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A History of Black Immigration into the United States through the Lens of the African American Civil and Human Rights Struggle

*The Africana Cultures and Policy Studies Institute: Zachary Williams, Robert Samuel Smith, Seneca Vaught, and Babacar M'Baye*

Long before the controversy over the militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border, national origins quotas, and a national identification system, the nation faced a problem with undesirable Black immigrants. Even though the issue was introduced by a European initiative in the Americas, Black immigration has historically been
perceived as being culturally invasive and distinctly alien. To be a Black immigrant is to be subject to a rigid set of attitudes, assumptions, and policies with regard to culture and place. Much of this legacy is owed and directly attributable to the era of slavery and slave trading. Discourse on Black migration was linked to the forced migration by the African slave trade until more recent scholarship revised such antiquated approaches. In fact, Black diasporic immigration was hampered by the “invisibility, nonparticipation, passiveness, immobility, and homogeneity often attributed to them in the literature.”

Voluntary immigration on the part of Black populations has garnered less attention than the migrations of other racial and ethnic groups in scholarship. Even less scholarly attention has been aimed at Black, multiethnic solidarity as an extension of Black immigrant and native Black sociocultural and political exchange. Yet, against these social odds, Black immigrants in the United States have found ways to unite and resist the prejudice they have faced internally and within the broader American society. Similarly, with major spikes in Black immigration numbers, new scholarship has emerged, making room for a more balanced depiction of Black immigration patterns and intergroup relations between native Black Americans and Black diasporic immigrants to the United States.

Using three case studies, in this essay we discuss, first, the history of Black immigration to the United States and the impact of American policy of alienation. Second, we explore the contributions of Caribbean immigrants to the history of African American civil and human rights struggles. Third, we examine the current relations between East African immigrants and African Americans in King County, Seattle. Fourth, we show how Charlotte, North Carolina, poses an interesting example of interaction between native Blacks and diasporic immigrants stemming from a burgeoning, urban, center in the contemporary South.

“Why Increase the Sons of Africa?": Black Immigrants and the American Policy of Perpetual Alienation

Revealing a deep concern about the issues of Black immigration through the transatlantic slave trade, which was remarkably different in character
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than that of the present, Benjamin Franklin wrote, "Why Increase the Sons of Africa, by Planting them in America, where we have so fair an Opportunity, by excluding all Blacks and Tawneys, of increasing the lovely White and Red?" At the heart of colonial immigration policy for Blacks, Franklin revealed a horrible predicament. The American project, an emerging nation destined for revolutionary processes of acculturation and assimilation, had no place for Blacks, whose culture and color seemed too defiling and whose numbers were too threatening for the American colonies to absorb.³

Yet, the introduction of such a racially identifiable and cheap—indeed, free—labor force dramatically altered social conditions by injecting a direct threat to the cultivation of white supremacy in a fledgling nation. Such labor patterns would make for interracial hostilities between poor whites and Blacks but would simultaneously produce the ingredients for multiclass, multiracial cohesion, despite the racial antipathy encouraged by America's codification of Black racial inferiority.

Moreover, Blacks have historically remained distinctly alien and illegal when they attempt to mainstream themselves as citizens. The host of early American policy that sought to restrict the movement and importation of Blacks was essentially immigration policy (e.g., the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 and prohibition of the slave trade in 1808). Yet, as the system of domestic slave trading peaked in the United States, European immigration patterns had already begun to impact the employment status of free Blacks. As early as 1820, free Black artisans of New York City were "relegated to more menial trades such as longshoremen, white-washers, domestic servants, and boot-blacks," due in large part to the migratory patterns of Irish immigrants.⁴

Indeed, during the 1830s, most domestic servants in New York City were African American. Yet, by the 1850s, most were Irish. Such "discrimination" in favor of non-Black immigrants was not lost on Black spokespersons. As Frederick Douglas remarked, "every hour sees the black man elbows out of employment by some newly arrived emigrant, whose hunger and whose color are thought to give him a better title to the place."⁵

In the nineteenth century, discourses of Black migration reflected the alienation and exclusion of African Americans from mainstream national life. Repatriation, the policy of sending Blacks back to Africa, was regularly articulated by both Blacks and Whites, but for different reasons.⁶ In
defiance of immigration policies designed to curtail their freedom and mobility, Blacks developed counterstrategies, policies, and emigration movements. Blacks charterered their own course of African repatriation and colonization, relocated to Canada via the mechanism of the Underground Railroad and Florida during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and aggressively argued for full citizenship in a nation still clinging to race-based enslavement.

Despite the policy-derived and socially constructed patterns of exclusion aimed at Blacks, something distinctly American was to endure. The melding of multiple cultural facets of the African diaspora into a Black American experience would forever maintain justification for Black permanence in the United States. Commenting on this historical irony in his classic early-twentieth-century work on immigration, Our Foreigners, Samuel Peter Orth discovered that by 1920 Blacks were American immigrants but not really American:

The negro's melodies, his dialect, and his banjo, have always been identified with America. Even Americans do not at once think of the negro as a foreigner, so accustomed have they become to his presence, to his quaint mythology, his soft accent, and his genial and accommodating nature. . . . The negro, however, is racially the most distinctly foreign element in America. He belongs to a period of biological and racial evolution far removed from that of the white man.

Since Blacks have historically been considered foreign within America, their movements into, outside and within the borders can and should be discussed as an act of immigration. Movement of Africans within America has usually been associated with some form of protest, resistance, or response to local conditions. During and immediately after World War I, following a northern demand for labor, over 1 million Black southerners migrated to the North and another 1.5 million relocated to the North each decade from 1940 to 1970. This regional move was nearly as significant to the culture and character of Black southerners as international migration was to other ethnic groups traversing the Atlantic.

Examining movements of the African American post-transatlantic slave trade experience as immigration policy also reveals much about the "imagined communities" of American nationalism(s). While the importation or
forced immigration of American Blacks into the British North American colonies was a small fraction of the overall distribution to the Caribbean and South America, it is ironic that the very process through which Africans (e.g., Ibo, Wolof, Yoruba, et al.) were brought in served to exclude them under the categorization of Black from the rest of American society. This artificial homogenization, which has had numerous cultural effects on the development of white identity and nationalism in the United States, is essentially an immigration policy.

Whereas historical factors in the twentieth century have created a tension between Black city dwellers and white ethnic immigrants, additional forces of white flight and gentrification pose significant glimpses into the continued trends of the immigration of American Blacks. The situation of African Americans has historically been tied to those of incoming streams of immigrants and in a racial climate and culture prone to increasing tension and economic competition between “assimilable” ethnic communities and Blacks—a process now further complicated by charges of internecine tensions between African Americans and new Black immigrants.12

Cultural Influences of Caribbean Immigrants on African American Civil and Human Rights Struggles

What would the American civil rights and freedom movements be without the contributions of countless known and unknown migrants from various areas of the Caribbean islands and the Spanish Caribbean? Historian Irma Watkins-Owens offers that the majority of residents in Harlem, New York, in 1915 originated from the following areas: Jamaica, Barbados, Montserrat, Antigua, Bermuda, the Bahamas, the Virgin Islands, Martinique, Haiti, Guadeloupe, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Panama, Suriname, and others. Watkins-Owens goes on to say that most immigrants, once arrived, chose to settle “in already existing or evolving African American communities.”13

Once settled in those particular communities, many West Indian migrants passed on the virtues of obtaining a good education, maintaining a strong work ethic, pursuing excellence, providing discipline, respecting elders, and focusing on sustaining a keen ethnic identity. But second-
generation and third-generation West Indians have struggled to maintain a sense of identity in a country that exhibits a tendency to place all people of African descent into one category: Black. The spatial location of the United States confronts young West Indians, in particular, with a sort of double consciousness whereby they attempt to forge a muted Caribbean identity in reconciliation with anti-Black discrimination and racism.

In response, 40 percent choose a Black American identity, 30 percent choose a West Indian ethnic affiliation, and the remaining 30 percent exist as merely "immigrants." Many who took on a West Indian ethnic orientation eschewed the realities of white racism against Blacks, as well as noticeable affiliations with the latter, choosing instead to emphasize the ideals of education, work ethic, and desire over and above pan-African linkages. The last group adheres to the immigrant label without pressure to immediately assimilate to either end of the white/Black race binary. In New York, for instance, the latter two groups have identified themselves based on their ethnic affiliation as Trinidadians, Grenadians, and Jamaicans. In each sense, both assimilation and acculturation processes fuse with transnational cultural customs and continually influence overall identity.14

Caribbean immigration to the United States evidenced a continuous flow into the United States. It developed in four distinct phases. Phase one occurred during the seventeenth century, due mainly to the enslavement of Barbadians in South Carolina. Phase two of occurred around the turn of the twentieth century, as a considerable influx of British West Indian migrants inhabited various locales of the United States. Phase three, the years 1930 to 1965, witnessed a resurgent increase in Caribbean migration to the nation, following a previous lull due to racist congressional legislation. Since World War II, Caribbean immigration has increased and reflected more diverse points of origin. During phase four, after 1965, the nation's immigration policy reflected an even greater growth of Caribbean peoples. Regardless of whether these new arrivals identified with the resident black population, what is certain is that many maintained some sense of historical, cultural, and ethnic connection.16

Perhaps the most important contribution of Caribbean migrants and their descendants to African American freedom struggles has been through participation and leadership of various social movements, most notably during the twentieth century. The list includes countless persons. Jamaican-born Marcus Mosiah Garvey was responsible for developing and leading the
Indians have struggled to maintain exhibits a tendency to place all people: Black. The spatial location of the Indians, in particular, with a sort of attempt to forge a muted Caribbean acknowledgment and racism. Black American identity, 30 percent, 1, and the remaining 30 percent exist on a West Indian ethnic orienta- nization against Blacks, as well as noping instead to emphasize the ide- re over and above pan-African link- immigration label without pressure to f the white/Black race binary. In New ps have identified themselves based ians, Grenadians, and Jamaicans. In alturation processes fuse with trans- ally influence overall identity. United States evidenced a continuous ed in four distinct phases. Phase one ery, due mainly to the enslavement four of occurred around the turn of the influx of British West Indian mi- United States. Phase three, the years rease in Caribbean migration to the to racist congressional legislation. gation has increased and reflected phase four, after 1965, the nation’s reater growth of Caribbean peoples. is identified with the resident black maintained some sense of histori-
distribution of Caribbean migrants and freedom struggles has been through social movements, most notably includes countless persons. Jamaican-sible for developing and leading the largest mass movement of people of African descent, and the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X, and Louis Farrakhan built on the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) to undergird twentieth-century ef- forts of Black nationalism. The scholarly community has been enriched by the contributions of noted thinkers and activists such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Hubert Harrison, Richard B. Moore, Claude McKay, Shirley Chisholm, Paule Marshall, June Jordan, Audre Lorde, Michele Wallace, and many others. Du Bois, pan-Africanist and leading twentieth-century intellectual, greatly influenced the global Black civil and human rights struggle. He also had significant Caribbean roots, as his father, Alfred, hailed from Haiti. Du Bois himself spent a lifetime working to unite displaced peoples of African descent via his writings, activism with numerous pan-African congresses, and nurturing of relationships with intellectuals and cultural workers on the African continent and throughout the diaspora.

Born in St. Croix in 1883, self-styled Harlem intellectual Hubert Harrison, contemporary to Du Bois, McKay, and Garvey, worked as editor of the UNIA’s Negro World, while also serving as New York commissioner of education. Harrison spoke and wrote on themes pertaining to black radicalism, civil rights, and socialism, and he contributed to noted periodicals of the day from the Messenger, the Call, the New York World, and the New York Times. In fact, Harrison’s Black radicalism, most evidenced in his “race first” slogan, inspired the work of Garvey, A. Philip Randolph, and Chandler Owen.

Jamaican-born writer and poet Claude McKay became one of the most important voices of the Harlem Renaissance, penning two autobiographies, A Long Way from Home (1937) and Harlem: Negro Metropolis (1940); three novels; and two books of poetry, Harlem Shadows (1922) and the posthumous Selected Poems (1953). While attending school in Charleston, South Carolina, McKay was exposed to very intense racism, prompting the accelerated formation of his racial consciousness. This consciousness was further ignited as McKay read Du Bois’s Souls of Black Folk.

Caribbean immigrant intellectual Richard B. Moore, was born in Barbados in 1893. Moore was a member of the Communist Party USA before being expelled in 1942. His cultural politics also included lecturing and writing for various news outlets and he served as vice president of the West Indies’ National Council; he also owned the Frederick Douglass bookstore in New York.
Shirley Chisholm, born to a Barbadian mother and a Guyanese father, became an uncompromising champion for civil and human rights for people of African descent, serving as the influential congresswoman of New York's twelfth district. In addition to her straight talk, bold leadership, and audacious personality, Chisholm became the first African American woman elected to Congress in 1968 and the very first African American to make a serious run for the presidency of the United States in 1972.

Paule Marshall, a child of Barbadian parents, went on to become one of the most celebrated novelists of her time. In addition to early poetic pieces, Marshall became known for her signature stories of black life and culture, including *Brown Girl, Brownstones*.¹⁹

June Jordan, political activist, professor of African American studies, writer, and essayist, was born to Jamaican immigrant parents. Jordan's activism infused the Black studies movement with her courageous political writings and autobiographical reflections. Audre Lorde, born in 1934 to West Indian parents, was significantly involved in the civil rights, feminist, and antiwar movements of the 1960s and 1970s. As an influential poet and cultural critic, Lorde was not afraid to address controversial subjects such as love and lesbianism. Openly embracing her sexual identity, she affirmed her own personal politics and spoke to a community wrestling with what had been a taboo subject.

Michele Wallace, professor, author, and daughter of noted artist Faith Ringgold, penned perhaps the signal piece of Black feminist criticism, *Myth of the Black Superwoman*, which took to task evident sexism in the Black nationalistic movement.²⁰

Harry Belafonte and Stokely Carmichael infused the civil rights and Black power movement with a good deal of its ideological force. Belafonte, of Jamaican background, has been an important cultural ambassador throughout his life and career, beginning as a noted calypso singer and voice for civil rights and equality for oppressed peoples the world over. Belafonte was influenced by the example of Paul Robeson in terms of his adherence to Black cultural politics and support of civil and human rights causes. Stokely Carmichael, later in his life known as Kwame Ture, was one of the signal leaders of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) under the leadership of visionary activist Ella Baker. After experiencing growing disillusionment with perceived gradualist tactics of civil rights leaders, Carmichael led the movement of youthful civil rights
mother and a Guyanese father, for civil and human rights for influential congresswoman of her straight talk, bold leadership, a m the first African American very first African American to United States in 1972. parents, went on to become one me. In addition to early poetic nature stories of black life and r of African American studies, immigrant parents, Jordan's acn with her courageous political Audre Lorde, born in 1934 to lived in the civil rights, feminist, 970s. As an influential poet and press controversial subjects such a sexual identity, she affirmed community wrestling with what daughter of noted artist Faith x Black feminist criticism, c to task evident sexism in the el infused the civil rights and l of its ideological force. Bella mport cultural ambassa as a noted calypso singer and pressed peoples the world over. Paul Robeson in terms of his sport of civil and human rights e known as Kwame Ture, was non-violent Coordinating Com monary activist Ella Baker. After perceived gradualist tactics of vement of youthful civil rights workers clamoring for Black power. Even though Congressman Adam Clayton Powell Jr. is first credited with coining the term, Carmichael, who studied briefly at Howard University, is centrally identified as one of the seminal figures of the movement. He, among other leaders, is largely credited with internationalizing the term Black as a form of popular identity. Many of these figures represent instances where sons and daughters of Caribbean immigrants have worked in tandem with African Americans to advance social movements and common goals. In addition to civil rights and Black power, pan-Africanism and hip-hop culture would be decidedly different without the central impact of Afro-Caribbean influences functioning alongside African American ones. Following Garvey's lead with the Universal Negro Improvement Association, in 1934, Elijah Muhammad continued the work of Master W. D. Ford Muhammad to strengthen the parallel movement of the Nation of Islam, emphasizing a synthesis of Islam, Christianity, and elements of cultural symbolism. This movement of religious nationalism, designed to liberate the minds and beings of Black people in North America from centuries of oppression, was continued by two disciples of Muhammad, Malcolm X and Louis Farrakhan.

Malcolm, whose parents were active Garveyites, was initially baptized into the politics of Black nationalism as a child. His mother, having been born in Grenada, further solidified his Afro-Caribbean genealogical links. After the assassination of his father by members of the Ku Klux Klan in 1931, Malcolm's family was further disrupted by his mother's mental illness. Sent to foster care, Malcolm was subjected to increasing levels of white supremacy, eventually leading him to a life of crime. In this sense, Malcolm was deprived of the highly affirming familial life of Afro-Caribbean religio-cultural nationalism and was left without both a father and a mother to nurture his continued maturation. Elijah Muhammad provided the missing connection of a paternal example that Malcolm longed for. After a stint in prison, Malcolm joined the Nation of Islam and soon became the national minister and assistant to Muhammad. With Malcolm's leadership and dedication, he injected tremendous growth into the organization, as the main spokesman for Muhammad. Even with the painful personal and ideological rift that separated the two, their collective influence on the cultural psyche of activists pressing for twentieth-century and twenty-first-century Black civil and human rights activists is undeniable.
Malcolm's protégé and Muhammad's pupil, Louis Farrakhan, also had deep Caribbean roots. Farrakhan's mother emigrated from St. Kitts and Nevis, and his father was a Jamaican immigrant. The effect of the teachings of Elijah Muhammad and the example of Malcolm impressed Farrakhan so much so that he became a member of the Nation of Islam in July 1955. Farrakhan's impact on the nation increased after Malcolm was assassinated in February 1965. In 1977, after the death of Elijah Muhammad in 1975, Farrakhan revived the original structure of the Nation of Islam, embarking on a path that would see the organization rise again to levels of prominence of the years that Malcolm served a national minister. Most recently, Farrakhan spearheaded the Million Man, Million Family, and the Millions More movements. The effect of Malcolm and Farrakhan on Black cultural life and politics remains strong to this day, despite a lingering controversy over the involvement of Farrakhan on Malcolm's assassination.23

To be sure, much has been made about the enduring and often troublesome relationship among Afro-Caribbeans and African Americans. Considering the lineage of most current African Americans, it is apparent that Caribbean immigration has played a monumental role in the biological and cultural construction of African American people from slavery to the present day. In light of that fact, the reality of the matter provides a complex set of relationships that deserve careful and close analysis rather than reliance on mere conjecture and stereotype. One aspect of this complexity is discovered in the relations between Afro-Caribbean and recent African immigrants as they seek assimilation into American society. Many have come to the realization of a conflict between myths and realities of racism, thus injecting a measure of unsettling and abrupt racial consciousness into their cultural psyche. Upon arrival in the United States, Caribbean immigrants, many from the West Indies, have harbored visions of a color-blind America, due in large measure to prior experiences of low levels of racial tension in their homeland regions.24

Based on this previous experience, as well as on overblown stereotypes about American Blacks, some West Indians have, on occasion, asserted that African Americans are too preoccupied with race, only to find out through personal experience the all-too-painful effects of racism on anyone of African descent with dark skin, whether born in the United States or abroad. "Over time," Milton Vickerman writes, "continued exposure to racial discrimination causes many West Indians to shift their paradigm
from a nonracial one to one that is more explicitly racial. Vickerman elaborates on his original point:

By this, one means that West Indians: (1) come to understand that race permeates all facets of American life; (2) expect to have unpleasant encounters because of race; and (3) often become pessimistic that the United States will become "colorblind" anytime soon. In other words, the understanding that they may have had about race prior to migrating goes from being fairly abstract to being experiential and more consciously life-shaping.

In evaluating such findings, one can conclude that the exposure and experience of racism socializes West Indian migrants to the same reality understood by most American-born Blacks, which is that race matters, as Cornel West opined. The same bias and criticism can also be applied to other Afro-Caribbean immigrants who once espoused similar beliefs of a color-blind America.

There is no question that the salience of American race and racism has contributed, one way or another, to the linkage of Caribbean Americans to African American struggles for civil and human rights. Whether some were drawn by the exigencies of civil rights, Black power, and the Black women's movement—or repelled by them—none were immune to the manner in which their race would change their American experience.

Relationships between East African Immigrants and African Americans in Seattle's Central District

The relations between African immigrants and African Americans is a taboo subject, because it unfolds unexplored conflicts between two groups that tend to emphasize differences of cultures and language rather than common links. A few examples of such conflicts are noticeable in Seattle's Central District, where troubling incidents that occurred in the summer of 2006 brought East African immigrants and African Americans at odds against each other. This area of the South Puget Sound is home to 30,000 to 40,000 East Africans, including Ethiopians, Eritreans, and Somalis.
This population is quite sizable in comparison with that of African Americans in King County which, in the 2000 census, was estimated at 93,875. Yet tensions arose between the two groups, raising central issues that can be understood only when the taboos and spirit of solidarity between the two communities are exposed.

The Seattle Post-Intelligencer reports that on July 12, 2006, an African American woman shot an Ethiopian cab driver named Berhane Halle, who was nearby, when she and three African American men attacked Zenebe Worota, another East African cab driver who had told them that he could not take them on a ride because he was on a break. This tragic incident brought the African Americans and East Africans of Seattle’s Central District together as they attempted to bridge the misunderstanding that weakens their relationships. Among the African American leaders, Charlie James, a longtime activist in Seattle, made honest remarks addressing the tension between African Americans and East Africans in Seattle while pointing out the need for collaboration between the two groups. At a meeting between members of the two communities held in the Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle on July 20, 2006, James located the divide between the two groups in the assumptions that some African Americans make about African immigrants. He said:

The appearance of success (among recent African immigrants). . . . People (immigrants) are opening businesses. They’re coming into areas that are dilapidated and run down and revitalizing it. . . . The perception is they have access to resources outside of America. . . . Some African Americans see themselves as having been left out, and people who have been in Kenya (and other African countries) don’t understand the African American struggle.81

These perceptions do not represent the views of all African Americans. Yet, they are pervasive among African Americans who view Africans as people who pretend to be better than them.

In an interview with Robert William and his friend, two African Americans sitting at a table in an Ethiopian restaurant of Seattle called the Blue Nile, World radio correspondent Chana Joffe-Walt learned what the two persons think of African immigrants: “They think when they get out here [that] they are better than African Americans that live here already and
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d his friend, two African American proprietors of Seattle-based Blue Sea-Walt learned what the two... think when they get out here...icans that live here already and

who have been here.” His anonymous friend added: “Because all you have to do is once they look at you. You know what they think of you ‘I am better than you!’ You are nothing.” This interview shows that the perception of some African Americans toward Africans is based on fear and prejudice rooted in the assumption that African immigrants think they have more stable families and connections to Africa than African American have. This stereotype is sometimes fed by many African immigrants themselves, who easily internalize the prejudice that many European Americans have toward African Americans, such as the notion that many African Americans celebrate violence, carry guns, play basketball, and have no connections with Africa.

In an interview with Chido Nwangwu and Charlie James, news correspondent Phyllis Fletcher of Seattle radio station KJOW uncovered some of the other stereotypes of many African immigrants toward African Americans. Nwangwu is a Nigerian and the founder and publisher of USAfricaonline.com, which is the first and most respected African-owned and U.S.-based newspaper to be published on the internet. He said that many Africans look at African Americans with condescension and view them as being less human than them.

Such stereotypes that both groups have toward each other prevent them from knowing and appreciating their shared cultural heritage and history of resistance against oppression. Furthermore, while many Africans respect this heritage, study it, and even teach it in American universities, others greatly need to learn and value the history of resistance and struggle against racism and discrimination of African Americans. As Bill Fletcher, the founder of Trans-Africa, pointed out, the divide between African Americans and African immigrants can be resolved “only if African immigrants are educated on the racial dynamics in the U.S.” and if African Americans begin to “de-demonize Africa.”

Charlotte, N.C.: Post–Civil Rights Era Possibilities in an Urban City in the Contemporary South

North Carolina, like most of the nation, has received a large influx of Latino immigrants since the early 1990s. While North Carolina’s immigrant
demography does not reflect the higher-end threshold as other states, the numbers are staggering nonetheless.44 However, amid the robust entry of Latinos has been a quieter, though significant, steady trickling of African and Caribbean immigrants to the Queen City. Charlotte’s growth as a city and its ever-rising influence as a southern metropolis make it an interesting place to explore the connectedness of diasporic immigrants and native Blacks.

Charlotte has emerged as an economically viable southern urban space, encouraging and stimulating various related immigration trends. The city is home to a vibrant corporate community, stabilized largely by the banking industry, and it offers a booming housing market. Such economic developments have pulled large numbers of economically mobile Blacks to the city, increasing its native Black population from the resulting remigration of African Americans to southern locales.45 Next, Charlotte can brag of having a simmering civil rights community, with holdovers serving as leaders of post–civil rights era legal developments.46 Leaders of this community openly encourage interdiasporic cultural cooperation and collaboration. Finally, Charlotte’s Black immigrant communities have forged key institutions to help stabilize and support one another. Collectively, these social networks and conditions could breed successful, domestically bound, transnational linkages.

Census data show that of the nearly one million African immigrants in the United States, more than 50 percent entered and settled in the country between 1990 and 2000. While some have charged that the numbers are underreported by hundreds of thousands, the 40,000 African immigrants arriving annually suggest one basic reality: more African immigrants are finding their way to the United States, particularly to metropolitan areas.47 In Charlotte, African immigrants total roughly 4,700 citizens, with Caribbean immigrants hovering around 2,500. These numbers seem too low for effective comparative analysis, but the presence of these immigrant populations and the social networks and institutions they have created provide room for critique.

As in many communities, diasporic immigrants to Charlotte have created culturally specific clubs and organizations, as well as important sociocultural programming that emphasizes their cultural distinctiveness. Economically, the entrepreneurial, medical, and corporate presence of
end threshold as other states, the however, amid the robust entry of significant, steady trickling of African American immigration trends. The city, stabilized largely by the banking market. Such economic dependence on economically mobile Blacks to fuel the resulting remittance locales. Next, Charlotte can support grassroots organizations with holdovers from earlier developments. Leaders of this and other communities have forged relationships with one another. Collectively, they have created a sense of cultural cooperation and community, with support from local officials.

Contrary to the common perception of African immigrants in the United States being concentrated in metropolitan areas, the reality is quite different. It is estimated that the numbers are significantly lower, with less than 4,700 African immigrants residing in Charlotte, North Carolina. These numbers seem too low for the significant role these communities have played in the city's development. The experiences of Black African and Caribbean immigrants reveal a unique set of challenges that differ from African American experiences. The immigration policy toward Black Africans has been marked by a lack of resources that could help them assimilate. The immigration trends in the United States, raises serious questions about the future role of cultural policies and practices of discrimination at the borders remain.
Recommendations:

- A scholarly push to emphasize community-based diasporic relations is needed. The injection of digestible diasporic literature can encourage social education and awareness to complement the work of community-based organizations.
- In cities experiencing recent spikes in Black immigrants, more community programming and initiatives emphasizing interconnectedness of distinctiveness of diasporic populations are desperately needed.
- Collaborative corporate involvement with social programming will be useful. As more and more companies have begun to welcome a more diversified vision and mission, such programming will be of interest.

NOTES


3. The number of Blacks in the colonies is estimated at 59,000 in 1714, according to Sidney Mary Sitwell, The Growth of the English Colonies (London: Rivingtons, 1884), 62. Citing Bancroft, Orth contends that the numbers increased to 78,000 in 1727, to 253,000 in 1754, and to 697,624 in 1790 (Samuel Peter Orth, Our Foreigners: A Chronicle of Americans in the Making [New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1920], 47). This increase, according to Orth, "was not due alone to the fecundity of the negro. It was due, in large measure, to the unceasing slave trade" (47). These numbers marked the effect of the Black colonial "immigration" policy.

4. Quoted in Jeff Diamond, "African American Attitudes toward United States Immigration Policy," International Migration Review, 32/2 (Summer 1998), 452. Douglas, while frustrated over the dislocation of Black workers, was a proponent of fair and open immigration policy. Such stances by liberal, civil, and human rights advocates would be consistent over the next two centuries and into the new millennium. Black leaders regularly supported nonbiased immigration policy, despite
the clear conflict among Blacks and other working-class populations, white and nonwhite.

5. Ibid.

6. Some philanthropists and Blacks wanted to return to Africa as a humane policy of emancipation. Others endorsed this policy of emigration as a means to rid the blossoming American nation of disproportionate numbers of Blacks. Sending free Blacks to Africa was also a response to the growing numbers of German and Irish immigrants and to the national impulse to make the completion of the nation a white one (Eric Burin, Slavery and the Peculiar Solution: A History of the American Colonization Society, [Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005]).

7. A discussion of these Black émigrés, referred to as estalusti, is in Daniel F. Littlefield, Africans and Seminoles: From Removal to Emancipation (Jackson: Banner Books, University Press of Mississippi, 2001), 4–6. Others returned to the continent of Africa.

8. Orth, Our Foreigners, 45–46.


10. The use of the term “imagined communities” is in reference to the concept discussed by Benedict Anderson that suggests, in his words, “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, rev. ed. [New York: Verso, 1991], 6). Anderson argues that nations are imagined as limited, sovereign, and a community.

11. Forecasting future conflict between African Americans and European Americans while typecasting both, Orth stated: “His [the African American’s] happy-go-lucky ways, his easy philosophy of life, the remarkable ease with which he severs home ties and shifts from place to place, his indifference to property obligations—these negative defects in his character may easily lead to his economic doom if the vigorous peasantry of Italy and other lands are brought into competition with him” (Our Foreigners, 65).

Perhaps this was the first dividing wedge between future debates between Black Caribbean immigrants and American-born Blacks. A discussion of grievances between Africans and African Americans is taken up in Godfrey Mwakikagile, *Relations between Africans and African Americans: Misconceptions, Myths and Realities* (Johannesburg, South Africa: Continental Press, 2006), esp. 94–99.


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Caribbean Immigrants and the Har-
port, Conn.: Greenwood, 2001), 139–
in Immigrant Dreams and American
, 1999), 48–49.
Motion: The African American Mi-
the, Conn.: Greenwood, 1985. For
colonial South Carolina, see Peter
South Carolina from 1670 through the
9: Winston James, Holding Aloft the
Early Twentieth-Century Radicalism
Biography of a Race, 1868–1919 (New
26. Ibid., 113.
33. Jennifer H. Cunningham, “Tensions between African Americans and Af-
34. In the last decade, Raleigh received 72,580 new Latino immigrants (a 1,180 percent increase), Greensboro received 62,210 (a 962 percent increase), and Charlotte received 77,092 (a 932 percent increase). Statistics borrowed from the Latin American Coalition of Mecklenburg County.

35. This remigration is most evident in Atlanta, but Charlotte, Richmond, Orlando, Jackson (Miss.), and other southern cities are experiencing similar demographic changes and patterns.

36. The centerpiece of Charlotte's civil rights community rests on its legal community. However, Black community mobilization around urban renewal and school desegregation or resegregation suggests a moderate degree of social activism on the part of Black Charlotteans. Similarly, civil rights activists have typically supported more open immigration policies and have been more receptive to the particular challenges facing immigrants of color. For example, Diamond, "African American Attitudes toward United States Immigration Policy"; see also Franco Ordoñez, "Blacks Fret over Immigrant Gains: Latino Population Surge Puts Wage, Jobs, Clout at Risk, Some Say," Charlotte Observer, May 21, 2006, A2.


38. The minutes to one group, the African Council, suggests that it assists with "housing, healthcare, jobs, and education," just to name some of its services. Other organizations such as African Diaspora Dialogues offer similar opportunities to encourage cultural exchange.