and your child may decline participation at any time. You may also withdraw yourself or your child from the study at any time; there will be no penalty (it will not affect your child's grade, treatment/care, etc). Likewise, if your child chooses not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty.

Although there may be no direct benefit to you and your child, the possible benefit of your child's participation is the opportunity to reflect upon his/her experiences and perceptions, which may result in a greater sense of self and community awareness. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you or your child's participation.

All names and responses in this study will be kept confidential. The results of this study will be primarily used for my dissertation. Results may also be used in reports, theatrical presentations, or publications but your name and your child's name will not be used (you and your child will have the opportunity to choose a pseudonym or one can be chosen for you).

If you have any questions concerning the research study or your child's participation in this study, please call me at (404) 914-6903 or email me at Asantewa.sunni-ali.@asu.edu. You may also contact my advisor on this project, Professor Johnny Saldaña at (480) 965-2661 or johnny.saldana@asu.edu.

Sincerely,

Asantewa Sunni-Ali

By signing below, you are giving consent for you and your child _____ (Child's name) to participate in the above study.

Signature

Printed Name

Date

If you have any questions about you or your child's rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you or your child have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

Performing New Afrikan Childhood: Agency, Conformity and the Spaces In Between

Parent Consent/Parent Permission Form- New Afrikan Scouts

Dear Parent:

My name is Asantewa Sunni-Ali, and I am a graduate student in the Theatre for Youth doctoral program at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to explore the ways in which New Afrikan children experience childhood and make sense of their layered identities as New Afrikans, members of a global Pan Afrikan community, and as “paper citizens” of the US. The purpose of this form is to provide you with information that will help you decide if you will give consent for you and your child to participate in this research.

I am inviting you and your child's participation in this study, which will involve a survey and an interview, both of which will not exceed 1 hour. I will observe classes, rehearsals and performances associated with New Afrikan Scouts organization during the months of July and August of 2012. You and your child's participation in this study is voluntary. You and your child may decline participation at any time. You may also withdraw yourself or your child from the study at any time; there will be no penalty (it will not affect your child's grade, treatment/care, etc). Likewise, if your child chooses not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty.

Although there may be no direct benefit to you and your child, the possible benefit of your child's participation is the opportunity to reflect upon his/her experiences and perceptions, which may result in a greater sense of self and community awareness. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you or your child's participation.

All names and responses in this study will be kept confidential. The results of this study will be primarily used for my dissertation. Results may also be used in reports, theatrical presentations, or publications but your name and your child's name will not be used (you and your child will have the opportunity to choose a pseudonym or one can be chosen for you).

If you have any questions concerning the research study or your child's participation in this study, please call me at (404) 914-6903 or email me at Asantewa.sunni-ali.@asu.edu. You may also contact my advisor on this project, Professor Johnny Saldaña at (480) 965-2661 or johnny.saldana@ asu.edu.

Sincerely,

Asantewa Sunni-Ali

By signing below, you are giving consent for you and your child _____ (Child's name) to participate in the above study.

Signature

Printed Name

Date

If you have any questions about you or your child's rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you or your child have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

APPENDIX E
CHILD ASSENT FORMS-KILOMBO AND NAS

Performing New Afrikan Childhood: Agency, Conformity and the Spaces In Between

CHILD ASSENT FORM-Kilombo Academic and Cultural Institute

I have been informed that my parent(s) have given permission for me to participate in a study concerning New Afrikan children's experiences and perceptions.

I will be asked to fill out a survey and participate in an interview which will take approximately 1 hour. My classes, rehearsals and performances at/associated with Kilombo Cultural and Academic Institute will also be observed during the months of August and September of 2012.

My participation in this project is voluntary and I have been told that I may stop my participation in this study at any time. If I choose not to participate, (it will not affect my grade or treatment at school) in any way.

Signature

Printed Name

Date

CHILD ASSENT FORM-New Afrikan Scouts

I have been informed that my parent(s) have given permission for me to participate in a study concerning New Afrikan children's experiences and perceptions.

I will be asked to fill out a survey and participate in an interview which will take approximately 1 hour. My classes, rehearsals and performances associated with the New Afrikan Scouts will also be observed during the months of July and August of 2012.

My participation in this project is voluntary and I have been told that I may stop my participation in this study at any time. If I choose not to participate, (it will not affect my grade or treatment at school) in any way.

Signature

Printed Name

Date

APPENDIX F
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Performing New Afrikan Childhood: Agency, Conformity and the Spaces In Between

INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Participant:

My name is Asantewa Sunni-Ali, and I am a graduate student in the Theatre for Youth doctoral program at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to explore the ways in which New Afrikan children experience childhood and make sense of their layered identities as New Afrikans, members of a global Pan Afrikan community and as “paper citizens” of the US.

I am inviting your participation, which will involve a survey and an interview, both of which will not exceed 1 hour. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty (it will not affect your child's grade, treatment/care, nor your relationship with the Institute).

All names and responses in this study will be kept confidential. The results of this study will be primarily used for my dissertation. Results may also be used in reports, theatrical presentations, or publications but your name will not be used (you will have the opportunity to choose a pseudonym or one can be chosen for you).

If you have any questions concerning the research study or your participation in this study, please call me at (404) 914-6903 or email me at Asantewa.sunni-ali@asu.edu. You may also contact my advisor on this project, Professor Johnny Saldaña at (480) 965-2661 or johnny.saldana@asu.edu.

Sincerely,

Asantewa Sunni-Ali

Please let me know if you wish to participate in this study.

Signature

Printed Name

Date

If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

APPENDIX G
DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEYS

Performing New Afrikan Childhood: Agency, Conformity and the Spaces In Between

ADULT DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

AGE: (circle what best describes you) 18-25 26-40 41-55 55 or older

GENDER: ___ MALE ___ FEMALE

RACIAL/ETHNIC IDENTITY: _____

OCCUPATION: _____

MARITAL STATUS: ___ SINGLE ___ MARRIED ___ DIVORCED ___ COHABITATING

CITY AND STATE OF RESIDENCE: _____

DO YOU HAVE ANY CHILDREN? _____ HOW MANY? _____

IF YOU DO NOT HAVE CHILDREN PLEASE DESCRIBE YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO/WITH NEW AFRIKAN CHILDREN.

Performing New Afrikan Childhood: Agency, Conformity and the Spaces In Between

TEACHER DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

AGE: (circle what best describes you) 18-25 26-40 41-55 55 or older

GENDER: ___ MALE ___ FEMALE

RACIAL/ETHNIC IDENTITY: _____

MARITAL STATUS: ___ SINGLE ___ MARRIED ___ DIVORCED ___ COHABITATING

CITY AND STATE OF RESIDENCE: _____

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN TEACHING? _____

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN TEACHING AT KILOMBO? _____

WHAT SUBJECT(S) DO YOU TEACH?

ARE YOU A LEAD OR ASSISTANT TEACHER? _____

DO YOU HAVE ANY CHILDREN? _____ HOW MANY? _____

DO THEY ATTEND KILOMBO? _____

Performing New Afrikan Childhood: Agency, Conformity and the Spaces In Between

CHILD DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

AGE: _____ GRADE LEVEL: _____

GENDER: ___ MALE ___ FEMALE

RACIAL/ETHNIC IDENTITY: _____

CITY AND STATE OF RESIDENCE: _____

DO YOU HAVE ANY SIBLINGS? _____ HOW MANY? _____

ARE YOU A MEMBER OF THE NEW AFRIKAN SCOUTS? _____

IF SO, HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A MEMBER? _____

WHAT OTHER ACTIVITIES ARE YOU INVOLVED IN OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL?

APPENDIX H
INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

CHILD INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

To ensure the confidentiality of your identity and the information you provide I would like to give you the opportunity to choose a pseudonym at this time. Please choose a name that is *not* the real name of anyone working at or attending Kilombo. Alternatively, I can choose one for you if you would like.

1. Describe yourself to me. (prompts: favorite: thing to do, color, t.v. show, food etc.)
2. How long have you been a student at Kilombo and/or a New Afrikan scout?
3. What has your experience been like?
4. Tell me about your teachers and/or leaders in the New Afrikan Scouts organization.
5. Describe your favorite subject.
6. On your survey you identified yourself as (racial/ethnic description on survey). Tell me more about that. (what does it mean to you?)
7. How do your family members identify themselves? How do you feel about that?
8. What does the term Pan-Afrikan mean to you?
9. Have you visited any other countries? Which ones? (if not, where would you like to go?)
10. What are your feelings about living in America?
11. Tell me what you think about Barack Obama being the first Black president of the US?
12. What are your plans for the future? (what/who would you like to be?)

PARENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

To ensure the confidentiality of your identity and the information you provide I would like to give you the opportunity to choose a pseudonym at this time. Please choose a name that is *not* the real name of anyone working at or attending Kilombo. Alternatively, I can choose one for you if you would like.

1. Tell me about your decision to enroll your child in Kilombo and/or the New Afrikan Scouts?
2. What has his/her experience been like thus far?
3. Did you attend an African-centered school (or belong to an African-centered youth organization) as a child?
4. If so, tell me about that experience. If not, what do you think would have been different about your childhood experience if you had?
5. Tell me about your parenting style.
6. How does it relate to the school's (or New Afrikan Scouts) philosophy/mission?
7. On your survey you identified yourself as (racial/ethnic description on survey). Tell me more about that. (what does it mean to you?)

TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

To ensure the confidentiality of your identity and the information you provide I would like to give you the opportunity to choose a pseudonym at this time. Please choose a name that is *not* the real name of anyone working at or attending Kilombo. Alternatively, I can choose one for you if you would like.

1. What is your teaching philosophy?
2. How does it relate to the school's philosophy/mission?
3. Did you attend an African-centered school as a child?
4. If so, tell me about that experience. If not, what do you think would have been different about your childhood experience if you had?
5. In what other ways are you affiliated with the school?
6. On your survey you identified yourself as (racial/ethnic description on survey). Tell me more about that. (what does it mean to you?)

NEW AFRIKAN SCOUTS LEADER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

To ensure the confidentiality of your identity and the information you provide I would like to give you the opportunity to choose a pseudonym at this time. Please choose a name that is not the real name of anyone working at or attending Kilombo nor the New Afrikan Scouts organization. Alternatively, I can choose one for you if you would like.

1. What is your teaching/leader philosophy?
2. How does it relate to the philosophy/mission of the New Afrikan Scouts organization?
3. Did you attend an African-centered school (or belong to an African-centered youth organization such as the New Afrikan Scouts) as a child?
4. If so, tell me about that experience. What does it mean to you to continue to live your life this way? If not, what do you think would have been different about your childhood experience if you had?
5. In what other ways are you affiliated with Kilombo and/or the New Afrikan Scouts?
6. On your survey you identified yourself as (racial/ethnic description on survey). Tell me more about that. (what does it mean to you?)

