

SCIENTIFIC RACISM'S ROLE IN THE  
SOCIAL THOUGHT OF AFRICAN  
INTELLECTUAL, MORAL, AND  
PHYSICAL INFERIORITY

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A

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## ABSTRACT

Scientific Racism was a method used by some to legitimize racist social thought without any compelling scientific evidence. This study seeks to identify, through the Afrocentric Paradigm, some of these studies and how they have influenced the modern western institution of medicine. It is also the aim of this research to examine the ways Africans were exploited by the western institution of medicine to progress the field. Drawing on The Post Traumatic Slave Theory, I will examine how modern-day Africans in America are affected by the experiences of enslaved Africans.

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

It is common knowledge, amongst the African community, that Africans in America have deep-rooted issues with the Western Medical Institution. These issues stem from a chronic misconception that Africans are intellectually, physically, and morally inferior to Europeans. Though modern scholars and scientists have dispelled this racist thinking; it was backed by scholarship developed out of the medical institution, i.e., medicine, psychology, sociology, etc. Many of these early research projects and scholarship is oriented in societal anxieties, at the time, instead of legitimate scientific evidence (Winston, 2003, pg4 ). This process results in the development of illegitimate racist research, which is still taught within the medical field today. This phenomenon is known as Scientific Racism. The African community has fallen victim to scientific racism within research such as The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment and Race Difference in Intelligence (RDI) Testing, to name a few studies. African bodies have been used to further the field of medicine without any regard of their agency; causing residual distrust of medical professionals in the African American community.

This research project seeks to 1.) identify the ways scientific racism has influenced the social thought of African intellectual, moral, and physical inferiority in The United States; 2.) identify the effects scientific racism has on the African Psyche and quality of life; and 3.) critically examine whether scholarship

oriented in scientific racism should be eradicated within their appropriate fields. This research will also briefly engage with the scholarship of Joy DeGruy's Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome; in which she outlines the ways the historical African experience affects modern-day Africans in America.

## METHODOLOGY

This research project aims to identify early scholarship that claims Africans are intellectually, physically, and morally inferior to Europeans. Many scholars and scientists, within the field of medicine, developed the scholarship in question; which has influenced modern-day attitudes and bias toward African people. One must understand, this process was done to maintain notions of White Supremacy in Western society. Scientific racism was essential to the validation of the racist social bias toward African people in Western societies (Winston,pg.3-4). Therefore, scientific racism legitimized racist research and theories regarding African people.

During this research, I will analyze scholarship oriented in scientific racism and their findings through the paradigm of Afrocentricity, as outlined by Molefi K. Asante; as well as identify the connections between their work and racial biases we see today. I will utilize a literature review to critically engage and critique scholarship developed by both Afrocentric and European scholars on the subject of scientific racism and its implications. I will analyze direct cases of

scientific racism towards African communities with examples like James Marion Sims, the “Father” of Gynecology; The Eugenics Movement; The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment; the case of Ms. Henrietta Lacks; and the development of Racial Differences in Intelligence (RDI) Testing. I will also have a brief discussion of the African experience in The United States of America. During the discussion, I will use the journal of formerly enslaved African, Rev. Thomas Jones, to illustrate the daily lives of enslaved Africans. It is important to note not all Africans had the same experience during enslavement, but there are glaring similarities.

The term “foreign” will be used to describe scholars who claim to be experts on African people and their worldview, but have never engaged with African peoples or Afrocentric theories. Most, if not all, of these works, have been perceived as being accurate, but are centered in fallacies wrapped in discrimination, oppression, and racism. I argue this because the scholarship was developed by racist persons seeking to further their worldview.

Developed in 1980, Afrocentricity is the study of world phenomena centered in the African experience(Asante,2003). Afrocentricity seeks to give agency and victory not only to the African Diaspora, but all people who have been oppressed and victimized by Eurocentric Hegemony. Some authors argue that Afrocentricity “distorts facts” and “turns history into Ethnic Cheerleading” (Daley, 1990). However, Afrocentricity is grounded in the idea that African

people should re-assert their agency in order to achieve sanity (Asante, 2003).

“Afrocentrism presents and deals with an authentic and specific culture and history- a cultural history that did not begin in Father Europe but a human/world history that began in Mother Africa.” (Hoskins, 1992,pg. 247)

Centered in Afrocentricity, The Afrocentric Paradigm is the orientation of all research and studies relating to the African Diaspora. Asante argues that any scholarly work concerning Africans must be oriented in the Afrocentric Paradigm or be rendered invalid. Afrocentric concepts, which constitutes The Afrocentric Paradigm, “seek to reorient our world-view to challenge Social Darwinism, Capitalism, and most forms of Marxism.” (Asante,2003, pg.42). It is noteworthy that Social Darwinism and Capitalism are two prominent Eurocentric methods/theories that sought to deny African cultural identity and humanity.

Author and Scholar, Joy DeGruy, argues that enslaved Africans endured generations of trauma during and after enslavement without any intervention or mental health treatment. DeGruy states unaddressed trauma can lead to residual effects on the mental health of the African community affected by enslavement. DeGruy also argues that unhealthy behaviors and coping mechanisms adopted by enslaved Africans have been passed down transgenerationally. This process has manifested as some of the common unhealthy/toxic behaviors we see exhibited in African communities (DeGruy, 2009). Drawing on this argument, I will briefly

discuss how this theory can be applied to descendants of those who used violent and oppressive behaviors to oppress the African community.

In a recent lecture, DeGruy compared Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome to that of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). (DeGruy, 2009). The *Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV, Revised* defines the following as the criteria for PTSD:

- “ – A serious threat or harm to one’s life or physical integrity.
- A threat or harm to one’s children, spouse, or close relative.
- Sudden destruction of one’s home or community.
- Seeing another person injured or killed as result of accident or physical violence.
- Learning about a serious threat to a relative or a close friend being kidnapped, tortured or killed.
- Stressor is experienced with intense fear, terror and helplessness
- Stressor and disorder is considered to be more serious and will last longer when the stressor is of human design.” (DeGruy, 118)

A prominent example DeGruy gave was the selling of a family member. If the father of an enslaved African family was sold to another plantation, it is possible that the mother of that family would develop symptoms of PTSD. She could exhibit behaviors such as a feeling of a shortened future, an outburst of anger, not sleeping, etc. Now, think about their children. Even though the child might not directly experience the same trauma, they are adapting and learning the behavior they see exhibited by their mother via The Social Learning Theory. Annie Chavis states, “ The theory focuses on learning that occurs within a social

context, and it considers that people learn from one another.” (Chavis,2012, pg. 55). Both Chavis and DeGruy agree, children are socialized by their parents. Children learn how to operate within society from their parents or guardians (Chavis, 2012; DeGruy, 2009). For example, children learn how to be parents from their parents. Even if they do some aspects differently, one can find continuity in the way a child was raised, and how that child will, in turn, raise their children (Degruy, 2009, 122). Drawing on Chavis’ scholarship, it is possible behaviors stemming from trauma can be learned. DeGruy notes, some present-day African children, from less affluence, feel they cannot be successful or will not have a good quality life due to behaviors and beliefs they have practiced since birth (Degruy, 122). It is important to realize, this thinking shows symptoms of PTSD. I argue, there should be more scholarship done regarding the linkage between trauma and the psyche of African people in America.

Trauma is defined, by *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, as "a disordered psychic or behavioral state resulting from severe mental or emotional stress or physical injury." Enslaved Africans were subjected to endure traumatic experiences in order to keep them in an oppressed state; and their enslavers in a position of authority. In Chapter 4, I will discuss these experiences in more detail. Afrocentric scholars Cheikh Anta Diop, John Henrik Clarke, Na’im Akbar, Asa Hillard, and Wade Nobles agree that the experiences of enslavement have had damaging psychological effects of the African Psyche. It is because of this, I will

engage in the effectiveness of African Psychology in treating mental illness in African persons.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, I will identify and analyze two specific research projects that deal with the history of scientific racism. These works also address how scientific racism affects consciousness, and in return, social thought. Much of the scholarship utilized in this research are by Eurocentric scholars. However through Beneficial extraction, as defined by Aaron Smith, Ph.D. in a recent lecture, I will extract the most useful information located in the text. Lastly, I will provide an Afrocentric critique using the Afrocentric Paradigm. There are many works regarding scientific racism, but most are not grounded in The Afrocentric Paradigm. I implore Afrocentric scholars to develop more complete works identifying instances of scientific racism, and discussing the effects of scientific racism on the African American community

*Defining Difference: Race and Racism in the History of Psychology* is a collection of essays edited by Andrew Winston. Winston prefaces these essays by arguing that many early psychologists based their research findings off “contemporary social concerns and anxieties” instead of actual scientific evidence (Winston, 2003,pg 4). He also argued that psychologists had a “limited, but important influence in shaping public discourse on race, heredity, and intelligence” (Winston, 2003,pg 4). Therefore, Winston agrees that Western Psychology influenced the social thought of African inferiority of intelligence,

physicality, and morality. It is also important to note that many of these early research projects and theories have influenced contemporary psychological practices today. Many of these early psychologists and scholars claimed to be experts of Africa and Africans. However, most, if not all, did not provide ethical or legitimate evidence to support their racist ideologies against African personhood, culture, and heritage. These same scholars spent limited to no time in African communities; nor were there any purely objective observations of Africans or African Culture. It is for these reasons, notions that “primitives[Africans] devoted more energy to ‘lower’ functions and less to ‘higher’ ones like reasoning and will...” (Winston, 2003,pg 138) were common. One should raise the question, ‘What constitutes a higher function and lower function?’ More importantly, ‘What paradigm is this statement centered in?’ The answer is immersed in Eurocentric Hegemony. One must understand, the criteria used to draw these racist conclusions were based in what Europeans or Western society considered standardized normality. However, what one might consider normal in western society might not be reasonable to others, in this case, African society. I will continue this discussion later in my findings.

Contributing author, Fredric Weizmann, highlights the scholarship of Francis Galton, specifically regarding his research on "intelligence men". Galton believed one could measure aspects of human behavior and nature scientifically, including intelligence. His work has been proven to have racial bias, nonetheless,

he is considered a prominent voice within the field of psychology. His work is still utilized in psychology curriculum. Galton is credited with coining the phrase “nature vs nurture”, and he was in opposition with nature (Jackson&Weidman,2005) Weidman. For Africans, this is alarming. African spirituality is not like the institution of religion, but a way of life (Mbiti, 1969;Asante &Mazama 2009) Nature is a key ontological entity with the African spiritual belief systems (Mbiti, 1969, pg 16). Mbiti argues that Nature, along with the other four entities, have a pervasive force that comes from the Supreme Deity. Galton also argued that African “were at least two grades below Anglo-Saxons in ability and intelligence”, and “were losing the evolutionary battle for existence in the face of their superior European conquerors” (Jackson & Weidman, 2005, pg.68). Galton’s work and Thomas Jefferson’s, Founding Father and third President of The United States of America, draws striking similarities. Jefferson believed that Africans were inferior in terms in intellect and physique (Jackson &Wediman, 2004, pg. 23).

Though Galton’s research predated IQ Testing, Racial Differences in Intelligence (RDI) testing started back in 1905 (Winston,2003). Alfred Binet developed the first practical intelligence test between 1905-1908. However, he argued it shouldn't be used to measure intelligence or label someone permanently. Lewis Terman developed The Stanford-Bient Test in 1916. This test is coined as the origin of multiple choice testing. In the manual, Terman claims a higher

number of “morons” are found in non-white races; and further research into race difference on intelligence should be conducted”. He also claimed “enormously significant racial difference in ‘general intelligence’ could not be remedied by education” (Terman, 1916). It is important to note the test released its fifth edition in 2003. It is presently used to identify intellectual handicaps.

RDI testing was used to “identify” intellectual inferiority in other "races" compared to White Americans. It is important to note that this type of testing was solely used in the United States of America. Other countries had their methods of tracking this information that was neither better nor worse, according to Richards (Winston, 2003).

"This methodology promised to ascertain the Negro's innate intelligence scientifically. Proving Black American's intelligence to be less than that of White Americans would exonerate the ‘system,’ assuage liberal White guilt, confirm what most White people believed previously, give segregation a scientific imprimatur, and justify Negroes to ‘industrial education’” (Winston, 2003, Pg 140)

In the passage above, Richards claims that these tests were used to keep Africans in an intellectually suppressed state. Scholars and scientists used their work to pacify the consciousness of White Americans. Therefore, these tests justified racist social thought of African intellectual inferiority. But in what paradigm is RDI oriented in? In other words, who set the standards for superior intellect in RDI testing? Africans were expected to meet European standards of

intellect. However, Africans, nor any other cultural group, are not obligated to meet European standards for anything. The arrogance of thinking one's cultural ideologies are superior to others is dangerous and false (Asante, 2003) (Mazama,2003)

RDI research began to decline in the 1930s with only "4% of psychologists accepting the RDI hypothesis," (Winston, 2003,pg 141). Nonetheless, racially charged research still persisted within western society. Jensen's Harvard Educational Review article (1969) entitled, "*How Much Can We Boost IQ and Scholastic Achievement?*" reignited the debate surrounding RDI research with claims that race and intelligence were connected. Jensen argued that IQ, or intelligence, is determined by genes, including racial heritage (Winston, 2003,pg 142). This furthermore proves how scholars used their works to maintain the standard of White Supremacy.

It is my conclusion that this scholarship, as a whole, highlights the theme of race and intelligence as a central part of psychology; just as racism is a central part of the founding ideals of the United States, as defined by The Critical Race Theory (2001).Winston and the contributing authors do a thorough job of disproving race-based research within the field of psychology, but their scholarship falls short. It is painstakingly obvious that each author is grounded in the same Eurocentric thinking that allowed the initial racist social thought. At no

point do any of the contributing authors or editors take part in the discussion of the Kemetic origins of Psychology, or engage with Afrocentric scholarship regarding this subject. It is also my observation that there was no effort to separate themselves from obviously racist terminologies. For example, Richards argues the following,

"Most obviously, the long-dubious notion of races as genetically definable natural categories was laid to rest. 'Race' did no scientific work, and such concepts as 'gene pool,' 'genetic drift,' and 'founder effects' were sufficient to handle human genetic diversity" (Winston, 2003,pg 153)

The above passage indicates that some psychologists moved away from obviously racially biased terms in exchange for others such as "gene pool", the same camouflaging Jensen used to make his claim for hereditary intelligence, or "founder effects", the reduced genetic diversity which results when a population descends from a small number of colonizing ancestors. It is important to note that these new terminologies still hold racist connotations, just as mainstream media uses terminologies such as "Thug" or "Hoodlums" to identify African Americans without saying such subliminally. The words are different, but the intention is still the same.

*The Falsification of Afrikan Consciousness – Eurocentric History, Psychiatry, and The Politics of White Supremacy* is comprised of two lectures by

Amos Wilson regarding the consciousness of African people. The first lecture, *“European Histography and Oppression Exposed: an Afrikan Analysis and Perspective,”* deals with how history and perspective influences the development of consciousness and human behavior. Wilson includes how racist Europeans manipulated both to maintain and advance the goal of white supremacy. Wilson argues that Europeans have politicalized, and therefore weaponized, global history in order to represent themselves as the standard and all others as non-normative. Eurocentric Hegemony “helps to [validate] the oppressive system and to maintain the imbalance of power in favor of the oppressor”, (Wilson, 2014,pg. 3). When one engages intellectually with Eurocentric Historiography, one will see the reliance on eradicating the legitimacy of African culture, or any other culture, and contributions in order to manipulate the general consciousness of society. It is important for one to understand the connection between history and consciousness. As I have stated, this research seeks to identify the ways scientific racism has been used to influence, and in turn manipulate, the general public’s perception. Scholars such as Wade Nobles and Asa Hillard have developed conducive arguments that early European psychologists and philosophers put forth articles and studies claiming the intellectual, moral, and physical, inferiority of African people. Western society took this scholarship at face value, and caused influencing effects on the general consciousness. Evidence of this is found in Debow's Review a popular magazine in the Southern United States from 1846-

1884. (Nixon, 1931). During the era of enslavement, it was commonplace of owners and overseers to write letters to DeBow's Review about the inferiority of enslaved Africans and the best ways to control them. The following was written by, an unnamed, assumed, White American man, in a letter to DeBow's Review's editors about "The Negro Problem."

“Whatever others may believe, or profess to believe, based upon theory, imagination, or falsehood, we *know* that the African is of limited intellectual capacity – that as a creature of imitation in contact with the white man, under his authority and control he improves, and has improved. But history as universal history and all experience testify, without the authority and control of the white man, to overcome the *vie inertia* of his nature, he cannot progress in civilization and improvement.” (Debow's Review, 1868, 248)

How did this man “know that the African is of limited intellectual capacity?” I believe that prominent scholars at the time gave validation to notions of African inferiority. Scientific racism influenced the social thought of everyday people such as the unnamed writer. Therefore, in my opinion, Wilson is correct in arguing the following:

“To manipulate history is to manipulate consciousness; to manipulate consciousness is to manipulate possibilities is to manipulate power,” and yet, “The history of the oppressed as written by the oppressor, shape the consciousness and psychology of both the oppressed and oppressors.” (Wilson, 2014, pg 2)

Wilson argues that Europeans have manipulated history in order to eradicate and falsify the African experience, as well as other cultures, in order to project an image of white superiority (Nobles,. This manipulation of consciousness affects the way one might develop their bias regarding a different group of people. For example, if a white person, who has never had any direct contact with African people, develops their attitudes toward African people based solely on societal generalizations; it is apparent Eurocentric views have manipulated their consciousness. Furthermore, if an African child only sees himself through the gaze of Eurocentric hegemony and not his African history, his consciousness has been manipulated by Eurocentric views. This process further reduces the agency of African people, and does not allow for a victorious consciousness.

Wilson further describes this manipulation with the example of Skinnerian Psychology. Burrhus Frederic Skinner, commonly known as B. F. Skinner, is well known for developing the theory of Operant Conditioning, a method of learning that operates under rewards and punishments for behavior (Wilson, 2014, pg.15-17). Skinner put a rat in a box and only gave it food or water if it performed a particular behavior. If the rat pulled the lever, Skinner would give it food and water. If it did not pull the lever, the rat got nothing; thus conditioning the rat to perform certain behaviors in order to survive. Wilson challenges his reader to look at this experiment politically (Wilson, 2014). The researcher determines the

conditions in which the rat survives, thus forcing the rat to adapt to the conditions set forth by the researcher (Wilson, 2014, pg. 16). Wilson argues that we [African people] are “conditioned by the circumstances under which we live. We are living under them as a result of the exercise of the power of another people over us.”

(Wilson, 2014, pg 17)

In his second lecture, *"Eurocentric Political Dogmatism,"* Wilson claims that in order for the European to hold the power he does within society, he must keep the African in a state of insanity (Wilson, 2014). This insanity is defined as the process of which an African must no longer think of himself as an African in order to survive within the oppressive measure set forth by the European (Nobles,2012) (Akbar, 1984). W.E.B. DuBois and Paul Gilroy would define this a double consciousness, the way in which an African performs a less threatening version of himself in society, and acts as himself in private. (DuBois, 1994) (Gilroy,1993) One performs this double consciousness in order to move through western society without the repercussions of being seen as African, as if it was a disgrace. I venture to argue that the presence of a double consciousness indicates a state of insanity. If one is not in his right [African] mind, he is operating within a state of insanity (Wilson, 70)

“Have we ever taken time to step back and step out of our ‘normal’ minds for a minute, and noted the madness that exists around us...that TV advertising is designed to keep us in a state of frustration and dissatisfaction, and designed

to inculcate in us a sense of inferiority, and designed to keep us from facing reality and confronting the truth, to divert us from the pitifulness of our situation” (Wilson, 2014, pg 71)

Wilson continues to say we cannot continue to use Europeans as a model of normality, as they were the ones who enslaved our ancestors and tried to eradicate our true culture and heritage. We cannot continue to operate within a double consciousness to appease White Supremacy (Wilson, 2014). Africans should not have to condition or develop a double consciousness in order to survive.

Racism stems from the insane belief that one group of people are superior to others based on the color of their skin. I argue that this belief is insane, because 'race,' itself, is nothing more than a social construct developed by those who would seek to oppress others who are culturally different (Nobles, 2012). No justifiable scientific evidence supports the arguments of racial superiority, rendering the concept, and those who practice, insane. Drawing on Wade Noble's scholarship on psychological enslavement, African people are continually living in a state of insanity due to the misclassification of non-normative behavior. The environment that racism has created via discrimination and violence has caused Africans to live in destitution. Modern day examples include the unprovoked calling of Police on African people living their daily lives; the murders of unarmed

African people at the hands of the police; and the everyday discrimination African people are made to endure. These are not the only examples of the insane conditions Africans in America must live in. One must recognize the mental stress this kind of trauma causes on the African psyche; which I will discuss later.

If one should want to understand the psychology of Eurocentric imperialists, one must look to their history. Wilson argues that the enslavement of Africans, the genocide of the Native Americans, and the use of holocaustic weapons are inevitable indictments of the insanity of Europeans (Wilson, 2014). He states that the examples previously mentioned give clear indications of the lengths colonizers would go to advance their ideology on the world. Wilson gives a fundamental Afrocentric critique of the psychology of oppressive Eurocentric thought, but he fails to engage in the epistemology of these so-called superior values rendering his work incomplete. I call for more Afrocentric scholarship to be done on this topic, as much of the scholarship surrounding these issues are Eurocentric at best.

### CHAPTER 3 SCIENTIFIC RACISM AND AFRICAN DISTRUST OF WESTERN INSTITUTIONS

One does not have to look far to find evidence of scientific racism within Western institutions. According to the Critical Race Theory, racist ideologies were built into the very fabric of American laws, which govern this nation (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). It is vital that one understands how these research projects have influenced social thought regarding Africans. Scientific Racism is defined as "The [Eurocentric] belief that scientific evidence exists to support claims of racial inferiority/superiority" (SSE, Pg 716) This belief became prominent during World War I and was not renounced until 1950; merely 67 years ago. It is worthy to note, scientific racism, though denounced, has influenced influential scholarship, including *The Bell Curve (1994)*.

Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species (1859)*, became the framework for ideologies and ethics favoring racial superiority and inferiority. Western science and scholarship have often been used to legitimize and maintain social thought of white racial superiority. It was the result of European scholars, such as Charles Davenport, that Africans, and anyone non-white, was genetically inferior to Europeans (Neejer, 2015). According to Graham Richards, European scholars and scientists routinely allowed their personal and political beliefs to influence their scholarship rather than a commitment to scientific integrity (Winston, 2003).

The 11th Edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica (1911), the leading encyclopedia in Great Britain, published scientific articles claiming Africans were mentally inferior to whites. It claimed Africans were more closely related to apes; and sexual thoughts consumed the African mind after puberty (Chrisholm, 1911-v.19, pg. 344-348) . These findings were recanted in later editions.

Another alarming observation from this encyclopedia was its finding regarding Africa. Britain scholars agree that Egypt was a great civilization; but they claim Egypt had no influence over the rest of the continent (Chrisholm, 1911- V. 1, pg 330-360) . Afrocentrists know this is not true. Diop argued that Africa is the cradle of all human civilization, and African culture flowed through Kemet, or Egypt (Diop,1989). The disregard of African agency and self definition is apparent. Furthermore, in the thirty pages regarding Africa, most of the information had to do with the colonization of Africa (Chrisholm, 1911- V. 1, pg 330-360). There is no mention of African culture or identity. How can one develop scholarship on Africa and African people without mentioning the African contribution to Western civilization? The 11th edition is still regarded as one of the greatest works of European scholarship to this day.

Centuries of political and scientific racism has affected the quality of life for Africans in America and abroad. As previously discussed, findings from racist scholarship gave merit to oppressive behaviors exhibited by European and White Americans toward Africans. Scientists and medical practitioners routinely abused

their power in African communities by using Africans as test subjects for experiments to advance the fields of medicine. This process resulted in deep-rooted distrust in Western institutions amongst African people. In this chapter, I will identify critical research and medical “experiments” that abused African people.

James Marion Sims is revered as the Father of Modern Gynecology for his work with women’s reproductive health during 1845-1849. He is credited with founding the first women's hospital when studying the female anatomy was considered crude and offensive (Owens, 2017, pg.110). Sims perfected his treatment of vesicovaginal fistulas, "a condition where a woman's bladder, cervix, and vagina is caught between the fetal skull and the woman's pelvis", by performing medical experiments on enslaved African women without the use of anesthesia. It was commonplace of enslavers to “lease” enslaved African women to Sims for his research for five years (Owens, 2017, pg.111).

From 1619 to 1865, The United States of America practiced Chattel Slavery, a system which placed monetary value on human life. This practice was used to strip away any evidence of humanity from enslaved Africans, and valued them as commodities to be bought and sold (Hines, 2014). Sims performed more than 50 known operations on enslaved women; many who were not named in his records (Owens, 2017). However, in the name of agency in honor, I invoke the memory of three African women who were subjected to Sims’ torture; Lucy,

Anarcha, and Betsy. Sims recorded an operation, in his personal records, involving Lucy in which two men restrain her as she was positioned on all fours (Owens, 2017). He observed she was in great pain after the operation, and even suffered blood poisoning due to his neglect in leaving a medical sponge inside of her (Holland, 2019). It was commonplace for Sims to perform these "operations" in front of a group of other male practitioners of medicine (Holland, 2017) (Owens, 2017). Sims claims these enslaved women gave consent for their bodies to be used in such ways. However, these claims are unfounded in any other reputable source. Enslaved Africans had limited access to education and were not able to exercise agency. So, how were these women able to give fully informed consent to these experiments? I speculate they did not, but instead, their captors did so for monetary gain (Owens, 2017, pg.113). It is also possible, these women were intimidated by their owners to give consent.

After perfecting his treatment techniques on enslaved African women, Sims began treating White women while using anesthesia. Sims produced a flyer showing a passive white-washed version of his procedures to showcase a more pleasant experience. (Owens, 2017, figure 5.1). Supporters of Sims argue that he was "a man of his time", and merely operated as such. Dr. William Johnston, while eulogizing Sims, said the following:

“Who can tell how many more years the progress of the art might have been delayed, if the humble servitors had

not brought their willing suffering and patient endurance.”(Owens, 108)

Johnston's statement is a clear indication of the disregard that medical practitioners in the U.S. have for African women. I emphasize this, because African women still experience oppression within the medical institution, in which I will discuss later. The quote mentioned above, by William Johnston, sheds light on the horrific fact, the use of African bodies was acceptable to experiment on and study in order to advance the field of medicine.

Sims also relied on his racist beliefs that Africans were intellectually inferior to conduct experiments on African children and infants. He used a shoemaker's tool to pry African children's bones apart in order to loosen their skulls (Brinker, 2000). This operation had a 100% fatality rate. It was also noted that Sims would continue his research on the corpses of these African children (Brinker, 2000). In January 2018, New York City finally removed Sims' statue and replaced it with a plaque honoring the enslaved women he experimented on. Sims made great strides in modernizing Gynecology, but one cannot dismiss his overtly racist actions by using powerless African women and children to advance the field of medicine.

The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment of 1932-1972, backed by U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS), examined the natural progression of syphilis in African men without intervention. In other words, African men were infected with

Syphilis without any medical treatment. Dr. J. E. Moore argued the conditions in Tuskegee already existed, and that the men “would not be treated anyway (Brandit,1978, pg.3). Moore was referring to the conditions in which African people in the U.S. were subjugated to living. Africans had limited access to health care, high poverty rates; and an assumed high promiscuity rate (Brandit, 1978). In an effort to encourage Moore to move forward with the study, Dr. O. C. Wenger stated the following:

“We must remember we are dealing with a group of people who are illiterate, have no conception of time, and whose personal history is always indefinite.”(Brandit,1978, pg. 3)

It is clear, Moore and Wenger did not take African contributions to civilization seriously. Enkis Calendar, or Adam's calendar, is the the oldest human-made structure in the world,. It is credited as the earliest megalithic stone calendar and is located in South Africa (Heine& Tellingner,2008) The stone calendar is estimated to be 75,000 years old. In comparison, Stone Hedge in Britian was built around 5,000 years ago (Last, 2018). How can a people who created the oldest known calendar have no perception of time? Moore claims that Africans have an indefinite history, but that is not true. Asante gives an exceptional histography of Africa spanning back to the civilization of Kemet (Asante, 2015). White Supremacy sought to falsify African history by claiming Africans were savages, but that is not true. Scholars such as Asante, Diop,

Mazama, and many others have argued the rich history of Africa and the birthplace of human civilization.

I must address both Moore and Wenger's hypomnesia of the systematic barriers placed to keep resources, such as adequate health care, quality education, and jobs, away from Africans. The system of White Supremacy seeks to keep Africans, and other non-European people, in a state of oppression. This system uses social constructs, such as capitalism and socioeconomic status, to keep White Americans in a place of privilege.

I define the Poverty Cycle, as a system put in place to keep groups of people in an oppressed state using restricted access to education, housing, and jobs. A vast majority of African communities in the U.S., schools are underfunded and overcrowded (Ready & Welner, 2004). Students are not provided an adequate education that ensures access to specific jobs or admission into higher learning institutions. This, in turn, limits people to low paying jobs and affects the quality of their homes and communities. These social constructs bar groups of people from obtaining equal access to power and wealth. Simultaneously, it places a lower value on their lives. This provides "moral" vindication for the racist rhetoric that influenced the constitutive goals of the Tuskegee project. During a 1965 Center for Disease Control meeting, the following was recorded:

“Racial issue was mentioned briefly. Will not affect the study. Any questions can be handled by saying these people were at the point that therapy would no

longer help them. They are getting better medical care than they would under any other circumstances.”  
(Brandt,1978, pg. 6)

In 1932, Scientists gathered 400 infected and 200 uninfected men under the pretense of free healthcare . No one received any form of treatment once infected with the disease; even when penicillin was accepted as the preferred treatment of syphilis in 1950 (Brandt, 1978). The U.S. Government-backed program lasted for 40 years before it was terminated. However, it was shut down due to garnering national press attention in 1972. (Brandt,1978). By the conclusion of the experiment, only 74 participants were still alive. (Brandt, 1978).

Scientific racism did not come in a singular form. Scholars, such as Galton, sought to further the reach of White supremacy by creating the rationale for The American Eugenics Movement (AES). Eugenics is "efforts to strengthen family and civilization by regulating fertility"(Kline, 2000). In other words, "intellectuals, physicians, scientists, politicians, and religious leaders" advocated for population control, which was used to control the size of the African community in the U.S. (Neejer, 2015, pg.108). In 1883, Galton coined "Eugenics" and argued, "creating a new 'national conscience' of eugenics was more humane than letting genetically inferior groups continue to spread unfit traits" (Neejer, 2015, pg.109). At this point, I would be remised not to draw on Dr. Orpheus Everts' view on castration. In 1888, Everts concluded that castrating sex criminals

would "ensure that the criminal could not [re-offend] and that he could not pass his predilection for sexual violence to any potential offspring" (Neejer, 2015, pg. 110). He and his peers concluded that castration was a logical option in the prevention of sexual crimes. It is important one notes that "legitimate" voices such as Everts's gave rise to the act of castrating African men for sexual crimes that many of them did not commit. I will discuss this occurrence more in a later chapter. Nevertheless, Everts' work gave rationale to the criminal act of castrating innocent African men, and progressed the efforts of Eugenics. I argue, it was medical doctors, scholars, and scientists that let their disregard for "lesser races" blind them to the ethical and moral mistreatment of African people in Western society.

In 1901, the belief that "immigrants, African Americans, and poor whites were having more children than fit parents"(fit parents being upper class White Americans), became more popular in the US (Neejer,2015, pg. 110). The American Eugenics Society was founded in 1926 by Madison Grant. The goal of the organization was to ensure undesirable groups of people would not be able to reproduce at a rate that would outnumber the diminishing elite class (Gur-Arie, 2014). Margret Sanger, a former president of AES, argued that women should "limit their families by utilizing birth control and sterilization" (Neejer, 2015). Sanger is credited with transforming The American Eugenics Movement into Planned Parenthood, which provides fertility related resources to women,

including abortion. In the 2009 documentary *Maafa 21*, Mark Crutcher identifies the way Sanger and other prominent Eugenics advocates pushed for race control by persuading African women to sterilize themselves in order to receive government assistance (Crutcher, 2009). In turn, this reduced the potential population of Africans in America. Many historians have overlooked the horrific history of Eugenics until recently. In 2014, North Carolina was the only state to compensate survivors of sterilization.

Henrietta Lacks was an African woman and mother of five who, unknowingly, revolutionized the medical field overnight. In February 1951, due to spotting between her menstrual periods, Lacks went to John Hopkins Hospital, located in Baltimore, Maryland. Further examination and testing of Lacks concluded that she had cervical cancer. Lacks would die in October 1951. During her initial visit to the gynecologists, Lacks received a biopsy where tissue in her cervix was sent to The Tissue Culture Laboratory (TCL) for research purposes without consent from Lacks or her family. (Lucey, 2009, pg.1464). During further examination of her cells, it was observed, "the cells grew robustly, contrary to the results with previous specimens, becoming the first human cancer cell line immortalized in tissue culture" (Lucey,2009, pg. 1465). This, of course, was a medical breakthrough. Dr. George Guy, Director of TLC, began responding to request for the cells by sending them to doctors and scientists around the world.

The cells in Lack's tissue sample was labeled "HeLa," a direct nod toward her initials. However, she would not be credited as the originator until 1998. Many doctors and scientists speculated the cells came from a "Harriet Lane or Helen Lane," though this could be considered an example of whitewashing in medicine by using more European sounding names (Lucey, 2009). Lacks' family did not know about the use of her cells or DNA until 1973, when a scientist seeking blood samples contacted them. Requests for Lack's medical records by the family were primarily ignored, and the family never received financial compensation for the cloned and sold HeLa cells (Lucey, 2009). According to a 2013 agreement between The Lacks Family and The Institutes of Health, the family now has limited control of the HeLa cell line.

The use and subsequent handling of Henrietta Lacks' case is an important part of the history of Scientific Racism. Not only were Lacks's cells harvested, cloned and sold without her knowledge or permission, but her agency was reduced. Michael Tillotson defines Agency Reduction Formation as *"Any system of thought that distracts, neutralizes, or reduces the need and desire for assertive collective agency by African Americans."* (Tillotson,2011,pg 60). Dr. Guy not only experimented on stolen cells but released them into the medical community without acknowledgment of their origins. I argue that if Lacks were a White woman, her story and legacy would have been different. Not only did doctors and scientists not give credit to Lacks, but they also tried to whitewash her identity by

crediting factious persons such as "Helen and Harriet Lane." Also, when Lacks family tried to gain access to her records and seek acknowledgment of her unbeknownst contributions, they were often denied access and ignored; despite Lack's record having public access. The use of her cells is a clear evident example of how African bodies are used to further the field of medicine without regard for their desires and humanity.

The bulk of this section has been identifying specific examples of scientific racism relating to the African body. I want to take this time to discuss intellectual racism toward Africans. As discussed in Chapter three, Racial Difference in Intelligence testing stemmed from the belief that there were significant difference in intellect between the "races". What was not mainstream knowledge was that these tests were primarily Eurocentric and based upon Eurocentric standards of intellect. Drawing on Graham Richards Scholarship in *Defining Difference*, in 1980 African Americans scored the same or better than Whites in the 1930s (Winston, 2003, pg.155). This information proves one would have to assimilate to Eurocentric standards in order to test well. Some might argue that these types of testing were political in nature, and I would agree. They do not test one's intelligence, but their sociocultural intelligence. Intelligence testing in the U.S. has had a political agenda from its inception. Scholars used illegitimate standardized testing to identify "feble-mindedness," which common belief of that Africans possessed this trait amongst White Americans. RDI testing became the

"legitimate scientific evidence" which justified colonialism, enslavement, segregation, and most racist rhetoric.

As discussed in an Chapter three, Francis Galton's research on racial differences in intelligence (1869) is credited as the origin of intelligence testing; though he believed in African inferiority without any scientific evidence. R. Meade Bache of The University of Pennsylvania validates Galton's claims with data supporting increased reaction times in White Americans as opposed to Native Americans and Africans (Meade, 1985). In a review published in *Psychological Bulletin* (1912), Frank Bruner is quoted in saying , "experience with the Negro in classrooms indicates that it is impossible to get the child to do anything with continued accuracy, and similarly in industrial pursuits, the Negro shows a woeful lack of power of sustained activity and constructive conduct" (Bruner, 1912). Bruner never acknowledged or identified the barriers preventing Africans from performing these task in a way deemed suitable for White Americans; such as lack of access to quality education or jobs.

Alfred Binet developed the first feasible intelligence test in 1905. (Encyclopedia of American studies) Though, he argued that the test should not be used to measure intelligence or label someone permanently. Lewis Terman, building on Binet's work, began developing The Stanford-Binet Testing in 1916. It is important to note, Terman believed that those of low intelligence should be eradicated through the process of Eugenics. Africans were almost always

considered low intelligence. I do not believe that Terman or any other of these so-called scholars spent any real time observing Africans to understand their experience or recognize their agency. I do believe they used their work to further a political agenda of keeping Africans in an oppressed state. Moreover, we continue to acknowledge these men and their works as fundamental to their respective field without regard to their racist origins. Yet, people wonder why racism exist in their fields.

A more modern example of these fruits is *The Bell Curve Theory (1994)* written by Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray. Their central argument was that one's hereditary and socioenvironmental factors could measure intelligence. In other words, they were arguing racial intellectual inferiority without saying those exact words. They argued that lower IQ scores in African Americans and Latinos (as a result of one set of data with emphasis on the correlation between IQ, Crime, Unemployment, etc.) gave merit to their claim (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). Just like their misguided predecessors, Herrnstein and Murray did not acknowledge the same barriers that hindered people within these communities; such as lack of education due to funding, lack of jobs in more impoverished communities, and why these barriers are there in the first place.

The argument of intellectual difference between the races is asinine. First, race is nothing more than a social construct developed to create division and hierarchy between cultural groups. There has been no legitimate research or

scholarship that persuasively argues for intellectual, moral, or physical differences between "races." Moreover, if there was, I argue that research would show the moral inferiority of imperialists Europeans that imposed their will over nations using oppressive and violent means. Second, the notion that these tests could measure any difference in intellectual intelligence is absurd. These tests were developed using racist beliefs and methods, thus providing invalid racist results and should not be used in any circumstance. The creator of intelligence testing, Alfred Binet, argued that these test should not be used to measure intelligence or to measure someone permanently. Third, these tests are not objective in the slightest. Only those who had fully assimilated to European standards of intellect would be able to pass. Nonetheless, drawing on Richard's research African test scores started to rise, the longer they stayed in America.

I argue that centuries of abuse, dehumanization, and manipulation by European scholars and scientists have led to a deep seeded mistrust in the African community. Western institutions have profited off the lives of Africans without so much as a thank you. Thus, causing Africans to avoid medical and psychological treatment and internalize damaging attitudes and behaviors.

## CHAPTER 4 AFRICAN EXPERIENCE IN THE UNITED STATES

To understand the African experience in the U.S., it is critical that one understands the history of Africans in this country. Enslaved Africans from multiple ethnic groups, across the continent of Africa, were stolen and sold into enslavement by Europeans, Arabs, and Africans alike (Hines, 2014). Enslaved Africans were sold, born, and died enslaved to White American slave owners for more than 246 years. After the ratification of the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment, Africans still faced oppressive laws and violent behaviors.

The buying and selling of human bodies marked the development of Capitalism in the New World (Hines, 2014). Capitalism is an economic and political system in which a country's trade and industry are controlled private owners for profit, rather than by the state. In Part II of *Slavery's Capitalism: A New History of American Economic Development*, Bonnie Martin, Joshua Rothman, Daina Berry, and Kathryn Boodry identifies the ways enslaved Africans were monetized and used to sustain the U.S. economy (Beckert & Rockman, 2016). Through the process of Chattel Slavery, enslaved Africans were valued as property and sold as such. Rothman highlights how northern financial markets supplied loans based on the potential profit from the labor of enslaved Africans (Beckert & Rockman, 2016). This practice dates back to 1837. For enslaved Africans to be viewed as property, they were dehumanized through acts of

harassment, humiliation, and terror. Western institutions such as the U.S. Government and the medical field. Africans no longer had ownership of their bodies, legally, and could be possessed with U.S. tender. Participants in this process, in any form, are complicit with the exploitation of African people.

"Slave owners sought to transform human beings into commodities for eventual sale to slave owners, who sought themselves to transform them into tools..... Both dealers and owners had the same goal, profit. ... They also had to take an intermediate step to deny the ultimate humanity of their captive. " (Hine, 2014, pg 257-258).

Now 400 years removed from the genesis of enslavement in The United States, corporations and private groups continue to thrive off the wealth generated from the unpaid labor of enslaved Africans. People of African descent have yet to receive reparations including back wages and mental health treatment or the crimes committed against them. The United States Government offered a formal apology in 2008, under the presidency of Barack Obama, the first African American President of the U.S...

One can not deny scientific research was misused to validify racist social thought, which appeased those who participated in the exploitation of African people. For Europeans to justify their crimes, they used science and religion to make the case Africans were not human and needed to be “saved” for their “savagery”.

As discussed earlier, European scholars and civilians maintained the social thought that Africans were soul-less, such as animals and had the mental capacity of children (Hines, 2014). Europeans misrepresented African culture and history claiming Africans were uncultured salvages not understanding the African Ontology. African spiritual systems use animals and plants to revere the Spirits in order to understand phenomena and occurrences in everyday life. Mbiti outlines the concept of ontological unity; the cosmic balance in the universe is maintained by the idea everything has force (Mbiti, 1985). This force originates from the Supreme Deity, thus rendered everything with force sacred. However, Europeans did not intend to understand the beliefs and culture of Africans. Instead, it was more profitable to see them as merchandise.

Therefore, it was “suitable” for slave owners to treat Africans as though they were animals; stripping them of their humanity. Institutional pillars of western society legitimized racists beliefs because it benefited those profiting off the labor of the enslaved. Science and medicine were used to legitimize the social thought of African inferiority. Eurocentric hegemony left no room for African agency and sought to destroy any trace of African culture.

The use of religion was used to disguise White supremacy as a “benevolent mission” from God to save the souls of Africans. African Spiritual belief systems were demonized and labeled as evil. Enslaved Africans risked beating and death by practicing their traditional religious beliefs and even

speaking traditional African languages. It is critical to note the hypocrisy in this approach. Europeans argue that Africans are soul-less, but they are trying to save those very souls. How can one save a soul that is not there?

Nevertheless, the end did not justify the means. I will now discuss the impact racist social thought has had on the African community. It is critical for my research to engage in the history of Africans in America because Africans have not been given the proper resources to survive in a society built of the exploitation of their people. I will engage with the conditions of enslavement, Jim Crow Laws, and the continued systematic oppression that inflicts Africans in America.

### CONDITIONS OF ENSLAVEMENT

One will never know the true extent of the horrors of enslavement. For more than two centuries, Enslaved Africans were forced to live and work under sub-par, oppressive, and violent conditions. During this section, I will examine various passages from the personal journal of enslaved African, Thomas Jones, who found freedom after 43 years. As an Afrocentrist, it is of the utmost importance to ensure the voices of enslaved Africans are not censored to spare the feelings of White America but heard for the liberations of all Africans. Though Jones's account is his own, many enslaved Africans endured the same horrors as

he, some even worse. His experience does not fully encompass the experience of millions of enslaved Africans but gives us a detailed look into the life of captivity.

Thomas Jones is the son of two enslaved Africans, whom he does not name; and brother to five. He would be enslaved for 43 years until he escaped his chains in 1849. Jones starts his narrative by recalling his childhood in captivity at the Hawes Plantation, located in North Carolina. He was not aware of his enslavement but could recall feelings of inferiority and degradation in his earliest memories (Andrews,2003, pg. 211). His first enslavers, John Hawes, distributed material to make one outfit per enslaved person annually. Enslaved persons had to sew their own clothes in addition to working "severe labor" (Andrews,2003). If extra clothing were needed, the enslaved persons would have to work more or go without (Andrews,2003, pg.212). As for food, each enslaved person received a peck of corn a week, which had to be ground after daily work was complete. Jones recalled how Africans had to steal food or starve. Year round, enslaved Africans on the Hawes plantation worked from dusk till dawn, sometimes longer during the harvest and winter months.

“They worked together, poorly clad, and suffering from bitter cold and wet of those Winter months. Women, wives and mothers, daughters and sisters, on that plantation, were compelled to toil on the cold, stormy days in the open field, while the piercing wind and driving storm benumbed their limbs, and almost froze the tears that came forth of their cold and desolate hearts. Little boys, and girls, too, worked and cried, toting brush to the fires, husking the corn, watching the stock, and running on errands for mater and mistress, and their three sons..., and constantly

receiving from them scoldings and beatings as their reward.”(Andrews,2003, pg.213)

Plantations across the south participated in ritualized terror that sought to keep Africans docile, in turn, and power would be the enslavers’ hands. An example of ritualized terror is communal punishments. When escaped enslaved Africans were captured and returned to their captors, they were flogged and beaten within an inch of their life in the gaze of the entire community – including children. Jones tells a story of how he heard his sister being flogged, as his parents sat byhelpless.

“I should have related, that one of the earliest scenes of painful memory associated with my opening years of suffering, is connected with a severe whipping which my master inflicted on my sister Sarah. He tied her up, having compelled her to strip herself entirely naked, in the smokehouse, and gave her a terrible whipping, - at least, so it seemed to my young heart, as I heard her scream, and stood by my mother, who was wringing her hands in agony of grief, at the cruelties which her tender child was enduring...I remember that her body was marked and scarred for weeks after that terrible scouring." (Andrews,2003, pg.214)

He did not know what she did to deserve such punishment, but many times Africans did not have to do much at all. Jones recalls his own beatings for praying, going to meetings with other Black people, and not completing all of his daily tasks given by his enslavers. Punishments, and how they were administered, were at the sole discretion of the slave enslavers and overseer of the plantation.

Scholar Thomas Foster argues, in *The Sexual Abuse of Black Men under American Slavery*, that enslaved African men and women were subjected to punishments in the form of sexual abuse. There were instances of slave enslavers or overseers sexually assaulting the strongest enslaved African man in front of the community of enslaved people to demonstrate and reinforce that Africans held no power on the plantation. Foster opens his work detailing the 1787 rape of Elizabeth Amwood and an unnamed man, both of African descent. Four white men watched as one of them forced the two Africans to have sexual relations with each other. Some mistresses on the plantation are also complicit in forcing “handsome” enslaved men to have relations with them or face severe punishments. (Foster, 2011, pg. 458-460). Much social thought said African men were sexually deviant, who would rape White women given the moment; however, historical evidence shows that is not the case. It was those in powerful positions (i.e., enslavers, mistresses, overseers) that were abusive both physically and sexually (Foster, 2011, pg. 447).

However criminal Africans were treated, Jones also spoke to the love and unity the enslaved community had for each other and their families.

“Father and Mother tried to make [their home] a happy place for their dear children...My dear parents were conscious of the desperate and incurable woe of their position and destiny; and of the lot of inevitable suffering in store for their beloved children. They talked about our coming misery, and they lifted up their voices and wept aloud, as they spoke of our being torn from them and sold off to the dreaded slave-trader, perhaps never again to see them or hear from

them a word of fond love. I have heard them speak of their willingness to bear their own sorrows without complaint, if only we, their dear children, could be safe from the wretchedness before us” (Andrews,2003,pg. 212-213)

Jones's portrait of this family life draws a striking resemblance to my own and many other African families in the Diaspora. He also gives historical evidence for Michael Gomez's argument that enslaved Africans unified under oppressive conditions to continue African culture in America, resulting in the development of the African American Culture. I argue the survival of the African community in the face of enslavement and oppression discredits racist arguments of African intellectual, moral, and physical inferiority. In *Exchanging our Country Marks*, Gomez argues that Africans continued to practice their spiritual belief systems by disguises their practices and rituals with the dominant Western religious systems such as Christianity. For example, ring shouts were used to communicate with spirits in the unseen world, but to the slave enslavers, it seemed as though the enslaved Africans were practicing Southern Baptist Christian traditions (Gomez, 1998). Jason Young's research *Rituals of Resistance* gives specific examples of how enslaved Africans continued to practice their rituals and traditions despite the effort to eradicate and misrepresent African people (Young,2011). How can people who have no intellectual capacity be organized enough to practice their “illegal” beliefs in plain sight? It is because enslaved Africans were intelligent and had a definitive culture that has been

passed down from Ancient Africa to present day African Diaspora. It also erases any argument that African people have no moral values or things they cherish. African cultures, across the board, cherish the relationship one has with their community and universe, as these are the pillars of African society. Jones's parent, as many African parents do, tried to pour much love into their children, and also prepare them for life as an African in America.

#### MENTAL HEALTH IN THE AFRICAN COMMUNITY

In a 2007 study, David Williams found that Africans made up 57% of chronic depressive cases compared to White Americans, who make up 39% (Williams, 308). Africans are also more likely to meet the criteria for PTSD than White America. Sternthal, Slopen, and Williams reported that Africans in America suffer from higher stressors in life than White Americans, i.e., life events, financial strains, health, etc. (Holloran, 2019, pg. 46) It is my conclusion that these stressors stem from systems and processes that target Africans in America and keeps them in an oppressive state. In other words, not only do Africans developed have a mental strain dealing with trauma passed down through behaviors and beliefs, but also from present-day stress from racists systems of oppression. This manifest itself which results in a lower quality of life for Africans in Americans. Holloran reports that Africans in America suffer from

higher rates of Diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and certain cancers than White Americans (Holloran, 2019). In order to address these issues, The United States must deal with Systematic Racism and White Supremacy's role within the conditions of enslavement and the lack of quality health care provided for Africans due to racists ideals and rhetoric.

The California Department of Education says the first five years of a child's life is crucial to the physical, intellectual, and social-emotional development. Meaning children born in enslavement experienced traumatic events during the most critical time in developing one's mind, normalizing images of violence and trauma at a young age. In an interview, Jim Allen, an enslaved African until the age of nine, said he had seen "bad niggers" whooped as many times as there were leaves. Thus, proving that these rituals were not isolated events, yet common occurrences. One cannot refute that being subjected to violence continually from birth does have damaging effects on the mind that can be passed down from generation to generation in the form of repeated attitudes and behaviors.

Dr. Phillip Zimbardo argues that persons stripped of their identity experience severe psychological damage. The Stanford Prison experiment of 1971 exemplifies the type of damage that could be caused. Zimbardo conducted the two week Stanford Prison experiment to explore the psychological effects of power

between prisoners and guards' and if personality traits were the leading cause of abusive behaviors. He randomly selected prisoners and guards from a pool of 24 male college students. Guards were told to create an environment where the prisoners felt as though they had no power nor control over their lives. Prisoners were stripped of their identities and were referred by their prison numbers. By day two, prisoners began to revolt. From there, prisoners that did not participate in the revolt were put in a "privileged" cell where they were treated better and had access to better food. It is noteworthy that after only 36 hours, one prisoner began to show signs of psychological damage extensive enough for him to be taken out of the experiment early (Zimbardo, 1972,pg 4-5). Africans were forced to strip themselves of their cultural identities and adopt inferior/subservient behaviors for four centuries, much longer than a mere 36 hours. Africans were not given proper mental healthcare to address to the trauma endured during or after enslavement. I believe that the systems that seek to deny African personhood and promote Eurocentric hegemony should be eradicated; and new policies that address the inadequacies of the former.

Though Africans actively resisted and rebelled against their captors, one must acknowledge the psychological damage caused by centuries of enslavement, dehumanization, and disrespect. It is critical there be more scholarship concerning the psychological effects enslaved Africans, and their descendants have suffered at the hands of white supremacy during and after enslavement.

Jim Crow Laws refer to a set of laws passed between 1877 and 1965 that legally separated Africans and whites; and gave all power, privilege, and wealth to the latter. Africans were forced to obey and remain docile to avoid severely violent punishments such as lynchings. Rarely were these punishments equal to the “crimes” committed nor were they fairly tried in court. Richard Wright, one of the greatest authors in U.S history, used his education on “how to live as a negro” during Jim Crow to write his first work, *Uncle Tom’s Children*. Wright, as well as other Africans living in the Jim Crow south, were forced to abide by western standards imposed to make Africans subservient and less threatening to whites. As previously discussed, it was the goal of white supremacy to keep enslaved Africans, and their descendants, in an oppressive state by violent and manipulative measures. Mental subordination was used as a tool to "keep Africans in their place" as second-rate citizens and human beings. Wright gives us clear examples of Africans being put in positions to choose between obedience and acting within their self-interest. For example, *Big Boy leaves home* tells the story of a teenage boy and his friends playing in a white only swimming hole. The owner finds the boys and shoots two while the other two escapes. The mob eventually finds one, and they tar and feather him. *Big Boy*, the only one who escapes the grasp of the mob, is left to leave his community without hope of return (pg 45). As Afrocentrists, it is critical that one analyzes the rumination behind *Big Boy's* decision to flee and exile himself from his own community.

African culture places a high value on community relationships and unity. In fact, in most burial rituals it is believed that one's soul cannot be entirely at rest without proper burial from the community(Mbiti,1985). The trauma inflicted upon Big Boy and his friends, at the hands of a white supremacist, was severe enough for him to uproot his life in order to protect his family and himself.

Eurocentric hegemony sought to deny Africans their humanity in order to transform them from people to saleable commodities. One must acknowledge and understand the tremendous amount of trauma and psychological distress inflicted on Africans by way of dehumanization. Not only were Africans stripped of their cultural identities but their humanity. Drawing on Zimbardo's scholarship, to strip one of their humanity is to cause severe psychological damage that must be treated. Unfortunately for Africans, treatment options were non-existent and at best limited.

One must effectively deal with their painful emotions and memories to avoid mental disorders such as Anxiety, Bi-Polarism, and Depression. Kanye West, one of the most influential producers in the music industry today, began his career as a Black nationalist. His music was culturally African in America, and he was very vocal about the Bush administration's handling of Hurricane Katrina. In 2007, West's mother tragically passed away. West publicly refused to seek treatment to deal with the loss of his mother effectively, and instead decided to find refuge in his music since West has dealt with a number of traumatic

experiences including his wife being robbed at gunpoint and loss of childhood family members and friends.

Nevertheless, West refused to maintain his mental health resulting in two very public psychological breaks. The world watched as Kanye transformed from a vocal activist who argued "George Bush does not care about black people" to exhibiting cognitive hiatus and arguing Africans choose to be enslaved. I use West as an example of the damage one can have when refusing to deal with experiences that affect our mental health. Though Africans have reasons to distrust Western institutions, many do not have access to quality mental health resources in their communities; rendering their treatment options limited.

## AFRICAN CENTERED PSYCHOLOGY

Wade Nobles calls for Africans to adopt African centered psychology to address the inadequacies of Western psychology. One should understand, African psychology is not intended to replace the institution of psychology but amend it as a perspective or orientation (Nobles, pg 18). Various scholars have argued the validity of African psychology, claiming its only difference is the skin tone of its subjects; but that is not true. African psychology focuses on the understanding of oneself through self-realization; while Western psychology understands oneself through prediction and control (Belgrave, 2014). It is interesting Eurocentric

scholars deem African psychology as fleeting or short-lived; primarily since African psychology can be traced 4,000 years back when Kemetic scholars studied the Sakhu's involvement in human behavior (pg 63). One should understand, Ancient Africans began the study of the human mind thousands of years before Western psychology developed.

Kemet, or Ancient Egypt, was a hub of learning for many groups including the great Greek philosophers. Scholars from around the world traveled to Kemet to study mathematics, Astronomy, etc. Kemetic teachings believed to treat one's mind; one must treat the whole person. The Kemetic spirit is comprised of seven parts: The Ba (Soul of Breath); The Khaba (Veil), The Akhu (Seat of Intelligence); The Seb (Ancestral Soul); The Putah (First Intellectual Father) The Atum (The Soul); and The K (the Divine Spirit) encases all seven components (pg 52-53). The goal of this model was for one to understand everything is interconnected for a higher purpose. For example, an individual can become part of their community, but no person is higher than the collective.

I argue that African psychology should be used to help Africans realize their humanity. Nobles argues the enslavement of Africans caused a disruption in the natural relationship between the spiritual, material, conceptual, practical, and connotative aspects of Black psychosocial and geophysical reality; causing perceptual and emotional distortion (pg 93). As previously discussed, the ramifications of dehumanization have severe effects on Africans' mental health.

“Akbar identified mental health as the affirmative identification and commitment to our African (natural) identity. In utilizing one’s own natural identity as the core being, he went on to conceptualize a system of mental disorders (anti-self, alien-self, etc.) which demonstrated that African-American insanity is the result of engaging in behaviors which deny one’s African identity and survival imperatives.” (Pg 93-94)

It should be the concern of African psychologists to focus on African position in history and the distortion of the Black, or African, reality in Western psychology. Nobles states that the recension of Black psychology must grapple with the human experience because Africans have not had opportunities to explore their humanity in the West. After enslavement, Africans have and do deal with oppressive behaviors and attitudes that continually found ways to strip them of their humanity, i.e., Jim Crow, Police Brutality, etc. One must fully realize themselves in order to recognize their humanity and strive toward mental wellness.

## CONCLUSION

The African contribution to medicine is extensive but mostly looked over. Born into enslavement in 1762, Dr. James Durham is credited as the first African American physician in the United States. Though he did not attend medical school, he assisted doctors who purchased him. After buying his freedom, he established a medical practice in New Orleans and was instrumental in treating patients with yellow fever in the late 1780s. Historical records for him are limited (American Heart Association). In 1864, Dr. Rebecca Lee Crumpler became the first African American woman to receive a medical degree. She is also credited with publishing the first medical text written by an African American. (American Heart Association). In 1943, Dr. Myra Adele Logan became the first woman to perform open heart surgery. She was also a co-founder of the first physician's group in the U.S. Although these are only a few examples of African American contributions to medicine, Kemetic studies of medicine and the human body can be traced as the earliest contributions to medicine. However, Eurocentric hegemony sought to eradicate and misconstrue African contributions and history in Western society and abroad.

Scientific Racism was a practice, used by doctors and scholars within science and medicine, that legitimized racist beliefs of African intellectual, moral, and physical inferiority. It was important for the stabilization of the U.S. economy that White supremacist social thought persisted, and White Americans

profit of the labor of enslaved Africans. It was the role of doctors, philosophers, scientists, and scholars to appease Eurocentric morals and validate false claims of African intellectual complicity. In recent years, many European researchers and scholars have developed scholarship to combat these racist ideas, but one cannot ignore the influence early racists' research has on the modern Western medical institution. Not only are tools developed by racist thought still used (i.e., Stanford-Binet testing), but regarded as milestones in Western society. While the latter might be true, one cannot ignore the cost African people were forced to pay in order to advance the fields of science in medicine. I argue that The Western Medical Institution entirely eradicates these theories, with no further acknowledgment, and research projects from further use; and develop more accurate studies in their stead.

One can not deny the damage these racists' studies have had on the African American community. As previously discussed, Africans were subjected to violent and oppressive behaviors, due in part to the validation the academy and other "legitimate" institutions gave to common racist social thought. As intellectuals and scholars, we must take a hard stance against racist ideologies, and develop the appropriate scholarship to debunk the myth of African inferiority. However, one cannot ignore that racial, and social thought influenced the founding principles of The United States of America through its founding fathers (Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2017)). In order to right this wrong, Americans

must come to grips with the same systematic racism that benefits White Americans and oppresses anyone else.

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