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I, Okera D. Nsombi Ph.D., hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Studies.

It is entitled:

**From Cultural Violence to Cultural Resistance in Antebellum America**

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**From Cultural Violence to Cultural Resistance in Antebellum America**

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**in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of**

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (Ph. D.)**

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**by**

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## ABSTRACT

This study is about how ideology was used to create a nefarious cultural representation of Africans in colonial America. I focus on early Virginian law because it was initially used as the primary mechanism to besmudge the image of Africans. Virginian law synthesized and transported the ideology of African or black inferiority generated decades earlier in Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, France, and England before race theory evolved. Depraving the African image through law in colonial Virginia represents the continuousness of an ideology which began in the fifteenth century. While an abundance of research exists about the imposition of slave law as a primary apparatus of control over the African population, most studies exclude an analysis of the relationship between ideology and law in the context of African subjugation. The central thesis of this study is that Virginian law promoted and perpetuated the ideology of African (black) inferiority and European (white) superiority into the cultural fabric of the colonies. According to Johan Galtung, when the dominant ideology is incorporated into the cultural sphere of a society it becomes a system of “cultural violence.” Winthrop Jordan’s seminal study, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812*, has been invaluable for documenting attitudes and ideas in Europe and colonial America about their professed superiority over Africans. Detailing European attitudes is a step toward establishing ideology as a stable structure of oppression. Connecting the ideology of African inferiority which undergirded Virginian law with the pre-colonial ideology propagated by Europeans is imperative in order to establish the continuity of these ideas as the basis of a system of “cultural violence.” Conceptualizing the propagation of European ideology as a system of “cultural violence” helps modify classic approaches to studies about African resistance. Many of the studies about African resistance have the following themes of resistance: emigration, abolitionism, revolts, ship mutinies, day-to-day resistance (destroying crops, breaking tools), alliance between Africans and Mexicans, guerrilla warfare (establishing maroon or independent communities), and an alliance between Africans and Native Americans. Providing an analysis of how Virginian law debased the image of Africans helps to contextualize African resistance to ideology rather than resistance to their involuntary labor. A critique of the writings of Africans in antebellum America reveals that they produced literary works as a key strategy to oppose the ideas propagated by white cultural leaders about their innate inferiority through the system of “cultural violence.” Rather than study the numerous memoirs, which detail the accounts of enslaved Africans in America, I studied the protest literature of Africans in America. I studied protest literature because it contains the views of Africans about their undesirable portrayal. My analysis of the protest literature of Africans in America demonstrates how they responded to “cultural violence” before the Civil War and before the development of race theory. Africans articulated the accounts from historical and biblical texts that described African intellectual capability, examples of virtuous character exhibited by Africans, God’s preference for social equality, and the African contribution towards world history and American independence.

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## **DEDICATION**

### **MY “JOURNEY”**

The Creator blessed me to complete this process by placing so many amazing people in my life. I dedicate this work to all of you:

**Parents:** Charles and Carol Daniels

**Siblings:** Brian Daniels, Yannik McKie, Chantal McKie, Veka

**Niece and Nephew:** Brian Daniels, Jr., Alisha Daniels

**Mother’s side of living family members:** Shirley Walker, Tena Staley, Duce Staley, Kisha Brooks, Michael Brooks, Fletcher Walker, Debbie Walker, Aunt Debbie Walker, Carl Walker, Marilyn Walker, Tosha Walker, Dale Walker, Karen Walker, Felecia Walker, Courtney Walker, Sherry Brooks, Charles Earl Brooks, Mary Brooks, Sherry Brooks, Crystal Walker, Shana McKnight, Anthony Wright, Cheryl Wright, Sharon Daniels, Tony Hall, “Cookie” Hall, Kerry Graydon, Cousin Lori, Cousin Brittney, Cousin Jill

**Dad’s side of living family member:** Aunt Debra, Aunt Loretta, Aunt Fat, Aunt Willie Mae, Marty Daniels, Brandi Daniels, Tyrone Daniels, Cedric Daniels, Dedrick Daniels, cousin “Val”, “Peanut” Daniels, “Skeeter” Daniels, Cousin “Deedee,” Uncle Lucious, Aunt Mary, Dakeema Daniels, Dawn Daniels, Cousin “Mika”, Cousin Lisa, Cousin “Trel,” Cousin Tina, Uncle Neal, Aunt Linda

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION and RESEARCH PROBLEM

#### Introduction

This dissertation is an historical study. I studied a significant body of social science research about the oppression of Africans in America prior to the Civil War. I focused particularly on studies about the enslavement of Africans in America from the seventeenth century to the end of the Civil War. Many scholars describe the early enslavement of Africans in America as an extension of the European enslavement of Africans, which began in the fifteenth century.<sup>1</sup> John G. Jackson asserts that in the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries European enslavers transported thousands of Africans against their will to places such as Europe, South America, and the Caribbean islands to become a perpetual source of cheap labor. According to Jackson, European enslavers employed a host of tactics to fortify their control over enslaved Africans.<sup>2</sup> To police enslaved Africans, European enslavers created forceful formal and informal rules and practices, law, and fabricated and disseminated the idea of African inferiority. What I found most intriguing about the system of enslavement was the commitment to degrade the African image by European cultural leaders and enslavers. I became more enthralled by this topic as I learned that Spanish and Portuguese sailors and explorers depicted West Africa as politically, socially, and economically prosperous during the early fifteenth century prior to their

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<sup>1</sup> Manning Marable, "Black Studies, Multiculturalism and the Future of American Education" in *A Turbulent Voyage: Readings in African American Studies*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., ed. Floyd Hayes III (San Diego, California: Collegiate Press, 2000), 24. Floyd Hayes III, ed., "Commentary: Africa and the Diaspora: Ties that Bind" in *A Turbulent Voyage: Readings in African American Studies*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., (San Diego, California: Collegiate Press, 2000), 37-38. Boniface Obichere, "African History and Western Civilization," in *A Turbulent Voyage: Readings in African American Studies*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., ed. Floyd Hayes III (San Diego, California: Collegiate Press, 2000), 45-48. Michael Mitchell, "Cafundo: Counterpart on a Brazilian African Survival" in *A Turbulent Voyage: Readings in African American Studies*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., ed. Floyd Hayes III (San Diego, California: Collegiate Press, 2000), 126. John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation in the Antebellum South* (1972; repr., New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1980), 49-104.

<sup>2</sup> John G. Jackson, *Introduction to African Civilizations* (1970; repr., New York, NY: Citadel Press, 2001), 304-311.

enslavement of Africans.<sup>3</sup> While descriptions recorded by Spanish and Portuguese explorers and sailors about their cultural and physical dissimilarities from West Africans are evidence of ethnocentrism prior to their enslavement of West Africans, it is not evidence of a widespread belief in African subservience. It is improbable that Africans did not also view Europeans as curious anomalies in these cultural exchanges. Nonetheless, the initiation of African enslavement by the Spanish and Portuguese was not grounded so much on their true belief in the innate inferiority of Africans; enslavers and cultural leaders from Spain and Portugal instead contrived ideas about Africans to advance slavery. European Christian leaders who supported the enslavement of Africans denounced Africans for not being Christians.<sup>4</sup> However, I do believe the interpretation of European Christian leaders of non-Christian Africans was not the sole reason for demeaning all Africans as subhuman. Instead, the ideology of African inferiority appears to have germinated from the interpretations of European Christian leaders and from the contrived notions Europeans created as a rationale for African subservience. These two ideological forces—religious/cultural ethnocentrism and fabricated ideas—shaped decrees about the inhumanity of Africans and became a very important pronouncement in the institution of slavery before the development of the American colonies. John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss suggested that American colonists grafted a similar model for enslaving Africans.<sup>5</sup> I wanted to identify some unique aspects that explain the continuity between the European enslavement of Africans outside of the American colonies and the enslavement of Africans within the American colonies. Sources indicate that within several decades of Virginia receiving the first population

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<sup>3</sup> John Henrik Clarke, ed., “The Slave Trade” in *Critical Lessons in Slavery and the Slavetrade: Essential Studies and Commentaries On Slavery, In General, and the African Slavetrade, In Particular*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Richmond, VA: Native Sun Publishers, 1996), 16-19.

<sup>4</sup> Nell Irvin Painter, *Creating Black Americans: African-American History and Its Meanings, 1619 to the Present* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3-7.

<sup>5</sup> John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 2000), 65-67.

of African servants in the American colonies, several Africans were legally designated as “perpetual servants” for breaking rules. Although European servants broke similar rules and received extended time of indenture for such infractions,<sup>6</sup> I did not come across any references to European servants being designated as “perpetual servants.” The institution of slavery did not exist in early Virginia, and the African population was small. For example, by 1624, the census listed twenty-five Africans in Virginia; and records identified them as servants.<sup>7</sup> I found this particularly interesting since servants from Europe vastly outnumbered Africans. European indentured servants numbered 6,000 in Virginia by 1671 compared to only 2,000 African indentured servants.<sup>8</sup> As such, both African and European indentured servants formed the hinterland into viable settlements. Given the ratio of European versus African servants to complete these laborious tasks, a plausible assumption is that European servants produced more work than African servants. The small population of Africans consisted of three social categories in early seventeenth century Virginia: indentured servant, free (after indenture), and perpetual servant; European servants, excluded from the “perpetual servant” category, had only two social categories: indentured and free. Akin to the earlier European model for enslaving Africans, Virginia began legally procuring Africans for an enduring labor class under the title, “perpetual servants.” I wanted to know why and how Africans became targeted in Virginia for such biased judgments. Evidence supports the idea that Virginia colonists did not select Africans to be permanent servants because they made up the largest population of laborers or because Africans

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<sup>6</sup> Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 113. A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr., *In the Matter of Color: Race and the American Legal Process: The Colonial Period* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1978), 20. Franklin and Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom*, 65-67.

<sup>7</sup> Edgar A. Toppin, “Slavery in the Southern Colonies from 1619 to 1776,” in *Critical Lessons in Slavery and the Slavetrade: Essential Studies and Commentaries On Slavery, In General, and the African Slavetrade, In Particular*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. John Henrik Clarke (Richmond, VA: Native Sun Publishers, 1996), 49-50.

<sup>8</sup> Toppin, “Slavery in the Southern Colonies from 1619 to 1776,” 49-50.

committed more crimes than Europeans. Moreover, Africans lived among, worked alongside, and had children with Europeans. Nevertheless, legal scholar, A. Leon Higginbotham, states Virginia law exclusively designated Africans as “slaves” and exempted white enslavers from legal reprisal for killing enslaved Africans by the end of seventeenth century.<sup>9</sup> My search for a cause to the unequal treatment of Africans prior to their enslavement led me back to the assertion made by Franklin and Moss about the relationship between the European enslavement of Africans outside of the American colonies and the enslavement of Africans within the American colonies. Enslavers in places such as the Caribbean rationalized slavery by alleging an inherent inferiority of Africans.<sup>10</sup> Despite the exploitation of Africans in Virginia during much of the seventeenth century, this philosophy was not widespread in Virginia and the other American colonies until the end of the seventeenth century when the legal distinction of Africans as slaves was made.

During my analysis I found a very unique aspect of the continuity between the European enslavement of Africans before the formation of the American colonies and during the American colonial period: Europeans in Africa and in the American colonies did not initially view Africans as inherently inferior. The preliminary European opinion of Africans on the continent and during the early part of the seventeenth century in Virginia consisted of a degree of respect for Africans as culturally diverse humans. The defamation of the African image by Europeans outside of the American colonies occurred concomitantly with the success of the African slave trade. European enslavers and cultural leaders argued that the enslavement of Africans was a civilizing mission. Without this widespread ideology in Virginia, the exclusive designation of Africans as slaves by the end the seventeenth century suggests that the law created the same perception of Africans

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<sup>9</sup> Higginbotham, Jr., *In the Matter of Color*, 35-57.

<sup>10</sup> Franklin and Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom*, 65-67.

which European enslavers and cultural leaders established outside of the American colonies. While Virginia law confined Africans to a rigid system of labor, the law also made an African pedigree synonymous with “slave.” “Slave,” in this instance, did not simply refer to involuntary laborers; it arbitrarily denoted an idea of the intrinsic sub-human nature of Africans. Although Virginia law did not include any conspicuous references to African inferiority prior to the institution of slavery in the colonies, it became obvious to me that, while very subtle, the law did degrade the image of Africans. I wanted to study how Virginia law projected the idea of African inferiority, which established the continuity of European ideology and framed the cultural representation of Africans in America. The European enslavement of Africans rested on two interlocking ideological premises. First, Europeans formed presumptuous notions about non-Christian Africans and their need for religious salvation. Second, the alleged subhuman nature of Africans was based on contrived ideas by European cultural leaders and enslavers rather than on their true beliefs. In short, the ideology of African inferiority originated from a combination of religious and cultural ethnocentrism and manufactured ideas used to rationalize the widespread enslavement of Africans. Virginia law supported and transmitted the ideology of African inferiority into colonial America, which served as a catalyst for the enslavement of Africans throughout the colonies. Although Virginia law sequestered Africans as “perpetual servants” during the early seventeenth century and as “slaves” by the end of the seventeenth century, the law also disparaged the African image. Virginia law codified the ideology of African inferiority into the colonies at the dawn of American culture. Scholars often refer to the political and ideological hegemonic forces that Europeans waged against Africans as “racism.”<sup>11</sup> I found

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<sup>11</sup> John Henrik Clarke, ed., “The Slave Trade,” 18. Beverly Tatum, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?: And Other Conversations with Race* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1997), 3-8. St. Clair Drake, *Black Folk Here and There: An Essay in History and Anthropology*, vol. 1 (1987; repr., Los Angeles, CA: Center for Afro-American Studies, 1998), 13. Barry N. Schwartz and Robert Disch, eds., introduction to *White Racism: Its*

“racism” to be a very inadequate term for explaining how early seventeenth century colonial law in Virginia reinforced the ideology which had been advanced by European enslavers and cultural leaders outside of the American colonies since the fifteenth century.

### **Research Problem Statement**

Some terms found in the literature used to describe one or more of the elements of the subordination of African descendants from the fifteenth to the twenty-first century include: “old-fashioned racism, symbolic racism, modern racism, aversive racism, cultural racism, white racism, White racism, racial slavery, racial prejudice, racial discrimination, institutional racism, ideological racism, individual racism, racist ideology, pseudoscientific racism, dominative racism, metaracism, and antiracist racism.”<sup>12</sup> A critique of how several of these terms are used by scholars is important. There are examples in the literature of scholars who distinguish between past and contemporary practices of racism. Robert M. Entman and Andrew Rojecki use the term “old-fashioned racism” to align the attitudes and beliefs held by some contemporary whites with views held by southern whites before World War II. According to Entman and Rojecki, “old-fashioned racism” is the overt identification of a set of pre-conceived ideas of African American’s proclivity for “...slow-wittedness and laziness.” Entman and Rojecki suggest since World War II the majority of whites have been exposed to implicit images of African American stereotypes through the media. This change represents for Entman and Rojecki an evolution from “old-fashioned racism” to a type of modern racism that reinforces African American

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*History, Pathology and Practice* (New York, NY: Dell Publishing Co, Inc., 1970, 1- 6. Robert M. Entman and Andrew Rojecki, *The Black Image in the White Mind: Media and Race in America* (2000; repr., Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 3-5. Lerone Bennett, Jr., *The Shaping of Black America: The Struggles and Triumphs of African Americans, 1619 to the 1990s* (1975; repr., New York, NY: Penguin Group, 1993) 62-73, 355.

<sup>12</sup> Tatum, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*, 3-8. Drake, *Black Folk Here and There*, 13-42. Schwartz and Robert Disch, eds., introduction to *White Racism*, 1- 6. Entman and Rojeck, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, 3-5.

subservience through subtly projected images by the white-dominated media.<sup>13</sup> Some scholars strictly use the term “racism” as the European justification-mechanism for enslaving Africans. John Henrik Clarke argues that Europeans used “race” to justify enslaving Africans. Clarke defines “racism” as the set of myths about barbaric Africa developed by Europeans beginning in the fifteenth century to declare the enslavement and colonization of sub-human Africans as Europe’s civilizing mission. Clarke supports his claim about Europe mythologizing Africa by documenting the lure of European explorers to Africa prior to the slave trade in search of gold and other treasures. Europeans introduced “race” as a way of re-characterizing Africans as savages when enslaving Africans became a financial priority. Clarke states that the system of “racism” which developed during the fifteenth century presently affects the perception of African descendants.<sup>14</sup> However, he offers no further discussion or information to support this position. Contrary to Clarke, Gary Nash asserts that “prejudice” was the rationalizing force for the system of enslavement against Africans.<sup>15</sup> Of significant note, although the title of Nash’s study is, “Red, White, and Black: The Origins of Racism in Colonial America,” he used the word “prejudice.” When describing the attitudes of white colonists in America, Nash uses terms “prejudice” and “racial attitudes” interchangeably in his study without making a distinction between the terms. Some scholars analyze when and how the definition of racism has changed. St. Clair Drake posits that during the 1930s and 1940s “racism” referred to a philosophy “of innate inherent inferiority or superiority” of humans; but later changed his explanation to underscore “differential power relationships” between African Americans and whites.<sup>16</sup> The

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<sup>13</sup> Entman and Rojek, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, 3-8.

<sup>14</sup> Clarke, ed., “The Slave Trade,” 17-19.

<sup>15</sup> Gary B. Nash, “Red, White, and Black: The Origins of Racism in Colonial America,” in *The Great Fear: Race in the Mind of America*, eds. Gary B. Nash and Richard Weiss (New York: NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1970), 16.

<sup>16</sup> Drake, *Black Folk Here and There*, 33.

literature also consists of discernment between the nuances of prejudicial thinking, ideology, culture, and institutions as it relates to racism. Beverly Tatum makes a distinction between “cultural racism” and “racism.” Tatum defines “cultural racism” as “cultural images and messages that affirm the assumed superiority of Whites and the assumed inferiority of people of color”; “racism” is “a system of advantage based on race.” Hence according to Tatum’s analysis “cultural racism” pertains to the projection of disparate images from antiquity to present-day, and “racism” is about unequal access to institutions. Tatum also states that “prejudice,” or biased and often unfounded opinions about people, must be distinguished from “racism,” because even whites who do not act on the basis of their personal prejudices benefit economically, socially, and politically more from “racism” than African Americans and other People of Color.<sup>17</sup> Drake states that “racial prejudice” is to generalize or stereotype an ethnic group, which contributes to the social, economic, and political marginalization of the disadvantaged group.<sup>18</sup> “Racial prejudice” does not explain adequately the European oppression of Africans. The repression and enslavement of Africans by Europeans did not occur because of European’s prejudgment of Africans. As previously stated, European explorers venerated African countries for their wealth, natural resources, and governments. There was no indiscriminate castigation of Africans made by Europeans before the slave trade was institutionalized. Therefore, the impetus behind the enslavement of Africans is not “racial prejudice” because Europeans did not generalize Africans as subordinate humans. Instead, Europeans produced the savage Africa myth as part of their rationale for enslaving Africans. Utilizing terms that include the word “race” has been widely accepted. Using racial terminology implies either negative ideas or negative actions, or a combination of both toward Africans, African Americans, and other People of Color. Many of

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<sup>17</sup> Tatum, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*, 3-9.

<sup>18</sup> Drake, *Black Folk Here and There*, 33.



these terms are used by scholars to frame a feature or some features of the conflict between Europeans and Africans from the fifteenth to the twenty-first century. Although I have identified some inconsistencies, there is a more basic problem with raced-based theories when discussing the European suppression of Africans in colonial America.

A problem with many of the descriptors for European suppression of Africans is that they consist of words like “racism, race, and racial.” The word “racism” implies that the actions and/or ideas used to oppress Africans derived from racial theory. “Race” was not introduced by Europeans into scientific literature to provide a “formal definition of human races in modern taxonomic terms” until the late eighteenth century. Leading theorists Carl Linnaeus (1707-78), Johan Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840), and Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon (1707-88) defined Africans as the most inferior and whites (Europeans) as the most superior of all human races.<sup>19</sup> An appropriate conjecture is that any working definition of “racism” would involve the application of these racial theories, which were produced in the late seventeen hundreds to adversely affect the lives of people. This is certainly the case when American theorists Samuel Morton, Josiah Knott, and Louis Agassiz used race theory to create the “the original American school of anthropology” in the mid-nineteenth century. Their purpose was to challenge the Abolitionist Movement by dispensing “the natural inferiority of the Negro” in numerous lectures and publications.<sup>20</sup> Forest Wood produced a study about how American race theorists attempted to galvanize the American populace against Africans after the Civil War.

Woods presents a proliferation of race theories that were used by American “racists” to negate

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<sup>19</sup> William Stanton, *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes toward Race in America, 1815-59* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 10-11, 29. Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York, NY: Norton & Company, 1981), 35. James Henry Breasted, in Anthony Browder, *Nile Valley Contributions to Civilization: Exploding the Myths*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: The Institute of Karmic Guidance, 1992), 19. Ann Morning, *The Nature of Race: How Scientists Think and Teach About Human Difference* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2011), 25-26.

<sup>20</sup> Lee D. Baker, *From Savage to Negro: Anthropology and the Construction of Race, 1896-1954* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, Ltd, 1998), 14-16.

African enfranchisement.<sup>21</sup> Wood appropriately refers to these theorists as “racists” and their movement against Africans in post-bellum America as “racism.” However, the ideology of African inferiority was set in motion in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries when Christian leaders and enslavers from Spain and Portugal proclaimed that Africans were innately inferior.<sup>22</sup> European enslavers also continued to advance the idea of the barbaric nature of Africans in places such as Europe, South America, and the Caribbean islands before the American colonies were established.<sup>23</sup> This new science supported the preexisting ideology of African inferiority (black) and European (white) superiority established in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries by Portugal and Spain. Moreover, Virginia’s utilization of law to make an African pedigree synonymous with an innate inferiority was firmly entrenched by the late seventeenth century.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, religious leaders in Virginia denounced Africans through lectures, sermons, and publications during the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>25</sup> However, race theory was not used to adversely affect Africans in America until the nineteenth century. Therefore, studies which describe the oppression of Africans as racism or similar terms should not be applied before the eighteenth century.

This study is about how the ideology of African inferiority was embedded into the social institutions of colonial America. I focus on early Virginian law because it was initially used as the primary mechanism to besmudge the image of Africans. Virginia law synthesized and transported the ideology of African or black inferiority generated decades earlier in Spain,

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<sup>21</sup> Forrest G. Wood, *Black Scare: The Racist Response to Emancipation and Reconstruction* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1968), 1-7.

<sup>22</sup> Maulana Karenga, *Introduction to Black Studies*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Los Angeles, California: University of Sankore Press, 2002), 119. Franklin and Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom*, 35-36.

<sup>23</sup> John G. Jackson, *Introduction to African Civilizations* (1970; repr., New York, NY: Citadel Press, 2001), 304-311.

<sup>24</sup> Higginbotham, Jr., *In the Matter of Color*, 35-57.

<sup>25</sup> Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Williamsburg, VA: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 183, 188.

Portugal, the Netherlands, France, and England before race theory evolved.<sup>26</sup> Depraving the African image through law in colonial Virginia represents the continuousness of an ideology which began in the fifteenth century. While an abundance of research exists about the imposition of slave law as a primary apparatus of control over the African population, most studies exclude an analysis of the relationship between ideology and law in the context of African subjugation. The central thesis of this study is that Virginian law promoted and perpetuated the ideology of African (black) inferiority and European (white) superiority into the cultural fabric of the colonies. According to Johan Galtung, when the dominant ideology is incorporated into the cultural sphere of a society it becomes a system of “cultural violence.”<sup>27</sup> Winthrop Jordan’s seminal study, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812*, has been invaluable for documenting attitudes and ideas in Europe and colonial America about their professed superiority over Africans.<sup>28</sup> Detailing European attitudes is a step toward establishing ideology as a stable structure of oppression. Connecting the ideology of African inferiority which undergirded Virginian law with the pre-colonial ideology propagated by Europeans is imperative in order to establish the continuity of these ideas as the basis of a system of “cultural violence.” Conceptualizing the propagation of European ideology as a system of “cultural violence” helps modify classic approaches to studies about African resistance. Historians often study African resistance to enslavement. Many of these studies have the following themes of resistance: emigration, abolitionism, revolts, ship mutinies, day-to-day resistance (destroying crops, breaking tools), alliance between Africans and Mexicans, guerrilla warfare (establishing maroon

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<sup>26</sup> Albert L. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The “Invisible Institution” in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 163-164.

<sup>27</sup> Johan Galtung, “Cultural Violence,” in *An Interdisciplinary Reader: Violence and Its Alternatives*, ed. Manfred B. Steger and Nancy S. Lind (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 39-43.

<sup>28</sup> Jordan, *White Over Black*, 183, 188.

or independent communities), and an alliance between Africans and Native Americans.<sup>29</sup>

Providing an analysis of how Virginian law debased the image of Africans helps to contextualize African resistance to ideology rather than resistance to their involuntary labor. A critique of the writings of Africans in antebellum America reveals that they produced literary works as a key strategy to oppose the ideas propagated by white cultural leaders about their innate inferiority through the system of “cultural violence.” Rather than study the numerous memoirs, which detail the accounts of enslaved Africans in America,<sup>30</sup> I studied the protest literature of Africans in America. Many memoirs include important information about the daily and life-long experiences of enslaved Africans. However, I studied protest literature because it contains the views of Africans about their undesirable portrayal. My analysis of the protest literature of Africans in America demonstrates how they responded to “cultural violence” before the Civil War and before the development of race theory. This study is guided by the following research questions:

### **Research Questions**

1. How did Virginia colonial law promote the ideology of African or black inferiority?
2. What forms of resistance did Africans utilize to challenge the ideology of African or black inferiority in antebellum America?

### **Definition of Terms**

#### **Cultural Violence:**

Galtung suggests cultural violence occurs when a dominant group uses cultural institutions, cultural vehicles, and cultural venues to create a pervasive image of a subordinate group as inherently

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<sup>29</sup> Karenga, *Introduction to Black Studies*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 146-160.

<sup>30</sup> Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861; repr., New York, NY: Barnes and Noble Classics, 2005), ix-239. Norman R. Yetman, ed., *When I Was a Slave: Memoirs from the Slave Narrative Collection* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2002), v-149.

inferior to the dominant group. The portrayal of the subordinate group is propagated through cultural traditions, religion, language, art, historical markers, literary texts, science, ideology, media, cultural celebrations, norms, and values of a society by a dominant group to create and maintain a desired perception. Johan Galtung argues that cultural violence is an effective means of control when the contrived image of a subordinate group is embedded into a society because these ideas can be found “spanning all domains of a culture” across periods of time.<sup>31</sup>

### **Nomenclature:**

Following DuBois’s observations nearly a century ago that “black Americans” are African and American,<sup>32</sup> in this study the descriptor, “African American” describes those people of African descent native to America after 1865, and “African descendants” or “Africans” refers to people of African descent within or outside of America before 1865.

The ideological representation of European American superiority over Africans cemented into colonial America’s cultural fabric is indicative of a particular mechanism used to create an enduring system of oppression. European descendants in colonial America such as the Dutch, Irish, and English did not originally identify themselves as “white.” European descendants began using the term “white” in the seventeenth century to socially and politically organize themselves against non-Europeans; “white” also encapsulated for European descendants their purportedly implicit and explicit cultural, intellectual, and biological advantage over Africans. Hence, in this study “Europeans, European Americans, or European descendants” are used as a descriptor in early seventeenth-century colonial America to describe people who have European ancestry. The term “white” is the descriptor used to describe European descendants after that time-period in America. To honor the continued struggle against the cultural diffusion of European’s pervasive

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<sup>31</sup> Johan Galtung, “Cultural Violence,” 39-43.

<sup>32</sup> Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction in Black America, 1945-1990*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1991), 188.

ideology, “white” is also used to pinpoint the dominant ideology, which became the mark of cultural violence carried out against Africans in antebellum America.

**African “Cultural Projection”:**

Merelman asserts that whites used ‘cultural hegemony’ to “control the flow of cultural projection” waged by African Americans. Merelman defines “cultural projection” as “the conscious or unconscious effort by a social group and its allies to place new images of itself before other social groups, and before the general public.” Merelman argues that a useful definition of ‘cultural hegemony’ is the ‘cultural, moral, and ideological leadership over a subordinate group’ to explain how culture has been a subject of “political combat” in the context of African American/white interactions.<sup>33</sup> With a simple modification to Merelman’s definition, African “cultural projection” is the effort waged by Africans to replace the negative cultural portrayal contained in the dominant ideology and transmitted to the general public with new positive cultural representations.

**African Literary Religious Vocation:**

The author of this study has chosen the term, African “literary religious vocation.” Inspiration to use the word “vocation” comes from Paulo Freire. Although Freire does not specifically define “vocation” in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he does argue that the major challenge faced by dominated groups is when oppressors deny the oppressed “the vocation of becoming more fully human.” Freire argues that subordinate group members develop despondent attitudes about their identity and abilities. According to Freire, despair prevents the oppressed from generating their own human progress independent of the oppressor’s influence.<sup>34</sup> Based on Freire, in this study the word “vocation” refers to “a strong impulse to follow a particular activity

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<sup>33</sup> Richard M. Merelman. *Representing Black Culture: Racial Conflict and Cultural Politics in the United States* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1995), 4-7.

<sup>34</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, rev. ed., trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (repr., 1970, New York, NY: The Continuum Publishing Company, , 1995), 25-27.

or career; a divine call to a religious life.”<sup>35</sup> The purpose of this section is to show how Africans engaged in “literary religious vocation.” African “literary religious vocation” is defined as Africans’ commitment to articulate biblical ideas in their writings that defied the Christian-based projection of African inferiority.

The literary works produced by Africans in antebellum America were interpolations against slavery and against the negation of their humanity in the dominant ideology. An examination of cultural leaders, institutions, and other venues, which have traversed the ideology of African inferiority into American culture, illuminates the pervasiveness of cultural violence in the United States. An interdisciplinary analysis of the literature demonstrates that there is a system of cultural violence in the United States, how the system was created, how the system has been maintained, and undercurrents of the structure.

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<sup>35</sup> *Webster’s Desk Dictionary*, s.v. “vocation”

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

This literature review is based on the following two research questions:

1. How did Virginia's colonial laws promote the ideology of African or black inferiority?
2. What forms of resistance did Africans utilize to challenge the ideology of African or black inferiority in antebellum America?

The first research question is about Virginia because the source for much of the political and social ideology used in other colonies was canonized there. Four of America's first five presidents were Virginians, some of the most prominent American revolutionaries resided there, and colonial Virginia initiated a system of oppression which led to enslaving Africans.<sup>36</sup> Virginia was certainly not alone in oppressing Africans, but Virginia is important to discuss because the first Africans in colonial America arrived in Jamestown, Virginia in 1619.<sup>37</sup> Virginia created a system of oppression which transformed the population of free and indentured Africans residing there into perpetual servants during the seventeenth century and into slaves by the beginning of the eighteenth century. Hence, Virginia is the location for some of America's earliest mechanisms of the legal and physical conquest of Africans. It is not difficult to find a text which details how Virginia suppressed Africans through colonial law and physical violence. In these texts religion formed the ideological basis which initially helped justify African domination. One example of this type of text is John Hope Franklin's, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of*

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<sup>36</sup> Higginbotham, Jr. and Kopytoff, "Racial Purity and Interracial Sex in the Law of Colonial and Antebellum Virginia," 1967.

<sup>37</sup> Wesley Frank Craven, *White, Red, and Black: The Seventeenth-Century Virginian* (Charlottesville, VA: The University Press of Virginia, 1971), 77.



*African Americans* (2011), which is currently in its 9<sup>th</sup> edition<sup>38</sup> and has been commonly used in schools and universities in the United States. In the 8<sup>th</sup> edition of this text, John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss argue that Virginia's enslavers used the fact that most Africans were not Christians as a rationalization for enslaving them.<sup>39</sup> However, this approach frames ideology as a secondary factor; meaning scholars generally consider ideology a supporting set of ideas to rationalize domination rather than as a primary mechanism of repression. Additionally, viewing ideology in the singular dimension of "justification" obscures the fact that its creators intended to produce an enduring system of ideas for members of the dominant and subordinate groups to internalize concerning the perception of Africans and whites. Other scholars commonly acknowledge that ideology has been used to justify the legal and physical suppression of Africans and other groups. For instance, Edwin Black stressed the ideological justification used in the United States for the eugenics movement in order to rationalize sterilizing African Americans and fourteen million other undesirables who did not fit into the "superior Nordic race."<sup>40</sup> Black revealed that a litany of medical and other scholarly journals, professors, universities, political leaders, conferences, and theories propagated the ideology which undergirded the eugenics movement. The success of the eugenics movement rested on indoctrinating the American public with the ideology expressed in such cultural venues and by cultural leaders. Black's study exemplifies how scholars typically consider ideology a mechanism to justify other types of repression. Ideology in America, when studied comprehensively, has not been simply used as an apparatus for rationalizing cruel acts in a given period; ideology has been utilized in America as an enduring system of subjugation. The

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<sup>38</sup> Franklin and Higginbotham, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 54-57.

<sup>39</sup> Franklin and Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom*, 65-69.

<sup>40</sup> Edwin Black, introduction to *War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race* (New York, NY: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2003), xv-xvii.

formation of the ideology that Black elucidated in his study began centuries earlier. This study is designed to trace the roots of ideology from Europe to colonial Virginia and to frame the ideology of African inferiority as a system of oppression. Although Virginia used its colonial laws to develop and perpetuate the ideology that Africans were substandard humans compared to European descendants, this ideology was not confined to Virginia. The purpose of propagating this ideology nationally was to create a sustaining dichotomy between subordinate African (inferior) and dominant European (superior) group members. There are contemporary African Americans who suggest that the dominant ideology has been maintained in various cultural institutions and venues. A contemporary organization called Committee for a Free World (founded in 1981) states ‘...the struggle for freedom may in the end be won...in books, newspapers, broadcasts, classrooms, and all public institutions.’<sup>41</sup> The second research question is: What forms of resistance did Africans utilize to challenge the ideology of African or black inferiority in antebellum America? This research question demonstrates that Africans in colonial America fervently sought to dispel the ideology about their inferiority.

Ideology is defined as:

1. The body of ideas reflecting the social needs and aspirations of an individual, group, or culture.
2. A set of doctrines or beliefs that form the basis of a political, economic, or other system.<sup>42</sup>

According to David Roediger, “settler ideology” also represented a conscious effort to form a “dominant ideology” which embodied and imposed the idea of a Divine presence and inherent superiority of Europeans (whites) over the darker Native Americans and Africans in the New

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<sup>41</sup> James Turner, “Africana Studies and Epistemology” quoted in *Out of the Revolution: The Development of Africana Studies*, ed. Delores P. Aldridge and Carlene Young 59-75 (2000; repr., Lanham, Maryland: The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc., 2003), 71.

<sup>42</sup> *The American Heritage College Dictionary*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., s.v. “ideology.”

World.<sup>43</sup> Under this “dominant ideology,” Africans were connoted as “black” or “Negro” (Spanish for black) and Europeans “white” in written documents.<sup>44</sup> According to Rebecca Ann Lind, the perpetuation of a “dominant ideology” is intended to oppress other cultural groups.<sup>45</sup> Although the focus of this study is on Virginia’s colonial laws, Frances C. Fowler asserts that dominant groups integrate their self-interest and ideology into law.<sup>46</sup> According to Asa Hilliard, “...ideology was the most dangerous part of the system...” of domination against blacks because it was used “...to boost the self-esteem of white people...” by inventing an opposing symbol of the “...mentally, spiritually, socially, and morally inferior” African American.<sup>47</sup> This interdisciplinary literature review is intended to demonstrate how the strategy of systematically incorporating ideology as a primary rather than a secondary mechanism of oppression created a system of cultural violence. Framing ideology as cultural violence is important in order to divert from the tendency to view ideology as a secondary function of oppression. An historical analysis of how ideology has been used to create cultural violence is perhaps a way of shedding light on some of the social forces that define and potentially affect “race” relations in the United States. The two research questions present an interdisciplinary illustration of the utility, effectiveness, manifestations, and the “invariance” of ideology as a mechanism of oppression as well as some of the literature about the cognizance, theories, and responses to ideological domination.

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<sup>43</sup> David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, Revised ed. (New York, NY: Verso, 2007), 21. Rebecca Ann Lind, “Laying a Foundation for Studying Race, Gender, and the Media” in *Race, Gender, Media: Considering Diversity Across Audiences, Content, and Producers*, ed. by Rebecca Ann Lind (Boston, Massachusetts: Pearson Education, Inc., 2004), 7.

<sup>44</sup> Higginbotham, Jr., *In the Matter of Color: Race and the American Legal Process*, 20, 24, 267.

<sup>45</sup> Lind, “Laying a Foundation for Studying Race, Gender, and the Media,” 7.

<sup>46</sup> Frances C. Fowler, *Policy Studies for Educational Leaders: An Introduction* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 2000), 106-108.

<sup>47</sup> Asa G. Hilliard, III, *SBA: The Reawakening of the African Mind* (Gainesville, Florida: Makare Publishing Company, 1998), 59.

## **Cultural Violence: Propagating the Dominant Ideology**

Virginia used its colonial laws to introduce and facilitate a system of cultural violence in colonial America. The purpose of spreading nationally the ideology of African inferiority was to create a sustaining dichotomy between African and European group members. Virginia's utilization of law to infer a tainted image of African inheritance helped set into motion a proliferation of arguments against Africans by white cultural leaders. Participation in the characterization of Africans as inferior humans was facilitated by white cultural leaders throughout America. This section of the literature review presents scholarship that demonstrates a variety of cultural venues, cultural vehicles, and cultural institutions, which supported the system of cultural violence.

The medical field was used as a cultural venue to propagate the dominant ideology. John S. Haller, Jr. argues that the "race ideology of the antebellum south" about "Negro" inferiority was proliferated in various studies conducted in the nineteenth century by southern physicians.<sup>48</sup> Lee D. Baker and William Stanton claim "the original American school of anthropology" was developed in the mid-nineteenth century to support pro-slavery interest challenging the Abolitionist movement. Baker cites Samuel Morton, Josiah Knott, and Louis Agassiz as the most prominent scholars in this period because of the abundance of data they disseminated in their numerous lectures and publications about "the natural inferiority of the Negro."<sup>49</sup>

State fairs presented white American anthropologists with the opportunity to visually substantiate their claims about the supremacy of whites over African descendants in the United States and abroad, as well as other People of Color. Phillips Verner Bradford and Harvey Bloom

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<sup>48</sup> John S. Haller, Jr., *Outcasts from Evolution: Scientific Attitudes of Racial Inferiority, 1859-1900* (1971; repr., Carbondale & Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1995), 39.

<sup>49</sup> Baker, *From Savage to Negro*, 14-16. William Stanton, *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes toward Race in America, 1815-59* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, Ltd., 1960), 1.

report that anthropologist, Dr. W. J. McGee, was head of the Anthropology Department at St. Louis's state fair in 1904. With "anthropology at the centerpiece" of St. Louis's fair, Bradford and Bloom contend that McGee directed fair employees to amass 'representatives of all races' from around the world. "Native Americans, African 'pygmies', Eskimos, Patagonians, and Ainu" were some of the individuals publically displayed at the fair. Bradford and Bloom suggest the absence of whites from this list of representatives exhibited at St. Louis's fair denoted American anthropology's designation of whites' supreme "...position on the evolutionary scale." Bradford and Bloom advance that People of Color were displayed in traditional attire for authenticity. Moreover, they contend anthropologists postulated the Africans (so-called "pygmies") 'erratic behavior showed the influence of the lower creatures upon their habits of thought,' which the anthropologists surmised was caused by their proximity in Africa to similar animals they brought with them to the fair. The accessibility of the public to negative anthropological ideas about African Americans, other Africans and other People of Color was augmented because nearly two fifths of the press releases about the St. Louis fair were about the Anthropology Department's activities.<sup>50</sup> The purported superiority of whites over African Americans, other Africans and other People of Color was affirmed through the activities at the fair.

Between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, psychology and anthropology became what Herbert Guthrie calls "bedfellows", because they complimented each other's search for and magnification of white superiority over African Americans, other Africans and other People of Color. Guthrie asserts psychologists aligned themselves with anthropologists when they eagerly included the study of African Americans, other Africans, and other People of Color under the term "uncivilized." They defined "uncivilized" as, 'the study of the minds of other

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<sup>50</sup> Phillips Verner Bradford and Harvey Bloom, *Ota Benga: The Pygmy in the Zoo* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 3-7.

races and people, of which, among more backward races, glimpses can be obtained only by living by means of observation and experiment.’ Guthrie states, psychologists and anthropologists cooperatively traveled the world to study the ‘uncivilized Negroes’ in places such as New Guinea. Psychologists also used St. Louis and other state fairs to conduct tests on Africans and other People of Color. Guthrie argues that the 1904 St. Louis World’s Fair, with the establishment of The World’s Congress of Races, permitted “the first large-scale testing arrangement” in the United States by psychologists. According to Guthrie, Africans were considered among the ‘least intelligent of the 1100 individuals comprised of’ 22 groups, and... 8 distinct ethnic types’ based on intelligence, sensory, and other tests scores. Guthrie cites the final report of prominent psychologist, R. S. Woodworth from Columbia University: ‘[blacks]...behaved a good deal in the same way as the mentally deficient person, making stupid errors and taking enormous amount of time.’ According to Guthrie, psychologists A. L. Crane from Brenau College in Georgia studied about twenty years later whether or not ‘the Negro is incapable of morality or of adaption to the social demand.’<sup>51</sup>

White superiority was propagated in the discipline of philosophy. Teshale Tibebu’s central argument in a recent study is that German philosopher, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, created the “Eurocentric” view. Tibebu argues that Hegel initiated the “Eurocentric” view by promoting the inherent superiority of whites over African Americans, African descendants, and other People of Color. Hegel’s philosophy about the incongruent progression of different groups in world history was formed by his “epistemology,” according to Tibebu. Tibebu reveals why whites were the pinnacle of humanity among the world’s cultural groups in the hierarchical nature of Hegel’s “epistemology.” Hegel stated whites in Europe solely possessed the bastion for

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<sup>51</sup> Robert V. Guthrie, *Even the Rat Was White: A Historical View of Psychology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc., 2004), 35-37, 46-51.

high human development, which was “self-conscious reason.” Tibebu quotes Hegel’s reasoning for the underdevelopment of all African descendants: ‘In Africa, man has not progressed beyond a merely sensuous existence and, has found it absolutely impossible to develop any further. Physically, he exhibits great muscular strength, which enables him to perform arduous labours...’<sup>52</sup> Tibebu contends Hegel’s statements and writings demonstrate that his “epistemology” caused him to characterize all African descendants as ‘cannibals,’ Africa as the ‘dark continent,’ slavery and colonialism as the ‘civilizing mission’ of whites, and all African descendants as the world’s only true ‘animal man.’ Emphasizing the effectiveness of Hegel’s philosophical ideas at congealing white superiority over all African descendants and other People of Color in world history, Tibebu concludes: “All Eurocentrism is thus essentially a series of footnotes to Hegel.”<sup>53</sup>

Cartography was used to cast all African descendants in a negative manner. Marcus Rediker supports this by describing how mapmaker, Emmanuel Bowen, changed a common designation of the main enslaving region in Africa from Guinea to “Negroland” in 1747. Rediker contends that this change represented the effort to solidify “new ways of thinking” about all African descendants.<sup>54</sup> While the name Guinea suggests a human presence similar for inhabitants of France, Sweden, and Rome, the relabeling of Guinea as “Negroland” seems a deliberate attempt to consign and project all African descendants as inhuman compared to whites.

Joseph Boskin asserts whites “institutionalized” the negative ideological portrayal of Africans in America during the seventeenth century through the image of “Sambo.” Boskin suggests postcards, jokes, wedding receptions, ceramic figurines, mascots, brochures, magazines,

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<sup>52</sup> Teshale Tibebu, *Hegel and the Third World: The Making of Eurocentrism in World History* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011), xi-xxi, 171-179.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., xi-xxi, 171-179.

<sup>54</sup> Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship* (New York, NY: Viking, 2007), 242-243.

travel reports, etc., were examples of cultural venues that incorporated “Sambo” as a form of entertainment. Whether represented by Africans or white actors in “blackface” on stage, or presented in magazines, “Sambo” enactments embodied the stereotype of African buffoonery and imprudence.<sup>55</sup> This is an example of how culture was used to reverberate the idea that Africans were clownish and lacked the capacity for logical and intellectual development.

In 1892, Anna Julia Cooper penned “The Negro as Presented in American Literature.” Cooper asserted that literary works in the United States were used to uplift and defame African Americans. Cooper refers collectively to those who denigrated African Americans in their literary works as “preachers.” Cooper expressed her thoughts about the role of the purveyors of African American inferiority in the following statement: “Preachers” are “all who have an idea to propagate, no matter in what form their talent enables them to clothe it, whether poem, novel, or sermon,— all those writers with a purpose or lesson...”<sup>56</sup> Cooper understood that the dominant ideology’s divergent meaning of “black” and “white” was manifested through cultural mediums.

Religion was a cultural institution used by whites to perpetuate white superiority over African descendants. Phillip Dray postulates that whites’ utilization of Christianity made it “...unique among the world’s religions in promulgating the idea that...” African Americans and other Africans were inferior.<sup>57</sup> Stephen Haynes cites seventy-one primary sources written between the early seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries in his study about the U.S.’s biblical justification of slavery. The majority of these primary sources were pamphlets, books, newspapers, letters, speeches, and sermons conducted and written by whites to advocate their

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<sup>55</sup> Joseph Boskin, *Sambo: The Rise & Demise of an American Jester* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1986), 4-12.

<sup>56</sup> Anna Julia Cooper, “The Negro As Presented in American Literature,” in *The Voice of Anna Julia Cooper: Including A Voice from the South and Other Important Essays, Papers, and Letters*, ed. Charles Lemert and Esme Bhan (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.), 136-138.

<sup>57</sup> Phillip Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America*, Modern Library Paperback Ed. (2002; repr., New York, NY: The Modern Library, 2003), 80.



biblical interpretation for the superiority of whites over African Americans and other Africans as a defense of slavery. Sixty-two of Haynes's primary documents alone were from the nineteenth century.<sup>58</sup> Rev. William Kingsley Opoku, International Coordinator of the African Council for Spiritual Churches, explains his view of what motivated Christian Missionaries to convert Africans to Christianity:

Our ancestors are our saints. Christian Missionaries who came here wanted us to pray to their saints, their dead people. But what about our saints?...If you are grateful to your ancestors, then you have blessings from your grandmother, your grandfather, who brought you forth...Non-Africans came in and said we should not obey our ancestors, should not call upon them at all, because they are evil people.

Reverend Opoku argues, "This has been a mental bondage, a terrible thing."<sup>59</sup> Other African scholars suggest when Christian missionaries superimpose their concept of God, it, "...does violence to the greater social importance of ancestor spirits in African traditional religions."<sup>60</sup>

Mary Frances Berry suggests that the cultural transmission of the dominant ideology undergirded the legal repression of Africans in the American colonies. For example, the first colonial slave laws were established during the seventeenth century in Virginia because Africans were considered "merchandise" and "property of great value."<sup>61</sup> The ideology of black inferiority sanctioned the need for whites to legally control all aspects of Africans' lives.

Donald Bogle argues that in the early twentieth century whites began to use motion picture films to "entertain by stressing Negro inferiority." Bogle states that *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the first of these films, was created in 1903 by Edwin S. Porter. Bogle posits Porter, a former mechanic, used a white actor "made up in blackface" instead of an African American actor to

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<sup>58</sup> Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah's Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), 299-313.

<sup>59</sup> William Kingsley Opoku, quoted in Mary Pat Fisher, *Living Religions*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2005), 41.

<sup>60</sup> Mary Pat Fisher, *Living Religions*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2005), 63.

<sup>61</sup> Mary Frances Berry, *Black Resistance/White Law: A History of Constitutional Racism in America* (New York: NY, Penguin Books, 1994), 1-7.

play the leading character, Uncle Tom. Bogle suggests that although Porter's twelve-minute film was an important contribution because it predated the motion picture industry, it was more important because it provided whites in the U.S. with an efficient mechanism to transmit "filmic reproductions of black stereotypes that had existed since the days of slavery and were already popularized in American life and arts." Bogle contends white filmmakers followed Porter's example by using white actors in blackface and restricting African American actors to stereotypical roles to distribute the idea of African American inferiority and white superiority into numerous motion picture films during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.<sup>62</sup> The examples presented above validate how the ideology of African inferiority introduced in early seventeenth century Virginia allowed other white cultural leaders to immerse into American culture a disparaged view of Africans. What techniques were used to preserve the projection of incongruent cultural representations of African Americans and other Africans with whites?

### **Preserving the Dominant Ideology**

By punishing Africans unfairly, Virginia colonial law was one method used to sequester Africans as worthy of enslavement. The insinuation of Africans as criminals under Virginia law introduced into America the notion that whites and Africans were unequal. Though Virginia was successful at disparaging the image of Africans, sustaining a system of cultural violence requires dominant groups to create other efficient methods of control over the characterization of their image and the image of the group under their subjugation. This section of the literature review presents scholarship that demonstrates methods and techniques used by dominant groups to preserve their ideological hegemony over subordinate groups.

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<sup>62</sup> Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York, NY: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2004), 1-5.

Lind suggests that the concept, “symbolic annihilation,” can be used to articulate how a dominant group’s creation and propagation of a negative representation of a subordinate group in the mass media is a form of power. A dominant group’s control over a subordinate is fortified by “condemnation,” “omission,” and “trivialization.” Theorists advance that a negative ideological portrayal of a subordinate group is achieved by condemning them, and playing down and excluding media representations which contradict the dominant group’s depiction of their adverse illustration of the outranked group.<sup>63</sup>

Cheik Anta Diop argues that white scholars used a “falsification of history” methodology to “fabricate” theories and studies in disciplines such as geology and history to extol the white ascendancy over all African descendants and other world cultures in the historical evolution of human history.<sup>64</sup> Similarly, Barry Glassner contends “journalists, politicians, and other opinion leaders” have intentionally used “egregious omissions” in unbalanced media portrayals about African Americans as part of a methodology to create “a culture of fear.” According to Glasner, a “culture of fear” about African Americans in the United States has been largely predicated on the strategies of cultural and political leaders.<sup>65</sup>

Psychologist, Joy Degruy Leary, argues that the dominant ideology in the United States has been maintained “...through its institutions, laws, policies, and media...” Leary contends the United States has exposed African Americans to “racist socialization” by historically using many of its cultural institutions to project African Americans inferiority. Leary professes that the beliefs about African American self-worth as human beings that are obtained from those

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<sup>63</sup> Lind, “Laying a Foundation for Studying Race, Gender, and the Media,” 5.

<sup>64</sup> Cheik Anta Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*, trans. and ed. Mercer Cook (repr.; 1974, Paris: Presence Africaine, 1955), 43-45. Cheik Anta Diop, *Civilization or Barbarism: An Authentic Anthropology*, trans. Yaa-Lengi Meema Ngemi (repr.; 1991, Paris: Presence Africaine, 1981), 26-28.

<sup>65</sup> Barry Glassner, *The Culture of Fear: Why Americans are Afraid of the Wrong Things* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1999), 109-127.

oppressive institutions can contribute to conditions she calls “ever present anger” and “vacant esteem.” Leary defines vacant esteem as, “the state of believing oneself to have little or no worth, exacerbated by the group and societal pronouncement of inferiority.” While many other groups of people deal with similar concepts of self-confidence and self-efficacy, Leary suggests these can often be repaired by accomplishing external tasks which cause self-doubt. For instance, one’s disappointment about their inability to pass a test can be overturned through rigorous study or a tutor. Leary further suggests that the term “vacant esteem” is more apropos for describing African American self-worth, given the unique way African Americans were and continue to be exposed to “racist socialization” and the multi-generational trauma it has caused.<sup>66</sup>

A common tactic of oppressors is to produce what Albert Memmi calls a “mythical portrait” of themselves and their victims. Memmi argues that “...the favored image...” of the oppressors is one which factitiously cast the oppressed as inferior and simultaneously the oppressors as superior. Memmi suggests this “myth” is intended to rationalize the dissimilar positions of the oppressors and oppressed.<sup>67</sup> Ezra Pound suggests an image “...is more than an idea—it is a vortex or cluster of fused ideas and is endowed with energy.”<sup>68</sup> Many scholars suggest that culture has been used to control the image of African Americans and other Africans.

Harold Cruse attributed “...the backward cultural development of America, the cultural banality, the cultural decadence, the cultural debasement of the entire American social scene...” as the foundation for African American oppression in the United States.<sup>69</sup> Frantz Fanon argues

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<sup>66</sup> Joy DeGruy Leary, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America’s Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing*, (Milwaukee, Oregon: Uptone Press, 2005), 125, 127-133.

<sup>67</sup> Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (New York, NY: The Orion Press, 1965), 79-80.

<sup>68</sup> Ezra Pound, quoted in George Edmond Smith, *More Than Sex: Reinventing the Black Male Image* (New York, NY: Kensington Publishing Corp., 2000), 29.

<sup>69</sup> Harold Cruse, quoted in Barry N. Schwartz and Robert Disch, *White Racism: Its History, Pathology and Practice* (New York, NY: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1970), 5.

that there is a “...reciprocal action” between racism and culture. Fanon posits that science, religion, and other cultural institutions which propagate notions of African descendants’ inferiority and “condition” or rationalize acts of physical and political despotism against African descendants. He says these acts “...become transformed into cultural racism.” A consequence of the “cultural racism” which African descendants experience is what Fanon calls “cultural mummification.” Fanon states, when African descendants are imposed with “the doctrine of cultural hierarchy” they view themselves and their culture as inferior to their oppressors.<sup>70</sup>

Charles Johnson states the history of oppressing African Americans in the United States must be understood as ‘... stripping a people of cultural identity, then grotesquely caricaturing them in the national (white) imagination.’ Johnson continues, ‘The burden on the...black population...is to counteract the ideology of racism, and prove themselves worthy of equality’.<sup>71</sup> Richard M. Merelman asserts that whites used ‘cultural hegemony’ to “control the flow of cultural projection” waged by African Americans. Merelman defines “cultural projection” as “the conscious or unconscious effort by a social group and its allies to place new images of itself before other social groups, and before the general public.” Merelman argues that a useful definition of ‘cultural hegemony’ is the ‘cultural, moral, and ideological leadership over a subordinate group’ to explain how culture has been a subject of “political combat” in the context of African American/white interactions.<sup>72</sup>

Amos Wilson argues that the type of consciousness African Americans currently possess is a reflection of the oppressive historical experiences they have endured in the U.S.’s cultural system. He emphatically contends that “[United States] culture is the reason” African Americans

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<sup>70</sup> Frantz Fanon, “Racism and Culture,” in *African Philosophy: An Anthology*, ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing LTD, 1998), 305-306.

<sup>71</sup> Charles Johnson, quoted in Mia Bay, *The White Image in the Black Mind: African-American Ideas about White People, 1830-1925* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 12.

<sup>72</sup> Merelman. *Representing Black Culture*, 4-7.

are in their current situation. Wilson suggests culture is not simply variety and the uniqueness of food or clothing of a group of people, but is in fact quintessential for human development. Wilson argues, “Developers of culture are intending to implant a spirit into its members.” “Acculturating” members of a society “is a process of building ‘responsivity,’ [through] the creation of symbols to invoke beliefs and behavior.” Wilson posits that the United States has produced cultural symbols to create a “self-hatred orientation” for African Americans; and that “black self-hatred orientation” is the greatest weapon created in the United States. Wilson contends that “when an act of oppression occurs, it does not stop at the point of occurrence; it continues to reverberate into the future and manifests through generations.” A manifestation of the “self-hatred orientation” created what Wilson calls “latent possession,” which means many African Americans, as victims of the U.S.’s cultural oppression, unconsciously believe in their own inferiority.<sup>73</sup> Amil Cabral states that oppressors have “... a clear idea of the value of culture as a factor...” for dominating groups of people. Cabral argues that history teaches “...material aspects of this domination... [which] ...can be only maintained by the permanent, organized repression of the cultural life...” of the oppressed.<sup>74</sup> The examples above elucidate techniques and methods used by dominate group members to sustain a contrasting set of images to subservient group members. The ideology of African inferiority, originally endorsed through Virginia law, was bolstered by additional methods and techniques. Education became a vehicle for projecting similar cultural representations of Africans in America and other oppressed groups.

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<sup>73</sup> Amos Wilson, “Blue Print for Black Power,” speech performed October 28, 2004 (Trans Atlantic Publications), DVD.

<sup>74</sup> Amilcar Cabral, “National Liberation and Culture: (Return to the Source),” in *African Philosophy: An Anthology*, ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing LTD, 1998), 260.

## **The Dominant Ideology and Schooling**

Education provided cultural leaders in America with an opportunity to advance Virginia's denigration of the African image. The dominant ideology, which undergirded Virginia colonial law and promoted African inferiority, was transmitted in schools. This section of the literature review presents scholarship that demonstrates how dominant groups use education to preserve their ideological hegemony over subordinate groups.

Paulo Freire argues that there is a link between violence, oppression, and education. Freire states, "Violence is initiated by those who oppress, who exploit, [and] who fail to recognize others as persons..." According to Freire, violence both precedes and accompanies oppression. Violence precedes oppression because it is used to establish "a relationship of oppression." Violence accompanies oppression because an environment such as schools that consist of exploitation and the prevention of self-affirmation for the oppressed must constitute violence to maintain itself. Freire contends that schools are effective cultural institutions for facilitating the dominant ideology. A mechanism by which the dominant ideology is transmitted to oppressed groups in schools is what Freire calls "the banking concept of education." "The banking concept of education" occurs when education is based primarily on transmitting information to students without engaging their analysis or inquiry into the process of schooling. Freire stresses that this form of pedagogy is an "ideological characteristic of the dominant group," which causes alienation from self and the community they come from, and can result in internalizing one's inferior status as well as internalizing the superior status of the dominant group. Freire further suggests that the psychological effects of the oppression is particularly problematic because it creates, "...contradictory, divided beings, shaped by and existing in a concrete situation of oppression and violence." Freire describes the paradox of this oppression on

its victims: “they distrust themselves...and almost never do they realize that they too, ‘know things’...; they call themselves ignorant...”<sup>75</sup>

Pierre Bourdieu’s research in part focused on how dominant groups use culture to reproduce and rationalize oppression. Bourdieu sought to develop a theoretical explanation “between culture, social structure, and action.” The wealthy benefit from controlling what Bourdieu calls “cultural capital”— “noneconomic goods and services” such as “verbal ability, general cultural awareness, aesthetic preferences, information about the school, and educational credentials.” Moreover, Bourdieu contends that “All cultural symbols and practices” are used by dominant groups to “embody interests and function to enhance social distinctions.” Controlling “cultural capital” constitutes what Bourdieu refers to as “symbolic power;” and when this “symbolic power” is exercised by the dominant group to construct and substantiate social stratification, it is “symbolic violence.” Bourdieu considered schools one of the most effective sources of “symbolic violence” because they clandestinely prepare youth to accept a social status commensurate to interests of the dominant group. Bourdieu asserts schools help to rationalize social stratification because they “consecrate social distinctions by constituting them as academic distinctions.” Furthermore, Bourdieu suggests student’s “self-selection”—level of motivation to attend school and willingness to apply and enhance academic aptitude—is influenced by their family, educational experiences, and “cultural life.” Bourdieu posits wealthy and poor youth internalize their respective roles in life through school personnel and their family’s “pedagogical action.” Bourdieu defines “pedagogical action” as “the investment of time by family members and hired professionals to sensitize the child to cultural distinctions.” Hence, schools are major arbiters of “symbolic violence” for the wealthy because they use “cultural capital” to socialize

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<sup>75</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 26-27, 37, 44-45, 53.



youth to fit into specific social classes.<sup>76</sup> Education has been used as a form of cultural violence to impose the dominant ideology on African Americans.

Schools became conduits of the dominant ideology in the U.S.'s early stages of development. An early method used to produce an incongruent meaning between "black" and "white" was to deny African Americans and other Africans formal education. William H. Watkins argues that the intent of denying enslaved Africans formal education was to create an idea that Africans lacked the ability to develop the intellectual and cultural capacity of whites, and to prevent the intellectual and cultural development of Africans, which he calls "cultural genocide." Producing an idea of African inferiority and simultaneously denying Africans formal education was a method of crafting "black inferiority and white superiority." Once African Americans began participating in formal educational institutions, a new technique was employed to cultivate the dominant ideology. Watkins argues that during the late nineteenth century industrial movement, schooling created an opportunity for disseminating the "political and ideological" interests of northern industrial leaders through the process of "ideation." Watkins defines "ideation" as "...the imparting and reinforcement of ideas and values that support the current economic and social order." Watkins states this "current economic and social order" allotted to northern industrialists after the Civil War was a very important period in United States history. Industry in the north permitted northern industrialists to assume some of the ideological and economic control southerners had dominated in the slave economy of the south since the seventeenth century. Many northern industrialists amassed millions of dollars and eagerly sought ways to create effective methods of "political ideation" to control members of the society and,

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<sup>76</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, quoted in David Swartz, *Culture & Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 6-7, 75-76, 197, 204.

particularly, African Americans.<sup>77</sup> According to Watkins, there were millions of freed African Americans eager to take advantage of the “growing popularity of mass schooling” following the Civil War. Watkins suggests, prior to the Civil War, the south claimed Africans “were incapable of formal learning” in order to conceal “plans of cultural genocide” against them. However, a new strategy was employed after the Civil War to transmit the dominant ideology. Northern industrialists began funding the creation of African American colleges to use schooling and the curriculum to commit “cultural genocide” against African Americans. Watkins claims “race philanthropy” was a conscious effort by the elite to address the vexing “Negro problem.” After the Civil War, the concern was how to fit the potentially millions of free African Americans into the political and social fabric of the United States. “Race philanthropy” helped educational leaders espouse equal educational opportunities for African Americans while simultaneously indoctrinating them in these colleges to accept a status of second-class citizenship.<sup>78</sup>

Philanthropists such as Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, and the Phelps Stokes family, and educational leaders such as General Chapman Armstrong and Franklin Giddings combined efforts to use schooling to train African Americans. African American students were taught to accept the following notions: segregation, menial jobs, whites saved them from inferior cultural and religious practices in Africa, and that their enslavement was caused by their own weaknesses. One such instrument used to disseminate these ideas to African Americans in Hampton Institute’s classrooms for twenty years was a newspaper created by Armstrong called *The Southern Workman*. Watkins refers to *The Southern Workman* as Armstrong’s “Ideological

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<sup>77</sup> Watkins, *The White Architects of Black Education*, 9, 12-14, 21, 43-61, 81.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 9, 12-14, 21, 43-61, 81.

Pulpit” because this primary text for students taught African Americans to be submissive about their disfranchisement and their alleged innate inferiority.<sup>79</sup>

In 1933, Woodson argued that whites in America produced an efficient mechanism to import the ideology of black inferiority and white superiority into the minds of African Americans through schooling. Woodson calls this mechanism “mis-education.” According to Woodson, African Americans at integrated and segregated public schools as well as integrated and segregated institutions of higher education are taught in school curricula to “despise” anything associated with African Americans and to “admire” whites. Woodson suggests the study of Africa and African Americans is simply omitted or the topic is approached in such a way that African Americans are studied “only as a problem.” Woodson contended that “the ‘[mis-] educated Negroes’ have the attitude of contempt towards their own people because in their own schools as well as in their mixed schools Negroes are taught to admire the Hebrew, Greek, the Latin, and the Teuton and to despise the African.” Woodson continues, “These ‘[mis-] educated’ people, however, decry any such thing as race consciousness; and in some respects they are right. They do not like to hear such expressions as ‘Negro literature, Negro Poetry, Negro art, or thinking black...’”<sup>80</sup>

Two years later, DuBois wrote “...American Negroes almost universally disparage their own schools. They look down upon them; they often treat the Negro teachers in them with contempt; they refuse to work for their adequate support; and they refuse to join public movements to increase their efficiency.” DuBois lamented that a reason for these attitudes among African Americans is “...a lack of faith on the part of Negroes that their race can do anything

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 9, 12-14, 21, 43-61, 81.

<sup>80</sup> Carter G. Woodson, *The Mis-education of the Negro* (1933; repr., Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc., 1990), 1-7.

really well.”<sup>81</sup> Several decades later DuBois argued that school integration for African American students was potentially detrimental because the students would ‘...take on the culture of white Americans doing as they do and thinking as they think.’ DuBois warned that, ‘Negro children educated in integrated schools and northern colleges often know nothing of Negro history; know nothing of Negro leadership and doubt if there ever have been leaders in Africa, the West Indies and the United States equal to white folk.’ DuBois suggests that consequently, ‘some are ashamed of themselves and their folk. They regard the study of Negro biography and the writing of Negro literature as a vain attempt to pretend that Negroes are really equal to Whites.’<sup>82</sup>

Cruse expressed similar concerns about the psychological impact of “mis-education” on African Americans:

The further the Negro gets from his historical antecedents in time, the more tenuous become his conceptual ties, the emptier his social connections, the more superficial his visions. His one great and present hope is to know and understand his African American realities in the United States more profoundly. Failing that, and failing to create a new synthesis in history and the humanities and a new social theory, he will suffer the historical fate of intellectual subterfuge.<sup>83</sup>

Similarly, Lightfoot emphasizes that a scheme was used to create and perpetuate the dominant ideology in indoctrinating white and African Americans with a “distorted historic picture.”

Lightfoot asserts that African Americans and whites are taught “...that the forward march of civilization—the growth of science and technology, education, the arts, etc....” was initiated by whites, “to bolster these concepts” while “the history of Black people has almost been obliterated.” He suggests that this yields the ideology of “white superiority and black”

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<sup>81</sup> W.E.B. DuBois, “Does the Negro Need Separate Schools?,” *Journal of Negro Education* 4, no. 3 (July, 1935): 330, under “The Courts and the Negro Separate Schools,” <http://www.jstor.org/sici?sici=0022-2984>.

<sup>82</sup> W.E.B. DuBois, quoted in Asa G. Hilliard, III, *SBA: The Reawakening of the African Mind*, rev. ed. (1997; repr., Gainesville, Florida: Makare Publishing Company, 1998), 60-63.

<sup>83</sup> Harold Cruse, quoted in James Turner, “Africana Studies and Epistemology,” in *Out of the Revolution: The Development of Africana Studies*, ed. Aldridge, Delores P. and Carlene Young (2000; repr., Lanham, Maryland: The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc., 2003), 66.

inferiority.<sup>84</sup> Franklin considers the U.S.'s "distortions" and "misrepresentations" in the teaching of history as a way of preserving the dominant ideology. Franklin posits the United States has not '...assumed...full responsibility for teaching the truth about ourselves and our history.'<sup>85</sup>

Tatum suggests that the dominant ideology is formed and maintained when African Americans and whites "...are bombarded" with "stereotypes" of African Americans in schools and other cultural institutions. Particularly, Tatum argues that "omissions" and "distortions" about the positive endeavors of African Americans have comprised an enduring strategy for extolling whites and disparaging African Americans. Tatum states "internalized oppression" is when a member of a stereotyped group internalizes the stereotypical categories about his or her own group to any degree. Tatum suggests "internalized oppression" happens very frequently because prejudice is an integral part of the socialization process.<sup>86</sup> bell hooks similarly argues that one of the most misunderstood and clandestine consequences of the oppression of African Americans in the United States is "internalized racism." hooks states "internalized racism" is the "...psychic impact of white supremacy" on the "...self-concept and self-esteem" of African Americans. hooks suggests the imposition of white supremacist ideas of African American inferiority projected through the mass media goes back to the nineteenth century. hooks further posits that the white-dominated mass media attacked the efforts of the 1960s Black Freedom Movement as well as any current movements aimed at ending "internalized racism." hooks explains that when African Americans internalize stereotypes about ideas such as beauty, African American manhood, materialism, and assimilation in a white supremacist system they

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<sup>84</sup> Claude Lightfoot, *Ghetto Rebellion to Black Liberation* (New York, NY: International Publishers, 1968), 48.

<sup>85</sup> John Hope Franklin, Jr., quoted in Claude M. Lightfoot, *Ghetto Rebellion to Black Liberation* (New York, NY: International Publishers, 1968), 49.

<sup>86</sup> Tatum, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*, 6-7.

become "...as much agents of this socialization as their racist non-black counterparts," thus often unknowingly and unintentionally supporting their own oppression.<sup>87</sup>

These "distortions," "misrepresentations," and other mechanisms previously described used to convey the supremacy of whites in education constitute what Ailsa M. Watkinson calls "systemic violence." Watkins defines "systemic violence," as, "...any institutionalized practice or procedure that adversely impacts disadvantaged individuals or groups by burdening them psychologically, mentally, culturally, spiritually, economically, or physically." Some of the specific examples of systemic violence Watkinson identifies are the denial of education, the business model of the bureaucratic structure of education, discrimination, "militaristic" educational leadership, and traditional pedagogy. Watkinson further suggests that the effects of systemic violence can contribute to students dropping out of school because of "...feelings of isolation, alienation, and frustration."<sup>88</sup>

Spring argues that early government and educational leaders wanted to promote the superiority of the Protestant Anglo-American into United States culture. Spring states leaders such as Benjamin Franklin were very concerned about whites being a numerical minority in the world and the United States. For instance, Franklin considered expansionism in the United States "...an opportunity..." for "...increasing the lovely White..." race. Nineteenth century government and educational leaders strategized to systematically expose African Americans, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, and Native Americans to a process of what Spring calls "deculturalization." "Deculturalization" is "...the stripping away of a people's culture and replacing it with a new culture." Political and educational leaders used inferior schools,

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<sup>87</sup> bell hooks, *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 1994), 173-182.

<sup>88</sup> Ailsa M. Watkinson, "Administrative Complicity and Systemic Violence in Education," in *Systemic Violence in Education: Promise Broken*, ed. Jaunita Ross and Ailsa M. Watkinson (New York, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997), 4-11.

restrictive laws and practices, violence, segregation, and curricula propagandizing the superiority of whites to “deculturalize” People of Color in the United States.<sup>89</sup> The examples above reveal how dominant groups use schools to perpetuate the dominant ideology. Virginia provided a blueprint for degrading the depiction of Africans; and schools fortified the system of cultural violence throughout America. As the three previous sections of the literature review demonstrate, white cultural leaders worked vigorously to progress Virginia’s representation of Africans as innately inferior humans. The system of cultural violence, which has perpetuated the dominant ideology, has been the underlying cause for many problems in the United States and abroad.

### **The Utility, Effectiveness, and Manifestations of the Dominant Ideology**

The goal of Virginia was to impart into American culture a permanent symbol of the superiority of European descendants over African descendants. Once the promotion of African subservience was initiated in Virginia colonial law, cultural leaders were able to traverse over time the dominant ideology through the system of cultural violence. Dominant groups develop a system of cultural violence so that members of the dominant and subordinate group will internalize the dominant ideology. This section of the literature review presents scholarship that demonstrates how dominant groups benefit from cultural violence, the utilization and manifestations of cultural violence, and how cultural violence impacts dominant and subordinate group members.

Lightfoot warned America in 1968 about the consequences of the “ideology of racism that poisons our national bloodstream.” Lightfoot asserts, “The longer it continues the greater

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<sup>89</sup> Joel Spring, *Deculturalization and the Struggle for Equality: A Brief History of the Education of Dominated Cultures in the United States*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York, NY: The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 1997), 1-3, 38, 16-17, 52-67, 73-84.

will be its negative effects on all phases of society.”<sup>90</sup> C. Eric Lincoln argued that the historical and continued oppression of African Americans after the *Brown* decision prevented “a sense of included identity.”<sup>91</sup> Cornel West states the perennial ideology, which he calls “white supremacist beliefs and images” “...attacks black intelligence, black ability, black beauty, and black character.” The psychological impact of this pervasive ideology, according to West, “resembles a kind of collective depression in significant pockets of black America.”<sup>92</sup> This pervasive ideology about white superiority does not only affect African Americans. Margaret Gibson observed that some Chicano students chastised their peers by labeling them as a “Wannabe” or “want to be White” for conforming in schools and engaging in academic rigor.<sup>93</sup> The “Riot Commission,” a federally appointed component of The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, which was created to study the causes of the protests of the 1960s, reported:

Our nation is moving toward two societies, one white, one black—separate and unequal. ... The most fundamental [cause of the riots] is the racial attitude...of white Americans... Race prejudice has shaped our history decisively and it now threatens to affect our future...<sup>94</sup>

Angus Campbell argues it is inevitable that whites, at very early ages, will develop racial stereotypes about African Americans.<sup>95</sup> Tim Wise states Gallup polls taken in 1962 and 1963 found 90 percent of whites declared African Americans were treated equally in jobs, schools, and

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<sup>90</sup> Lightfoot, *Ghetto Rebellion to Black Liberation*, 9.

<sup>91</sup> C. Eric Lincoln, introduction to Michael V. Namorato, *Have We Overcome? Race Relations since Brown* (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1979), xv.

<sup>92</sup> Cornel West, *Race Matters* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1993), 27.

<sup>93</sup> Margaret A. Gibson, “Minorities and Schooling: Some Implications,” in *Minority Status and Schooling: A Comparative Study of Immigrant and Involuntary Minorities*, ed. Margaret A. Gibson and John Ogbu (New York, NY: Garland Publishing, 1991), 357-378.

<sup>94</sup> James A. Tillman, Jr., “A Black Psychologists Finds a ‘Fatal Flaw,’” in *Chronicles of Black Protest*, ed. Bradford Chambers (New York, NY: Mentor Books, 1968), 238.

<sup>95</sup> Angus Campbell, *White Attitudes toward Black People* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Institute for Social Research, 1971), 69.



housing opportunities.<sup>96</sup> Other surveys found whites believed “inherent racial inferiority,” “genetic inferiority,” and more popularly “lack of ambition, laziness, and failure to take advantage of...opportunities” to be the reasons for problems African Americans face in urban communities rather than racial discrimination. Campbell suggests family and/or American society is the source of “acculturation” about these beliefs.<sup>97</sup> Highlighting the creation and dissemination of ideology into a system of cultural violence as a primary tool of oppression is a way of independently studying ideology in order to uncover this source of acculturation.

The dominant ideology created a rationalization for thwarting African Americans’ attempts to acquire adequate housing, employment, education, and other amenities for centuries. The 1960s and 1970s bare testament to the emotional and psychological burden of this pervasive ideology and the confrontation of the structural and direct mechanism of violence it produced. Psychologist, Kenneth Clark, suggests the lawlessness and illegal acts committed by many African Americans during the turbulent 1960s and 1970s were a confrontation with generations of sustained racially driven structural and direct violence. Clark stated,

Segregated, desperate people with no jobs or servile jobs; little education, broken families, delinquency, drug addiction, rejected, segregated, discriminated against in employment, in housing; his children subjugated to de facto segregated and inferior schools in spite of contradictory laws other Americans have access to. The inmates in the ghettos view police brutality, stemming from institutionalized racism, as racism itself. Police are seen as exploiting the ghetto and symbols of pathology.<sup>98</sup>

According to Clark, “the very laws the police claim to uphold often interfere with the plight of blacks, hence these laws are a part of racism that must be broken.”<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Tim Wise, *Color-Blind: The Rise of Post-Racial Politics and the Retreat from Racial Equality* (San Francisco, California: City Lights Books, 2010), 65.

<sup>97</sup> Campbell, *White Attitudes toward Black People*, 69.

<sup>98</sup> Kenneth Clark, “The Wonder is There Have Been So Few Riots,” in *Black Protest in the Sixties* ed. August Meier; Elliot Rudwick; John Bracy, Jr. (New York, NY: Marcus Wiener Publishing, Inc., 1991), 111.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

The *National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, with the support of President Lyndon B. Johnson, was established to investigate causes of the civil unrest of the 1960s. Barbara Ritchie summarized the report of the *National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* about the investigation in a book called *The Riot Report*, which was published in 1969. Ritchie states over 150 cities reported “disorders” in some Puerto Rican but mainly “Negro” neighborhoods. According to Ritchie, the “disorders” “...ranged from minor disturbances to major outbursts involving sustained and widespread looting and destruction of property.” Racially motivated direct and structural mechanisms of violence were reportedly the catalyst for the protests. Ritchie contends the *National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* suggests years of unrelenting oppression were the underlining cause of the “disorders.” “Riot participants” were reportedly angry with issues such as insufficient high school and college education, discrimination in employment, and biased newspaper reports “playing up crimes [committed] by Negroes” and “playing down crime committed against Negroes.”<sup>100</sup>

The ideology of black inferiority was instrumental in creating mechanisms of structural and direct violence for southern African Americans migrating to the north. The residency of southern African American migrants was restricted to certain areas in the north. The persistence of the dominant ideology about the unequal status of African Americans and whites prompted the need to use mechanisms of structural and direct violence to confine African Americans in particular communities without access to adequate resources. These communities became known as ghettos. William Julius Wilson argues that mechanisms of structural violence, which he calls “structural underpinnings,” created and maintain oppression in inner-city ghettos. Wilson

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<sup>100</sup> Barbara Ritchie, *The Riot Report: A Shortened Version of the Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (New York, NY: The Viking Press, 1969), 13, 15, 18, 28, 36.

explains how “structural underpinnings” generated joblessness, which sustains the deplorable social conditions in ghettos:

Prominent among these are the early actions of the Federal Housing Authority in withholding mortgage capital from inner-city neighborhoods, the manipulation of market incentives that trapped Blacks in the inner cities and lured middle class Whites to the suburbs, the construction of massive federal housing projects in the inner-city neighborhoods, and, since 1980, the New Federalism, which, through its insistence on localized responses to social problems, resulted in drastic cuts in spending on basic urban programs. Just when the problems of social dislocation in joblessness have escalated, the city has fewer resources with which to address them.<sup>101</sup>

Wilson cautions that criminal acts and other negative behaviors often associated with ghettos derive from a limited access to viable resources and are not “ghetto-specific” or exclusive to ghetto residents. Contrarily, Wilson suggests inner-city ghettos are plagued by “ghetto-related” behavior, which he defines as “...behavior and attitudes that are found more frequently in ghetto neighborhoods than in neighborhoods that feature even modest levels of poverty and local employment.” These poverty-driven patterns of behavior are perpetuated by “accidental or non-conscious cultural transmission—also called transmission by precept.” Wilson explains this transmission occurs when “...a person’s exposure to certain attitudes and actions is so frequent that they become part of his or her own outlook and therefore do not, in many cases, involve selective application to a given situation.” When describing some elements of an oppressed group’s behavior, Wilson also cites the term, “situationally adaptive behaviors” which, according to Wilson, “provide members of a group with models of behavior that apply to situations specific to that community.”<sup>102</sup>

When the structural violence created by the dominant ideology persists over generations, some African Americans experience a profound sense of despair. Psychologist, Joy Degruy

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<sup>101</sup> William Julius Wilson, *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1996), 52-55, 71.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 52-55, 71.

Leary, states, “When the young begin believing that their future is bleak, they sometimes respond in ways that boggle the imagination.” Leary cites an article from the *Washington Post* to demonstrate the consequences of unrelenting structural and direct violence. According to Leary, the *Washington Post* reported that in the early 1990s African American children living in poor neighborhoods in Washington D.C. were engaging in “fatalistic behaviors.” Leary states that the *Washington Post* conferred, “Children as young as ten years old had started to plan their own funerals, identifying the clothes that they wished to be buried in along with the accompanying music to be played.” Psychologists suggest because of impoverished conditions, “...these children felt such hopelessness; it appeared they were no longer trying to triumph over death, but they were instead reconciling themselves to it.”<sup>103</sup>

Additional research confirms that a residual and traumatic effect can occur when a perpetual ideology is used to marshal structural and direct mechanisms of oppression. Research conducted on groups who have experienced such oppression and trauma indicates consecutive generations develop “survivor syndrome” by the second and third generations. “Survivor syndrome” is characterized by “stress, self-doubt, problems with aggression, and a number of psychological and interpersonal relationship problems with family members and others.” Yael Danieli, in the *International Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma*, explains:

The intergenerational perspective reveals the impact of trauma, its contagion, and repeated patterns within the family. It may help explain certain behavioral patterns, symptoms, roles, and values adopted by family members, family sources of vulnerability as well as resilience and strength, and job choices (following in the footsteps of a relative, a namesake) through generations.<sup>104</sup>

The dominant ideological claim about the inferiority of African Americans disallowed many whites to ascertain an acceptance of their enfranchisement.

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<sup>103</sup> Leary, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 14, 125-126.

<sup>104</sup> Yael Danieli, quoted in Joy Degruy Leary, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing* (Milwaukie, Oregon: Uptone Press, 2004), 10- 11.

The perpetuation of the dominant ideology not only created structural and direct mechanisms of violence perpetrated against African Americans to prevent participation in the electoral process such as physical violence and laws, it has also affected the current level of participation in America's political process. Talmadge Anderson defines "political efficacy" as "the sense of feeling that a person can influence political outcomes through his or her participation in the electoral process." Anderson suggests there has been a lack of African American participation in the electoral process before and after the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Anderson asserts some political scientists argue that the "political efficacy" of African Americans in America is influenced by "fear" and a lack of "trust" from years of various methods of racial oppression such as voter discrimination, intimidation and violence.<sup>105</sup>

Practitioners in the field of psychology have become aware of how the acculturation of the dominant ideology impacts therapist/client interactions. For instance, questions have been raised about how perceptions of racial and ethnic identity impact the interaction between white therapists and clients of Color. Researchers suggest that white therapists are often exposed to biased and prejudiced ideas about their own superiority and the inferiority of People of Color during their socialization process. According to researchers, this cultural conditioning, which most white therapists are unaware of, may be subtly manifested during the therapist/client interaction. "Racial Microaggressions" is the term researchers used to identify this documented pattern of interaction. Many clients of Color perceive these acts as offensive and extensions of white racism and oppression. Hence, researchers argue the idea of many clients of Color that these "racial microaggressions" are traumatic is demonstrated in patterns of "...therapy

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<sup>105</sup> Talmadge Anderson, *Introduction to African American Studies* (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1993), 212-213.

underutilization and premature termination...”<sup>106</sup> The utilization of the term “micro” seems to personify the subtle, unintentional, and indirect nature of these kinds of acts perpetrated by some white therapists, but the utilization of the term “aggression” seems to articulate a perspective of the victims during these interactions that the white therapists view them as inferior.

There are numerous examples in the literature of African Americans who appear to not have succumbed to the perils of direct, structural, and cultural violence. However, in contemporary society many successful American Americans lament that they have not escaped the throes of America’s ideological system. Many African Americans harnessed defiant spirits, which were spawned during the 1960s, to propel them into careers in which ideology had been historically used to vindicate the exclusion of African Americans. Ellis Cose includes commentaries from an African American lawyer, journalist, professor, management consultant, etc., some of whom discuss the racial oppression they experienced in the 1960s and 70s as being “a turning point” for their lives. Despite their economic success, the interviewees Cose included discussed their anger, pessimism, disgust, and resentment about the continuation of racially charged mechanisms of structural violence and vestiges of the dominant ideology often subtly conveyed through lower expectations and offensive comments by many white professionals about African Americans’ inferiority.<sup>107</sup>

West asserts that the unrelenting mechanisms of direct, structural, and cultural violence have created despondency and “rage” in many African Americans. For instance, West contends the causes and characterization of the 1992 protest as a “race riot” and “class riot” in Los Angeles proposed by conservative and liberal commentators were incorrect. West argues the 1992

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<sup>106</sup> Donald Wing Sue, Christina M. Capodilupo, Gina C. Torino, Jennifer M. Bucceri, Aisha M. B. Holder, Kevin L. Nadal, and Marta Esquilin, “Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for Clinical Practice,” *Journal of the American Psychological Association* 62, no. 4 (2007): 271-280.

<sup>107</sup> Ellis Cose, *The Rage of a Privileged Class: Why are Middle-Class Blacks Angry? Why should America Care?* (New York, NY: HarperPerennial, 1993), 14-26.

demonstration “was a multiracial, trans-class, and largely male display of justified social rage” and not a “race riot nor a class rebellion.” According to West, liberals and conservatives misunderstand the major problem currently facing African Americans in the United States. West argues members from both political groups erroneously frame the problems in “black America” around economic dispossession and political subjection. West contends the primary problem currently in “black America” is “nihilism.” West defines nihilism as “the profound sense of psychological depression, personal worthlessness, and social despair so widespread in black America” resulting from generations of ideological, economic and political suppression.<sup>108</sup>

The declaration of black inferiority led to their clandestine and/or coercive participation in medical experimentation. The perpetuation of the dominant ideology not only created structural and direct mechanisms of violence perpetrated against African Americans in the medical field, it has also affected many of their contemporary attitudes about medical practices in America. Leary posits that a 2003 study conducted by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill states, “Blacks...reluctant to participate in research studies, were fearful their doctors might use them as guinea pigs in research.” Leary states this fear occurs “...because they believe they may be harmed often citing...” the long history of medical experimentation on African Americans “...as evidence of why they continued to be skeptical and suspicious.”<sup>109</sup> Harriet Washington found similar fears and resistance among African Americans during her interviews for her book, *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present*. Washington states Western medical practices and doctors were, “characterized as racist, rapacious, and eager to exploit black bodies for medical gain at the cost of [black] health,” by African American patients she interviewed.

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<sup>108</sup> West, *Race Matters*, 3, 20.

<sup>109</sup> Leary, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 126.

Washington contends that research into the past and present medical exploitation and experimentation substantiates the feelings harbored by many African Americans about the medical field. Often erroneously regarded as “paranoid,” Washington prefers to call this distrust and fear of Western medical practices and white doctors as lamented by her African American interviewees “...as *iatrophobia*, coined from the Greek word *iatros* (healer) and *phobia* (fear).”<sup>110</sup>

The dominant ideology also rationalized the suppression of Africans in the medical field in South Africa during Apartheid. Physician, Paul Farmer, suggests the term “structural violence” is an appropriate term to apply toward despotic countries such as South Africa because the suffering they cause is structured by conspired historically and economically driven processes. Farmer cites South Africa, Africa’s wealthiest nation below the Sahara desert, as evidence of sustained “structural violence” because Africans were deprived of adequate health care during Apartheid. Farmer laments the infant mortality rate for Africans in South Africa was up to ten times higher than that of whites in South Africa. Farmer posits poverty continued to be the primary cause of health problems for Africans in South Africa despite the removal of Apartheid. Apartheid was comprised of cultural, direct and structural mechanisms of violence initiated centuries ago which have created disparities in wealth and access to healthcare. Hunger, AIDS, malnutrition, and lack of healthcare are the consequences of the culmination of these disparities. Farmer argues this crisis is protracted because white South Africans refused to intervene in this historically deep causal chain of “structural violence.”<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Harriet Washington, *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York, NY: Harvest Moon, 2006), 16, 21.

<sup>111</sup> Paul Farmer, *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor* (Berkeley & Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2003), 40-41, 45.



In a comparative analysis, Sheila Smith McCoy describes how whites in America and South Africa used a dominant ideology to create a system of cultural violence to dominate blacks in Africa and the United States. McCoy argues whites in America and South Africa incorporated the concept of race into the dominant ideology. A function of cultural violence was to provide an apparatus for institutionalizing the dominant ideology's representation of black inferiority and white superiority. These opposing symbols were harnessed and used at will by the dominant group to rationalize the oppression of blacks. McCoy asserts America and South Africa's white-dominated media labeled the collective responses of blacks to white oppression as violent "race riots." According to McCoy, in oppressive "racialized" contexts such the United States and South Africa, even violence has been defined and projected through societal norms, a variety of media, the images generated through popular culture, "the interpretation of sacred texts, written and visual cues used in the media, color coded language, and political discourse" as always a "'colorized' event." McCoy contends that whites in South Africa and America "colorized" black opposition to suppression by calling them "race riots" because it justified the perpetual and urgent need for what she calls a "white riot." The "white riot" is depicted as a contrasting and necessary intervention to the "race riot." A "white riot" is the control and imposition of the institutional practices and policies, ideologies, and cultural institutions by certain whites in America and South Africa. Whites in both contexts imposed a negative perception of blacks which helped rationalize the need and the ushering in of authorities to control blacks. In addition to painting violence as exclusively a "black phenomenon," the legitimacy for the strict enforcement of the "white riot" is amplified by the process of "attribution." According to McCoy, "attribution" is "the process of constructing social positions as if they are equally assessable to everyone." Therefore, the "white riot," consisting of cultural and political

mechanisms, conceals itself from being unjust through the very institutions which are a part of the “white riot.” Thus, the “race riot”, which is a response by blacks to the “white riot” in racialized contexts such as America and South Africa, is considered fair and just.<sup>112</sup> The transmission of the dissimilar meaning of black and white has also affected the way many white Americans view their own social conditions.

One of the most paradoxical consequences of creating a disparate meaning of black and white is what Swartz and Disch call the “displacement” of the hostility of many whites about their own social conditions. Swartz and Disch argue that many whites who have internalized the dominant ideology’s assertion of black inferiority use African Americans as a “scapegoat” when they experience economic changes and hardships.<sup>113</sup> For instance, Joel Dyer studied the economic conditions of whites in rural America in the late twentieth century and found the dominant ideology influenced the perception of whites about the causes of their economic hardships. Dyer states 90 percent of rural America was in poverty in 1990. Dyer traces the origins of this economic crisis back to the previous decade. Dyer contends rural Americans lost 700,000 to 1 million farms since 1980. Dyer suggests fiduciary sources external to their communities persuaded farmers to change their production patterns. According to Dyer, “The Department of Agriculture, bankers, and university extension officers” in the early 1980s directed famers to borrow money to create very large farms. Subsequently, close to a million families “were forced from their land in a twelve-month period, between 1986 and 1987” because they were unable to settle up their loans. A surge of what Dyer calls “economically induced violence” spread in rural America as families felt betrayed by the government and any of its affiliates. Symptoms of “economically induced violence” include: “Suicide, spousal abuse,

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<sup>112</sup> Sheila Smith McCoy, *White Riot: Writing Race and Violence in American and South African Cultures* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), 12-14.

<sup>113</sup> Schwartz and Disch, eds., introduction to *White Racism: Its History, Pathology and Practice*, 2-3.

child abuse, and aggression towards any institution affiliated with the government.” For example, Dyer states a study of rural Iowa reported child abuse cases rose 43.6 percent from 1982 to 1986; spousal abuse rose from 1,620 cases in 1985 to 4,500 by 1987; and alcoholism doubled in the period from 1981 to 1983 for farmers. Incidents of many farmers’ “economically induced violence” were often directed at themselves. Hence, “The suicide rate among farmers was three times the rate of the general population” making it the leading cause of death in rural America. Dyer posits many farmers blamed themselves for their economic failure or they attempted to get insurance settlements for their families. However, succumbed by anger, many farmers joined “anti” groups such as the Posse Comitatus to fight against African Americans and other People of Color, and what they referred to as the “Zionist Occupied Government” all of whom they blamed for their economic problems.<sup>114</sup> The adverse effect of many white Americans acculturation of the dominant ideology is not limited to rural America.

Randy Blazak argues the racial homogeneity and financial stability of predominantly white suburbs in America were severely compromised during the 1980s. As the economy was shifting from industrial to service, many of the industrial jobs which had sustained white Americans in suburbs were closed down. Simultaneously, more African American families moved into these white suburbs; and economically successful African Americans were paraded weekly on shows such as *The Cosby Show*. Blazak posits whites in these protected enclaves developed a sense of self-aggrandizement about their privileged social position in America. However, when the loss of jobs forced them to compete for jobs more often relegated to the poor and People of Color, and the racial composition of their neighborhoods changed, many white males experienced what Blazak calls “status frustration.” The white males in Blazak’s participant

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<sup>114</sup> Joel Dyer, *Harvest of Rage: Why Oklahoma City Is Only the Beginning* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), 15, 19, 30, 32-34, 40-41.

observation study interpreted their economic misfortunes and the new racial composition in their communities as an assault to a social position in America they assumed was esoterically theirs. Blazak argues “status frustration” experienced by white males created misguided interpretations about the causes of their families’ economic circumstances. Consequently, enrollment in Skinhead groups increased exponentially during the 1980s.<sup>115</sup> The undeniable presence and utility of the dominant ideology in the previous examples supports Galtung’s contention about the “invariant” nature of cultural violence. Virginia colonial law framed a cultural representation of Africans in American culture. Virginia’s cultural representation of Africans as unequal to whites served as the basis of the dominant ideology. The dominant ideology was fixed into American culture by white cultural leaders, thus forming a system of cultural violence against Africans. The symbol of African inferiority became entrenched into American culture. The literature review shows that not only did the dominant ideology suggest in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that Africans were worthy of enslavement, the dominant ideology has promoted the supremacy of whites over Africans into the twenty-first century.

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<sup>115</sup> Randy Blazak, “Hate in the Suburbs: The Rise of the Skinhead Counterculture” in *The Practical Skeptic: Readings in Sociology*, ed. Lisa J. McIntyre (Mountainview, California: Mayfield Publishers, 1999), 51-52.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Research Methodology**

This dissertation is a historical study. “Intellectual history” is the name of the particular method of historical research used to produce this study. Norman J. Wilson refers to “intellectual history” as “a history of ideas” because practitioners of this methodology study the ways in which ideas influence society. Initially confined to a critique of the ideas of prodigious political figures, religious leaders, intellectual giants, and canonized texts, intellectual historians expanded their interests during the late twentieth century. The result of these divergent interests among intellectual historians has produced three approaches to research methods and modes of writing intellectual history: 1. history of ideas, 2. contextualism, and 3. new intellectual history.<sup>116</sup> The two approaches to intellectual history that directed this study are “new intellectual history” and “contextualism.” “Contextualism” refers to the historical and political context in which thoughts and ideas emerge. Contextualists argue that it is critical to study the social and political environment in which ideas materialize.<sup>117</sup> A contextualist slant to intellectual history helped to trace the origins of cultural violence against Africans in America. The first section of chapter four is an analysis of colonial law in Virginia. The analysis of Virginia law is critical because it exhibits the political and social context which shaped and influenced the cultural representations of “black” and “white” in colonial America. The second section in chapter four examines how Africans responded to their negative cultural portrayal in America. This portion of the study employs a different slant to intellectual history because it is based on an analysis of primary source documents, particularly, literary works produced by Africans. “New intellectual history”

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<sup>116</sup> Norman J. Wilson, *History in Crisis?: Recent Directions in Historiography* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999), 73-77.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 75-76.

is a study “of the ideas, attitudes, and opinions of the common person.”<sup>118</sup> Sticking with the theme of the “common person,” this study reveals ways in which oppressed Africans used ideas in literary works to confront the ideology of African inferiority in antebellum America. Although some of the literary works produced by Africans are now canonized as what Richard Newman, Patrick Rael, and Phillip Lapsansky call “Protest Literature,”<sup>119</sup> they were written by “common people.”

### **Impetus for Selection of Data Sample**

In this study data from a variety of primary documents produced primarily between the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries are presented. Providing samples of this data is very important because they contain literary works and speeches of white cultural leaders who advanced the system of cultural violence. Reprints of pamphlets, books, and other writings were purchased and copied from internet sources to complete this study. I also present data from secondary sources from various disciplines. Including theories and concepts from historians and other disciplines about the oppression of Africans and other subjugated groups is very critical for the literature review and to describe the historical context of early America.

The literary works selected for this study were produced by Africans adversely impacted by American domination prior to the Civil War. The gradations of oppression experienced by these African authors depended on the region where they resided and a host of other factors. Despite the variance of subjugation experienced by the African authors, this research shows that they presented ideas in literary works as a key instrument to refute the copious notions in

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 76-78.

<sup>119</sup> Richard Newman, Patrick Rael, and Phillip Lapsansky, eds., introduction to *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African American Protest Literature, 1790-1860* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2001), 1-3.

America about African subordination. Moreover, this study demonstrates there are themes in their literary works which validate a consistent opposition to the projection of their innate inferiority. Hence, the literary works are intended to present the ideas of Africans in the north and south; both free and enslaved; poor and wealthy; and male and female.

The intellectual historical method is vital because it helped to demonstrate the evolution and utilization of ideology in antebellum American culture. In her doctoral dissertation in the widespread research paradigm called “Critical Whiteness Studies,” Stephanie Spaulding argues that it is important to study the development and projection of “whiteness” in early American literary works as a key construct in the dominant ideology.<sup>120</sup> However, this study examines the literary works of Africans who protested their characterization as deficient humans in the early American ideological system.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

#### **Primary Sources**

Data from a variety of primary documents produced primarily between the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries are presented in this study. Diane Hacker states, “Primary sources are original documents such as letters, diaries, legislative bills, laboratory studies, field research reports, and eyewitness accounts.”<sup>121</sup> Providing samples of data from primary sources is very important because they contain literary works and speeches of cultural leaders who promoted the inferiority/superiority thesis about Africans and whites as well as how Africans responded. Reprints of pamphlets, books, and other writings were purchased and copied from internet

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<sup>120</sup> Stephanie Spaulding, “The Crisis of White Imagination: Towards the Literary Abolition of Whiteness” (Ph.D. dissertation, Purdue University, 2007), v, 35-38.

<sup>121</sup> Diane Hacker, *A Writer's Reference*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007), 338.

sources to complete this study. Some of these documents were very difficult to read because they are copies from very old sources.

### **Secondary Sources**

A scrutiny of data from secondary sources from various disciplines is presented to support this study. Secondary sources are scholarly works and other commentaries on primary sources. Secondary sources contain the analyses and/or opinions about primary sources.<sup>122</sup> Theories and concepts from historians and other disciplines about the oppression of Africans and other subjugated groups is very critical for the literature review and to describe the historical context of early America.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Galtung advises that a careful analysis of violence should be done to create a “violence typology”, so that, “...like pathology [mechanisms of violence] reflect a reality to be known and understood.”<sup>123</sup> Galtung created this “violence typology” to reveal how dominant groups can utilize mechanisms of oppression in a systematic and interconnected way over long periods to control subordinate groups. Galtung uses the concept of violence because of the many economic, political, physical, and cultural deficits subordinate groups experience when methods of structural and direct violence influence their lives in particular. Utilizing a broad interdisciplinary approach, which characterized other mid-nineteenth century European scholars,<sup>124</sup> Galtung produced a theory on violence to explain how the use of violence affects the relationship between the oppressed and their oppressors. Galtung’s theory consists of three

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<sup>122</sup> Hacker, *A Writer’s Reference*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed., 338-339. *The Chicago Manual of Style: The Essential Guide for Writers, Editors, and Publishers*, 16<sup>th</sup> ed. (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 777.

<sup>123</sup> Galtung, “Cultural Violence,” XV, 40-43.

<sup>124</sup> David Swartz, *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 3.



super-types of violence: “structural, direct, and cultural violence.” As a general framework or meta-category for the complex relationship between subordinate and dominant groups, Galtung categorized the three super-types of violence into two meta-categories of violence: Direct Violence and Indirect Violence.<sup>125</sup>

As a super-type of violence, direct violence is defined as acute action intended to be abrupt and terminal to one or more of the psycho-cultural, physical, and social aspects of a person or group’s existence. Direct violence causes four classes of basic human deficiencies for dominated group members, which Galtung calls “needs-deficits”: survival, well-being, identity, and freedom needs-deficits. Galtung lists eleven mechanisms or subtypes of direct violence.<sup>126</sup> (See Table 1.A)

Table 1.A

	Survival Needs	Well-being Needs	Identity Needs	Freedom Needs
Direct Violence	Killing	Maiming, Siege Sanctions Misery	Desocialization Resocialization Secondary-Citizen	Repression Detention Expulsion
Structural Violence	Exploitation A	Exploitation B	Penetration Segmentation	Marginalization Fragmentation

Structural violence fits into the meta-category of indirect violence. Structural violence occurs when a dominant group uses the control of practices and/or policies— including formal and informal; illegitimate and legitimate; illicit and licit—within social institutions (education, media, politics, religion, etc.) for the purpose of debilitating one or more of the physical, social, psycho-cultural aspects of a person or group. Hence, the imposition or the exclusion of formal/informal practices or policies in “violent structures,” can be utilized to control and determine a person or group’s life

<sup>125</sup> Galtung, “Cultural Violence,” 39-40, 42-45.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid, 40-41.

chances. Given the furtive nature of social institutions, the mechanisms or subtypes of structural violence are different in that they are carried out over prolonged periods through laws, policies, rules, or even culture creating "highly ramified causal chains and cycles [of violence]."<sup>127</sup> A unique feature of structural violence is that the "historically and economically" conspired processes instituted by a dominant group in the various structures of a society can become so customary that the intent of violence is concealed and mystified.<sup>128</sup> Galtung lists eight mechanisms or subtypes of structural violence. (See Table 1.A)<sup>129</sup>

Galtung advises that structural violence creates four categories of human needs— well-being needs, identity needs, survival needs, and freedom needs. Galtung suggests each of the four human-needs categories under structural violence is created by a particular set of actions subtypes. For instance, "marginalization" is a specific method or subtype of structural violence.<sup>130</sup> A dominate group can marginalize a subordinate group from partaking in political elections. A dominant group can develop a set of criteria in the electoral process which guarantees that the subordinate group is excluded from participation. The "marginalization" of the subordinate group from politics endows the dominate group with political control. In this example, the specific method or subtype of structural violence used by the dominant group is "marginalization." The consequences experienced by the subordinate group under these politically hegemonic forces are what Galtung calls "freedom-needs." A second meta-category of violence in Galtung's theory is direct violence. Direct violence also produces four categories of human needs or "needs-deficits"— well-being needs, identity needs, survival needs, and freedom needs. Though the four categories of human needs created by direct violence are identical to the

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid, 39-43.

<sup>128</sup> Farmer, *Pathologies of Power*, 40-41.

<sup>129</sup> Galtung, "Cultural Violence," 39-43.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 39-43.

human needs formed by structural violence, the specific methods or subtypes are different. For example, victims of direct violence also experience “freedom-needs.” A dominant group can utilize mechanisms of direct violence to prevent a subordinate group from exercising political rights. One way a dominant group can exclude a subservient group from the electoral process is by incarcerating any members who attempt to participate in the electoral process. This subtype of direct violence is called “detention” by Galtung. Detaining outranked group members falls under direct violence because it is more of salient attack on their rights. Despite the different mechanisms used in structural and direct violence—biased voting criteria and incarceration—, they both produce “freedom-needs” because dominant group members deny subordinate group members political rights. According to Galtung, a dominant group can use culture to systematically transmit negative ideas about a subordinate group. Galtung’s violence theory also states that when a dominant group incorporates an ideology into the vast cultural symbols, institutions, and practices in a society to legitimize the “structural” and “direct” mechanisms of oppression of a subordinate group, it is “cultural violence.” Galtung contends that the role of cultural violence is to create a perception of a subordinate group which rationalizes their oppression. A unique characteristic of cultural violence is its “invariant” nature. Given the symbiotic relationship between humans and culture, aspects of cultural violence can be found in the various manifestations of a violent culture, such as the crosses, anthems, portraits of leaders, statues, curriculum, TV shows, jokes, cultural celebrations, etc. because they are embedded in cultural traditions, norms, and values.<sup>131</sup>

The ideological representation of black inferiority and white superiority cemented into the U.S.’s cultural fabric was used to create an enduring system of cultural violence. According to Galtung, culture can be used to perpetuate the ideology of a dominant group. Galtung

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 39-43.

contends that the role of cultural violence in aiding the oppression of a subordinate group is to cast an enduring perception of a subordinate group as inferior and dominant group as superior. Galtung suggests that the intention of cultural violence is for members of the dominant and subordinate group to internalize the dominant group's ideology.<sup>132</sup> Ideology has been a very effective apparatus for oppressing African Americans and other subordinate groups. The ebb and flow of ideology is determined by a dominant group's utilization of its cultural institutions. Once a dominant ideology is transfixed into the cultural institutions of a society and become part of public discourse, the manifestations and results in a society are complex and far reaching.

### **Importance of Study**

Significantly George Edmond Smith states, "it is necessary to reflect on the past...to understand..." the derivation of the factors which have shaped contemporary notions of African American identity.<sup>133</sup> Earl Ofari Hutchinson argues that the contemporary image of African American identity in the United States is in part a continuity of "...a time-resistant bedrock of myths, half-truths, and lies" originating from Europeans during the 15<sup>th</sup> century and extending throughout America's transition from British colonies to the present.<sup>134</sup> Researchers assert that some African Americans use a similar logic developed and institutionalized centuries ago to assign the human worth of European descendants as superior and Africans as inferior.<sup>135</sup> To suggest this dichotomous logic influences the motivation of some African Americans today seems to be a paradox in the face of studies about the historical struggle of African American to

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 39-43.

<sup>133</sup> George Edmond Smith, *More Than Sex: Reinventing the Black Male Image* (New York, NY: Kensington Books, 2000), 17.

<sup>134</sup> Earl Ofari Hutchinson, *The Assassination of the Black Male Image* (New York, NY: Simon & Shuster Paperbacks, 1996), 1-5.

<sup>135</sup> Ogbu, *Black American Students in an Affluent Suburb: A Study of Academic Disengagement*, 77-90.

acquire education from the seventeenth to the twentieth century by scholars such as James Anderson,<sup>136</sup> and Carter G. Woodson.<sup>137</sup> However, to ignore or minimize the potential residual effects of oppression African Americans have experienced for centuries excludes the caution of Nathan Hare. Hare argues that studies which exclusively focus on positive strengths of African Americans “prohibits any recognition of pathological consequences of...oppression.”<sup>138</sup> Frederick Douglass, Albert Memmi, Franz Fanon, W.E.B. DuBois, Paulo Freire, Manning Marable, Asa Hilliard, Beverly Tatum, Lisa Delpit, Curtis Keim, Sheila Smith McCoy, James Loewen, Johan Galtung and many others have written about how dominant groups develop and maintain an ideological system intended to control the aspirations of African Americans and other oppressed groups. These writers have also written about the potential impact of the cultural projections of inferiority on African Americans and other dominated groups. Critics of such a possibility seem to eliminate these works from their analyses and fail to elicit what Antonio Gramsci calls “cultural hegemony” from the history of African American oppression. Gramsci defines cultural hegemony as “cultural, moral, and ideological leadership over...subordinate groups.” Gramsci contends exposure to a history of “cultural hegemony” manifest as “common sense” among subordinate/dominate group members when integrated into the social fabric effectively.<sup>139</sup> According to Angela Davis, the “historical inception” of how such oppression was

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<sup>136</sup> Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*, 1-366.

<sup>137</sup> Carter G. Woodson, *The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861- A History of the Education of Colored People of the United States from the Beginning of Slavery to the Civil War* (The Project Gutenberg PDF E-Book, 2004), 1-191.

<sup>138</sup> Nathan Hare, quoted in Maulana Karenga, *Introduction to Black Studies*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Los Angeles, California: University of Sankore Press, 2002), 322.

<sup>139</sup> Antonio Gramsci, quoted in Richard M. Merelman, *Representing Black Culture: Racial Conflict and Cultural Politics in the United States* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1995), 6.

carried out and its impact is essential when addressing contemporary problems in the African American community.<sup>140</sup>

An important feature in this study is the identification of the period when cultural leaders used the ideology of black inferiority and white superiority to generate a system of cultural violence. Nash argues that the preference of the English colonists for utilizing the ideological system, which he refers to as “prejudice,” as a mechanism for rationalizing slavery was superseded by labor shortage and the inability to coerce the various Native Americans into laborers.<sup>141</sup> Jordan, contrarily, argues that the ideological system (prejudice) was developed concomitantly with the need to rationalize slavery in a reciprocal or “cause and effect” pattern.<sup>142</sup> The divergent view of these two preeminent historians is indicative of the complexity in this topic. Despite the differing opinions about the role that the ideological system played as the initial catalyst for enslaving Africans, there is not much debate about the dependency of American colonists on this ideological system to justify enslaving and dominating Africans once slavery was legalized. Nash posits, “Once institutionalized in the American colonies slavery cast the Negro in such a lowly role that the initial bias against him could only be confirmed and vastly strengthened.”<sup>143</sup> The confirmation and strengthening of this ideological system in order to invent a perception of African American identity supports the contention of this study that America did not simply use ideology as a basis for justifying slavery, but instead used ideology as a basis for creating cultural violence, which in turn would promote the decimation of the self-esteem of Africans across time. This transformation of ideology from a supporting cast to a

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<sup>140</sup> Angela Davis, “Reflections on the Black Woman’s Role in the Community of Slaves” in *A Turbulent Voyage: Readings in African American Studies*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., ed. Floyd Hayes III (San Diego, California: Collegiate Press, 2000), 83.

<sup>141</sup> Nash, “Red, White, and Black” 16.

<sup>142</sup> Winthrop Jordan, *The White Man’s Burden: Historical Origins of Racism in the United States* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1974), 80.

<sup>143</sup> Nash, “Red, White, and Black,” 16.

system of cultural violence represents the expansion of prior techniques for oppressing Africans. Early European enslavers' techniques for oppressing Africans were directed by their belief in the infinite supply of Africans available for slavery and their aversion to the climate in the Caribbean islands. English enslavers assembled at the colonies temporarily with the intent of acquiring wealth expeditiously before returning to England. Their belief in the boundless supply of Africans meant they preferred to purchase new Africans rather than breed them.<sup>144</sup> Initially, the English view of Africans as an expendable labor force averted the need to create stable communities for Africans because ideology improved social control. These two factors contributed to the prevalence of early enslavers for utilizing physical violence as a matter of convenience to control enslaved Africans. However, ideology became more important for enslavers as the financial gains from slavery required increased control mechanisms. Enslavers during the American colonial experience decided to institutionalize an ideology which conveyed the superiority of Europeans over Africans into developing American cultural institutions as a pillar for the domination of Africans. Early cultural leaders worked vigorously to make the extolment of the superiority of Europeans over Africans an integral component of the American social and cultural milieu. Contextualizing the dominant ideology in its proper historical context and identifying a particular methodology of oppression waged against Africans is vital for establishing the origin, potential continuity, and possible impending consequences of their oppression. Beginning in the eighteenth century, Africans devoted much of their effort to challenging the claim of the dominant ideology that they were inferior to European Americans.

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<sup>144</sup> Franklin and Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom*, 52.

### **Restrictions of Study**

An historical study requires the analysis of primary documents for authenticity. Obtaining primary documents about colonial Virginia and the resistance Africans engaged in from the early 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries for this study presented a serious challenge. Some of the data containing the actual writings and lectures of Africans are from secondary studies.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

#### Virginian Colonial Law and Cultural Violence

##### **Introduction: Law, Culture, and Ideology**

Virginia's colonists used law to oppress Africans. Through law, the status of Africans changed from free and indentured servants to that of a slave. As a mode of oppression, Virginia law certainly imposed a system of involuntary labor on the African population; but oppression is a multi-faceted endeavor. Three years before Nat Turner's rebellion in Virginia, Noah Webster's *1828 Webster's American Dictionary* defined oppression as:

1. The act of oppressing; the imposition of unreasonable burdens, either in taxes or services; cruelty; severity.
2. The state of being oppressed or overburdened; misery.
3. Hardship; calamity.
4. Depression; dullness of spirits; lassitude of body.<sup>145</sup>

Webster's definition not only coincides with the harsh system of labor imposed on enslaved Africans, it also includes other ways in which oppression was intended to affect Turner and other Africans. Notably, the word "press" is contained in the word "oppression." Not only are the words conjoined phonetically, there is also an analogous meaning in both words. "Oppression" is defined as, "to weigh heavily on the mind, spirits, or senses; to distress"; and "press" is defined as, "To weigh down; bear heavily; to lay stress on; to emphasize; to go forward with an energetic effort; a pressing or being pressured; to force one's way."<sup>146</sup> This is an important point because it helps to expand the discussion from the system of forced labor that Africans endured in Virginia to how and why this system of oppression was anticipated to "press" the "mind, spirit", and "senses" of Africans; and how Africans resisted. Virginia instituted a systematic approach to

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<sup>145</sup> <http://www.websters-online-dictionary.org>, s.v. "oppression."

<sup>146</sup> *Webster's New World Dictionary of American English*, 3<sup>rd</sup> College ed. s.v. "press," "oppress."

oppressing its African population which included law, physical violence, and ideology.<sup>147</sup> Galtung calls this three-tiered system of oppression a “violence triangle.” Galtung argues that systematic oppression is composed of three interlocking components: cultural violence (ideology), direct violence (physical violence), and structural violence (law).<sup>148</sup> Certainly, the purpose of this three-tiered system of oppression was to impose a system of forced labor on enslaved Africans. However, oppressors wanted Africans not merely to be *enslaved*, oppressors intended to produce *African slaves*. There is a qualitative distinction in designating a group of people as enslaved versus defining them as slaves. The term *enslaved Africans* infers that the social status of Africans in Virginia was debased through an imposition of repression; *African slaves* connotes that the debasement of Africans was a natural state and total sum of their existence. Virginia’s system of oppression, which laid the foundation for projecting Africans as subhuman in early America, facilitated the subjugation of Africans beyond the yoke of legal slavery in early America. Criminologists have identified the relationship between law and ideology. For example, Frank P. Williams III and Marilyn D. McShane argue in the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of *Criminological Theory* that law provides dominant groups with the ability to perpetuate their ideology and values; and the implementation of law ensures for the dominant group ideological power over the subordinate group.<sup>149</sup> The ideology that undergirded Virginia law comprised the beliefs, values, and self-interests of European enslavers and cultural leaders. Hence, Virginia used colonial law to make “African, Negro, or black slave” synonymous with a perennial state of alleged African inferiority throughout colonial America. Law codified the ideology about the purported deficient nature of Africans. The purpose of this codification was to create an enduring dichotomy between the meaning of white and black into the American cultural fabric.

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<sup>147</sup> Shapiro, *White Violence and Black Response*, 24-25. Watkins, *The White Architects of Black Education*, 9, 12-14, 21, 43-61, 81. Franklin and Higginbotham, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 55-56.

<sup>148</sup> Galtung, “Cultural Violence,” 42-46.

<sup>149</sup> Frank P. Williams III and Marilyn D. McShane, *Criminological Theory*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education. Inc., 2004), 168.

Political institutions embody the ideas of people in a cultural environment. John S. Mbiti states that political institutions are part of a society's culture.<sup>150</sup> People make political decisions based on their self-interests, values, and ideology, which means the cultural framework in a given context will reflect those self-interests, values, and ideology. Law reproduces the self-interests, values, and ideology of powerful groups. Thus, law imparts into culture the subjective ideas of powerful groups. The legal sequestering of Africans as perpetual servants and slaves formed a cultural representation of Africans. By exclusively imposing Africans with a marred social status at the dawn of American culture, Virginia law integrated a biased perception of Africans into a newly emerging culture. The symbol of African inferiority became so firmly fixed into the American culture that whites who never had any direct contact with Africans formed nefarious opinions about them. For example, Wood asserts that there were locations in the North and West in which Africans were disparaged by whites who had no direct contact with Africans.<sup>151</sup> Virginia law perpetuated the ideology of African inferiority into American culture. When the dominant ideology is incorporated into the cultural sphere of a society it becomes a system of "cultural violence."<sup>152</sup> Through law, Virginia initiated a system of cultural violence in colonial America. As a recipient of the first African population in the colonies, Virginia used law as a vehicle to introduce into American culture the ideology of African inferiority.

### **Law and Ideology in Colonial Virginia**

The first Africans in Virginia arrived in 1619 on a Dutch ship at Point Comfort in Jamestown. During the same year, a company from London that held authority over Jamestown granted the colonists legal rights to practice self-government. There were no legal provisions for slavery in the

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<sup>150</sup> John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. (Gaborone, Botswana: Heinemann Educational Books, 1991), 7-8.

<sup>151</sup> Wood, *Black Scare*, 12-15.

<sup>152</sup> Galtung, "Cultural Violence," 39-43.

legislature. John Rolfe, cofounder and secretary of the Virginia colony, did not refer to Africans as slaves. Their status more closely resembled that of indentured servants.<sup>153</sup> The 1623 and 1624 census supports this fact, which list Africans in Virginia as servants rather than slaves.<sup>154</sup> After completing their servitude, some of the twenty-five Africans recorded in the 1624 census became free land-owning colonists and eventually owned other indentured servants. The colonists initially relied on European and African indentured servants, and Native Americans to confront the formidable task of transforming a wilderness into communities complete with homes and productive crops. The population of European indentured servants grew to 6,000 by 1671 compared to 2,000 African indentured servants. However, colonists learned very early that European indentured servants and Native Americans were unable to supply the labor needs in Virginia.<sup>155</sup> The disproportionate number of European indentured servants did not occur because colonists demanded laborers from Europe. The influx of European servants into Virginia was largely based on their aspirations for prosperity in a new environment. Though Virginia had more European than African servants to produce work, they had begun developing a system of cultural violence against its African population decades earlier that would help procure a permanent source of cheap labor for the colonies. This system of cultural violence, which promoted the idea of the inherent inferiority of Africans, was outlined in the colonial laws of Virginia.

Although Virginia created the first statute, which recognized Africans as slaves by the end of the seventeenth century, colonists in Virginia began constructing a system of cultural violence against its African population within the first couple of decades of Virginia officially becoming a colony in 1619. Among the African indentured servants in Virginia during the first two decades of the colony's existence, there also existed Africans who were regarded as "perpetual servants." Before any legal

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<sup>153</sup> Toppin, "Slavery in the Southern Colonies from 1619 to 1776," 49-50. Higginbotham, Jr., *In the Matter of Color*, 20.

<sup>154</sup> Toppin, "Slavery in the Southern Colonies from 1619 to 1776," 50. Franklin and Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom*, 65.

<sup>155</sup> Toppin, "Slavery in the Southern Colonies from 1619 to 1776," 49-50.

designation of Africans as slaves, these Africans were imposed with a status of servitude to the colonists which assigned them as laborers without remuneration for the rest of their lives. Between 1619 and 1651, the African population comprised three distinct social positions: indentured servants, free persons, and perpetual servants.<sup>156</sup> Portuguese, Spanish, French, Turks, Dutch, Africans, Native Americans,<sup>157</sup> and a very small group of Irish convicts made up the population of Virginia during the seventeenth century.<sup>158</sup> Many members of these groups worked industriously together in Virginia.<sup>159</sup> The centrality of labor among workers forged social bonds, which trumped their ethnic and religious differences. For instance, Anthony Johnson arrived in Virginia circa 1622, making him one of the first Africans in the colony. Upon completing his tenure as an indentured servant, Johnson secured an African indentured servant named Casor. Casor complained to two other European colonists when Johnson would not set him free following his completed indenture. Later, the two men that he initially complained to about Johnson held Casor as a servant. Johnson later complained in court about the two men coercively obtaining Casor's labor; subsequently, the judge ordered Casor to be a servant for Johnson for life.<sup>160</sup> Although this example demonstrates that some Africans in colonial Virginia such as Johnson had similar privileges to European descendants, Casor's unmerited and perpetual punishment foreshadowed the efforts in Virginia to maneuver its free and indentured African population into permanent slaves. Johnson and other colonists who owned indentured servants addressed such matters in a courtroom, but the plight of Casor and other African servants was not so fortunate. Moreover, there is no mention of the two Europeans who forced Casor to work for them without authorization ever being punished. Though Casor's unwarranted punishment forced him to work for another African, the exclusion of the two Europeans from legal penalties demonstrates a biased opinion of one or more legal

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<sup>156</sup> Franklin and Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom*, 65-66.

<sup>157</sup> Higginbotham, Jr., *In the Matter of Color*, 29.

<sup>158</sup> Levy, *The First Emancipator*, 5.

<sup>159</sup> Toppin, "Slavery in the Southern Colonies from 1619 to 1776," 50-51.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 50-51.

officials. This is a very important point because Casor, one of the first Africans in Virginia, did not commit any crime. The law obviously condemned Casor to perpetual work, but law also codified an inference that his social status was less than the two Europeans who commandeered his labor. The true identity of Casor was legally superimposed with the status of a criminal. Casor's case served as a precedent for the legal disparagement of the African image in Virginia. The centrality of work, a lack of social distinctions among servants, and the lack of legal provisions for servants such as Casor eventually created problems in Virginia when European and African servants formed alliances. Virginia officials used law as an apparatus to objectify Africans in the cooperation between African and European servants.

Indentured African and European servants began running away together within the first several decades of the existence of Virginia. There is much ambiguity found in early legal cases about the comparative social status of African and European indentured servants running away together prior to 1640. However, the *In Re Negro John Punch* court case in 1640 bolstered precedent for the legal degradation of Africans in Virginia. John Punch, one of three runaway indentured servants in Virginia who fled to Maryland, was African. When Punch was captured in Maryland with James Gregory—a Scotchman, and one called Victor—a Dutchman, their proposed sentences were unequal. The time of service for Victor and Gregory was increased by an additional four years, while Punch's conviction consigned him a servant for the rest of his life.<sup>161</sup> Colonists used their political means to differentiate the social status of Punch from Gregory and Victor. Though the two European servants, Gregory and Victor, worked four extra years for the infraction, their legal designation as indentured servants remained intact. Presumably, Gregory and Victor received the same privileges as other Europeans once their tenure was completed. Legal officials used law to reprimand Victor and Gregory for a criminal act, but their continued status as servants assured their eventual freedom. However, labeling Punch as a

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<sup>161</sup> Higginbotham, Jr., *In the Matter of Color*, 26-29.

perpetual servant surmises him as a criminal rather than as a servant who will be freed from indenture once his extra time is served. In this blatant example, the image of Punch is permanently confined to that of a lawless person while the image of Gregory and Punch is temporarily blemished. There was no opportunity for Punch to elevate his status in Virginia. Legal officials used law as a mechanism to subtly advocate European's social identity over Africans. These early efforts were very important in separating Africans from poor European descendants in Virginia. Virginia's population consisted of many poor European workers often considered intractable because of their ethnic identities and opposition to the working conditions. Irish convicts worked in Virginia even before the first Africans arrived in 1619.<sup>162</sup> Virginia's colonists feared very early that European workers under such social conditions would potentially form alliances with Africans and Native Americans in the colony.<sup>163</sup> If not for the concerns and efforts in Virginia with preventing social cohesion amid various ethnic groups perhaps there would have been more incidents in Virginia like the 1676 rebellion steered by Nathaniel Bacon with African and white indentured servants against the royal governor of Virginia,<sup>164</sup> and the 1859 raid led in Harper's Ferry, Virginia by white anti-slavery activist, John Brown, alongside Africans.<sup>165</sup> Leaders in Virginia attempted to prevent such social and political alliances among the diverse population. Virginia strengthened its system of cultural violence after the mid- seventeenth century by enacting laws that ensured the legal and continuous enslavement of its African population by projecting Africans and Europeans as incongruent.

It is critical to view more of the laws passed in colonial Virginia used to promote the inferiority and, eventually, the enslavement of Africans. In 1661, Virginia passed a law that stated any runaway English indentured servant accompanied by an African indentured servant

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<sup>162</sup> Levy, *The First Emancipator*, 5.

<sup>163</sup> Higginbotham, Jr., *In the Matter of Color*, 26-28.

<sup>164</sup> Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1998), 45.

<sup>165</sup> W. E. B. DuBois, *John Brown* (1909, repr.; New York, NY: The Modern Library, 2001), 55-60, 116-120.

would incur the African's remaining time of servitude in addition to his or her own time.<sup>166</sup> This statute acknowledges that Virginia made a distinction between Africans and Europeans. The repercussions for European indentured servants associating with Africans were very harsh. If two or more English indentured servants fled, they received maybe four additional years to their time of indenture. However, an Englishman caught with an African could potentially serve Virginia for the rest of her/his life. This certainly was an incentive for English servants to avoid consorting with Africans, but it also perhaps led to Africans being stigmatized in the diverse population. Europeans previously justified the enslavement of Africans beginning in the fifteenth century by stigmatizing Africans for supposed inferior physical and mental characteristics. Similarly, Virginia's law began to stigmatize Africans in America. Virginia passed a very important law in 1662 that helped further defame the African population and to ensure their disproportionate punishment.

In 1662, the rising mulatto population was a major concern for Virginian legislatures. To procure the enslavement of the offspring produced by European men and African women,<sup>167</sup> the Virginian legislators enacted a law (Act XII) stating that children's designation as free or enslaved was determined by the status of their mother.<sup>168</sup> This law is also significant because it was the first to make being an African synonymous with the legal status of a slave.<sup>169</sup> Moreover, Virginian legislators attached the following penalty in a 1662 law: "...and if any Christian shall commit fornication with a Negro man or woman, he shall pay double the fines of a former

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<sup>166</sup> Franklin and Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom*, 65.

<sup>167</sup> A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr. and Barbara K. Kopytoff, "Racial Purity and Interracial Sex in the Law of Colonial and Antebellum Virginia," *The Georgetown Law Journal* 77 (1967): 1970-1971, accessed February 5, 2012, <http://heinonline.org>.

<sup>168</sup> Joan W. Peters, introduction to the 1995 Edition of June Guild's *Black Laws of Virginia*. The Afro-American Historical Association of Fraquier County, 1, accessed February 19, 2012, <http://www.balchfriend.org/Glimpse/JPetersIntroBklaws.html>.

<sup>169</sup> Higginbotham, Jr. and Kopytoff, "Racial Purity and Interracial Sex in the Law of Colonial and Antebellum Virginia," 1971.



act.”<sup>170</sup> However, a document drafted thirty-two years prior to the 1662 law demonstrates that white Virginians were to avoid sexual relationships with Africans. The document reads:

1630 *Virginia* [Resolution] Hugh Davis to be soundly whipped before an assembly of negroes and others, for abusing himself to the dishonor of God and the shame of Christians, by defiling his body in lying with a negro, which he is to acknowledge next Sabbath day.<sup>171</sup>

Another Virginia law passed in 1662 stated that when a female indentured servant bore a child from her master, the church sold her as a laborer for two extra years following her indenture.<sup>172</sup>

The overture in the Virginia law represents the preeminence of white males over white women, African females, and African males. These laws permitted the sexual interests of white men to support a recurring population of perpetual servants. In the Virginia 1662 law, a mulatto child that white a male produced with a female African servant could become a servant for life by virtue of the status of the African mother. Even though white males faced fines for miscegenation, the laws and the church added two additional years or perpetual servitude to female African servants. The exclusion of white males from penalties that resulted in perpetual servitude (slavery) means Virginia made the merit of an inferior social status synonymous with Africans. Mary Frances Berry suggests British Parliament supported the Virginian objectification of Africans several decades later when it regarded Africans as “merchandise” and “property of great value.”<sup>173</sup> Moreover, miscegenation may have contributed to the establishment of laws designed to impede sexual relations between Africans and whites in colonial Virginia. According to Ira Berlin, sexual intercourse between African men and white women produced perhaps as much as one-quarter to one-third of the illegitimate children born in Maryland and Virginia

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<sup>170</sup> Higginbotham, Jr., *In the Matter of Color*, 42-43.

<sup>171</sup> William Waller Henning, “The Statutes at Large being a collection of all the Laws of Virginia (1823),” in *Chronicles of Black Protest*, ed. Bradford Chambers (New York, NY: Mentor Books, 1968), 35.

<sup>172</sup> Higginbotham, Jr., *In the Matter of Color*, 42-43.

<sup>173</sup> Berry, *Black Resistance/White Law*, 1-7.

during the seventeenth century.<sup>174</sup> Though data was not found to compare the reproductive patterns of African women and white men or white men and white women, two suppositions can be made about Berlin's data. First, the laws previously discussed demonstrate that Virginia officials viewed sexual relations between Africans and whites with disapproval. The establishment of laws which intended to discourage sexual contact with Africans and whites may have occurred because of miscegenation. Second, Berlin's data also rebukes the notion that the ideology of African inferiority was widespread in the minds of white Americans during the seventeenth century. The cohabitation of white women and African men for sex suggests white women did not consider African men as dissimilar to white men. This supports the central argument of this study because the projection of African inferiority was inferred through law, and not by the average white Virginian. Law helped initiate a system of cultural violence in the seventeenth century, which did not become prominent until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The purpose of conveying ideology through a system of cultural violence is for members of the dominant and subordinate group to internalize a notion that one group is superior over the other. Until the ideology of African inferiority became ingrained into American culture, surely the perception of many whites about Africans in Virginia was based on personal criteria. To curtail the idea that whites and Africans were comparable, white cultural leaders in Virginia decided that the penalties of the law had to reinforce the condemnation of Africans. The laws also had to produce a similar gulf between African and white Christians in the colony.

In 1667, Virginia created a law (Act III) allowing the Christian baptism of slaves.<sup>175</sup> This Virginia law threatened to jeopardize the effort to make an African inheritance synonymous with that of a slave because of the 1662 law previously discussed. The children of baptized African

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<sup>174</sup> Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 45.

<sup>175</sup> Franklin and Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom*, 65-66.

woman evaded enslavement because of the status of their mother as a Christian. In order to protect the institution of slavery; however, this law provided that ‘the conferring of baptism doth not alter the condition of the person as to his bondage or freedome. Thus, diverse masters, freed from this doubt, may more carefully endeavor the propagation of Christianity.’<sup>176</sup> Moreover, religious leaders such as Reverend Thomas Bacon and Samuel Davies reported that baptized Africans were not subservient and carried a certain amount of smugness in their attitudes. Reverend Davies embarked on a new mission in Virginia to teach Africans that being good Christians was equivalent with being ‘good slaves.’<sup>177</sup> Underlying Virginian’s attitudes about the legal rights of African Christians in colonial America was an ideology about the supremacy of European Christians over Africans as well as non-Christian religions practiced in Africa. European explorers and enslavers began propagating this ideology of inferiority about non-Christian Africans in the fifteenth century. What presupposed the 1667 Virginia law about African Christians was a belief in the inherent inferiority of Africans and their religious practices. The connection between Reverend Davies and this ideology of inferiority about Africans is discussed in the next section of this study. The important point here is that leaders promoted the ideology of white superiority over Africans through the 1667 law and through the new mission to indoctrinate Africans and white Virginians about what being a pious African meant. Hence, not only did this law encourage Africans to convert to Christianity, it also created a mechanism for controlling African converts by teaching them what it meant to be a “good Christian.” Virginia further marginalized Africans from whites in another law passed two years later.

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 65-66.

<sup>177</sup> Winthrop Jordon, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Williamsburg, VA: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 182-183, 188. Higginbotham, Jr., *In the Matter of Color*, 37.

The Virginia case, *Re Warwick*, marked the end of the era of ambiguity about the social status of Africans and Europeans, and revealed consensus in Virginia that Africans were socially distinct. Hanna Warwick, a white female indentured servant, served her time under the oversight of an African. The Warwick case suggests that the Virginia court dismissed Warwick's violation during her indenture simply because she committed an infraction while serving under a "Negro overseer." The court record does not explain the violation committed by Warwick; in one sentence, the court record merely states: 'Hanna Warwick's case extenuated because she was overseen by a negro overseer.'<sup>178</sup> This example verifies that white was becoming a legal category for the ascendancy of European descendants over Africans in Virginia. As a "white" female, Warwick was given preeminence over her African employer. Scott L. Malcomson states that the term "white" to signify European superiority took on two meanings during this period: "Being white meant not being the property of others;...it also meant creating the not-white..."<sup>179</sup> Two decades later, Virginia's laws helped shape a key construct in the ideological system under the term "white," which was necessary to strengthen the consolidation of European descendants over Africans.

Virginia produced two important laws in 1681. In the first law, African and mulatto servants became permanent servants if their owner did not finance their transportation outside of Virginia within six months of completing their indenture. Under the second law, European descendants were barred from Virginia if they married a free or servant African, mulatto, or Native American.<sup>180</sup> These are several examples of Virginia's laws that gradually repealed the legal rights of free and indentured Africans in Virginia. Also inherent in these laws is the efforts of Virginia to establish the legitimate alliance and privilege of European descendants over its

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<sup>178</sup> Higginbotham, Jr., *In the Matter of Color*, 26-30.

<sup>179</sup> Scott L. Malcomson, *One Drop of Blood: The American Misadventure of Race* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2000), 46-47.

<sup>180</sup> Peters, introduction to the 1995 Edition of June Guild's *Black Laws of Virginia*, 1-2.

African population. The 1681 law in Virginia, which outlawed intermarriage between English or other European descendants with African, mulatto, or Native American men or women, is evidence of the commitment of law makers in Virginia to buttress the descendants of Europeans by preventing their amalgamation with non-Europeans. Virginia had a diverse population in the seventeenth century—“Portuguese, Spanish, French, English, Turks, Dutch, Irish, Negroes (Africans), and Indians (Native Americans).”<sup>181</sup> The 1681 law about marriage in Virginia did not apply to any particular European ethnic group in the colony; the law characterizes trepidations in Virginia about consolidating its population of European descendants. This is further supported by the fact that, although Virginia and other colonies consisted of various European ethnic groups, laws and other recorded documents in the seventeenth century reveal that colonists began using the term “white” to signify Europeans.<sup>182</sup> The choice of assimilating European ethnic names in the seventeenth century into one term—white—means Virginia was then in a position to fortify its system of cultural violence against Africans. Under the term “white,” most European descendants in Virginia received legal preference over Africans and other non-Europeans. It is important to note here that the small population of Irish convicts precluded any significant political or social role in Virginia between the early seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The majority of the Irish immigrated to America during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Other whites in the United States called them ‘white niggers or niggers turned inside out’ by the late nineteenth century because of the religious conflict between the Irish and the English and anti-slavery sentiment expressed from Irish leaders such as Daniel O’Connell. Although Virginians and other whites considered the Irish an inferior European ethnic group, the system of cultural violence, which modified the legal demotion of Africans in Virginia to a slave status, preserved an ideological

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<sup>181</sup> Higginbotham, Jr., *In the Matter of Color*, 29. Levy, *The First Emancipator*, 5.

<sup>182</sup> Higginbotham, Jr., *In the Matter of Color*, 20, 24, 29, 267.

template for the gradual amalgamation of the Irish and other European immigrants with “white” Americans by the late nineteenth century.<sup>183</sup> This helped to ensure the Irish with privileges over Africans traditionally afforded to other “whites” in America.<sup>184</sup> In colonial Virginia, legislators used law to denigrate African inheritance, which created the opportunity for various social classes of Europeans to join the legal category of “white.” The 1705 Virginia law (Chapter XXIII), which designated Africans as “real estate,” sealed the legal distinction of Africans as non-human while eulogizing “white” as an omnipotent classification. Virginia law was the vehicle for appropriating Africans as worthy of enslavement. White Virginians were unwavering in their commitment to uphold their alleged superiority over Africans. White control over the ideology about African subservience reached a critical state in Virginia during the next century when Nat Turner led a major slave revolt.

### **The Battle Over Ideology: Nat Turner’s Rebellion**

There were more than 2 million enslaved Africans in the United States the year before the Nat Turner rebellion in 1831.<sup>185</sup> Turner led what is often considered the U.S.’s fiercest and bloodiest slave revolt in South Hampton, Virginia. When captured, Turner professed to his captors that he was divinely instructed to terminate the institution of slavery, which Africans in Virginia and other locations in the United States had been subjugated by since the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>186</sup> Two years before the Turner rebellion, David Walker’s, *Walker’s Appeal in Four Articles, Together with a Preamble to the Coloured Citizens of the Free World, But in Particular to those of the United States*, was published. Walker, a free African residing in Philadelphia, stated that it was the God-given and legal right of Africans to end slavery with violence. Walker

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<sup>183</sup> Joel Ignatiev, *How the Irish became White* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1995), 1-2, 39-41, 165-176.

<sup>184</sup> Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, 190.

<sup>185</sup> Franklin and Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom*, 139.

<sup>186</sup> Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 163-164.

also meticulously challenged the scientific and religious arguments which supported the ideology of African inferiority; and he pointed out examples of Africans' accomplishments in the Bible and in history. Walker characterized the ideological perspective of Thomas Jefferson toward Africans<sup>187</sup> in Jefferson's *Notes on Virginia* which stated, "The improvement of blacks in the body and mind" is generated "in the first instance of their mixture with whites,"<sup>188</sup> as "very severe marks on us [Africans or blacks]."<sup>189</sup> Southern enslavers speculated that Turner was inspired by *Walker's Appeal* to lead the rebellion. Consequently, anyone caught by whites distributing *Walker's Appeal* could be killed, fined from \$1,500 to \$20,000, or banished from a community.<sup>190</sup> Moreover, fears of more slave uprisings led Virginians to pass "Black Laws" in 1831 making it illegal to teach Africans, slave or free, to read or write.<sup>191</sup> Although Thomas Jefferson's 1787 education proposal to the Virginia legislature to ensure exemplary white male children free higher education excluded African children who comprised forty percent of the total population of Virginia's children,<sup>192</sup> it was not illegal to educate free or enslaved Africans in Virginia prior to 1831.<sup>193</sup> One enslaver's frustration captured the sentiment held by many white enslavers about educating enslaved Africans in Virginia before the Turner rebellion and *Walker's Appeal*: "What I want here is Negroes who can make cotton and they don't need

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<sup>187</sup> David Walker and Henry Highland Garnett, *Walker's Appeal in Four Articles: An Address to the Slaves of the United States of America* (1848, repr.; New York, NY: Cosimo Classics, 2005), 11-28, 46-56.

<sup>188</sup> Thomas Jefferson, "The Administration of Justice and Description of the Laws [1787]," in *Notes of the State of Virginia by Thomas Jefferson with Related Documents*, ed. David Waldstreicher (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002), 175-178.

<sup>189</sup> Walker and Garnett, *Walker's Appeal in Four Articles*, 11-28, 46-56.

<sup>190</sup> Franklin and Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom*, 193-195, 213.

<sup>191</sup> "The African-American Schools of Louisa County, Virginia," funded by *The Virginia Foundation for the Humanities* and *The Louisa County Historical Society*, accessed February 19, 2012, <http://louisaheritage.org/history.htm>.

<sup>192</sup> James Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 1-2.

<sup>193</sup> "The African-American Schools of Louisa County, Virginia," accessed February 19, 2012, <http://louisaheritage.org/history.htm>.

education to help them make cotton.”<sup>194</sup> After 1831, enslavers became feverishly concerned with Africans’ formal access to or propagation of ideas, which refuted the dominant ideology’s claim of European descendants’ superiority over Africans.

These events surrounding Turner’s rebellion demonstrate that the enslavement of Africans and the ideology of African inferiority were major points of contention for Africans and whites. Walker’s text vehemently challenged the idea promoted by theorists and enslavers that Africans were substandard humans. Walker’s call for Africans to end slavery represents his resistance to the perennial doctrine of Africans inferiority, not just an end to the forced labor many Africans endured. For many whites, safeguarding the ideology of African inferiority by eradicating texts such as Walker’s required the same violence it took to end Turner’s rebellion. This suggests that whites’ control over Africans in an early period of the United States mandated the regulation of the dominant ideology, which projected what the perception of being an African or a “black” was. Moreover, this means that whites used ideology for more than justifying the enslavement of Africans; ideology was the philosophical cornerstone for maintaining the system of cultural violence. Turner and Walker opposed Virginia law that emerged in the seventeenth century and created the enduring link between the enslavement of Africans and the ideology of African inferiority. White’s resistance to literature that challenged the system of cultural violence was an attempt to preserve the socially constructed idea about white superiority over Africans.

### **The Social Construction and Mythologizing of Human Identity**

In addition to the potential legal privileges “white” carried, the term also became a moniker for the purported superiority of European descendants over Africans and Native

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<sup>194</sup> Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty!: An American History*, vol. 1, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008), 646.



Americans<sup>195</sup> in Virginia. Multiple ideologies, ethnicities, and cultures existed among the diverse population in Virginia during the seventeenth century. The European descendants in Virginia during the seventeenth century consisted of the “Portuguese, Spanish, French, Turks, Dutch, and Irish.”<sup>196</sup> Although Virginia and other colonies consisted of various European and African ethnic groups, laws and other recorded documents in the seventeenth century reveal they used the term “white” to signify Europeans.<sup>197</sup> Virginia’s choice of assimilating European ethnic names into one term— white— can be interpreted in several ways. First, Virginia colonists were attempting to collectively organize themselves against the two groups they would have the most conflict with—Native Americans and Africans. Second, colonists were conveniently using a term that similarly approached their physical characteristics. Third, perhaps they combined both by developing a term closely resembling their physical characteristics to collectively organize themselves against Africans and Native Americans. However, according to David Roediger, “settler ideology” also represented a conscious effort to form a “dominant ideology” which embodied and imposed the idea of a Divine presence and inherent superiority of Europeans over the darker Native Americans and Africans in the New World.<sup>198</sup> “White” never represented a cultural synthesis of the various European ethnic groups in Virginia, but helped impart what they presented as their dominance over Africans.<sup>199</sup> How did Virginia categorize their diverse African population under this dominant ideology in the seventeenth century?

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<sup>195</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust, introduction to *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (repr.; 1997, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 3-4.

<sup>196</sup> Higginbotham, Jr., *In the Matter of Color*, 29. Levy, *The First Emancipator*, 5.

<sup>197</sup> Higginbotham, Jr., *In the Matter of Color*, 29.

<sup>198</sup> David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, Revised ed. (New York, NY: Verso, 2007), 21. Rebecca Ann Lind, “Laying a Foundation for Studying Race, Gender, and the Media” in *Race, Gender, Media: Considering Diversity Across Audiences, Content, and Producers*, ed. by Rebecca Ann Lind (Boston, Massachusetts: Pearson Education, Inc., 2004), 7.

<sup>199</sup> Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, 190.

The African descendants in Virginia and other colonies were from countries in West and Central Africa such as Senegal, Gambia, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Mali, Benin, Ghana, and Nigeria. The following ethnic groups lived in these African countries: Wolof, Tukulor, Fulani, Vai, Mandingo, Hausa, Nago, Nupe, Soninke, Mina, Susu, and others.<sup>200</sup> Under the “dominant ideology,” these diverse groups of Africans were connoted singularly in Virginia as “black” or “Negro” (Spanish for black) in written documents.<sup>201</sup> Although possibly utilized initially as a “descriptive adjective” by the Spanish and Portuguese enslavers in Africa, the word “black” or “Negro” became a noun full of nefarious connotations.<sup>202</sup> Similarly, Europeans once referred to the entire African continent as Ethiopia. The Greek word “ethios” means burnt or dark; “ops” means face.<sup>203</sup> Referring to all Africans as “burnt face” was an adjective for their darker skin. Europeans christened the African continent by the nineteenth century as the “Dark Continent.” Unlike the descriptive adjective “burnt face,” the “myth of the Dark Continent” defined Africans as tribes of heathens, savages, and cannibals. European enslavers cast themselves as leaders of a Christian crusade in the “Dark Continent” who were under the constant threat of ‘going native’— “taking on [inferior] African customs.”<sup>204</sup> The word Negro also transformed over time from a physical descriptor for Europeans about the dark skin of Africans to a metaphor akin to the “Dark Continent” myth. Robert Powell suggests, “The word ‘Negro’ was not only a superfluous term but one that carried with it a connotation of contempt, opprobrium, and

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<sup>200</sup> Sylvaine A. Diouf, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1998), 46-47.

<sup>201</sup> Higginbotham, Jr., *In the Matter of Color*, 20, 24, 267.

<sup>202</sup> John Henrik Clarke, quoted in Anthony T. Browder, *Nile Valley Contributions to Civilization: Exploding the Myths*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: The Institute of Karmic Guidance, 1992), 31.

<sup>203</sup> Anthony Browder, *Nile Valley Contributions to Civilization: Exploding the Myths*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: The Institute of Karmic Guidance, 1992), 50.

<sup>204</sup> Curtis Keim, *Mistaking Africa: Curiosities and Inventions of the American Mind*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2009), 42-46.

inferiority.”<sup>205</sup> Anthony T. Browder states that the 1884 edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, describes the Negro as one who, “occupies at the same time the lowest position in the evolutionary scale, thus affording the best material for the comparative study of the highest anthropoid and the human species.”<sup>206</sup> According to Lind, the intent of perpetuating such terms in a “dominant ideology” is to oppress other cultural groups.<sup>207</sup> The social repercussions of denoting Africans as inferior reached various levels of discourse in American society. The term “Negro” compressed for whites a set of alleged behaviors and features ostensibly unique to Africans. Similarly, “nigger” signified for whites a set of negative connotations about Africans. In fact, the word “nigger” may be a mispronunciation or slang of “Negro.” When Virginia secretary John Rolfe wrote a letter acknowledging the arrival of the first twenty Africans to Jamestown in 1619, he referred to the Africans as “Negers.”<sup>208</sup> The usage of such a term as “Negers” by whites suggests there were derivatives created from the word “Negro” to identify Africans. Hence, the terms “Negro” and “Nigger” represented a form of dichotomous logic for whites to distinguish an alleged set of behaviors deemed appropriate for “whites” and Africans.

In 1837, Hosea Eaton described common expressions that whites in Virginia and other states used to coerce their children: “Sally, go to sleep, if you don’t the old nigger will carry you off; ...don’t cry Hark, the old nigger’s coming.” Eaton observed that white children in schools were taught the dominant ideology when they were told to sit in the “nigger-seat,” or threatened for misconduct by being made to sit with a “nigger.” Eaton states white adults used the following phrases to castigate disobedient white children:

...how ugly you are, you are worse than a nigger.

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<sup>205</sup> Robert Powell, quoted in Anthony Browder, *Nile Valley Contributions to Civilization: Exploding the Myths*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: The Institute of Karmic Guidance, 1992), 31.

<sup>206</sup> Browder, *Nile Valley Contributions to Civilization*, 33.

<sup>207</sup> Lind, “Laying a Foundation for Studying Race, Gender, and the Media,” 7.

<sup>208</sup> Toppin, “Slavery in the Southern Colonies from 1619 to 1776,” 49-50. Higginbotham, Jr., *In the Matter of Color*, 20.

...poor or ignorant as a nigger.  
...black as a nigger.  
...have no credit [better] than a nigger.  
...have hair, lips, feet,..., like a nigger.<sup>209</sup>

The incongruent notions of “black” and “white” in the dominant ideology used to depict African and European descendants did not originate in Virginia.

### **Deconstructing the Root of American Cultural Violence**

In the seventeenth century, Virginia colonists transplanted the ideology about the inferiority of Africans from Spain and Portugal.<sup>210</sup> The Portuguese and Spaniards led Europeans in invoking the missionary zeal of Christianity to justify their activities on the West Coast of Africa. In 1493, Pope Alexander VI’s papal bull stated heathens (Africans) and “...especially their resources...” were rewarded to Spain and Portugal by the “...grace of an understanding god.”<sup>211</sup> Moreover, in 1517 Bishop Bartolomeo de las Casas encouraged Spaniards to import enslaved Africans into the New World to replace the enslaved Indians. The rationalization given by Spanish and Portuguese sailors for making Africans slaves in Europe was that the “heathen (non-Christian)” Africans gained exposure to Christianity.<sup>212</sup> The dawn of European enslavement in Africa began with the Spanish and Portuguese and summoned Christian reasoning for approval. Converting Africans to Christianity was a priority for Spanish and Portuguese enslavers. Slave control depended on the “deculturalization” or the obliteration of all forms of African culture.<sup>213</sup> Enslavers believed supplanting a new ideology, primarily conversion to

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<sup>209</sup> Hosea Easton, *A Treatise on the Intellectual Character, and Civil and Political Condition of the Colored People of the U. States: and the Prejudice Exercised towards them: with a Sermon on the Duty of the Church to Them* (1837; repr., Boston, MA: Isaac Knapp, 2010), 40-42.

<sup>210</sup> Franklin and Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom*, 65.

<sup>211</sup> Karenga, *Introduction to Black Studies*, 119.

<sup>212</sup> Franklin and Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom*, 35-36.

<sup>213</sup> Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 4. Spring, *Deculturalization and the Struggle for Equality*, 1.

Christianity, into Africans would replace their resistance to enslavement with docility and conformity to the regiments of slavery. For instance, in the early sixteenth century, Spain's government decreed that only enslaved Africans "...born under the power of Christian masters..." should be taken to the New World. Enslavers concentrated on ideology during the "breaking in" process where Africans were exposed to physical violence and propaganda aimed at deracinating their cultural continuity from Africa.<sup>214</sup> Beginning in the fifteenth century, European enslavers used "Noah's curse" as the core of the dominant ideology to rationalize enslaving Africans. According to the ninth chapter of Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament, Noah had three sons—Shem and Ham and Japheth. Noah became upset when Ham, who "uncovered his father's nakedness," laughed at him. Despite the fact that the Bible states Noah cursed Canaan, many Christian leaders taught that Noah cursed Ham and all his unborn descendants. Christians taught that Africans descended from Ham, and their enslavement was the will of God.<sup>215</sup> Dray postulates that the way in which Europeans used Christianity made it "...unique among the world's religions in promulgating the idea that..." Africans were inferior.<sup>216</sup> According to Nana Banchie Darkwah, Europeans used four main processes to promote their supremacy over Africans:

- Christian Europe accepted slave traders' justification of their consciences and description of Africans they were dehumanizing as inferior, uncivilized, and sub-humans.
- Christian Europe determined that based upon its perception of African people, White and Black people could have not originated from the same origin.
- Christian Europe decided to search for the separate origin of Europeans and found it in the biblical narrative of Noah and the Flood.

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<sup>214</sup> Franklin and Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom*, 51-58.

<sup>215</sup> Haynes, *Noah's Curse*, 224. , Bradford Chambers, ed., "A Famous Curse: The Origin of a Myth" in *Chronicles of Black Protest*, (New York, NY: Mentor Books, 1968), 19-20.

<sup>216</sup> Phillip Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America*, Modern Library Paperback Ed. (repr.; 2000, New York, NY: The Modern Library, 2003), 80.

- Renaissance artists and painters helped to change the images of the people of the Bible from Black to White.<sup>217</sup>

Religious leaders from England would soon use Christianity as a foundation of the dominant ideology. The Spanish and Portuguese had contact with “black skinned” people of North Africa for centuries prior to the sixteenth century, but the English contact with Africa did not take place until the late sixteenth century.

Although for England, trading and exploring in Africa were initially their primary activities, a type of biased logic about the physical and cultural characteristics of people in West Africa and the Congo quickly emerged.<sup>218</sup> Winthrop Jordan argues that the English juxtaposed the religion, culture, and what they assumed to be a “libidinous” nature of West Africans and the Congo to their Christian religion and culture. One Englishmen explored West Africa from 1562-1563 and wrote:

And entering in [a river], we see a number of blacke soules, whose likeliness seem’d men to be, but as black as coles. Their Captain comes to my as naked as me naile, not having witte or honistie to cover once his taile.<sup>219</sup>

The most striking feature of Africans that English travelers “rarely failed to comment upon” in their writings was their color, which constituted much of the basis of the dichotomous logic employed by the English.<sup>220</sup> Juxtaposing the physical characteristics of the “black skinned” people in Africa was influenced by several factors. As previously stated, the English contact with “black skinned” people was virtually new at this point in history.<sup>221</sup> Hence, the first of these factors, according to Jordan, is the “suddenness of impact” or “rapidity” in which this contact occurred. The second factor may have been found in English cultural ideas about the

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<sup>217</sup> Nana Banchie Darkwah, *The Africans Who Wrote the Bible: Ancient Secrets Africa and Christianity have Never Told* (repr.; 2002, Russellville, AR: Audana Publishing Co., 2003), 18-19.

<sup>218</sup> Daniel Troy Hembree, “Person, Community and Divinity in Yoruba Religious Thought and Culture: Foundations for Pastoral Theology with African American Men” (Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 2003), 37-38.

<sup>219</sup> Jordan, *The White Man’s Burden*, 4.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>221</sup> Hembree, “Person, Community and Divinity in Yoruba Religious Thought and Culture,” 37-38.

representation of the colors black and white that formed the “most ingrained values” explorers brought with them to West Africa. The English preoccupation with the dark color of the different ethnic groups in West Africa and the Congo may have been caused by the fact that “no other color except white conveyed so much emotional impact,” argues Jordan. Jordan sites the pre-sixteenth century meaning of black in the Oxford English Dictionary to support this idea:

Deeply stained with dirt; soiled, dirty, foul....Having dark or deadly purposes, malignant; pertaining to or involving death, deadly; baneful, disastrous, sinister....Foul, iniquitous, atrocious, horrible, wicked...Indicating disgrace, censure, liability to punish, etc.<sup>222</sup>

Nash argues that in particular, “the English’s usage of black and white was not just a physical description to stress phenotype, but was instead bound up with implicit notions of the same negativity...” and positivity “...allotted to the meaning of black...” and white in England.<sup>223</sup>

Jordan states, “Whiteness...carried a special significance of Elizabethan Englishmen: it was...the color of perfect human beauty, especially *female* beauty.” Jordan continues, “This ideal was already centuries old in Elizabeth’s time and their fair Queen was its embodiment...By contrast, the Negro was ugly, by reason of his color and also his ‘horrid Curles’ and ‘disfigured lips and nose.’” Jordan stressed that England encountered people in Africa when the standard of beauty was a fair complexion, which intensified the juxtaposition of themselves with “black skinned” people in Africa. White signified the complete opposite of black in England. Jordan argues the meaning of black and white in England produced consistent opposition between “purity and filthiness, virginity and sin, virtue and baseness, beauty and ugliness, beneficence and evil, God and the devil.”<sup>224</sup> Furthermore, by encapsulating black or Negro with such negative connotations, an implicit dichotomy was formed in the cultural meaning of white. The English theorized that African’s geographical proximity to the sun was the cause of their dark

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<sup>222</sup> Jordan, *The White Man’s Burden*, 4-6.

<sup>223</sup> Nash, “Red, White, and Black,” 11.

<sup>224</sup> Jordan, *The White Man’s Burden*, 5-6.

complexions. Richard Hakluyt, a preeminent Elizabethan navigator defined a Negro as “...a people of beastly living, without God, law, religion, or common wealth, and so scorched and vexed with the heat of the sun that in many places they curse it when it riseth...”<sup>225</sup> However, religious theories quickly replaced the geographical ones. Religion was the third factor that affected the English’s preoccupation with contrasting themselves with Africans in West Africa and the Congo. Religious leaders from England carried this religious-based dichotomy between Africans and Europeans into the English colonies known as America. Virginia was the ideal place to transform what may be properly called religious/cultural ethnocentrism into a cornerstone of the dominant ideology in America.

Though law was the original vehicle for the dominant ideology in Virginia, religion reinforced the notion that Europeans were superior to Africans. For example, religious leader, Reverend Samuel Davies, propagated the dominant ideology in his lectures to Virginia enslavers about the inferiority of Africans in sermons. He also wrote a publication in 1758 publication called, *The Duty of Christians to Propagate Their Religion Among Heathens, Earnestly Recommended to the Masters of Negro Slaves in Virginia*. Davies warned that some Africans ‘...imagined themselves upon an Equality with white people.’<sup>226</sup> Virginia’s role in perpetuating the ideology of black inferiority was important for whites who embraced “monogenism,” or the belief that all humans originated from a single source—Adam and Eve.<sup>227</sup> White “monogenists” who struggled to reconcile the single origin of superior Europeans and inferior Africans now claimed Africans were the progeny of Ham.<sup>228</sup> Although the prevailing ideology about African

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<sup>225</sup> Hembree, “Person, Community and Divinity in Yoruba Religious Thought and Culture,” 41.

<sup>226</sup> Samuel Davies, quoted in Winthrop Jordon, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Williamsburg, VA: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 183, 188.

<sup>227</sup> Bruce Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 7.

<sup>228</sup> Darkwah, *The Africans Who Wrote the Bible*, 18-19.



inferiority was based on religion, this ideology was expanded when enslaved Africans were defined as “of wild, barbarous, and savage nature...”<sup>229</sup> Defining the nature of Africans as animal-like was augmented with the heathen status imposed by religious leaders such as Reverend Davies in Virginia. This represented a deliberate attempt to reinforce the reprehensible symbolic representation of Africans through the dominant ideology. The dominant ideology influenced the opinion of English enslavers about Africans in Virginia and in the Caribbean.

According to James Walvin, English enslavers in the Caribbean islands and enslavers from Virginia had similar perceptions about Africans. Walvin states that an English enslaver in the Caribbean islands stated that Africans were “lazy” and “indolent,” and “could only be kept in check by white discipline” in the form of physical punishment and enforced labor routines by enslavers. James Walvin cites the following statement about “black indolence” from a Virginia enslaver in 1772: ‘I find it impossible to make a negro do his work well. No orders can engage it, no encouragements persuade it, nor no punishment oblige it.’<sup>230</sup> Under the subjugation of slavery, refusing to or decelerating labor efforts seems to be a fitting reaction for subordinate groups. However, English enslavers judged Africans’ resistance to harsh involuntary work as a manifestation of African inferiority. The purported substandard humanity of Africans, initially inferred through Virginia law and reinforced later by religious leaders, generated an enduring cultural representation of Africans in America. The theme of African subservience resonated into the developing cultural environment in America. As America progressed, so did the system of cultural violence. It is important to demonstrate how the system of cultural violence, which began in Virginia, influenced “race” relations in America.

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<sup>229</sup> Franklin and Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom*, 40, 53.

<sup>230</sup> James Walvin, *Black Ivory: A History of British Slavery*, (Hammersmith, London: Fontana Press, 1993), 236-238.

## **The Significance of Cultural Violence in Virginia**

The projection of the ideology of black inferiority in Virginian law predates the concept of “race” and “racism.” The word “racism” was perhaps not used until the early twentieth century.<sup>231</sup> “Race” was introduced into scientific literature to provide a “formal definition of human races in modern taxonomic terms” in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Leading theorists such as Carl Linnaeus and Johan Blumenbach defined Africans as the most inferior and whites (Europeans) as the most superior of all human races. This new science germinated from and supported the preexisting ideology of black inferiority and white superiority established in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries by Portugal and Spain. Blumenbach considered whites “...the first and most beautiful and most talented race, from which all the others had degenerated to become Chinese, Negroes, etc.”<sup>232</sup> Virginia strengthened the dominant ideology by using these new racial classifications as a way of codifying the ideology of black inferiority and white superiority through its laws into the cultural fabric of the colonies. The purpose of this codification was to create an enduring dichotomy between the meaning of white and black into the entire cultural domain of Virginia.

Virginia’s laws synthesized and transported the ideology of African or black inferiority generated decades earlier in Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, France, and England.<sup>233</sup> The terms “white” and “black” (or Negro) became composite symbols in Virginia and other colonies to personify the superiority of European descendants over Africans. The implementation of the divergent meaning of “black” and “white” gained momentum during the debate among colonists over the social status of the “Negro” following the American Revolution. Dissidents such as

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<sup>231</sup> David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006), 48.

<sup>232</sup> Stanton, *The Leopard’s Spots*, 10-11, 29. Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, 35. Breasted, in Anthony Browder, *Nile Valley Contributions to Civilization*, 19.

<sup>233</sup> Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 97.

Anthony Benezet, John Woolman, and many others considered the continued enslavement of “Negroes” paradoxical to the freedom colonists gained after the American Revolution. James Otis’s, *Rights of the British Colonies* and John Woolman’s, *Considerations on Keeping Negroes* declared, “Negroes” right to freedom, which did not align with the writings of cultural leaders before the American Revolution such as John Locke. *Fundamental Constitutions* by Locke promoted the dominant ideological rationalization touted by whites to enslave Africans.<sup>234</sup> However, John Woolman’s advocacy for manumitting Africans from slavery does not mean he did not take a similar ideological position to Locke about the inferiority of Africans. Woolman seems to support the dominant ideology about the dissimilar abilities and nature of whites and Africans when he stated, “The Blacks seem far from being our Kinsfolks,...and [are] of so vile a stock...”<sup>235</sup> It is evident that the dominant ideology found in both proslavery and antislavery advocates helped solidify a marred status of Africans at this point in U.S. history. The assertions made by cultural leaders, such as Woolman and Locke, support the inference made originally through Virginia’s laws, that Africans were worthy of enslavement. The success of Virginia’s laws at sequestering Africans as “slaves” throughout America is revealed in census data. For example, by 1790, most of the slightly more than 750,000 Africans in the United States were enslaved. The South Atlantic states alone had 641,691 enslaved Africans in 1790,<sup>236</sup> and the northern states contained 36,505 enslaved Africans in 1800.<sup>237</sup> To further advance the system of cultural violence, cultural leaders transfixed the disparate meaning of black and white into the developing culture in America. The incongruent connotations of white and black originally

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<sup>234</sup> Franklin and Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom*, 81, 111.

<sup>235</sup> John Woolman, “Some Considerations on Keeping Negroes (1754),” in *Against Slavery: An Abolitionist Reader*, ed. Mason Lowance (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2000), 22.

<sup>236</sup> Franklin and Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom*, 97.

<sup>237</sup> Leon Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), 3.

produced in Virginia were eventually merged into religion, philosophy, psychology, anthropology, religion, academia, the laws, public schooling, literary works, films, cultural celebrations, songs, plays, forms of punishment, government, history, rites of passage, and folk tales throughout American culture. The cultural symbol of Africans, largely shaped in Virginia, spread across America. However, Africans found ways to oppose the ostensible ideology projected about their tainted human identity in antebellum America.

### **Analyzing Literary Works as Resistance to Cultural Violence**

#### **Establishing Literary Works as Resistance: African “Cultural Projection”**

In the literature about African oppression in America, the role of ideology is often limited to an ancillary function, typically justifying or rationalizing various mechanisms of physical violence and discrimination. Reducing ideology to the secondary role of such salient forms of subjugation may have resulted in a profusion of insufficient explanations about the nature of African oppression in America and how Africans responded. Africans historically considered the dominant ideological projection of African subordination in America to be a dynamic, unrelenting, and prime feature of their oppression, worthy of their concentrated attention. Furthermore, Africans regarded culture, which transmitted the ideology of black inferiority, to be “a subject of political combat.”<sup>238</sup>

Merelman asserts that whites used ‘cultural hegemony’ to “control the flow of cultural projection” waged by Africans in America. Merelman suggests that a useful definition of ‘cultural hegemony’ is the ‘cultural, moral, and ideological leadership over a subordinate group’ because it explains how culture has been a subject of “political combat” in the context of African/white interactions. Africans in America used “cultural projection” as a way of

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<sup>238</sup> Merelman, *Representing Black Culture*, 3-4.

countering cultural hegemony and cultural violence. Merelman defines “cultural projection” as efforts waged by subordinate groups to replace their negative cultural portrayal contained in the dominant ideology and transmitted to the general public with new positive cultural representations.<sup>239</sup> Writing became a spirited form of “cultural projection” for Africans in America between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Many of the literary works produced, published, and circulated by Africans in America were aimed at countering their negative portrayal in American culture.<sup>240</sup> An analysis of the literary works presented in the next section frames the writings as methods of African “cultural projection.” With a simple modification to Merelman’s definition, African “cultural projection” is the effort waged by Africans to replace their negative cultural portrayal contained in the dominant ideology and transmitted to the general public with new positive cultural representations. A sample of these literary works demonstrates that writing was central to African “cultural projection.”

Benjamin Banneker used writing as a method of African “cultural projection” in a letter he sent to Thomas Jefferson on August 19, 1791. Banneker, a free African astronomer in Maryland, challenged the statements Jefferson put forth about Africans in *Notes on the State of Virginia*.<sup>241</sup> Jefferson described Africans as possessing a “very strong and disagreeable odor,” prominent and irregular skin color, penchant toward white standards of beauty, alleged use of lust rather than love as the basis of female/male relationships, perpetual laziness, and inability to use rational thought.<sup>242</sup> Banneker informed Jefferson that his description of Africans was not based on an assessment of African abilities, but was the continuity of an enduring set of

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 3-7.

<sup>240</sup> Richard Newman, Patrick Rael, and Phillip Lapsansky, eds., introduction to *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African American Protest Literature, 1790-1860* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2001), 1-3.

<sup>241</sup> David Walstreicher, ed., “Benjamin Banneker and Thomas Jefferson: *Letters*” in *Notes of the State of Virginia by Thomas Jefferson with Related Documents* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2002), 208-209.

<sup>242</sup> Jefferson, “The Administration of Justice and Description of the Laws,” 176-177.

unfounded and biased ideas about Africans. According to Banneker, there is “almost general prejudice and prepossession, which is so prevalent in the world against” Africans.<sup>243</sup> Banneker had the letter published in 1792 to use writing to contest Jefferson because of the influence that his book wielded about Africans to the American populace.

In 1794, Richard Allen and Absalom Jones were the first Africans in America to pen a pamphlet intended to challenge the damaging ideological depiction of Africans. The title of the pamphlet is, *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People During the Late Awful Calamity in Philadelphia*. During the Yellow Fever outbreak in 1793, Africans were hired to aid the sick and to bury and incinerate the deceased in Philadelphia. This pamphlet is an example of “cultural projection” because Jones and Allen wrote it to refute the allegations of noted printer, Matthew Carey. Carey produced and circulated a pamphlet accusing Africans involved in the cleanup efforts of stealing from the homes of the white Philadelphians they were sent to help. Jones and Allen refer to the allegations of Carey as “partial representations” because they assert his claims were not based on eyewitness accounts. Jones and Allen attempt to avert the accusations of Carey with the testimony of Africans who participated in the cleanup and other witnesses. Jones and Allen used logic, eyewitness testimony, and biblical references to not only challenge Carey’s charge of African criminality, but also to challenge the general idea of black inferiority put forth by cultural leaders.<sup>244</sup>

Prince Hall, a former enslaved African known for forming the African Masonic Lodge in Boston at the beginning of the American war with Great Britain, was a staunch leader in the

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<sup>243</sup> Benjamin Banneker, “[Letter] To Thomas Jefferson [August 19, 1791],” in *Notes on the State of Virginia by Thomas Jefferson with Related Documents*, ed. David Waldstreicher (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2002), 209-212.

<sup>244</sup> Absalom Jones and Richard Allen, “A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People During the Late Awful Calamity in Philadelphia (1794),” in *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African American Protest Literature, 1790-1860*, eds. Richard Newman, Patrick Rael, and Phillip Lapsansky (New York, NY: Routledge, 2001), 32-36, 41-42.

African struggle against the ideology of black inferiority. After he twice unsuccessfully petitioned the Massachusetts legislature to end slavery in the late eighteenth century, Hall's *Charge* was published in 1792 to accentuate the moral and social responsibilities African Masons had to Africans in America.<sup>245</sup> Five years later, *A Charge* was published to advance African "cultural projection." To Hall, the biblical text provided an opportunity to combat stereotypes of Africans and the outcome of the Haitian Revolution provided inspiration for African activism in America.<sup>246</sup>

*A Dialogue Between a Virginian and an African Minister* (1810) reflects the social and political context in antebellum America as well as the personal experiences of the author, Daniel Coker. Coker manumitted himself from slavery in Maryland, associated with the newly formed and independent African Methodist church, and travelled to Sierra Leone in West Africa. The political context that Coker and other Africans experienced at the beginning of the nineteenth century was contemptuous. The abolishment of slavery stalled in the north, tensions between southern enslavers and abolitionists increased,<sup>247</sup> the debate among colonists over the paradox of upholding African enslavement in the colonies for Britain while the colonists were oppressed by the British was settled by restructuring slavery as a sovereign American institution,<sup>248</sup> and enslavers ignored the 1808 Congressional sanction against the importation of enslaved Africans into America.<sup>249</sup> Rather than forcefully attacking whites for enslaving Africans, Coker employed a unique strategy to indirectly resuscitate the deliberation about slavery. Coker did not write the

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<sup>245</sup> Richard Newman, Patrick Rael, and Phillip Lapsansky, eds., "Prince Hall," in *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African American Protest Literature, 1790-1860* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2001), 44.

<sup>246</sup> Prince Hall, "A Charge (1797)," in *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African American Protest Literature, 1790-1860*, eds. Newman, Richard, Patrick Rael, and Philli Lapsansky. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2001), 44-47.

<sup>247</sup> Richard Newman, Patrick Rael, and Phillip Lapsansky, eds., "Daniel Coker" in *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African American Protest Literature, 1790-1860* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2001), 52.

<sup>248</sup> Franklin and Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom*, 80-84.

<sup>249</sup> Richard Newman, Patrick Rael, and Phillip Lapsansky, eds., "Daniel Coker," 52.

pamphlet in first person; instead, he strategically presented discourse between two fictional characters—a white slave master from Virginia and an African minister. In the dialogue, the questions and comments of the white slave master to the African minister supported various arguments given by whites to rationalize African enslavement. Coker’s narrative is an example of African “cultural projection” because the African minister used the text to oppose many of the stereotypes about Africans that slave masters and other cultural leaders articulated.<sup>250</sup>

The publication of *A Series of Letters by a Man of Colour* (1813) by James Forten underscores the African dedication to using literary works as a vehicle for African “cultural projection.” James Forten and his family were not bound by slavery in Philadelphia. Under the tutelage of his father, employment as a sail-maker in a local company, and his experience aboard British naval vessels in the American Revolution, Forten acquired the skills to build a lucrative sail-making business. Although he became one of the most financially successful Philadelphians, the legal restrictions against free Africans like Forten and the almost seven thousand other enslaved Africans in Pennsylvania denoted the inferior status of the African population. Twenty-three years before Forten’s letters were published, Pennsylvania became the first state to pass a law to abolish slavery. Not only was the enslavement of Africans still practiced in Philadelphia in 1813, state legislatures were contemplating legal constraints against Africans migrating to Pennsylvania. Spawned by white Philadelphians who wished to prevent an increase in the African population in the state, legislatures were planning to require the registration of African settlers with state officials. Officials would be given the authority to banish, physically harm, or

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<sup>250</sup> Daniel Coker, “A Dialogue Between a Virginian and an African Minister (1810),” in *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African American Protest Literature, 1790-1860*, eds. Newman, Richard, Patrick Rael, and Phillip Lapsansky ( New York, NY: Routledge, 2001), 53-57.



require a financial sum from Africans relocating to Philadelphia.<sup>251</sup> Forten “unleashed his pen” to declare that Africans possessed a character and status worthy of the same legal rights as whites. Forten published his writings as a strategy to counter the alleged inferiority of Africans.

*Address Delivered Before the African Female Benevolent Society of Troy* was published in 1834. The author, Elizabeth Wicks, was a member of the African Female Benevolent Society in Troy, New York. This organization, like many of the other groups created by African women in free northern communities prior to the Civil War, provided financial and medical assistance to the local African population. The organization that Wicks belonged to also conducted reading groups and encouraged members to circulate their writings as a way to promote literacy to Africans.<sup>252</sup> Wicks’s publication is an example of African “cultural projection” because she disputed the argument put forth by white cultural leaders that enslavement created for Africans the opportunity to acquire superior education and religion from whites.<sup>253</sup>

The early nineteenth century lectures of Maria Stewart—a very dynamic female orator and activist— were published in 1835 under the title *Productions*. Stewart, the first African woman to conduct public lectures to large African audiences in places such as the African Masonic Hall in Boston, was inspired by several key factors. As a free Bostonian, Stewart was surrounded by various antebellum civic and religious organizations that used oration, demonstrations, and published literature aimed at eliminating legal and cultural barriers against Africans. Stewart was also influenced by anti-slavery activist, David Walker, and her

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<sup>251</sup> Richard Newman, Patrick Rael, and Phillip Lapsansky, eds., “James Forten” in *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African American Protest Literature, 1790-1860* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2001), 66. James Forten, “A Series of Letters by a Man of Colour (1813),” in *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African American Protest Literature, 1790-1860*, eds. Newman, Richard, Patrick Rael, and Phillip Lapsansky (New York, NY: Routledge, 2001), 67.

<sup>252</sup> Richard Newman, Patrick Rael, and Phillip Lapsansky, eds., “Elizabeth Wicks,” in *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African American Protest Literature, 1790-1860* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2001), 114.

<sup>253</sup> Elizabeth Wicks, “Address Delivered Before the African Female Benevolent Society of Troy (1834),” in *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African American Protest Literature, 1790-1860*, eds. Newman, Richard, Patrick Rael, and Phillip Lapsansky (New York, NY: Routledge, 2001), 116.

experiences in Boston as a teacher. Stewart was enraged about the treatment Africans had endured for centuries in America. She used her published lectures as a mechanism for “cultural projection.”<sup>254</sup> For example, Stewart rebelled against the idea that women should be homemakers. For Stewart, fighting tyranny against Africans should not be restricted by gender or age. Stewart used her words as a way to provoke in Africans the same character, spirit, and accomplishments they once exercised in Africa. She argued that Africans should not allow the fear of white oppression to thwart the power of a people God had blessed for thousands of years in sovereign and thriving societies in Africa.<sup>255</sup>

Easton’s, *A Treatise on the Intellectual Character, and Civil and Political Condition of the Colored People of the U. States: and the Prejudice Exercised towards them: with a Sermon on the Duty of the Church to Them*, was published in 1837 to refute the exaltation of whites over Africans. In the first several pages of the text, Easton used a logical and philosophical approach to dispute explanations made by many whites about the supposed disparate meaning of the physical dissimilarities between Africans and whites. The central focus of his text is the comparison of the historical development of Africa to Europe. Using the Bible and historical texts, Easton’s thesis is that, although the historical record of Africa had almost been obliterated by whites and other conquerors, the African march to civilization predated Europeans. Eaton shifted his attention to the dominant ideological assertion of the inferior status of enslaved Africans in the U.S. in chapters two and three of his text.<sup>256</sup> The literary works produced by Africans are examples of African “cultural projection” because Africans used writing to replace

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<sup>254</sup>Richard Newman, Patrick Rael, and Phillip Lapsansky, eds., “Maria W. Stewart,” in *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African American Protest Literature, 1790-1860* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2001), 122.

<sup>255</sup> Maria W. Stewart, “Productions (1835),” in *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African American Protest Literature, 1790-1860*, eds. Newman, Richard, Patrick Rael, and Phillip Lapsansky (New York, NY: Routledge, 2001), 123-128.

<sup>256</sup> Easton, *A Treatise on the Intellectual Character, and Civil and Political Condition of the Colored People of the U. States*, 5-7, 12-18, 22-23, 40-41.

their negative cultural portrayal contained in the dominant ideology and transmitted to the general public with new positive cultural representations. The negative cultural symbol of Africans, which was produced in Virginia and eventually augmented by religious leaders, presented another challenge to Africans. Therefore, Africans also studied the Bible to challenge the religious-based disparagement of their humanity.

### **African Literary Religious Vocation**

Africans used religion to challenge their conjectural subordination to Europeans or whites. As previously stated in the section of this study, “Deconstructing the Root of Cultural Violence,” white religious leaders in Europe and early America used the Christian religion as a cultural institution to perpetuate black inferiority and white superiority. Chief among the white religious advocates of an inherent superiority of whites over Africans was their dubious biblical interpretation that all Africans descended from Noah’s cursed son, Ham.<sup>257</sup> Cultural leaders used the story of Ham to rationalize the enslavement of Africans as well as to suggest endowments purportedly unique to Africans such as dark skin color, physical dissimilarities between the hair texture and genital size of whites, intellectual incompetency, and sexual promiscuity, all resulted from African’s curse. Moreover, white religious leaders published texts that included biblical scriptures to substantiate the alleged incongruent identity of Africans and whites into the minds of Americans: Reverend Fred A. Ross’s, *Slavery Ordained of God*,<sup>258</sup> and Charles Carroll’s, *“The Negro a Beast”: Or, “in the Image of God”: the Reasoner of the Age, the Revelator of the Century! The Bible as It Is! The Negro and His Relation to the Human Family! The Negro Not*

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<sup>257</sup> Haynes, *Noah’s Curse*, 224. Chambers, ed., “A Famous Curse: The Origin of a Myth,” 19-20. Franklin & Moss, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed., 35, 40.

<sup>258</sup> Fred A. Ross, *Slavery Ordained of God* (1857; repr., New York, NY: Haskell House Publishers LTD, 1970), 141-142.

*the Son of Ham*.<sup>259</sup> Furthermore, white religious leaders referenced biblical scriptures to infer African subservience as divine. For example, Helen Ellerbee suggests a biblical verse in the 25<sup>th</sup> chapter of Leviticus was commonly used to support the idea that the enslavement of Africans by whites was a Divine intervention:

By thy bondmen, and thy bondmaids, which thou shalt have, shall be of the heaven that are round about you; of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids. Moreover of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them ye buy, and of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land: and they shall be your possession. And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession; they shall be your bondmen for ever.<sup>260</sup>

Africans were not complacent to their religious-based oppression and used religion to challenge their enslavement as well as the notion that their status on earth was predetermined by God to be obedient to whites.

Nat Turner and many other Africans viewed resistance to their oppression as a divine calling,<sup>261</sup> which Wilson Jeremiah Moses calls ‘phrophetism’ or ‘messianism.’<sup>262</sup> Moses describes four patterns of ‘messianism’ Africans engaged in. The first is called “racial messianism,” which he states is “the redemptive mission of the black race.” The second, “messianic symbolism,” occurs when an emblem of a black savior is created in writing or artistic expositions through the public media or imagination of individuals. The “expectation or identification of a personal savior” is the third. Moses states the literary works of Africans that contain a political and religious theme used to denunciate African oppression capture the essence of this method of ‘messianism.’ The fourth and last form of ‘messianism’ Moses describes that designates any African with a divine liberating mission is ‘prophetism’ or ‘prophetic

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<sup>259</sup> Charles Carroll, *“The Negro a Beast”: Or, “in the Image of God”: the Reasoner of the Age, the Revelator of the Century! The Bible as It Is! The Negro and His Relation to the Human Family! The Negro Not the Son of Ham* (1900; repr., Memphis, Tennessee: General Books, 2010), 3-19.

<sup>260</sup> Helen Ellerbee, *The Dark Side of Christian History* (San Rafael, CA: Morningstar Books, 1995), 90-91.

<sup>261</sup> Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 163-164.

<sup>262</sup> Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Black Messiahs and Uncle Toms: Social and Literary Manipulations of a Religious Myth*, rev. ed. (1982; repr., University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 1, 24.

movements.<sup>263</sup> Regardless of Africans' religious affiliation, religion facilitated their charge against their domination by whites. Because the common motif of the African forms of 'messianism' presented by Moses is resistance, the author of this study has chosen the term, "literary religious vocation." Inspiration to use the word "vocation" comes from Freire. Although Freire does not specifically define "vocation" in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he does argue that the major challenge faced by dominated groups is when oppressors deny the oppressed "the vocation of becoming more fully human." Freire argues that subordinate group members develop despondent attitudes about their identity and abilities. According to Freire, despair prevents the oppressed from generating their own human progress independent of the oppressor's influence.<sup>264</sup> Based on Freire, the word "vocation" in this study refers to "a strong impulse to follow a particular activity or career; a divine call to a religious life."<sup>265</sup> The purpose of this section is to show that Africans engaged in "literary religious vocation." African "literary religious vocation" is defined as Africans' commitment to articulate biblical ideas in their writings that defied the Christian-based projection of African inferiority. An analysis of sample of these literary works demonstrates that writing was as form of African "literary religious vocation."

Banneker challenged the cursed Hamitic-origin myth of Africans produced by white cultural leaders when he stated all human beings "stand in the same relation" to God. He also warned Jefferson that his opinion of Africans was hypocritical to the idea that there is a divine responsibility for all devout Christians to utilize their abilities, resources, and clout to assist all oppressed human beings. Banneker specifically requested that Jefferson help "eradicate that train of absurd and false ideas and opinions" about African inferiority that Jefferson affirmed in *Notes*

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<sup>263</sup> Ibid., 1-29.

<sup>264</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 25-27.

<sup>265</sup> *Webster's Desk Dictionary*, s.v. "vocation"

on *Virginia*. For Banneker, the “prejudices” or ideology of black inferiority held and propagated by Jefferson and many others could be rectified by what the biblical character Job challenged his friends to do: ‘put your soul in their souls’ stead.’<sup>266</sup> Banneker seems to use the biblical account as a way to stress the importance of empathy. Perhaps for Banneker, it was essential for whites to relate to Africans as humans because it would help counter the depictions of Africans as uniquely worthy of subjugation.

Jones and Allen (1794) referenced the Bible to challenge Carey’s charge of African criminality and to specifically contest the perennial ideology set in motion centuries earlier that the enslavement of Africans civilized them. They referred to the biblical account of the enslavement of the Israelites by the Egyptians as a way of bolstering God’s abhorrence of slavery and comparing the effects of the oppression on the Israelites to Africans. When Jones and Allen “confess[ed] the vile habits often acquired” by those enslaved, they opposed the civilizing properties of slavery. They premised their argument by discussing the problems Moses had with getting the Israelites to cease activities they acquired during their enslavement by the Egyptians. Additionally, Jones and Allen specified, like God forbid the Israelites to despise Egyptians, that Africans would forgive whites. Jones and Allen lamented to whites that enslaving Africans was a sin; ending slavery was a way of replicating the work of God, who “was the first pleader of the cause of slaves.”<sup>267</sup>

Hall (1797) compared the social status of Africans, who had been subjected to enslavement and labeled as substandard humans, to the adversity faced by biblical characters such as Moses, Jethro, and Elijah. According to Hall, God would intervene in the oppression of Africans and “...hath no respect of persons...” that do not treat all humans with mutual

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<sup>266</sup> Banneker, “[Letter] To Thomas Jefferson [August 19, 1791],” 209-212.

<sup>267</sup> Jones and Allen, “A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People During the Late Awful Calamity in Philadelphia (1794),” 32-36, 41-42.

respect.<sup>268</sup> Contrary to the argument asserted by many Christian leaders since the fifteenth century that God prescribed the European (white) enslavement of Africans,<sup>269</sup> Hall regarded the enslavement of Africans by whites as a sin. He refuted the argument that the control whites had over Africans was a heavenly edict and representative of a divine ranking of humans. Hall described how Moses and a distinguished general of the Syrian army, Nomen, each benefitted from individuals with fewer social privileges. An Ethiopian named Jethro was the father-in-law of Moses. Although of lower social status than Moses, Jethro taught Moses how to efficiently manage his courts of justice; an impoverished servant taught Nomen the cure for leprosy.<sup>270</sup> For Hall, these biblical stories were informative about the conflict between whites and Africans because they demonstrated that the negation of humans derived from human disparagement rather than God.

Coker (1810), a Christian minister, articulated ideas asserted by many white religious leaders about African inferiority through a fictional character (“the white Virginian”); “the African minister,” also a fictional character, voiced the African opposition to that religious-based suppression. The African minister quoted biblical scriptures to support his contentions about the white Virginian. For instance, the white Virginian discussed a biblical scripture, ‘Servants obey your masters (COL. iii.22),’ which many white cultural leaders referenced to substantiate the African subjugation. The African minister asked the white Virginian to read the scripture he quoted, which in fact stated, “Servants obey in all things your masters.” This misquote represented a misinterpretation by white cultural leaders who were erroneously extrapolating from scripture African subservience, according to the African minister. Coker also used the

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<sup>268</sup>Hall, “A Charge (1797),” 45-47.

<sup>269</sup> Karenga, *Introduction to Black Studies*, 119.

<sup>270</sup> Prince Hall, “A Charge (1797),” in *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African American Protest Literature, 1790-1860*, eds. Newman, Richard, Patrick Rael, and Philli Lapsansky (New York, NY: Routledge, 2001), 45-47.

African minister to demonstrate how, according to the Bible, God condemned and forbid slavery during the conflict between the Egyptians and the Israelites.<sup>271</sup>

Forten (1813), in the first sentence of his first published letter, points out how the white political leaders that drafted the Declaration of Independence stated "...God created all men equal." Forten drew attention to a fundamental Christian idea put forth by those political leaders in the Declaration of Independence by capitalizing all three letters in "GOD." For Forten, the content in this portion of the document supported the biblical idea that all social classes and ethnic groups in Pennsylvania, the United States, and the world were equal because all were created by God. He proclaimed the political obstacles and negative connotations waged against Africans in Pennsylvania as hypocritical to the directives described in the Bible about human equality.<sup>272</sup>

Wicks (1834) also found solace in biblical literature about how Africans should be treated. Wicks states that whites who oppressed Africans were not abiding by Christian ethics. According to Wicks, Africans were allowed to access the power of God through prayer like other people.<sup>273</sup> Wicks intended for African children to take up the responsibility of disseminating ideas that opposed white cultural leaders as a Divine mission.

Stewart's (1835) philosophical approach towards African reform is called "Liberation Theology" by Richard Newman et al.<sup>274</sup> Stewart stated that her dedication to dispel the myth of African inferiority and to incite in Africans a spirit of contempt against their subjugation is a heavenly duty. Stewart expressed that God will, in turn, support the African struggle: 'Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands unto God.' She refuted the notion that slavery was a virtuous task

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<sup>271</sup> Coker, "A Dialogue Between a Virginian and an African Minister (1810)," 56-59.

<sup>272</sup> Forten, "A Series of Letters by a Man of Colour (1813)," 67.

<sup>273</sup> Wicks, "Address Delivered Before the African Female Benevolent Society of Troy (1834)," 116-118.

<sup>274</sup> Richard Newman, Patrick Rael, and Phillip Lapsansky, eds., "Maria W. Stewart," 122.



taken on by white religious leaders that would lead Africans to heaven. According to Stewart, the promotion of African inferiority by white Christian leaders who vowed to uphold sacred principles was representative of a sinful contradiction. She referred to these white Christian leaders as “lordly whites.”<sup>275</sup> By not capitalizing the letter “l” in Lord and adding “ly,” Stewart seems to suggest that the promulgation of the substandard African idea was not consistent with biblical scriptures, but instead represented a method used by white Christian leaders to manufacture a set of mythologies about Africans.

Easton argued (1837) that white religious leaders propagated “a hypocritical religious crusade” about dissimilarities between Africans and Europeans. He suggests the physical variability among whites, Africans, and other humans in hair texture, phenotype, etc., was not representative of a Divine hierarchy created by God as many whites claimed. For Easton, the same physical variation among humans was archetypical of various aspects of nature found in God’s creation such as the extreme diversity in plants and animals. He extrapolated the genetic origins and historical progression of Europeans, from the Romans on to the American colonies, to the biblical character, Japheth. Easton states, “In the first place, the European branch of Japheth’s family have but very little claims to the rank of civilized nations. From the fourth to the sixteenth century, they were in the deepest state of heathenish barbarity.”<sup>276</sup> The literary works produced by Africans are examples of African “literary religious vocation” because Africans articulated biblical ideas in their writings that defied the Christian-based projection of African inferiority. The bolstering of the dominant ideology initiated in Virginia by white religious leaders throughout America negated the humanity of Africans. White enslavers, theorists, scholars, and other cultural leaders also projected Africans as subhuman. The next

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<sup>275</sup> Stewart, “Productions (1835),” 123-129.

<sup>276</sup> Easton, *A Treatise on the Intellectual Character, and Civil and Political Condition of the Colored People of the U. States*, 5-6, 12-20.

section reveals that Africans' resistance to their alleged bestial nature involved using literary works as a way to highlight positive features of their humanness.

### **Accentuating Humanness through Literary Works**

#### **Introduction: African Dehumanization**

According to Kenneth Stamp, the enslavement of Africans required complete control over all aspects of their lives.<sup>277</sup> Galtung advises that this control created four classes of human needs or deficiencies in the lives of oppressed groups. The table below (Table 1.A) summarizes Galtung's taxonomy of oppression mechanisms—Direct and Structural Violence—and the effects those techniques produce. (Note: For a detailed explanation of Galtung's theory, see pp. 46-50.)

Table 1.A

	Survival Needs	Well-being Needs	Identity Needs	Freedom Needs
Direct Violence	Killing	Maiming, Siege Sanctions Misery	Desocialization Resocialization Secondary-Citizen	Repression Detention Expulsion
Structural Violence	Exploitation A	Exploitation B	Penetration Segmentation	Marginalization Fragmentation

According to Galtung, direct and structural violence techniques produce seventeen types of human needs for dominated groups.<sup>278</sup> Africans experienced methods of direct and structural violence and the ensuing deficits from the subjugation that resulted in both direct and structural violence. However, the synergy between these two types of suppression and their consequences

<sup>277</sup> Kenneth M. Stamp, "To Make Them Stand in Fear," in *A Turbulent Voyage: Readings in African American Studies*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., ed. Floyd Hayes III (San Diego, California: Collegiate Press, 2000), 293.

<sup>278</sup> Galtung, "Cultural Violence," 39-45.

do not tell the whole story of African domination. Virginia laws, which inferred the inferiority of Africans, commandeered the true historical development of Africans. A summary of the historical progress of West and Central Africans helps to unveil how the dominant ideology depicted a fabricated portrait of Africans.

For millennia prior to their enslavement, West and Central Africans conveyed their humanness in copious and distinct ways. For example, Africans were distinguished by the enormous variety of languages which were formed in their palates making it possible to distinguish a number of cultural characteristics among various ethnic groups that encompassed the African continent. Moreover, the methods for recording histories contained bounteous memories of their human progress. Their facial muscles were molded from learned cultural cues and were expressed through gestures such as smiles, laughter, crying, or anger. Africans had wars and internal strife, as well as peaceful times. Hunters, farmers, barterers, traders, scholars, artisans, anglers, sailors, goldsmiths, coppersmiths, and other skilled artisans helped to push Africa to its “Golden Era” by the early fourteenth century. Africans had formal procedures for marriage, childbirth, death, rites of passage, religious events, political victories, education, and many other cultural customs. West Africa’s “Golden Era” attracted Asians, Europeans, and Africans living outside of West and Central Africa to their wealth and to enroll in the numerous universities in Gao, Jenne, and Timbuktu and other cities in West Africa where professors taught “grammar, geography, law, literature, surgery,” mathematics, and many other disciplines.<sup>279</sup>

From these social, cultural, and political contexts individuals and groups in Africa obtained

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<sup>279</sup> C.L.R. James, “The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery: Some Interpretations of Their Significance in the Development of the United States and the Western World,” in *A Turbulent Voyage: Readings in African American Studies*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., ed. Floyd Hayes III (San Diego, California: Collegiate Press, 2000), 58-59, 67. Molefi Kete Asante, *The History of Africa: The Quest for Eternal Harmony* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2007), 116-142. Michael L. Conniff, and Thomas J. Davis, *Africans in the Americas: A History of the Black Diaspora* (1994; repr., Caldwell, NJ: The Blackburn Press, 2002), 17-27. Franklin & Moss, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 8.

pride, dignity, and a sense of identity, as well as memories, values, gender roles, and many other components of their humanness. Africans who possessed a strong sense of their humanness were taken directly from the continent of Africa to be enslaved in the New World. However, these very Africans likely presented many challenges to enslavers because they knew intrinsically that they were not born to be subservient to whites.<sup>280</sup> With an understanding of the emphatic human and humanizing characteristics exhibited by Africans for centuries prior to European enslavement, African activist, C. L. R. James, dared ask, “Who were the slaves?”<sup>281</sup> The answer to the question posed by James was dangerous for white cultural leaders because it required an inquiry into the history of Africans that was free of conjecture. In spite of all the evidence which challenged notions of the natural inclination of Africans for enslavement, whites who supported the enslavement of Africans preferred to create what they considered a “perfect” African slave.<sup>282</sup> Many white enslavers feared that African’s knowledge of the history from which their humanity grew from would potentially lead to the resistance of African enslavement. Therefore, it is critical to examine some of the mechanisms whites used to create their idea of a “perfect” African slave.

Many white oppressors committed to preventing Africans from knowing about or expressing elements of their culture. Therefore, slave control depended on “deculturalization” or the obliteration of all forms of African culture.<sup>283</sup> Moreover, Africans were prohibited from the right to express their humanness. To dehumanize someone is, “to deprive of human qualities, personality, or spirit.”<sup>284</sup> Many African societies decreed marriage as a sacred responsibility

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<sup>280</sup> Stamp, “To Make Them Stand in Fear,” 293.

<sup>281</sup> C.L.R. James, “The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery: Some Interpretations of Their Significance in the Development of the United States and the Western World,” 58-59, 67.

<sup>282</sup> Stamp, “To Make Them Stand in Fear,” 294.

<sup>283</sup> Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 4. Spring, *Deculturalization and the Struggle for Equality*, 1.

<sup>284</sup> *Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed., s.v. “dehumanize.”

because it generated the three phases of human life— unborn, living and departed (ancestors). Africans expressed the importance of this concept in countless ceremonial occasions for naming newborns, the selection of marriage partners for the living, and in funerals for the departed.<sup>285</sup> Many of the laws and practices developed by whites prevented Africans from exercising such customs. For example, American enslavers in Virginia and other states in the upper south between the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century attempted to control the child-rearing practices of African women through malicious incentives. White enslavers declared the manumission of African women who produced ten to fifteen children for future enslavement.<sup>286</sup> Moreover, white enslavers and cultural leaders characterized African religions as inferior.<sup>287</sup> Part of the Christian missionary zeal was to introduce Africans to Christianity as a superior religion.<sup>288</sup> White enslavers and cultural leaders imposed new child-rearing practices and the Christian religion on enslaved Africans. White enslavers and cultural leaders created a system of control which usurped many of the cultural practices that Africans deemed essential for their human expression and advancement.

As Fanon,<sup>289</sup> Memi,<sup>290</sup> Freire,<sup>291</sup> and Galtung<sup>292</sup> suggest, the deliberate or accidental repercussions of mechanisms of domination such as, “deculturalization” and “dehumanization,” advance the image of dominant group members as praiseworthy, while vilifying the representation of subordinate group members. Those whites supporting cultural violence in America worked determinedly to make the distinction between being an African (Negro or black) and European (white) two opposing and fixed symbols in American culture. The cultural

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<sup>285</sup> Mibiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 98-125.

<sup>286</sup> Franklin and Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom*, 130-132.

<sup>287</sup> D. A. Masolo, *African Philosophy in Search of Identity* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 1-3.

<sup>288</sup> Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 20-21.

<sup>289</sup> Fanon, “Racism and Culture,” 305-306.

<sup>290</sup> Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 79-80.

<sup>291</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 26-27, 37, 44-45, 53.

<sup>292</sup> Galtung, “Cultural Violence,” 39-45.

and genealogical heritage of Africans, that was thousands of years old with familial, educational, legal, linguistic, economic, technological, political, axiological, and other systems which characterize all human groups, was reduced to collectively to one term— “Negroes.”<sup>293</sup>

In the words penned in 1853 by Virginia native, Edmund Ruffin,<sup>294</sup> “Negroes are savage inhabitants...noted for ignorance, indolence, improvidence..., poverty..., vicious habits, and numerous violations of the criminal laws.”<sup>295</sup> While imposing Africans with the status of “Negro” was a moniker for their speculative inherent inferiority, the signifier also represented efforts to conceal the truth about the identity of Africans prior to slavery. Whites could theoretically argue that “Negroes,” a word not phonetically connected to a land mass like the French are to France, did not construct, manage, attend, or serve as professors at the University of Sankore in Timbuktu in Mali. However, it was the African ethnic group called the ‘Mande, Mandingo,’ or also known as, ‘Mandinka,’ from Mali in West Africa who erected, operated, and maintained the University of Sankore.<sup>296</sup> Collectively referring to the Mandinka or other African ethnic groups as “Negroes” helped white cultural leaders create a label for Africans that was void of their humanness. Confining Africans to the tenuous category of “Negro” represented a form of domination which was intended to control the human aspirations of Africans. Rescinding Africans from the historical experiences of their particular ethnic groups was important for white cultural leaders. White enslavers and cultural leaders opted to redefine what it meant to be African.

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<sup>293</sup> Molefi Kete Asante, *Afrocentricity*, rev. ed. (1988; repr., Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 1992), 1-7, 28.

<sup>294</sup> Paul Finkelman, ed., “Edmund Ruffin: The Political Economy of Slavery, 1853,” in *Defending Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Old South: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2003), 61.

<sup>295</sup> Edmund Ruffin, “The Political Economy of Slavery (1853),” in *Defending Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Old South: A Brief History with Documents*, ed. Paul Finkelman, (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2003), 63, 76.

<sup>296</sup> Asante, *The History of Africa*, 125-136

With this evidence, Stamp states that astute plantation owners knew there was a difference between the actual aptitudes of their enslaved Africans versus what enslavers chose to project about them. To bolster the ideology of black inferiority, white enslavers in early America indiscriminately cast “Negroes” as substandard humans.<sup>297</sup> Stamp further maintains, most important to the ideology of black inferiority for white cultural leaders was just an inaccurate account of the mental capacity of Africans, but that their humanity be redefined with fabricated ideas. The challenge for enslavers was to implant Africans with this new identity. Stamp studied the primary documents of enslavers about effective techniques for managing enslaved Africans and concluded that part of their mission was to deny Africans access to any idea that may: inspire any independent “judgment or will;” make them think that their African ancestry was anything other than “tainted;” or did not entrench in Africans “a consciousness of personal inferiority.”<sup>298</sup> The purpose of controlling the socializing influences of enslaved Africans was not only for creating efficient laborers, it was also intended to create what Fanon calls ‘psychic alienation,’ which is ‘the estrangement or separation of a person from some of the essential qualities of personhood.’<sup>299</sup> Moreover, whites could deny Africans any efforts to learn about anything that would inspire their personal ambition to resist their condition. Instead, whites like Dr. Samuel Cartwright, taught that the anatomical structure of the “Negroes” knee was distinctively “flexed or bent” to be ‘the submissive knee-bender’ to whites.<sup>300</sup> The “perfect” slave was an African without the pride, character, dignity, or any key elements of their humanness that were autonomous from the influence of whites. The next section demonstrates

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<sup>297</sup> Stamp, “To Make Them Stand in Fear,” 294-295.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid., 294-295.

<sup>299</sup> Franz Fanon, quoted in commentary, Floyd Hayes III, ed., “Discovering the Meaning of Black Identity: Psychic Dimensions of Oppression,” in *A Turbulent Voyage: Readings in African American Studies*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (San Diego, California: Collegiate Press, 2000), 275.

<sup>300</sup> Samuel A. Cartwright, “[1851] Report on the Diseases of and Physical Peculiarities of the Negro Race,” in *Defending Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Old South: A Brief History with Documents*, ed. Paul Finkelman (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2003), 165-167.

how African writers reconstructed, reconnected, and propagated to other Africans and whites alike, a sense of dignity, which existed in conjunction with the basic attributes of their humanness.

### **African Perspectives on Skin Color and Innate Inferiority**

Several points of contention addressed in the literary works produced by Africans affront white cultural leaders about their suggestions that their dark skin and aptitude were inferior. When Jefferson, a Christian, suggested in *Notes on Virginia* that the dark skin color of Africans was a mark of their inferiority,<sup>301</sup> Banneker wrote to Jefferson that, although the African skin was of the “deepest dye,” God created all humans with diverse physical features, but the same “sensations and faculties.”<sup>302</sup> Jones and Allen not only attempted to avert the accusations of Carey with their writings, the pamphlet was one of the first written and published accounts of Africans’ refutation of the dominant ideological contention that the debasement of Africans in America was caused by their innate inferiority rather than their enslavement. According to Jones and Allen, whites “...reduced us [Africans] to the unhappy condition our colour is in...”<sup>303</sup> This statement is an attempt to debunk the idea that the dark skin color of Africans was a sign of their natural subordination. Subsequently, several African writers followed suit in praising African identity and contributions to American society and culture.

Hall reasoned there was a similarity in the “skin” color of Ethiopians in the Bible and Africans in the African Diaspora, including the Caribbean Islands and America. He also referenced a biblical verse in *Acts*, in which the apostle, Philip, befriended and loved a powerful

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<sup>301</sup> Jefferson, “The Administration of Justice and Description of the Laws,” 176-177.

<sup>302</sup> Banneker, “[Letter] To Thomas Jefferson [August 19, 1791],” 209-212.

<sup>303</sup> Jones and Allen, “A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People During the Late Awful Calamity in Philadelphia (1794),” 32-36, 41-42.



European Eunuch, to vindicate the dark skin of Africans. “This minister of Jesus Christ [Phillip] did not think himself too good to receive the hand, and ride in a chariot with a black man in the face of day,” stated Hall.<sup>304</sup> By suggesting that the European Eunuch embraced Philip, and African, without color prejudice, Hall opposed the position taken by many white religious and cultural leaders that “black-skinned” Africans were defiled by God and distinct from whites. The European Eunuch

Additionally, Easton was not reticent of his pride about being African. He embraced the Egyptians, Ethiopians, and Carthaginians as part of the pedigree of Africans in America and throughout the African Diaspora. Easton argued that the inhumane conditions in which Africans were forced to live are what created the social inequities between Africans and whites. Eaton posited that these inequities were further amplified when white scholars and other cultural leaders classified Africans as inferior, which in turn left an indelible mark on the status of Africans.<sup>305</sup> Stewart rejected the label of Negro placed on Africans and used phrases when addressing Africans in America such as, “O ye sons of Africa” and “daughters of Africa,” in a manner that invoked pride in African ancestry.<sup>306</sup>

Continuing with the assertion of African validation, Forten confronted the negative ideological portrayal of Africans, which he called “colonial inhumanity.” He stated that, although Africans were “deeper skinned” than whites, “there... [are] men of merit among the African race.” Not only did Forten embrace the term “African” with dignity, he described how

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<sup>304</sup> Hall, “A Charge (1797),” 46-47.

<sup>305</sup> Easton, *A Treatise on the Intellectual Character, and Civil and Political Condition of the Colored People of the U. States*, 5-6, 12-18, 22-23, 40-41.

<sup>306</sup> Stewart, “Productions (1835),” 124, 127.

his “African ancestors” helped America achieve independence from Britain to support his claim about the worth of Africans.<sup>307</sup> Forten viewed his African identity with a sense of self-respect.

Even more, Coker portrayed the African minister with a sense of pride about his African heritage. For example, The African minister thanked the white Virginian for initiating a dialogue with a “descendant of the African race.” Coker concluded the interchange between the African minister and the white Virginian with a list of local and national African ministers as well as churches involved in resisting the oppression against Africans in the United States. Not only did Coker refer to the twenty-four Christian ministers and thirteen churches as “African,” he also stated that “...the list will show what God is doing for Ethiopia’s sons in the United States of America.”<sup>308</sup> Coker endorsed a sense of dignity in his African heritage even through a fictitious African minister. African writers in America also took issue with their purported inability to produce internal attributes.

### **Africans Praise Their Character**

The literature of African writers reveals their dedication to dispel the notion that Africans lacked the ability to develop internal qualities such as love and patience. Hall credited Africans in America with “patience” for enduring a profusion of physical, mental, and spiritual mechanisms of oppression without declaring retribution against whites.<sup>309</sup> Forten argued that Africans possessed positive qualities such as “love, emotions, and to be great and honest,” as well as negative characteristics like other human groups.<sup>310</sup> Stewart confronted the perception put forward by white cultural leaders that Africans lacked the knack to develop “natural abilities”

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<sup>307</sup> Forten, “A Series of Letters by a Man of Colour (1813),” 68-70.

<sup>308</sup> Coker, “A Dialogue Between a Virginian and an African Minister (1810),” 53, 64-65.

<sup>309</sup> Hall, “A Charge (1797),” 47-48.

<sup>310</sup> Forten, “A Series of Letters by a Man of Colour (1813),” 68-70.

to form affectionate and loving human bonds without the assistance of whites. Stewart asserted that the pre-chattel slavery history of Africans is a testament to the human enterprise exercised in Africa; and that white domination was the culprit for regression in the humanity of Africans.<sup>311</sup> The literary works of Africans not only bolstered their ability to exercise honesty and other internal assets, their writings also highlight the acumen of African people.

### **Projecting African Intellectual Ability**

African writers further confronted the claims of natural inferiority by pointing out that if afforded similar opportunities and resources that Africans would certainly match, if not surpass, whites in intellectual capacities. For example, Banneker confronted Jefferson's notion that Africans were naturally "...brutish and scarcely capable of mental endowments," by stating that Africans were a revered "race of beings" whose degradation stemmed from their extensive oppression rather than innate mental deficiencies.<sup>312</sup> The notion of "innate" deficiencies spurred arguments towards demonstrations of proof.

For example, Jones and Allen insisted that the intellectual capacity of Africans was comparable to whites, and they challenged whites to conduct an experiment by "taking a few black children, ...cultivate their minds with the same care," and expose them to the same social reality as white children. Jones and Allen suggested this would disprove the supposition put forth by cultural leaders that Africans were incapable of approximating white intelligence.<sup>313</sup> Stewart likewise proclaimed that Africans would become scientists, political leaders, and academics if

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<sup>311</sup> Stewart, "Productions (1835)," 123.

<sup>312</sup> Banneker, "[Letter] To Thomas Jefferson [August 19, 1791]," 209-212.

<sup>313</sup> Jones and Allen, "A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People During the Late Awful Calamity in Philadelphia (1794)," 32-36, 41-42.

given the same opportunities as whites.<sup>314</sup> Hall praised Africans for their ability to meditate and intuit weather patterns, despite so many being denied formal education and an opportunity to learn Standard English. For Hall, Africans' ability to perceive events, such as solar eclipses "without a telescope," was demonstrative of how God blessed Africans with ingenuity.<sup>315</sup> Some African writers included an historical analysis of the ancient African contribution to Europe.

For example, Easton suggested that a juxtaposition of the historical development of Africans and whites is a better method to measure the proposed intellectual superiority of whites over Africans. He produced a time-line with important stages of the development of Africa and Europe to support his claim. Additionally, Easton presented the historical development of Europe, beginning with the founding of London by the Romans in 49 A.D., and ending in 1667 with the American colonies. For Africa, he began with the establishment of Egypt in 2188 B.C. by Misraim, the son of Ham, and ends in 991 A.D. After citing various achievements by the African Egyptians, Ethiopians, and Carthaginians, Eaton satirically states, "Poor Negroes, I wonder where they got learning. These are the race of people who are charged with an inferior intellect."<sup>316</sup> Similarly, Stewart regarded Africa as the progenitor of academic, political, and religious institutions for the world, which "Greeks flocked thither for instruction."<sup>317</sup> In a slightly different vein, even though Wicks did not view Africans as innately inferior to whites, she recognized that most Africans could not obtain a level of "genius" similar to whites because repression prevented them from using what she calls "native force."<sup>318</sup> Wicks's utilization of the term "native force" emphasizes the fact that she did not view Africans exposure to education and

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<sup>314</sup> Stewart, "Productions (1835)," 124.

<sup>315</sup> Hall, "A Charge," 47-48.

<sup>316</sup> Easton, *A Treatise on the Intellectual Character, and Civil and Political Condition of the Colored People of the U. States*, 12-20.

<sup>317</sup> Stewart, "Productions (1835)," 124.

<sup>318</sup> Wicks, "Address Delivered Before the African Female Benevolent Society of Troy (1834)," 116.

religion from whites during enslavement as progress for Africans. Instead, Wicks suggested Africans were equipped with their own gifts and talents, which their subjugation prohibited.

### **Chapter Summary**

Chapter four explores how the ideological underpinnings in Virginia law led to the disparagement of the African population in the colony. For much of the seventeenth century, the African population in Virginia had similar legal rights as white colonists. Whites began sentencing Africans disproportionately for various fractures. The inconsistency in the law inferred that Africans were unequal to whites. Virginia law defined Africans as slaves by the beginning of the eighteenth century. The perception of African inferiority created in Virginia influenced the characterization of Africans as substandard humans throughout America. Virginia's disparagement of Africans helped spawn a system of cultural violence throughout America. Whites used law, religion, education, media, and other cultural venues to propagate a perpetual idea of African subordination across America. However, beginning in the late eighteenth century, Africans created literary works to counter the negative images whites perpetuated of Africans.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

During a recent commute to work, I saw a billboard with the following caption: “Zero to Bachelors in 2.5.” The ad is for ECPI University, which has been in existence for forty-five years. ECPI boasts a speedy path to earning associates, bachelors, and master’s degrees in various disciplines.<sup>319</sup> The focal point of ECPI and many other similar institutions of higher education is expediency. This theme of “expedience,” or accelerated learning, in institutions of higher education makes it difficult to carry out many of the worthy social responsibilities of education. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss how my research about the historic struggle of African Americans fits into the social purpose of education; and to suggest the need for colleges to evaluate their commitment to the continued plight of African Americans. I challenge institutions of higher education because some researchers support my claims that an historical analysis of how ideology has been used to create cultural violence is perhaps a way of shedding light on some of the social forces that potentially affect African American identity development. First, it is essential to present how the literature of African oppression shaped my study.

The remarks made in 1832 to delegates at an assembly of the Virginia House of Representatives by Henry Berry incited my research interest:

We have, as far as possible, closed every avenue by which the light may enter the slave’s mind. If we could extinguish the capacity to see the light, our work will be complete. They would then be on the level of the beasts of the fields and we would then be safe.<sup>320</sup>

Berry’s quote led me to explore methods of oppression that whites used in an attempt to affect the minds of Africans. While perusing secondary and primary sources about the suppression of

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<sup>319</sup> ECPI’s official website, accessed October 2, 2012, <http://ecpi.edu/>

<sup>320</sup> Henry Berry, quoted in Anthony T. Browder, *Nile Valley Contributions to Civilization: Exploding the Myths*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: The Institute of Karmic Guidance, 1992), 18.

Africans in America, an interesting picture began to emerge. It became clear that early leaders produced unfounded ideas about the inherent inferiority of Africans. Whites introduced this set of ideas (ideology) about African inferiority into every facet of American culture, thus using culture as the vehicle for their dominant ideology to affect the minds of Africans. Hence, whites used religion, music, literary works, folklore, newspapers, science, law, and many other cultural vehicles, to transmit the substandard human nature of Africans into early American culture.

Whites in colonial America merged the idea of African inferiority into the newly forming American culture. This permitted white cultural leaders to implant a representation of African subservience into American culture at every stage of development. As improved technology in America generated an opening to produce film and print large texts, cultural leaders opportunistically projected a disparaging symbol of Africans into new cultural vehicles. For example, professor William Benjamin Smith wrote a text, *The Color Line: A Brief In Behalf Of The Unborn* (1905),<sup>321</sup> and D. W. Griffith produced a film, *Birth of a Nation* (1915),<sup>322</sup> to present new and old scientific, sociological, religious, and historical arguments about the superiority of whites over Africans. Whites transmitted ideology into cultural vehicles to create a perpetual representation of African inferiority. I chose to identify the pervasive cultural transmission of African subordination with Johan Galtung's concept of "cultural violence" because cultural leaders impaired the accurate image of Africans. "Cultural violence" is the utilization of cultural symbols, traditions, celebrations, norms, and values by a dominant group as a *transport-mechanism* to create and maintain a desired perception of a subordinate individual or group by conditioning members of that society.<sup>323</sup> The dominant ideology, which stemmed from European beliefs about

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<sup>321</sup> William Benjamin Smith, *The Color Line: A Brief In Behalf Of The Unborn* (New York, NY: McClure Phillips & Co., 1905), 194-261.

<sup>322</sup> Franklin and Higginbotham, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 357.

<sup>323</sup> Galtung, "Cultural Violence," 39- 43.

human dissimilarities and further expanded by white cultural leaders in Europe and America, was not hindered by location and time.<sup>324</sup> The permeation of cultural violence left an ineradicable mark on African Americans even in the north where legal slavery did not exist.

Not long after the publication of Smith's book and Griffith's film production, white business leaders in East St. Louis, Illinois cunningly used the history of American "cultural violence" against African Americans. In 1917, a major race riot took place in East St. Louis. Oscar Leonard conducted a survey over the next several days following the riot. Leonard used the interviews, newspaper reports, and on-the-scene observations to write a report of the disturbance. Beginning with a summary of the report is critical to understand the full impact of this event on the penetration of cultural violence as it pertains to African Americans. Most of the report is paraphrased, but I made a deliberate attempt to capture the manner in which Leonard wrote the report.

There was an ethnically diverse population of approximately 100,000 in East St. Louis during the early nineteenth century. The residents, drawn by the proliferation of industrial work, competed fiercely for factory jobs. According to Leonard, the exploitation of the workers by white industrial leaders in East St. Louis created the impetus for "one of the worst race riots in American history" in 1917. In addition to native-born white factory workers, industrial leaders had access to foreign and "Negro" workers either through immigration or importation by industries. Rejecting any alliance with their neighboring former slave state— Missouri— Negroes in East St. Louis were given the freedom to "own a great deal of land," intermarry, attend school, and hold state, county, and municipal offices with whites. According to business leaders, laborers, and professionals, industrial leaders imported foreigners and schemed to attract Negroes because both groups were preferred as a cheaper source of labor over native-born

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<sup>324</sup> Morning, *The Nature of Race*, 26-28.



whites. Negroes in particular, “being the most disinherited,” were often brought in as strike breakers through means of inducement by industrial leaders. Negroes were favored because of cheaper wages; and because they voluntarily, but most often involuntarily, did not join unions. On May 28, 1917, compounded by frequent newspaper reports of “...outrages upon white women... robberies and stabbings and shootings of white men at frequent intervals,” angry whites began to hold what they referred to as “anti-race meetings” in attempt “to agitate the idea that East St. Louis must remain a white man’s town.” Furthermore, rampant liquor consumption in the surplus of saloons, which, according to the report, “outnumbered schools and churches;” gambling dens, and a lack of social workers all added to this hodgepodge of contempt. Hence, two days before the Independence Day celebration, a two-day massacre occurred in 1917 on May 28th and July 2nd, in which, ironically, the neighboring former slave state of Missouri became a refuge for fleeing Negroes. The total number of dead Negroes will never be known, but, according to the report, “...black men and women and children were murdered... In the seven Negro districts of the city, fires were started at the same time. Negroes were hanged and stoned and shot and kicked. White women and boys as well as men took part. A black skin was a death warrant on the streets of this Illinois city.”<sup>325</sup>

As Leonard’s report states about the undercurrents of the “riot,” whites in East St. Louis considered African Americans the most unwanted group in the city. The history of American cultural violence benefitted white employers and set the tone for actions leveled against African Americans. White business owners exploited poorly paid African Americans as strike breakers to increase their profits. This tactic surely inflamed native-born white and immigrant workers because white business leaders chose African Americans for employment over them. The

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<sup>325</sup> Oscar Leonard, “The East St. Louis Pogrom Survey XXXVIII, 14 July 1917, pp. 331-333,” in *Urban America in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Milton Speizman (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1986), 79-82.

resentment toward African American strike breakers caused white employees to exclude African Americans from unions. The unification of African American, native-born white, and immigrant workers against white employers would have been a powerful force. However, native-born white workers, fostered by the designation of a superior status to immigrants and African Americans, assumed they were entitled to have access to institutions and resources above these others. When the native-born white business leaders chose “inferior” immigrants and African Americans in East St. Louis over other native-born whites for employment, they experienced what Blazak calls “status frustration.” “Status frustration” is the emotion felt by whites when not permitted the social advancement they consider their birthright.<sup>326</sup> As white employers discriminated against white employees, the “status frustration” mounted. The anger created by employment discrimination was compounded by projections of cultural violence about the inferior immigrants and African Americans. Cultural violence justified the exclusion of African Americans and immigrants from unions aimed at confronting exploitation. Although native-born white Americans defined immigrants as inferior to themselves because of their dissimilarities to mainstream American culture, immigrants were not the target of their aggression.

In this context, the intensity of violence imposed on a particular racial/ethnic group corresponds to how the cultural status of that racial/ethnic group is defined by the dominant group. The treatment of African Americans, which was culturally defined through law, science and religion for centuries as inherently inferior, proves this point. For example, cultural violence sparked the displaced physical violence perpetrated against African Americans. Media, such as newspapers, often presented alarming stories of African Americans relentlessly killing, stabbing, raping, and robbing white citizens. The projection of African American criminality compelled whites to perpetrate more cultural violence against African Americans. Whites held meetings to

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<sup>326</sup> Blazak, “Hate in the Suburbs” 51-52.

gain support and momentum to reinforce and perpetuate the idea of an all-white city. The cultural portrayal of African Americans helped substantiate more severe mechanisms of violence. This fueled the urgent necessity to kill and physically assault African Americans and burn communities in seven of the districts where African Americans lived. The designation of being the most undesired in society necessitated the legitimacy of more callous and systematic mechanisms of violence by native-born white business and industrial leaders; which was supported by native-born white factory workers, as well as white immigrants. Berry hoped the mechanism that had been created for African American oppression would keep whites “safe.” In East St. Louis, the perennial symbol of African subordination was an underlined cause for employment exploitation, physical violence, and the elimination of African Americans from the city. Leonard’s report supports my position. For example, Leonard stated that African Americans wedded, worked, and progressed alongside whites. However, he reported African Americans to be the most undesired group in the city, disproportionately cast in the media as murderers of whites, and the most exploited in employment. My research demonstrates that the combined and rigorous attempt made by white cultural leaders since the seventeenth century influenced the treatment of African Americans in East St. Louis and many other locations across America. Given the pervasiveness of the dominant ideology in America, I sought to learn how African Americans responded to the idea of their intrinsic human deficiencies.

Beginning in the late eighteenth century, Africans in America produced literary works as a mechanism to oppose the dominant ideology. They referenced stories from the Bible and historical texts to promote African heritage, human diversity, social equality, African ingenuity, approval for dark pigment, African intellect, African character and other innate qualities, and the African contribution to world civilization. For example, “A Committee of Colored Gentlemen”

from Boston published the work of Robert Benjamin Lewis in 1844. Lewis's 400-page text is suitably titled, *Light and Truth: Collected from the Bible and Ancient and Modern History: Containing the Universal History of the Colored and the Indian Race, from the Creation of the world to Present Time*. Lewis argued that the creation of the world began in Ethiopia in 4004 B.C. Besides an account of the Ethiopian influence on the world, Lewis discussed the contributions of other Africans in ancient times, during the Haitian Revolution and in nineteenth century America. He attempted to dismiss the notion of African subordination. Lewis encouraged readers to, "Search this work with care and candor; every line and page you read will brighten all the truths of Scripture, proved by history—plain indeed."<sup>327</sup> Africans outside of America also toiled to ascend Africa in literary works. An African born in St. Thomas, West Indies, Edward Wilmot Blyden, wrote *Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race* (1887),<sup>328</sup> and Jamaican, J. A. Rogers, wrote texts such as *World's Great Men of Color, Volume 1* (1946)<sup>329</sup> to uplift the image of Africans. African descendants in America, the Caribbean Islands, and Africa have attempted to revive their image since the eighteenth century. The literature about African resistance to the superiority of whites spans from the eighteenth into the twenty-first century. For example, *The First Americans Were Africans: Documented Evidence* (2012) by David Imhotep is a concerted effort to reposition Africans in world history.<sup>330</sup> Although contemporary African and African American scholars currently advance much of the resistance literature, many of the early African authors gained the skills needed to produce literary works without financial incentives or guarantee of protection from whites for the production of so-called incendiary

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<sup>327</sup> Robert Benjamin Lewis, *Light and Truth: Collected from the Bible and Ancient and Modern History: Containing the Universal History of the Colored and the Indian Race, from the Creation of the world to Present Time* (Boston, MA: A Committee of Colored Gentlemen, 1844), x, 2, 385-400.

<sup>328</sup> Edward Wilmot Blyden, *Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race* (1887; repr., Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 1994), 1-5.

<sup>329</sup> J. A. Rogers, *World's Great Men of Color, Volume 1* (1946; repr., New York, NY: Touchstone, 1996), 27.

<sup>330</sup> David Imhotep, *The First Americans Were Africans: Documented Evidence* (Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2012), v.

literature. There were no grants or lucrative contracts available to Africans researching and writing this literature; and it was not uncommon for whites to kill Africans for writing works that opposed white superiority. Furthermore, many of the early African authors gained the skills needed to produce literary works without the benefit of formal education. Public education was not accessible to Africans in much of America at the dawn of African protest literature. Whites advanced the idea that education would improve the economic, social, and political climate in America. Even the early African authors who did attend white schools were not compelled to resuscitate the African image by their educational experiences. My literature review documents how education was used as a mechanism to perpetuate cultural violence against Africans in America. I now want to discuss how the African American struggle to defy the dominant ideology compares/contrasts to the goals of public schooling.

Public education in the United States is based on political, social, and economic goals. For example, students learn the Pledge of Allegiance, patriotic songs, and an encouraging history of the Founding Fathers of America to build a sense of resolute political responsibility. Economic values are engrained into students through their preparation for the labor market. Students are taught skills and conduct for employment. The social purpose of schooling involves using school to improve society. For example, students are imparted with moral values in an attempt to prevent crime, strengthen social bonds and family cohesiveness, and to abstain from or practice safe sex.<sup>331</sup> On the surface, the three goals of public education appear good for American society. Collectively, the goals of public education are intended to enhance the political, economic, and social arenas in American society through student preparation. However, Africans in America did not benefit from these goals. Conversely, the goals of public

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<sup>331</sup> Joel Spring, *American Education: An Introduction to Social and Political Aspects*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York, NY: Longman, Inc., 1989), 6-23.

schools reflect an ideology. Powerful groups have historically determined the nature of these goals. For example, girls were taught to be good housekeepers for men in home economics courses in the early twentieth century; boys were taught to pursue employment and to be heads of households.<sup>332</sup> These teachings in public schools reinforced the idea that men were leaders, and were part of the social goal of schooling for that period. The susceptibility of the social mission of public education to a dominant ideology has made schooling a key mechanism for social control. Whites exercised social control against Africans in early America with laws that forbade their access to formal education. However, educational leaders elicited a new method of control over African Americans in the late nineteenth century.

After the Civil War, white cultural leaders used schools as a mechanism of cultural violence to teach African American students that they were inferior to whites. Millions of freed African Americans sought public education after the Civil War. White cultural leaders pondered over how to fit the potentially millions of free African Americans into the political and social fabric of the United States. Once African Americans began participating in formal educational institutions, a new technique was employed to cultivate the dominant ideology. Virginia would again initiate an innovative strategy for propagating cultural violence. Backed by northern industrial philanthropists and the American Missionary Association, Hampton Agricultural and Normal Institute in Virginia became the American model for the dissemination of African American inferiority. Through the school's leader, Samuel Chapman Armstrong, African Americans learned the following notions: segregation, menial jobs, whites saved them from inferior cultural and religious practices in Africa, and that their enslavement was caused by their own weaknesses. A newspaper created by Armstrong called, *The Southern Workman* was the primary text used to teach African subordination in Hampton Institute's classrooms for twenty

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<sup>332</sup> Joel Spring, *American Education*, 14<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2010), 13-14.

years.<sup>333</sup> Moreover, Thomas Gossett states one of the most “rabid defenders” of the inferiority of people of African descent lived in Virginia during as Hampton Institute emerged. Monogenist and social theorist, George Fitzhugh, declared that the inherent inferiority of Africans made their enslavement judicious.<sup>334</sup> Fitzhugh articulated his theory of African inferiority in two major publications in Virginia: *Sociology of the South; or, the Failure of a Free Society* (1854)<sup>335</sup> and *Cannibals All or Slaves Without Masters* (1857).<sup>336</sup> According to Fitzhugh, “He the Negro is a grown up child, and must be governed as a child...The Master occupies toward him the place of a parent or guardian.” Fitzhugh continues, “...slavery relieves him from a far more cruel slavery in Africa, or from idolatry and cannibalism, and every brute vice and crime than can disgrace humanity; and that it Christianizes, protects, supports and civilizes him...The Negro slaves of the South are the happiest, and in a sense, the freest people in the world.”<sup>337</sup> Through the support of Virginia’s cultural leaders such as Fitzhugh and Armstrong, Hampton Institute became a normal or teacher training school, which carried out the social mission of elite whites. Armstrong and Fitzhugh believed that the south belonged to whites. Therefore, the social mission of the school was to indoctrinate into a crop of African Americans educators and leaders a disparaged view of themselves. Thousands of African Americans graduated from Hampton. As a teacher training school, white educators intended for future African American educators and leaders to impart the dominant ideology into African American communities. The social mission of Hampton Institute was an effective way, as stated in Berry’s quote, to impact the minds of African Americans so

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<sup>333</sup> Watkins, *The White Architects of Black Education*, 9, 12-14, 21, 43-61, 81. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*, 33-71.

<sup>334</sup> Thomas F. Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1968), 66.

<sup>335</sup> George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South; or, the Failure of Free Society* (Richmond, VA: A. Morris, 1854) 1-203.

<sup>336</sup> George Fitzhugh, *Cannibals All or Slaves Without Masters* (1857; repr., Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1988), vii-264.

<sup>337</sup> George Fitzhugh, “The Universal Law of Slavery,” *PBS Online, Africans in America*, accessed February 7, 2012, <http://www.pbs.org/wgh/aia/part4/4h3141t.html>.

that white domination would not be overturned. As a form of social engineering, Armstrong constructed a teacher training school to socialize African Americans to accept second-class citizenship. Whites envisioned that this school model would ensure African American servitude indefinitely. African American students and families balked at the embellishment of an African American identity, which was the central theme employed in school policies and practices. In the case of Hampton Institute, many African Americans were discouraged by their model of education and dropped out. The ideology espoused at Hampton Institute was in opposition to African American resistance literature. African American students were taught to view themselves with contempt. Nevertheless, African Americans created schools to project a sense of cultural pride.

The literature about the African American struggle against oppression proves their perseverance to acquire education. For example, Thomas L. Webber presented numerous accounts of enslaved African Americans risking punishment or even death at the hands of white enslavers for surreptitiously learning how to read and write;<sup>338</sup> Anderson documented the independent and often clandestine schools —“Sabbath schools”— that African Americans created, funded, and supervised in the south prior to 1865;<sup>339</sup> Litwack and Henry Louis Taylor, Jr. described the African American struggle in the north to acquire education in segregated schools and to create independent schools;<sup>340</sup> and Henry Allen Bullock demonstrated African Americans’ zeal to enroll in public schools when restrictions were removed from the south

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<sup>338</sup> Thomas L. Webber, *Deep Like the Rivers: Education in the Slave Quarter Community, 1831-1865* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1978), 131-138.

<sup>339</sup> Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*, 4-11.

<sup>340</sup> Litwack, *North of Slavery*, 113-152. Henry Louis Taylor, Jr., ed., introduction to *Race and the City: Work Community, and Protest in Cincinnati 1820-1970* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 1-11.



following the Civil War.<sup>341</sup> Most importantly, the literature exposes that African American educators developed a social mission for education to defy the dominant ideology.

Scholarship shows that African American educators recognized their protracted image in America as innately inferior humans. They understood that white missionaries and other cultural leaders were responsible for vilifying the African American image. Anderson described when white Christian missionaries from the north went into the south to provide education to African Americans, not only were the missionaries shocked to find that they had their own schools, they were dismayed that African Americans did not want whites involved in their schools. The white missionaries reported southern African Americans preferred that the teachers, school board members, staff, and economic sponsorship be African American. These African Americans opposed the notion that they needed whites to save them from savagery. African American educators also felt that whites would bring a sense of self-aggrandizement and paternalism into their schools. Therefore, there was another social mission amid the spelling, diction, arithmetic, history and other traditional curricula taught in independent African American schools.<sup>342</sup>

According to the 1832 National Negro Convention, the social purpose of African American education was to counter the recurring theme of African American inferiority by building a sense of self-respect in African American students.<sup>343</sup> The social purpose of African American schools was to impart into students a sense of leadership, self-sufficiency, and dignity. For African American educators, pedagogy provided a mechanism to invoke the type of character in African American students needed for political and economic self-sufficiency.<sup>344</sup> The social purpose in African American schools was similar to the purpose of the protest literature produced by

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<sup>341</sup> Henry Allen Bullock, *A History of Negro Education in the South, From 1619 to the Present*. (New York NY: Praeger Publishers, 1967), 33-76.

<sup>342</sup> Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*, 4-32.

<sup>343</sup> Liwack, *North of Slavery*, 113.

<sup>344</sup> Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*, 28-29.

African Americans. African American educators and authors worked persistently to elevate the image of African inheritance. There are instances of African Americans who used schooling and literary works to exalt African American identity. For example, Drusilla Dunjee Houston (1876-1941) was a self-taught African American author and educator from Virginia. Her father worked with Frederick Douglass, Blanch K. Bruce, and other African American leaders; and implanted in her a sense of commitment to African Americans. Spawned from her father's pro-African American values, Dunjee founded and operated for twelve years the McAlester Seminary in Oklahoma. In addition to using schooling to challenge the ideology of African American inferiority, Dunjee used journalism by way of her brother's newspaper, the *Black Dispatch*, to write about the plight of African Americans. Moreover, Dunjee became dedicated to creating literary works about ancient Africa to enrich the representation of African American heritage. Inspired by DuBois's publications, she wrote *Wonderful Ethiopians of the Cushite Empire Book 1: Nations of the Cushite Empire, Marvelous Facts from Authentic Records* (1926) to promote the African contribution to Europe and Asia. Dunjee died in 1941 while working on another African history text.<sup>345</sup> Dunjee pledged her life to resurrecting the African character in literary works, journalism, and schools. Dunjee, like the other examples mentioned, was passionate about restoring prominence to African heritage. From the late eighteenth century to the present, resistance to the dominant ideology has been marshaled in Africa, the Caribbean Islands, and America by descendants of Africa. They obtained literateness to counter stereotypes in the face of physical violence, in both independent schools and segregated schools, and without financial incentives. This resistance movement was not spawned by whites; it has been a crusade waged in America and other parts of the African Diaspora by African descendants against the system of

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<sup>345</sup> Drusilla Dunjee Houston, preface to *Wonderful Ethiopians of the Cushite Empire Book 1: Nations of the Cushite Empire, Marvelous Facts from Authentic Records* (1926; repr., [www.forgottenbooks.org](http://www.forgottenbooks.org), 2007), vii-ix.

cultural violence that has belittled African heredity. With this evidence, I wanted to know how the African American struggle to defy the dominant ideology fit into contemporary educational issues addressed in college of education programs.

Education literature addresses an enormous amount of variables that affect schooling in America today. For example, Pedro Noguera described the challenges faced in urban schools;<sup>346</sup> Sheryl Cashin's study documented the failures of integrating public schools,<sup>347</sup> and Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa, in *Academically Adrift*, argued students' desires to obtain writing and critical thinking skills in K-12 and college is undermined by various societal, institutional, and cultural influences.<sup>348</sup> These data elucidate many contemporary educational issues, but I want to point out how the continued African American struggle against cultural violence ranks among educational concerns. I have chosen to present an analysis of a text called *Letters to Next President*, which was created specifically to present opinions of the most critical hindrances and solutions to quality education. I selected this text because a total of forty-five people contributed forty-one entries; and because it includes ideas from a diverse group of students, politicians, civic leaders, school administrators, community activists, and scholars. For example, sixteen of the contributors are scholars in philosophy, psychology, research programs, and etc. There were three United States Senators. Two doctoral students provided summaries; both were doctoral candidates in social personality psychology. Seven K-12 students and two undergraduate college students also contributed; and two authors co-founded and directed a community-based program called *Parents for Public Schools*. All forty-five contributors discussed their opinion of the most

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<sup>346</sup> Pedro Noguera, *City Schools and the American Dream: Reclaiming the Promise of Public Education* (New York, NY: Teacher's College Press, 2003), 2-3, 5.

<sup>347</sup> Sheryl Cashin, *The Failures of Integration: How Race and Class are Undermining the American Dream* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2004), 219, 223.

<sup>348</sup> Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa, *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 1-13.

pressing problems in education and their preferred resolutions to those problems. The forty-five authors identified a total of sixteen specific causes to the difficulties in education. The table below (2. A) identifies the number of times each of the sixteen causes were raised by the forty-five authors and the percentage.<sup>349</sup>

<b>BREAKDOWN OF MAJOR EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS PRESENTED IN <i>LETTERS TO THE NEXT PRESIDENT</i></b>	<b># of times particular problem was raised by contributors</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>LIST OF SPECIFIC CAUSES OF EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS</b>		
1. Insufficient School Funding	20	28 %
2. Standardized Testing (No Child Left Behind)	15	21 %
3. Classroom Size is too Large for Effective Teaching	4	.056 %
4. Lack of Local Decision-Making in Schools	6	.084 %
5. Negative Media Portrayal of Schools Creates distrust in Communities	2	.028 %
6. Concern for Individual Schools Rather Than School Districts	1	.014 %
7. School Are Disconnected From Community Concerns	6	.084 %
8. Lack of Culturally Relevant Education for Students	5	.07 %
9. Low Teacher Salaries	1	.014 %
10. Lack of Teacher Assistants in schools	1	.014 %
11. Lack of Adult/Teacher Advisors for Students	2	.028 %
12. Decline in Performing Arts Classes and Programs	1	.014 %
13. Outdated Teaching Methods	1	.014 %
14. Veteran Teachers Being Forced Out of Work	1	.014 %
15. Low-income Families	5	.07 %
16. Deficient/Lack of Teacher Training Programs	5	.07 %
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>100 %</b>

(Table 2.A)

Only five (.07 %) of the seventy-one major educational problems identified by the forty-five authors consider the lack of cultural competency as a critical concern in education. Of those five, African American scholar and educator, Lisa Delpit, is the only contributor to make a case for dispelling the myth of the inherent inferiority of African Americans. For example, Delpit stated there are three essential factors needed to produce educational excellence. The first factor Delpit described is: “We must have schools and teachers that, despite widespread societal stereotypes, understand the brilliance of African American children.” Delpit further explained that “In our

<sup>349</sup> *Letter to the Next President: What Can We do About the Real Crisis in Public Education*, ed., Carl Glickman (New York, NY: Teacher’s College Press, 2004), vii-272.

country African Americans have been historically stereotyped as being inferior to other citizens. From enslavement to the present, our society has consistently held and disseminated demeaning views of the intellectual capacity of people of African descent.” Delpit suggests white political leaders, intellectuals, and other cultural leaders propagated the ideology of African American inferiority, which has become entrenched into American culture.<sup>350</sup> Delpit, like Dunjee, Stewart, Coker, and the other African Americans previously mentioned, considers the elevation of the African American image a requisite. Moreover, Delpit is the only contributor to make this critical point in a text specifically created to address causes and solutions to problems in American schools. Hence, her mission is similar to the other African Americans previously mentioned, in that their devotion to uplift the image of African Americans is not a priority in American education and other institutions. It is important that I conclude this discussion by pointing out why African Americans place so much emphasis on reviving their image.

Many Africans Americans not only view the negation of their human image in cultural institutions as a mechanism to justify slavery, segregation, and racial discrimination, but also as a method that has and continues to abolish a sense of their dignity. Some scholars couch the impact of cultural violence on the minds of African Americans as “internalization.” For example, Tatum suggests that the dominant ideology is formed and maintained when African Americans and whites “...are bombarded” with “stereotypes” of African Americans in schools and other cultural institutions. Particularly, Tatum argues that “omissions” and “distortions” about the positive endeavors of African Americans have comprised an enduring strategy for extolling whites and disparaging African Americans. Tatum states that “Internalized oppression” occurs when a member of a stereotyped group internalizes the stereotypical categories about his or her

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<sup>350</sup> Lisa Delpit, “In Struggle and Hope,” in *Letter to the Next President: What Can We do About the Real Crisis in Public Education*, ed., Carl Glickman (New York, NY: Teacher’s College Press, 2004), 70-76.

own group to any degree. Beverly Tatum suggests this happens very frequently because prejudice is an integral part of the socialization process.<sup>351</sup> bell hooks argues that one of the most misunderstood and clandestine consequences of the oppression of African Americans in the US is “internalized racism.” hooks states “internalized racism” is the “...psychic impact of White supremacy” on the “...self-concept and self-esteem” of African Americans. hooks suggests that the imposition of white supremacist ideas of African American inferiority projected through the mass media goes back to the nineteenth century. hooks further posits that the White-dominated mass media attacked the efforts of the 1960s Black Freedom Movement as well as any current movements aimed at ending “internalized racism.” hooks explains that when African Americans internalize stereotypes about ideas such as beauty, African American manhood, materialism, assimilation, etc., in a white supremacist system they become “...as much agents of this socialization as their racist non-Black counterparts,” thus often unknowingly and unintentionally supporting their own oppression.<sup>352</sup> “Internalization” or “Sambo mentality,” according to Ogbu, is “a state of mind in which people unconsciously replay in modern society...the role (or mentality) of slaves.” Ogbu stated that, as some African American students internalized these ideas, “self-doubt” about their academic ability resulted. Researchers reported “self-doubt” was sometimes manifested as complacency or withdrawal from academic achievement in honors and AP classes. Mirroring the findings in Ogbu’s co-authorship of the 1986 ethnographic study of a predominantly African American high school in Washington, D.C.,<sup>353</sup> some African American students in Shaker Heights, Ohio were reported to consider the pursuit of academic excellence as “acting White.” An African female student stated during an interview with researchers, “Once

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<sup>351</sup> Tatum, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*,” 6-7.

<sup>352</sup> hooks, *Outlaw Culture*, 173-182.

<sup>353</sup> Signithia Fordham and John Ogbu, “Black Students’ School Success: Coping with the “Burden of ‘Acting White’” *The Urban Review* 18, no. 3, (1986): 176-177.

we have that inferior feeling, it's like something turns us off. We're just turned [off] and stop trying."<sup>354</sup> Although contested by many scholars, these theories suggest that an historical analysis of how ideology has been used to create cultural violence is perhaps a way of shedding light on some of the social forces that define and potentially affect African American identity development. It is important to note here that although my research focuses on the indomitable efforts African Americans have undertaken to repair their image; to ignore or minimize the potential residual effects of oppression African Americans have experienced for centuries excludes Nathan Hare's caution. Hare argues that studies which exclusively focus on positive strengths of African Americans "prohibits any recognition of pathological consequences of...oppression."<sup>355</sup> Education has been a vehicle for cultural violence against Africans Americans, but African Americans have proven education can be an apparatus for cultural resistance. I believe that college of education programs can stimulate more interdisciplinary research to investigate this topic by incorporating into college programs recent scholarship into such as, *Black Demons: The Media's Depiction of the African American Male Criminal Stereotype*, *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity*, and *Monstrous Intimacies: Making Post-Slavery Subjects*. The authors of these three texts discuss the continuity and consequences of cultural violence in America.<sup>356</sup> In light of the proliferation of negated representations of African Americans, education programs can assist African Americans in their continued struggle to unveil and resist the system of cultural violence.

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<sup>354</sup> John Ogbu, *Black American Students in an Affluent Suburb: A Study of Academic Disengagement* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2003), 77-90.

<sup>355</sup> Hare, quoted in Maulana Karenga, *Introduction to Black Studies*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 322.

<sup>356</sup> Dennis Rome, *Black Demons: The Media's Depiction of the African American Male Criminal Stereotype* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2004), x-12. Ron Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity* (2001; repr., New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008), v-20. Christina Sharpe, *Monstrous Intimacies: Making Post-Slavery Subjects* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), v-13.

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## **GLOSSARY**

1. **African descendants or Africans** -- refers to people of African descent within or outside of America before 1865.
2. **African American** -- describes those people of African descent native to America after 1865
3. **Europeans, European Americans, or European descendants** -- are used as a descriptor in early seventeenth-century colonial America to describe people who have European ancestry.
4. **White** -- is the descriptor used to describe European descendants after that time-period in America.
5. **Cultural Violence** -- when a dominant group uses cultural institutions, cultural vehicles, and cultural venues to create a pervasive image of a subordinate group as inherently inferior to the dominant group.
6. **African “Cultural Projection”** -- is the effort waged by Africans to replace the negative cultural portrayal contained in the dominant ideology and transmitted to the general public with new positive cultural representations.
7. **African “Literary Religious Vocation”** -- is defined as Africans’ commitment to articulate biblical ideas in their writings that defied the Christian-based projection of African inferiority.