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THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN DEMOCRACY MOVEMENTS IN THE BLACK  
EXPRESSIVE TRADITION: ARTIST PERFORMANCE PRACTICE IN  
BRAZIL, SOUTH AFRICA AND THE UNITED STATES

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**The Role of Culture in Democracy Movements in the Black  
Expressive Tradition: Artist Performance Practice Theory  
in the U.S., Brazil and South Africa**

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Pan-Africanism has stimulated powerful debate in the African diaspora setting off social and political movements in which artists and their practice have been major players (DuBois, 1925 and Hughes, 1926). The Black expressive tradition in the U.S., Brazil and South Africa constituted its political agendas around arts-based advocacy in a variety of countries whose non-white (artist) populations experienced repression, racism, political exclusion and economic marginalization. During the Twentieth Century, political events, global conferences (e.g., Dakar/1966, FESTAC/1977, Zabalaza/1990) nationalist struggles (Stuckey, 1987; Abraham, 1991; Davis, 1989) and technology advances have sharpened the focus on African cultural production. From the perspective of artists of color the non-elective nature of artist practice enforced a politicized agenda upon the visual and performance arts in those communities (Do Nascimento, 1992; Neal and Jones/Baraka, 1968; Serote, 1993). Patterns of cultural practice have, in fact, socially and aesthetically cohered around resistance to systemic policies of censorship, legitimation and screening procedures which discriminate against artists of color, and resulted in the formation of discrete art worlds characterized by social justice, cultural preservation, and communal advocacy. Artists and democratic movements, therefore, are critical indicators of how art and politics unite in African global arts traditions (Marable, 1992).

This paper is an epistemological search into artist practice. It is the result of research conducted since 1988 in Brazil, South Africa and the United States. The impact of social and political events on artists and the creative process is the primary focus with artists of color as a study population. The work is informed by three factors: the author's field visits to the three sites, the author's work as a professional artist since the late 1960's in the United States, and the author's social science research. The paper explores the historical and contemporary currents in the epistemological aspects of the development and application of "theory" in artist practices. Further, it aims at the application of a lexicon to artist practice which is defined in text footnotes.

Conventional epistemological approaches to our understanding of what is "political" and what is "spiritual" are all too often infused with Eurocentric dichotomies. Even the language which the intellectual community invents to construct the experience, meaning and perception of culturally discrete art worlds, and its often ethereal boundaries, leads inevitably to an historical fissure which determines another apparent hiatus. Between the received experience of spirituality and science, the former is portrayed as anti-empirical, non-quantitative, and affective, the latter as anti-imaginative, non-improvisatory and cognitive. To say that culture is by nature spiritual is to embark on a dangerous curve into vulnerable areas of discourse such as morality, ethics, social conscience, right and responsibility, freedom and madness. Yet this is the course I wish to pursue since my own theory and praxis is rooted in the experience of art, culture and the role of expressive culture in social, personal and political transformation.

Functionalist determinations in Black cultural production are made around a broad but definitive set of criteria, some of which elicited from traditional western art historical method, but all aim at defining the extra-territorial limits of the Black context. Indeed, defining the context is the mission of this tradition, and the context is vast. Historically, as a discrete Pan-African tradition created out of routine encounters with discrimination, the politics of exclusion and commodification from mainstream (white) art worlds which are culturally centrist, the construction of this tradition was a pragmatic policy of political engagement with invisibility. The "apartheid projects" in the diaspora were concerned with making the ubiquitous African presence invisible. From the marshaling of a massive Black labor force during the slave trade to white corporate control of the Black music industry, politics and art in tandem have shaped the Black cultural tradition. Status creation, art creation, and political advocacy are normative for these artists. As such, the practitioners of Black cultural production hold several approaches to praxis in common.

These include, first, a framing of African-based art as a tradition qualitatively shaped by both African and European influences, an American South African or Brazilian expression of the social, political and aesthetic forces which impact Blacks in the diaspora. If white artists could maintain Europe as a singular reference point, then African-based artists could operationalize the dualities inherent in mainstream cultural production and history. In historical texts in the visual arts, this translated into the definition of an art history derivative of a classical African idiomatic style as the

dynamic lineage of theory/praxis. The 'Source Movement' which deferred to philosophical and aesthetic forbears in Africa. **Second**, history is then drawn from the borders of folklife, the craft and artisanry legacy in which African-American played a major role as builders, draftsmen, quilt makers, architects, potters, and so on.<sup>1</sup> **Third**, these writers tend to cover folk and self-taught artists, studio-trained artists, and an array of installation/ conceptual artists who traditionally work across media. James Hampton's *Throne of the Third Heaven*, as an example, is treated as unique phenomena in installation work created in the Fifties by an untrained artist out of a religious compulsion toward signification, trance possession and the Second Coming of Christ. This type of sculptural assemblage is, by now, common in the Black Diaspora. **Fourth**, there is a pattern of historicizing communal groups, artists' collectives, and diaspora collaborations which advance issues of social change and artist empowerment.<sup>2</sup> The relationship between community centers and museums/galleries as breeding grounds for creative expression and the means by which artist advocacy, planning and policy making stimulate the development of small-scale enclaves into larger-scale institutions deserves further study as a social and economic development initiative in the African diaspora. However, these are to be found in Nigeria, Jamaica, Trinidad, Zimbabwe, Britain and numerous sites in which African populations reside. **Fifth** and final, the versatility of the text ( mural wall, gallery space or outdoor venue) is partnered with a readable text, one which transcends and includes all levels and types of literacy.

The proverb says that the man killed the bird and with the bird went the song, and with the loss of the song he killed himself. Culture is really nothing more than a containment device for expressive modes of communication that we understand universally as music, dance, theatre, literature, the visual arts, film, crafts and the many technologies traditional and modern which they have spawned. Language has left little space for a global or Pan-Africanist comprehension of "tribe" ( a numinous alter ego for culture) except through its power as a killing tool which factionalizes. Not only has the global language not yet evolved through which the nascent structure of culture can be understood as a blessing rather than a curse, but we are confronted with the problematic of differentiated constructs which equate culture with antiquated notions civilization and aesthetics. What we mean by civilization is too heavy a tautological burden for the current international debates on culture, empowerment and the arts, particularly in the African diaspora. The equations and their meanings so narrowly conceived are not applicable to the contemporary dilemmas posed by multiple identities and the cultural projects now being debated and carried out in the global diaspora. Embedded in my

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<sup>1</sup>Also see John M. Vlach in *By the Work of Their Hands* (1991) and by the same author, *The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts* (1978), and Gladys-Marie Fry's *Stitched From the Soul* (1990).

<sup>2</sup>Numerous movements too numerous to list, some defunct, are covered in forthcoming notes. However, in 1959 (NCA) the National Conference of Artists was founded by several Black visual artists including Margaret Burroughs, also director of the DuSable Museum in Chicago.

analysis of art worlds and how they are constructed around cultural centrisms is the subsequent presentation of a multicultural epistemology .

I suggest that the "modern" epoch and the theoretical construction of "tribe/culture", a construction of social Darwinism, is an essentially anti-human, and simultaneously anti-Black, project involving dissimulating heart from mind. This has led to the construction of "race", at its most innocent a mental abstraction and at its most heinous, genocidal. The fabrication of culture and creative expression has been liberally applied to Blackness producing hierarchies and intersections of race/power in the African diaspora. In the arts these iconoclasm ostracized artists through censorship and social control, exile, imprisonment, sexism and discrimination, economic marginalization, torture and occupational disdain of artists. These issues are rooted in political economy and the disincentives for artist participation in social advocacy and the arts. By definition, artist performance practice among people of color requires of its participants devotion, commitment, solidarity and consensus building, imagination and a strong

#### **HOW THE SONG LIVES: EPISTEMOLOGY AND BLACK CULTURAL PRODUCTION**

As an American in Salvador or Johannesburg one is, especially as an artist, asked to look into all things with a searching eye. As a person of color one melts into the fabric of these cities phenotypically and linguistically with relative ease. Turbulent political contexts in flux produce a genuine social orthodoxy of their own, however, and what appears to look like "home" may or may not be. Both Pearl Primus and Katherine Dunham contributed much to modern dance both as anthropologists, writers, and choreographers and "much as the rappers of today reflect social and political conditions peculiar to African-Americans in the 1990's in the lyrics of their songs, Primus reflected the common realities of disenfranchisement, chain gangs, lynchings, and sharecropping that were common to African-Americans of her day."<sup>3</sup> In theorizing on Dunham's enormous impact on American and world dance, wittier/critic Veve Clark cites published research on two approaches to memory as Dunham attempted dance literacy from within the diaspora -'sites of memory' and 'environments of memory'. "Dunham taught her various companies that the performance of "forgotten dances" was not merely a question of learning steps-ag'ya or shango, tango or the mooch. During the 1940's , Dunham performers contextualized the dances and re-presented them in a climate replicating the original settings as they simultaneously "signified" on their legacy following a continual process of transformation

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<sup>3</sup>Beverly Hillsman Barber. "Pearl Primus: Rebuilding America's Cultural Infrastructure, "African-American Genius in Modern Dance/American Dance Festival. Tour Publication, 1993-94: 9.

and revision true to African-American cultural production."<sup>4</sup> In the 1944-45 dance season roduced by Sol Hurok, Dunham's repertoire included a work "Bahiana" in which dancers recreate the Bahian Batuke in a scene in which a fishing expedition is transformed into a samba performance.<sup>5</sup>

The epistemological projects of multiculturalisms are critical theoretical and practical strategies in search of political means. The preservation of African humanism and expressive culture among people of African descent has marshaled forces to renew and extend this project into the year 2000. The geopolitical shifts underway in South Africa, Brazil and the United States are a clarion call to artists to intensify their commitments across unfamiliar terrain to capture the conscience and imagination of their audiences towards the task at hand. In this cultural analysis of global arts movements "multiculturalisms" contain several strata of participants, people who "identify" politically, spiritually and aesthetically with the construction "people of color." The strategies embedded within these are historically shaped by the politically charged contexts in which people of color implement their art and life, here referred to as 'artist performance practice'<sup>6</sup>. Proportionally, satellites of African culture outside of Africa have, collectively, been devastated by genocide, at least in a mass community. Yet how is it that the song lives?

Is it Gordimer's notion of "a nationalism of the heart"<sup>7</sup>, do Nascimento's gleanings on "quilombismo"<sup>8</sup>, Morrison's musings on the speculative nexus of the white imagination<sup>9</sup> or is it possibly the everyday

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<sup>4</sup>Veve A. Clark, "Katherine Dunham: Method Dancing or Memory of Difference," ADF: 5. For in-depth studies on Black dance refer to Lynne Fauley Emery, Black Dance From 1619 to Today (Princeton: Princeton Book Company, 1988), Richard Long's The Black Dance Tradition in American Dance (New York: Rizzoli, 1989) and the International Journal of African Dance published by the Institute for African Dance Research and Performance, Temple University, Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring 1992..

<sup>5</sup>See the promotional broadside, "S. Hurok presents Katherine Dunham and her Company in Tropical Revue," 1944-45.

<sup>6</sup> Artist Performance practice is an over-arching term which describes the theory and practice of art/cultural production, initiation and training into ones' media techniques and cultural context. It is the totality of conceptual and experiential knowledge amassed and the development of a language and form with which the artist communicates with the material and spiritual world(s). For an elaboration of the use of the lexicon see Chandler, R.M. "Reason and Memory in Artist Performance Practice: Toward a Multicultural Epistemology," Ph.D. dissertation, Northeastern University (1992).

<sup>7</sup>Clingman, Steven, ed. "Where Do Whites Fit In?," The Essential Gesture, 33.

<sup>8</sup>do Nascimento, Abdias and Elisa Larkin, Africans in Brazil(A Pan African Perspective), 66 citing Abdias' text, O Quilombismo(1980) in which he proposes the organization of a Brazilian state around pluriculturalism, ecological sustainability and social reparations to redress inequities. He distinguishes quilombismo, a historical reference to the Palmares maroon societies in Brazil which resisted Portuguese domination, from European-derived socialism; see also Thomas Skidmore, Black into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought (1974).

<sup>9</sup>Morrison, Toni. Playing in the Dark (whiteness and the Literary Imagination).



social context of the jook and the shebeen <sup>10</sup>also operating to preserve the music, dance, and forms of social interaction as a site of gestation in Black communal exchange? Hazzard-Gordon's (1990) query acknowledges the transcultural formation of the communal watering hole-dance/music site:

"What of the South African "shebeen," which bears a remarkable resemblance to the African-American after-hours joint? In both institutions patrons are served in the owner's home, the liquor trade is conducted surreptitiously, ownership is not gender specific, and dancing and music are a large part of the attraction. If there is such a thing as a South African jook continuum, the shebeen is part of it...Examined in the light of the colonial model, other similarities emerge that lend themselves to a pan-African interpretation of cultural development." <sup>11</sup> In Brazil, bar culture operates similarly. "What the country has to teach us" writes John Krich " isn't found in conservatories but in the samba schools. Its true cathedrals are the backyard terreiros filled with candomble chants. Its finest exhibitions can be seen in dance halls or in bars and especially in the streets." <sup>12</sup> Milton Nascimento can be found inlet-hopping on small excursion boats from Rio to Paraty, boats which become more like floating folklore jams where traditional Brazilian music is chanted by young and old. Octogenarian, Sinval Silva's folk ballads are available in impromptu cultural gatherings in his favela, Morro da Urca and Mestre Didi, a religious leader in Brazil and sixth generation descendent of African slaves, following in the late Alex Haley's footsteps, returned to West Africa having traced his lineage and learned Yoruba.<sup>13</sup> Since the 100th Anniversary Celebration in 1988 of Brazil's abolition of slavery, the resurgence of interest in African links has been popularized and furthered by forms of cultural production such as samba-reggae. However, engaging the Brazilian military regime in the late 1970's to renew ties with Portuguese-speaking Angola and Mozambique remains as efforts to ensure that the Black-on-Black dialogue manifests itself in political representation for Blacks. City councilman, Gilberto Gil, is a musician and part of a cadre of cultural practitioners who support *cultura Bahiana*, a movement to preserve African culture in the Bahia region, a region in a country where nearly 75 million Brazilians are of African descent. <sup>14</sup> Black Africans brought more than okra from the Continent. Could it been the global neighborhood of Black cultural production operating centrifugally to keep the African family whole in

<sup>10</sup>Zora Neale Hurston's novels, anthropology and folklore research and on African-American folklife convey the structural depth and social formation of Black community life. This project is extended by many writers including Katrina Hazzard-Gordon's *Jookin': The Rise of Social Dance Formations in African American Culture* (1990). See Gordon's postscript for a reference to the jook-shebeen semblance and the South African literature on shebeens listed in the postscript notes, 212.

<sup>11</sup>*ibid.*, 175-6.

<sup>12</sup>John Krich, "The Sound of Brazil," *The New York Times*, October 20, 1990: 28-29,76-78.

<sup>13</sup>Although Mestre Didi is widely known in Salvador, William Long's "Brazil and Africa: Ties That Bind," *Los Angeles Times*, April 10, 1990

<sup>14</sup>James Brooke, "Conversations/Joao Jorge Santos Rodrigues-The New Beat of Black Brazil Sets the Pace for Self-Affirmation," *The New York Times*, April, 1993

modalities which speak through popular as well as traditional, folk and religious-based musics?

Anthropologists and missionaries were among the most efficient mercenaries of Hegelian-inspired Eurocentrism. Shame, rather than blame, is a more just spiritual explanation of and transformation from the centrist parodies of race, culture and ethnicity which are the entrails of colonialism. In the popularized cinematic fiction of Gandhi's life the shamed Hindi beseeches the mahatma in his protest fast asking how he himself could be saved after killing a Moslem man in the rebellion. Mahatma replies: "I know a way out of hell." The way out of the nightmares of materialism, nationalism, ethnic and tribal conflict always involves a way back into fear. The spiritual solution, so often leading to embarrassing evasions into the sanctuary of ridicule, provides a way into Blackness as a pragmatic social construct. African survival and *cultural maroonage*<sup>15</sup> in the Americas are historically preserved through a religious code of sanctioned social organization which transcends place and space because it convenes its spiritual agendas in sacred space and time. The exteriority of under explored sacred spaces in the African diaspora and the interiority of expressive culture experienced through myth, ritual and an unknowable essentialism is very much at the heart of spirituality. It may be noted in the new generation of films and filmmakers by America's Julie Dash in *Daughters of the Dust*, (1991) Brazil's Carlos Diegues' *Ganga Zumba* (1963),<sup>16</sup> a study of slavery, maximize content, narrative, and cultural conventions to reflect and invoke the historical consciousness of Blackness in innovative cinematic ways. In 1994 Wynton Marsalis was commissioned by Jazz at Lincoln Center to produce a lengthy three-hour work entitled "Blood on the Fields". Even as a younger jazz composer and performer he approached the theme of the Dramatic Event-slavery- as a documentarian of holocaust might. The critical response to the premier attested to the success of musical allegory as narrative in music: "Marsalis creates memorable sonic pictures: bass slides and cascading saxophones for a heavy slave ship, volleys of percussion and wailing horn solos for a flogging, a boogie-based mesh of repeating phrases

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<sup>15</sup>Cultural maroonage describes a historical and aesthetic process whereby communities of resistance consolidate the preservation of traditional means of cultural production. Cultural maroonage is a theoretical matrix which stimulates a core aesthetic. From that core aesthetic the theory/praxis relation elicits models of study, social systems, stylistic devices, canons, formal methods of training, and cross-media experimentation. Inter cultural modification is a historical norm in patterns of maroonage. See Richard Price, ed., *Maroon Societies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979) especially his essay, "Palmares: An African State in Brazil" and Eugene D. Genovese's *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolt in the Making of the New World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981) for histories on the maroon societies of the Americas.

<sup>16</sup>See Roy Armes' *Third World Film Making and the West* (1987) and Toni Cade Bambara's "Reading the Signs, Empowering the Event" *Daughters of the Dust* and the Black Independent Cinema Movement, *Black American Cinema* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993). Diegues' *Bye Bye Brazil*, *Quilombo*, and *Subway to the Stars* and *Black Illusions* deal with non-traditional, otherwise, Black themes.

for the labor of cotton-picking."<sup>17</sup> Since recent reports of conditions of slavery are still prevalent in Pan-African headlines such as "Lynching Increases in Brazil's Shantytowns,"<sup>18</sup> or "Slavery on Rise in Brazil, as Debt Chains Workers,"<sup>19</sup> and "Paper reports Slave Trade on Mozambique Border,"<sup>20</sup> there will be no thematic drought in Black cultural production.

Teshome Gabriel formulates a critical matrix which stages the methodological devices of Third World film making to include assimilation, remembrance and combative phases and employs the critical tools of text, reception and production in critical theory. Reception, for example illuminates the fluidity and populism of diasporic audiences. He suggests that "how the system of perceptual patterns and viewing situation varies with conditions of reception from one culture to another, or how changes in the rules of the grammar affect spectator viewing habits, is part of a larger question which solidifies and confirms the issues of cultural relativism and identity."<sup>21</sup> 'Activist aesthetics' and 'critical spectatorship' embody the concept of 'memories of the future', a phenomena whereby, Gabriel points out, "we collectively place our signature on historical change."<sup>22</sup> Currents theories on migration, namelessness, rootlessness and return, homelessness, invisibility, loss, and biculturalism are re conceptualized not around victimization but human agency and collective empowerment. If Europe could "discover" Africa and the Americas, certainly Africa can reinvent herself through expressive culture which pitches itself at a reflexive Black consumer, an audience which identifies with parody, humor, social realism and spectator engagement with text and character. Traditional anthropology is interrogating itself on questions of cultural centrism, a stream often replenished by interdisciplinary rethinking in other fields.<sup>23</sup>

Whatever forms of religion exist in pan-African sites in what has been recalled as the Black Atlantic or the Black Triangle certain correlations recur whether in Cachoeira, KwaZulu or Detroit between expressive culture and religiosity or spirituality particularly derivations of slave folklore. Stuckey (1994) reasserts the facticity of cultural preservation through expressive music. Social forms of institutionalization produce similar forms of consensus and action in the Black arts and culture. Both imply social action, personal agency and collective action in order to fulfill agendas of personal and structural transformation. Art and the religious instinct are

<sup>17</sup>Jon Pareles, "Wynton Marsalis Takes a Long Look at Slavery," The New York Times, April 4, 1994.

<sup>18</sup>James Brooke, The New York Times, November 3, 1991.

<sup>19</sup>ibid., The New York Times, May 23, 1993.

<sup>20</sup>Philip van Niekerk, The Boston Globe, November 17, 1990.

<sup>21</sup>Teshome Gabriel, "Towards a Critical Theory of Third World Films," Questions of Third Cinema, p. 39. In his tables on filmic conventions in western and non-Western canons and comparisons of folk and print art forms (see pages 42-47).

<sup>22</sup>ibid., 60.

<sup>23</sup>For a review of recent developments in contemporary anthropology on African themes see Sally Falk Moore's "Changing Perspectives on a Changing Africa: The Work of Anthropology," in Africa and the Disciplines (1993).

interrelated in Black social norms. Stabilization, social cohesion and order are achieved through these institutions as Albrecht suggests. "As an alternative to religion, art as an independent system may not just "balance" the instrumental, rationalistic aspects of society; it may become the basis for fostering social change, not merely by supporting and giving expression to the goals of a deviant social movement, but by representing its values as a distinct way of life."<sup>24</sup>

There is a type of global aesthetic furthered by "Blackness" which is characterized by a list of factors which draw from Geertzian<sup>25</sup> analyses :

**First**, many cultural/artist practitioners who employ the text (visual, oral, aural, gestural) assert the "living ground" of culture as a site where "the people of the land and the street...and the thinker"<sup>26</sup> meet to negotiate the terms of social liberation. **Second**, the non-elective nature and politicization of artist performance practice enforces liberatory agendas on art due to the exclusionary effects of mainstream politics implicitly defined by whiteness. Larry Neal and Imamu Amiri Baraka (Leroi Jones,1968) articulated institutionalized forms of Black cultural patriotism as a watershed against assimilation into whiteness. Immersion in the social problems of society as encountered by the lived histories of Blackness generationally and diasporically was, therefore, according to popular culture in the United States in the late 1960's a matter of constrained choice. Culture, as an instrument against domination, has been accepted by critical theorists and community activists in the arts as a theory and practice of cultural democracy asserted as the "right of bicultural identity" as a preferred bicultural response pattern elected by "people of color."<sup>27</sup> It contends with the social and political realities of what is called a "pigmentocracy" or racial pecking order as do most nations which have a multiracial citizenship as do the U.S., the northeast coast of Brazil (Bahia) and South Africa, contexts which maintain a strong African presence. The culture markers point the way in a sample book title by David Toop, The Rap Attack: African Jive to New York Hip-Hop. (1984). The Pan-African diasporic framework is routinely executed by a theory of cultural production driven by that very large paradigmatic idea - Africa! Acappella hip-hop culture in New York city shares cultural space with Ladysmith Black Mombaza with a rhetorical technology and sonic harmonizing which ripples through the Black Atlantic with laser/sonar privileging the voice as instrument.

**Third**, the multiethnic, multicontextual, multilingual, interreligious and diasporic stages upon which Blackness has been played out predetermine

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<sup>24</sup>Milton Albrecht, "Art as an Institution," American Sociological Review, Vol. 33: 383-397.

<sup>25</sup>Clifford Geertz' text, The Interpretation of Cultures (1973), formulates an approach to understanding the notion of culture by means of 'descriptions' of actors and contexts, an approach which is helpful in investigating the 'meanings' of lived experience and the routine activities and worldview unveiled by first person accounts of cultural subjectivities.

<sup>26</sup>Ventura, Michael. "Report From El Dorado," Multicultural Literacy, 188.

<sup>27</sup>de Anda,

a set of Pan-Africanist ideologies and practices which defy monolithic classifications but which stimulate powerful debates and even more dynamic forms of expressive culture. The demographic shifts produced by the Atlantic slave trade were a major factor in social upheaval, yet its cohesive influences have been historically validated in scholarly and artistic enclaves. Multiple identities as a platform for unification has emerged as a force in the class struggle against Black empowerment. As a weapon of social stratification phenotype is a brutal manipulation of political economy in nations which idealize democracy. In Brazil the myth of racial democracy which has disenfranchised African Brazilians for two centuries is predicated on "blaqueamento". The "whitening process" as it is known has its counterparts in South Africa's "verblankingsproses" and in the United States as the familiar strategem "if you're white you're right, if you're brown stick around, if you're black stay back." Such white supremacist ideologies are partnered with economic underdevelopment in which the formerly enslaved or disenfranchised are made the culprits of racial pathology. Yet its energies are not protected from doom nor above criticism in the experience of Blackness and rage. Cultural rage has been described as liberating, intoxicating and ultimately damaging if the moral reckoning is not navigated by the lessons of history which deserved to be reproduced rather than those which were feeble.<sup>28</sup> Cultural production as exemplified in music has evolved a blue tradition out of the enslavement periods of Black people which I refer to as the *Dramatic Event*.<sup>29</sup> Political contexts in which national ideologies conflict with popular values attest to the psychological pressures which repression enforces on the arts. Albie Sachs remarks: "It is as though our rulers stalk every page and haunt every picture; everything is obsessed by the oppressors and the trauma they have imposed... little is about us and the new consciousness we are developing."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Mura, David, "Strangers in the Village," *Multicultural Literacy*, 149; see Joseph Lelyveld's *Move Your Shadow* (1985) recounting "the sadistic farce" enforced by South Africa's Race Classification Board. (p.85); for current perspectives on the "new miscegenation see Marla P.P. Root, ed., *Racially Mixed People in America* (1992) and Russell, Wilson and Hall in *The Color Complex* (1992); Euzhan Palcy's film *Sugar Cane Alley* (1984) explored the 'tragic mulatto' in Haitian/ French identity, power and love/betrayal themes as prefigured in the 1959 American film, *Imitation of Life*. Palcy has gone on to direct *A Dry White Season*. The films of American filmmaker Spike Lee have normalized the treatment of multiple identities as a "norm" in Black culture rather than as tragic or deviant.

<sup>29</sup>The *Dramatic Event* is a significant phenomena or complex of processes which alter the worldview, habitat, attitudes, behaviors, and customs of individuals and groups in psychological, physical, social, aesthetic and political dimensions. Further, it has been referred to as a 'holocaust', a spiritual upheaval of the identities and continuities of a people; a unifying framework for understanding the circularities embedded in power relations between victim(s) and oppressor(s), the rejective behaviors which set them in motion and the effects which these produce in societies; Discordance and concordance are evoked in the practice of art which draws upon the *dramatic event* as a thematic structure.

<sup>30</sup>Albie Sachs, "Preparing Ourselves For Freedom (Culture and the ANC Constitutional Guideleines), *IDR*, Spring 1991:188.

Fourth, there exist an infinite set of adaptive and stylistic devices or tools which prompted the preservation of old forms of culture and the development of new forms. Such processes as syncretism, creolization, innovation, biculturalism, cultural coding, masking, sermonizing, call and response, improvisation, appropriation, initiation, syncopation, the underground, and signification emerged as strategies of political consciousness and psychological healing. Hidden within folklife, religion and visual and performative traditions the messages of promise, self-deliverance, resistance and self-love were reformulated in the "New World/Americas" as African survivalisms/ retentions. No matter that colonial enslavers and contemporary commercial cultures view these as the primitive impulses of marginalized subordinates. The fact remains that African sensibilities remain while the expressive cultures of non-African referents become increasingly obsolescent. Later I will discuss the cultural exemplars in Brazil, South Africa and the United States which makes a case for social and popular movements which were specifically aimed at liberation. Artists and cultural practitioners continually comment on the appropriation of their work for commercial markets. Brazil's 1960's Bossa Nova movement became a stylistic version of the Samba music/dance tradition which was exported as a device to internationalize Brazil's mythic vision of racial democracy. In that same decade the popular film export, *Black Orpheus*, Jean Cocteau's French fantasy of the Greek myth adapted to Brazil's favelas on the Carnivale theme but which propagandized the myth of racial democracy through its depiction of a self-contained, contented favela community. The utopian trop never existed and "gone is the bucolic innocence portrayed in the film. ...The fantasia of the Carnival has become a televised competition dominated by rival gangsters and corporate sponsors, and the children of Orpheus are less likely to be found strumming guitars than peddling crack."<sup>31</sup>

Fifth, communication patterns in the Black expressive tradition follow a path back to Africa which can be plotted even in the modernist shifts from folk to popular culture. They can be found in such formulations as street theatre, wall/mural art, African, ground-based movement, and so on and can be tracked historically to what social science historians term "pre-literate" cultures. Current definitions of "literacy" and its epistemological hangover are fortunately under scrutiny particularly in literary criticism. Africanist in this area have exhumed the rhetorical traditions of oral societies and there it is evident that conditions of repression and censorship such as apartheid have served the projects of expressive culture in unanticipated ways. Bheki Langa (1993)<sup>32</sup> cites the resurgence of oral traditions in South Africa as a means whereby tradition has been renewed even as external citizenship rights were overruled. Speaking out has been a diasporic project

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<sup>31</sup> John Krich, "Sound of Music," *The New York Times*, October 210, 1990, p. 75.

<sup>32</sup> Langa, Bheki, "Social Control and the Arts in South Africa," *Social Control and the Arts: An International Perspective*.

in the juxtaposition of color politics and cultural politics, but the specter of language democratization hangs in the political abyss.

Sixth, and final in the factors which have furthered the strategies of power and advocacy in African aesthetic populism is communalism. More especially those communal events which re-integrate the diasporic communities for reunion and set agendas for future liberation. Nationalism, however incommensurable with Twentieth Century Blackness, remains on the post-colonial, post-apartheid menu to be updated. Global conferences such as Dakar in 1966 and Senegal in 1977 established Pan-Africanism among cultural producers and artists on a scale which has marked FESTAC as the quintessential forge for exchange, social movement, and cross-fertilization in expressive culture and its developing traditions.<sup>33</sup> Beyond African soil, the First Congress of Culture in the Americas in Cali, Columbia (1977), the Second Congress in Panama (1980), and the Third Congress in Sao Paulo (1982) carried the agendas forward in the Black Atlantic. In Manthia Diawara's African Cinema (1992) the notion of Pan-Africanism mobilized African filmmakers to create FEPACI (Federation en Africaine des Cineastes) in the late 1960's. These early efforts at institutionalization and resting economic and esthetic control of film industries from former colonial powers grew out of the many Congresses held during that period. Diawara situates the historicism of African filmic movements toward democratization: "After the independence of most African countries in the early sixties, the filmmakers still could not have access to production facilities and to the movie theatres for the projection of this films in their own countries. They consequently increased the political pressure on their governments to intervene and restructure the organization of film activities in a manner that would encourage African productions."<sup>34</sup>

Problems of production distribution and exhibition as outlined in Diawara's text chronicle the steady but laborious decolonization projects of African-based cinema since the 1969 Ouagadougou (FASPACO) Festival.<sup>35</sup> In the narration and representation of the political text African, U.S. and Brazilian filmmakers have reverted to non-didactic methods of cinematography loosely termed the 'Source Movement', a return to root traditions. The realities of fear of censorship, this return to pre-colonial African traditions and the construction of a new film language form Diawara's analysis. Artist performance practice enables a re-Africanization process around such issues as gender, historical revisionism and spirituality.

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<sup>33</sup>Described by writer John Collins as "the biggest soul to soul experience of the 1970's" FESTAC 1977 attracted delegations from 62 countries with "50 plays, 150 music and dance shows, 80 films, 200 poetry and literature sessions, and 40 art exhibits." (1992); also see, Stuckey (1987), Abraham (1991), Davis (1989); also see Andries Oliphant's Culture and Empowerment which chronicles the Zabalaza Festival of South African artists held in London, 1989 sponsored by COSAW and the ANC Department of Arts and Culture.

<sup>34</sup>Diawara, p.37.

<sup>35</sup>ibid.

36 " It is a look," states Diawara " that is intent on positing religion where anthropologists only see idolatry, history where they see primitivism, and humanism where they see savage acts." Haile Gerima's view of a triangular cinema lays out a progressive relationship of transformation of the cultural cinema movement, one which energizes the audience/community, the filmmaker/storyteller and the activist/critic.<sup>37</sup> The politicized context of institutional racism and paternalism made it even harder for women filmmakers. Cultural production is a marker which often prefigures the social conflict, bureaucratization, and economic subterfuge characterizing world politics. The production matrix and the social structure or context demand that artists declare positionalities because the nature of their work is critical to social change.

### ARTISTS, NATIVISM AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

We can, as a global audience, witness how far along we are on the race for human and social freedom by what our artists tell us lay on the frontier just ahead. It is for this reason that the man must harbor the bird, thus nurturing the song for the song will obtain, if not an ultimate freedom, then at least freedom from madness.

Social movements in the arts in South Africa, Brazil and the United States circulate around the routine activities which characterize the arts in general but which produce a politically engaged person. Bannings, exile, imprisonment, censorship and economic marginalization are not merely political demons to be reckoned with, but as coercive forms of state control act to stimulate novel and innovative art forms, techniques, and political underground's. These shift and change when bans, sanctions, exiles, and forms of social control are lifted. Important lessons for new directions must be learned in the transition to a post-apartheid reform period. The pressures and institutional threats take on different hues, but forms of legitimating and screening remain often masked as radical, progressive, and liberalized. As the South African film and literary community in exile, for example, returns, what form will the new marginalization take? How will gender equalities be addressed? What realistic timetables can be drawn up to ensure that training opportunities in filmmaking for Black South African women will lead to financial access to the means of production. When will we see Black women film directors who will shape the narration of South Africa's Black freedom

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<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>37</sup> Gerima in Pines, *Questions of Third Cinema*, p. 68; The films of Sarah Maldoror, the Guadeloupan filmmaker/activist ensure her status as one of the forerunners of African cinema. Recognized among Black cultural practitioners for *Sambizanga* (1971) and for her concise translation of the work of African novelists and writers into the filmic text, see Francoise Pfaff's "Sarah Maldoror", *International Review of African American Art*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1982:25-32. See also Francoise Pfaff's biographic chapter on Maldoror in *Twenty-Five Black African Filmmakers* (1988).



fighters in stories such as that told in Diane Russell's Lives of Courage (Women for a New South Africa) (1989)?

Democratic reformation is intertwined with cultural histories and personal growth all of which, under the most ideal circumstances, must shape the artists' lifework and the artists' life. The Leninist attachment to structural transformation which many thought would lead to sweeping revolution and social change since 1917 was quickly abandoned and generational shifts in art production placed new agendas in the arena of discourse. Transformed people change the course of any society. Confronting this dilemma has led many artists to renew their commitment to the art and community advocacy. Schools of expressive culture evolved out of community-based organizing during the 1970's in the Black Triangle.<sup>38</sup> Including participants from many backgrounds, community-based organizing has become a methodology for praxis in the arts which has metamorphosed into institutions of seminal political influence as well as training in theatre, music, dance, visual arts, film, and orature. With the failure of the Leninist projects and the collapse of Marxism, neo-Marxism and socialist projects in many African countries, Black cultural practitioners can serve as a global catalyst and avant-garde shaping the future course of societies searching for alternatives to materialist capitalism.

What have artists and cultural practitioners in African-based art worlds brought to the epistemological quest? What resources are required in order to begin to develop a language with which to speak across the vast ground base of knowledge on experiential tracks which are valid within Africanness in its variety? The Black tradition is expressively validated in the woodcuts of John Muafangejo whose 'teaching style' in the plastic arts bears a kinship with the "Story Quilts" of Faith Ringgold.<sup>39</sup> Afro-Brazilian woodcarvers in Cachoeira (Bahia) are a living manifestation of the promise Herskovits anticipated in the 1950's when he speculated on the vitality of African carvers in wood in the Old World and whether or not this tradition

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<sup>38</sup>The Black Triangle is a historical construct which refers to the geographical field in which the slave trade operated, commonly the Colonial United States south to the Caribbean, the northeast coast of Brazil and the west coast of Africa. Brazilian field studies and research in the 50's and 60's by Freyre and others has been updated by social, political and economic studies by U.S. scholars including Eric Williams' text, Capitalism and Slavery (1944) and African-American social scientist, E. Franklin Frazier who, in turn, completed field studies among Black Brazilians and family structures in 1940-41 under a Guggenheim grant. Both, qualitatively and quantitatively, have resulted in a reevaluation of slave trade studies by scholars across many disciplines. The Atlantic Slave Trade - Effects on Economies, Societies, and Peoples in Africa, the Americas, and Europe (1992) ed., Joseph E. Inikori, and Stanley L. Engerman

<sup>39</sup>American artist and feminist Faith Ringgold has traveled arts production via soft sculpture, painting, design arts, and more recently her Quilt Series reproduced in the video Faith Ringgold: The Last Story Quilt (1992) Though the artist never met the late Muafangejo they both typify the use of narrative texts as storyboards for portraying the critical advocacy for which the art of Black cultural referents is often impugned. Texts on Muafangejo include Levinson's, The African Dream (1992).

would survive as a retention.<sup>40</sup> The folk arts are replete with examples in all three contexts under study. African-American yard decoration, Afro-Brazilian mural painting and South African house painting and yard sculpture are exemplars of the presence of cultural patterns in the decorative arts which defy categories of western art by establishing an intent and language of their own. The once narrowly defined theories which cast African art only in the traditional reality has undergone a reformation of analysis. The acknowledgment of African art as an on-going tradition with permutations, diffusive influences, and avant-garde innovations has opened up not only new methodological approaches to the study of art away from the object-centered tendencies to broader, context-centered approaches. It has also permitted greater understanding of the impact of art on daily life in the African experience.<sup>41</sup>

Tourist representations of South Africa and Brazil played a principle role in commodifying the material culture of Africa since the 1950's when the South Africa Tourist Corporation and Brazil's more current Bahiaturca both were engaged in the service of industry and international relations. The effects on cultural production have been a seminal form of social control. In South Africa Today (1955) adventurers, E. and H. Blenck portray a modernized South Africa poised to greet the traveler with a whiskey and soda delivered by the compulsory Black steward only hours before a 2800 ft. descent into the Rand Mines for a look into egoli's<sup>42</sup> womb and a follow-up run through the "mineboys" compound conducted much like an inspection foray into a child's summer camp.<sup>43</sup> This account of the ensuing performance generated at the arena at the Rose Deep Mine reveals more about the white gaze and the extent to which white self-identity has been historically conditioned by an obligatory African presence constructed routinely within an entertainment matrix. Historically and politically, any form of cultural production which seeks alternate objectives- education, reformation or consciousness-raising suffers from cloaked as well as uncloaked forms of

<sup>40</sup> Herskovits, Melville, The Myth of the Negro Past (1958).

<sup>41</sup> Chandler, Robin. Reason and Memory in Artist Performance Practice: Toward a Multicultural Epistemology. 1992; see also Gundaker, Grey. "Tradition and Innovation in African-American Yards," African Arts, April 1993; and Thomas Matthew's articles in African Arts on mural making (January 1977 and 1979); see Sidney Kasfir's "African Art and Authenticity-A Text With a Shadow," African Arts, April, 1992 for a discussion of paradigm shifts in western methodology in African art history and trends of modernity in art production. In African Studies, The State of the Discipline. Papers presented at a Smithsonian Symposium at the National Museum of African Art, September 16, 1987 numerous issues were raised by Abiodun, Blier, Drewel, Ottenberg, Eyo et al.

<sup>42</sup> Egoli is a reference to Johannesburg as 'the city of gold.'

<sup>43</sup> E. and H. Blenck, South Africa Today, 29-30. Contemporary revisionist art history promotes the ethnographic gaze in such travel-log-cum-amateur-archeo collections as in Virginia -Lee Webb's "Fact and Fiction: Nineteenth Century Photographs of the Zulu," African Arts, Vol. XXV, No. 1 January 1992:50-59 and numerous other authors. Brazilian 'tropicalisme' is promoted regularly in the popular press as in "Colorful, Colonial Olinda", New York Times, March 27, 1994 (by Pamela Petro) which depicts the Recife suburb as an artist / crafts enclave.

ensorship. The language of "nativism" and condescension is expected, even in post-apartheid South Africa. The DuBoisian dualism in expressive culture as social organization and group formation is a clever creolization and foil against the impoverishment of white imagination which devours the "dark other", primeval dancing darkies always rallying to entertain and titillate the adventurous tourist:

"We are sitting...waiting for the dances by Native mine workers to begin. These take place every week and draw crowds of spectators, especially overseas visitors to South Africa on the sunny side of the arena sit rows of Native miners as spectators, and these are almost as fascinating a sight as the dancers themselves. Red-brown, grey, and multi-colored blankets are often seen in the city, though the Native from the rural areas soon tries to rival the "city Natives" by strolling around in a stylish suit-light blue is a favorite colour-on Sundays, with a loud silk tie and brightly coloured hat.

"With shrill whistles a team of dancers rushed into the arena. Tall, coloured ostrich plumes wave from their heads. they wear white angora-goat-skin leggings and armbands; and home-made bells jingle at their ankles. They brandish wooden spears decorated with tufts of fur. Reaching the centre of the arena, at a signal from the two dance leaders they spring into action. Though they throw every ounce of energy into their dancing, they perform with extraordinary precision and a sharply accented rhythm. Team after team give their particular tribal dances, each in their own costume: Vendas, Pondos, Xhosas, Basutos, and Zulus. Each have their own group among the spectators to urge them on, and these express their approval with as little restraint as their dissatisfaction. The morning ends with the wild rhythm of a xylophone orchestra - 24 men sitting behind their home-made instruments - and with a grotesque dance showing all the extraordinary agility and expressiveness of the Black races. These are not war dances, though the performances on the Johannesburg mines are often so called. They are certainly based on the old tribal dances, but nevertheless spring from the intense enjoyment that the unsophisticated Native finds in dancing."<sup>44</sup>

Subsequently in that text we are drawn into questions of "race mixing", South African coloureds as "the problem children" and the reader is further propagandized that "all the great work...done in South Africa in the last 300 years...has been exclusively the work of the White man. The Black man has contributed his share too, but only as the simple laborer whose work is far inferior to that of the White man in the same position."<sup>45</sup> The Pan Africanist phenomena of 'Carnivale' alerts the reader to Cape Town with the recent news headline, "But Will '94 Be a Cakewalk for These Strutters?"<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>ibid.

<sup>45</sup>ibid., 52.

<sup>46</sup>Bill Keller, *New York Times*, January 3, 1994. Keller is less adept at capturing the "masked" undercurrents in the Black expressive tradition and its status as an encoded form of cultural reproduction and resistance, moreover as a historical form of social organization reproduced in Brazil, South Africa and the U.S.; for an in-depth study of the subject see Judith Betteheim and John Nunley's *Caribbean Festival Arts* (1988).

The popular culture consumer has to veer only briefly to Brazil to witness the cultural commodification of "the happy dancing darkie" in capoeira <sup>47</sup>demonstrations in hotels on Copacabana beach in Rio. The marketing of Africa through its material culture is an extension of the mission of patriarchy cloaked as free enterprise with the free part expected from Africans' artistic charity. Among Black artists on either shore, profits from the public performance of art and folkloric traditions are minimal and leadership and decision-making in organizational development are mostly controlled by whites. Brazil's Samba Schools which form the nexus of the annual Carnivale preparation, have been overtaken by the underworld and for a paltry \$23 USD Face-to-Face Tours<sup>48</sup> will take you on a three-hour tour of Soweto to view Mandiba's past residence, Winnie's mansion, township shebeens, squatter camps, migrant hostels, and traditional healers in a railroading which resembles surrealism at its best, rather than a social commentary of marginalization and the commercialization of culture.

Conducting tours of Cabrini Green in Chicago? Exotica-econ postcards and billboards would be inconceivable in the American context. In excerpting Mandiba's inauguration speech- "a nation of people improved their standing overnight. All without a semi-annual sale" the designer Kenneth Cole deploys Mandela's photo with this cutline to promote sales in product advertisements in the New York Times. Jamaica Kincaid's A Small Place (1988) examines the reduction of Blackness to exoticism by a de-nativizing white gaze which fails to fully frame power (white= dominant) as ethnic essentialism on the rampage. "Every native is a potential...so when the natives see you, the tourist, they envy you, they envy your ability to leave your own banality and boredom, they envy your ability to turn their own banality and boredom into a source of pleasure for yourself." <sup>49</sup> Mainstream, dominant, power - these are all elements of meaning invisibly prefixed by "white" and, while avoiding cultural critic Paul Gilroy's apprehensiveness concerning ethnic absolutism, continue to signify the need for cultural maroonage and resistance among progressive artists.

In northern Brazil, in Belem where the Amazon opens up to the ocean a small distance in, one encounters a small river enclave whose subsistence economy is half-rooted in fishing and the other in a pottery-making industry awkwardly nestled in the clutches of capitalism. Most of the townspeople regiment their lives around the riverside collecting clay, then forming exquisite jars, plates and artifacts of material culture through the stages of wheel-throwing, carving and ornamentation, glazing and firing . The north Brazilian Indian ornamentation which characterizes the artifacts accommodates notions of "primitive" and so it interests the western market. The assembly line manufacturing milieu in which all of this work occurs

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<sup>47</sup>Kenneth Dossar, "Capoeira Angola: An Ancestral Connection," American Visions, August 1988:39-42.

<sup>48</sup> Bill Keller, "Touring South Africa's Black Townships," New York Times, February 6, 1994.

<sup>49</sup>Jamaica Kincaid, A Small Place, p. 19.

would impress a more sophisticated pottery-making studio. The artisans were so overextended keeping up with market demands that fishing was put on temporary hold. In 1990 when asked "where the good stuff was", our artists group was escorted through a maze of backyards to a small warehouse which held thousands of material objects which had already been commissioned by Japanese buyers for distribution in upscale western boutiques for consumers who can fondle masked primitivism at market prices. Upon entering the storehouse, a postmodern reaction not unlike uncovering Tutankhamen's Tomb or the Zimbabwe Ruins, thoughts circulated concerning the reversion of remnants of conquest, the peripatetic instinct for museumification of "dead objects" once a dynamic sign of cultural patrimony. The long arm of western social and economic controls on the lives of rural artisans in the African diaspora is a recurrent economic reality.<sup>50</sup>

In other media the streams of familial currents in theory/praxis are interlaced in the rhetorical and psycho-narrative strategies of many writers whose sanguine texts concentrate on bicultural kinesthesia, a Black imagination which sorts and filters the estuaries of collaged racial identities which run into the larger waters of Blackness. Racial "skeletons" once closeted have been revisited as a space of exploration of the politics of race while pasts are being forgiven. All over the Black Atlantic the psychology "CD" (Cultural Difference) phenomena reproduces itself in the arts and cultural production becoming one of the most powerful strategies of creativity if taken on to the flood. Individual personality formation, a century after emancipation, constitutes a spiritual healing for some, a wellspring of source material and encouragement for others. The following texts map the problematic of "race mixing" or biculturalism defined by the lived experience of Africanness. Zoe Wicomb's You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town (1987) and Shirlee Taylor Haizlip's The Sweeter the Juice (1994) brings the Black audience full circle to Nella Larsen's Passing published in 1929 in the United States. Charting the passage of "mixed race-ness" bridges all of the expressive arts as a strategy of renewal around the fundamental question which nationalism historically answered,- who am I? American visual artist, Adrian Piper called attention to an ordinarily taboo subject. Piper's Calling Card (1986) read: "Dear friend. I am black. I am sure you did not realize this when you made/laughed at/agreed with that racist remark. In the past, I have attempted to alert white people to my racial identity in advance. Unfortunately, this invariably causes them to react to me as pushy, manipulative, or socially inappropriate. Therefore, my policy is to assume that white people do not make these remarks, even when they believe there are no black people present, and to distribute this card when they do. I regret any discomfort my presence is causing you, just as I am sure you regret the discomfort your racism is causing me. Sincerely yours, Adrian Margaret

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<sup>50</sup>Kasfir, "African Art and Authenticity-A Text With a Shadow," African Arts, April 1992.

Smith Piper *My Calling (Card) # 1*, 1986.<sup>51</sup> Mixed race people, ordinarily classified in Brazil, the United States and South Africa as subjects of ridicule whose psychological profile assumed a type of personality disorder, a social mutation, define the double vision in innovative ways.

U.S. film and video artist, Kathe Sandler's *A Question of Color* (1992) uses the video text tackling the color tone issue and the 'taken-for-granted' socialization which institutes social dynamics around competing socio-economic variables, class, gender, status and political affiliation pitting them against religious-based mythologies such as predestination and prophecy.

The ideological linkage between nationalism and Pan-Africanism is a well documented element of the theory/praxis debate in Brazil, the U.S. and South Africa. Forms of Black expressive culture has been fired in a kiln of race politics forcing people of color to elect either political engagement or levels of assimilation. Since art, culture and religion are the three most liquid streams into which Africanness might be found, it is evident that artists, cultural workers and the religious have had a primary role in preserving African tradition(s) and in combating racism. Strategies of resistance are played out within the expressive form itself. In music, American composer George Russell proposes 'the "River Trip" Explanation of Jazz Improvisational Styles' to theorize about the way in which jazz musicians make aesthetic decisions regarding form and content. The theory exposes the plural approaches to the construction of pan-tonal jazz " a music that is rooted in folk scales"<sup>52</sup> Employing metaphor, Russell posits the river as a tune. Selecting a pantheon of American jazz performance artists he extends symbolic referencing with small towns along the river as chords and larger towns as chords and tonic stations. Coleman Hawkins' strategy might be go by steamer, a local which stops tonally at all towns. Lester Young, an express steamer that stops only at large ports and perhaps a small town. The early John Coltrane, like Hawkins, elects the local means, but in lieu of a steamer uses a rocket ship to soar into the chromatic universe between neighboring towns. Ornette Coleman, finally, will employ the rocket ship but concentrates on developing a chromatic melody around a single tonic station.<sup>53</sup>

What is pertinent for theorizing about expressive culture here is the varied ways whereby methodology in Black music is approached from multiple vantage points in the cultural production journey. The high incidence of innovation as a strategy of resistance to the dramatic event (bondage/enslavement) suggests certain conclusions about how diaspora

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<sup>51</sup> Adrian Piper in Lucy Lippard's *Mixed Blessings New Art in a Multicultural America*. (1990), p. 236

<sup>52</sup>George Russell, *The Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization*, p. xxii. For a brief introduction to Black musics in Brazil and South Africa related to resistance themes see "Rhythm of resistance -The Black Music of South Africa," *Beats of the Heart*. (1985) by Jeremy Marre and Hannah Charlton, pp. 34-50 and in the same text, "Spirit of Samba-The Black Music of Brazil", pp. 215-228.

<sup>53</sup>ibid., xviii-xix.

artists and culture griots tap into the ground water of ethnic heritage. The foundation of Black culture, shaped by both pre-colonial and post-colonial hegemonies, has emerged in the faces of bosses, lords, and masters, chiefs and clan leaders, yet "civilization" was ever brewing. Samba has historically been a form of cultural resistance in Brazilian cultural production as outlined in Muniz Sodre's *O Terreiro e o Cidade* (1988). Despite the fact that modern "imperialisms" threaten traditional forms of expressive culture, tradition yet remains. Traveling north from Rio to Cachoeira and Salvador (Bahia), the public presentation of processional, carnival and festival in festivals is celebrated within religious social organization. *Ile Axe Opo Afonja* community, one of the oldest Candomble houses in Bahia, has engendered close links with artist practitioners among Afro-Brazilians. As an African-based religion Candomble constitutes a syncretism of Roman Catholicism and Yoruba cosmologies which preserves the dynamism of religion. Artist performance practice, informed by African sensibilities and the religious mission of spiritual self-renewal through invocation to orishas is practiced by many artists in Brazil and the diaspora. Abdias do Nascimento, a progressive artist activist in painting and theatre attests to religion as a reference point. "My art is born in the ceremonial drawings and songs of Candomble. they are its basis, its foundation...a profound experience of *living* Afro-Brazilian culture . I apprehend certain visions, fantasies, revelations contained in Candomble symbols... The orishas (deities) come out of their cosmic habitats and mount a human medium's body. They dance, eat, drink and make love.... My orishas receive the names of living people and take on the defense of the heroes and martyrs still offered by the African people as sacrifices to the search for freedom."<sup>54</sup>

Mid-century for people of color in the African diaspora was an intense period of political reawakening. In 1944 do Nascimento had founded TEN (Black Experimental Theater). TEN went on to organize the National Black Conventions of 1945 and 1946 in Sao Paulo and Rio and the First Congress of Brazilian Blacks in 1950. Those assemblies, which included the participation of Afro-Brazilian artists and cultural workers, attempted to push forward anti-discrimination measures which were presented to the National Constituent Assembly which included only one African. Characteristic of Brazilian power relations, American power relations and South African power relations of that period, such measures were summarily rejected due to white denial of the existence of discrimination. Debates on racial questions resulted in intense cultural debates which labeled proponents as subversives. With Brazil's National Security Laws , the 1950's in South Africa was propelled into turmoil when the government embarked upon a series of

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<sup>54</sup>do Nascimento, *Africans in Brazil*, p. 54. Enriched by the African legacy in Candomble, the Festa de Nossa Senhora da Boa Morte is celebrated every August in Cachoeira; Sheila Walker and Mikele Smith Omari have done considerable research on Irmandade da Boa Morte. See Walker's "The feast of Good Death: An Afro-Catholic Emancipation Celebration in Brazil," Sage, Vol. III, No. 2 (Fall 1986) and Omari's "From the inside To the Outside: The Art and Ritual of Bahian Candomble," *Museum of Cultural History/UCLA*, No. 24, 1984.

repressive policies including the Bantu Education Act, the Native Laws Amendment Act, the Group Areas Act, and the never-ending pass laws. The United States confrontation, *Brown Vs. the Board of Education* matched these repressive politics with its own apartheid.

### REPRESSION AND THE ARTIST

In the United States, the McCarthy campaigns against progressive cultural practitioners couched in the anti-Communist discourse, coupled with school, voting and amenities segregation struck a resounding cord. Mid-century in Brazil, South Africa and the United States established itself as the point of no return for democratization and social justice movements. The ANC's Department of Art and Culture convened South African cultural workers for the Culture in Another South Africa (CASA) Arts Festival in 1987 in Amsterdam and was followed by the Zabalaza festival in 1990 in London. Mongane Wally Serote phrased the passage of cultural empowerment. "When, in 1982, at the Culture and Resistance Conference and Festival of the Arts, South African cultural workers declared that culture is part and parcel of the liberation process, they were expressing a vision which is now our reality. the creators of art, the institutions of culture, our language, our life itself, which makes culture, will liberate us from the past."<sup>55</sup>

In asserting that the arts must have a structural function in society in the "New South Africa", South African novelist and critic, Njabulo Ndebele attempts to draw the outer parameters of cultural practice. "Instead of asserting that we need the arts to mobilize people, as a primary goal, rather we should say we need the arts because they extend the limits of democratic participation.... We aim not only at enlarging the limits of our cultural expression, but also at efficient social organization and organic civic society."<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, the structural limitations of the new government call for a cautious brokerage with the National Arts Coalition presided over by Ndebele, as well as other cultural forces in the nation which have historically played both sides of the court.

Long before John Kani and Winston Ntshona were introduced to non-South African theatre audiences in *Sizwe Bansi Is Dead* and *The Island* and prior to the founding of the Serpent Players (1961), Langston Hughes brought apartheid to the attention of the progressive community in the cultural diaspora through the poem entitled *Johannesburg Mines*.

#### *Johannesburg Mines*

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<sup>55</sup>Serote in *Culture and Empowerment* (Debates, Workshops, Art and Photography from the Zabalaza Festival), Oliphant, ed., p. 242.

<sup>56</sup>Njabulo Ndebele, *Writers From South Africa*, p.97.



In the Johannesburg Mines  
There are 240, 000 natives working

What kind of poem  
Would you make out of that?

240, 000 natives working  
In the Johannesburg Mines.

In 1928 Hughes wrote this poem included in the collection entitled Good Morning Revolution was published in Crisis magazine. His undistilled articulation of cultural production as a form of social protest extended well into the 1950's and his use of drama and irony directed the reader to a threshold of Black political consciousness. Aime Cesaire's warning that "art is the only weapon we have against the deafness of history" was never wasted on critical voice in Hughes who consistently assaulted hierarchies of psychological bondage bred in the apartheid which he witnessed as an inveterate world traveler. Though his works in the African canon were widely read in Africa, he rarely gave public readings of the more "revolutionary" works in Good Morning Revolution. As a political victim of the McCarthy inquisition Hughes, along with Paul Robeson<sup>57</sup> and too many other filmmakers, screenwriters, poets, dancers, musicians, painters, censorship became routinized at certain repressive periods. It is a recurrent theme in artist performance practice. In *Envoy to Africa* and *Memo To Non-White Peoples*, Hughes invokes Pan-Africanism. Even at his worst, Hughes was a nationalist, performing the necessary rituals of resistance much as Dylan Thomas urges in us "do not go swiftly into that good night. Rage, rage against the dying of the light."

At home in South Africa moral ground must be made where one stands. The character of the Judge in Genet's classic text, *The Blacks*, intended for white audiences, utters words which are standard in color politics. "I've drafted a bill" he assures the assembled players "the first paragraph of which reads as follows: Act of July 18. Article I. God being dead, the color Black ceases to be a sin; it becomes a crime...."<sup>58</sup> The criminalisation of Blackness by whites coincides with a recurring theme which Baraka (when he was Jones) suggested as the "contemporary (post-renaissance) loss of prestige of the unseen" toward the worship of "machines which are completely knowable."<sup>59</sup> Euro-essentialism, in rationalizing God as an artifact, also succeeded in laying the conceptual groundwork for Black life as "a found object" and in pursuing the Baraka treatise on "art-as-a-verb" the museum as a social institution becomes "a curious graveyard of thinking.... Music, the

<sup>57</sup>see Stuckey's Going Through the Storm: The Influence of African-American Art in History (1994) and *Song of Freedom* (VHS-1986) for Robeson's portrayal of a concert singer descendant of slaves who is in search of his African heritage.

<sup>58</sup>Jean Genet, *The Blacks*, 119.

<sup>59</sup>Baraka(Leroi Jones) in *Home(Social Essays)*, 178.

most valuable of artifacts, because it is the most abstract.." also becomes "what is left after what? *That* is important. Alternately said Baraka muses on the empty abyss left in the wake of objectification, museumification and ethnographic voyeurism. In the Black tradition, the aesthetic preoccupation is with the dynamic moment opened up by the creative person in the act of creativity. Process is an ethnically sustainable condition of art-making among Black artists and artisans, the way in which the creative person apprehends the purpose of being human and produces cultural humanism. The context is recreated, social and spiritual change ensues, and the object is an ineffectual remnant of the miracle of creativity. Many artists in general share in the creation of such moments. the moral detour suggested by Genet and Baraka in the 1960's and prophesied forty years earlier through the DuBoisian imagination as 'the color line' succeeded for nearly two centuries in imprisoning the white South African imagination with the reenactment of the death of God. Apartheid as the final Homicide.

The themes of namelessness, homelessness, invisibleness, rootlessness, anonymity, exile, migration and the divided self can be seen in the apartheid projects in South African visual art in more than the resistance art of the progressive community. Throughout Africa, in forms of cultural diffusion which are transhistorical and which serve a constructive neo-functional end from within the art-history-as-archaeology matrix of the early Iron Age. Fabricating artifacts from between the First Millennium B.C. and the Third Century A.D. Africa's west and southern regions produced artisans whose visual work departed markedly from their eastern and central counterparts. Each fashioned hollow terra cotta heads of animal and human creatures during this age considered to signal the spread of Bantu-speaking peoples. Though stylistically dissimilar, the Nok Heads in West Africa believed to be the precursor of material culture of classical Ife and Benin, and the seven terra cotta Lydenburg Heads uncovered in the 1960's south of the Limpopo in the eastern Transvaal become hypothetical relatives. A revisioning of methodology might see a historical exchange as evidentiary in social groups who are themselves nomadic or link with migrating kin. Further it is suggested that "this represents a fairly widespread and well developed sculptural tradition within this period" further demonstrating "that there was an Early Iron Age underlay to African sculpture that extended far to the south of those west and central African areas known today for their sculpture."<sup>60</sup>

The power and primacy of the visual image, then, in early rock art and sculptural forms can be seen as an intercontinental form of ritual communication about ways of knowing, meaning, and the union of life and art. It is an initiation into the dynamic force of cultural protocols which are manifested in contemporary mural movements in Brazil, South African and

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<sup>60</sup>Maggs and Davison, "The Lydenburg Heads," *African Arts*, Vol. XIV, No. 2. February 1981:28-33; the South Africa National Gallery / Igalari Yobuzwe Yomzantsi Afrika featured an exhibition "The Ideology of Meaning and the Lydenburg Heads (November 1993-January 1994).

the United States. The importance of the wall as a context for narration links the petroglyphs of the Tassili with American muralist, John Biggers and his Hampton University mural, *House of the Turtle* (1991-92) thousand of years later, with the FUBA murals in Soweto and the street graffiti of urban Salvador. Throughout the African diaspora the wall mural has taken on mythic proportions as a "sacred text", a site where the chaos and exultation of the mystery of life may be explored.<sup>61</sup> John Biggers has termed the mural phenomena "a shrine for the neighborhood."<sup>62</sup> In earlier times the wall, the rock must have conjured this protocol to narrow the gap between an awesome nature and an embryonic mythology and cosmology which left much to chance and human wits. Such a visual protocol predates and equalizes the primacy of the written text, the power of the word, a theory of literacy in the West which absented Africans from the picture altogether due to the construction of the idea of literacy as language and power. Visual literacy is intertwined intercontinentally with orature, tonal or aural literacy and gestural or kinetic literacy. Africans diasporically have explored the use of the use of *the body as text* as a holistic text on which to experiment with that living resource which has contemporary Black culture in its grips as performance practice.<sup>63</sup> The criteria of performance language, the use of the body as the first site of expressiveness and the use of the *wall as text* is continually played out in the Black tradition. In the cultural production continuum, cultural codes were institutionalized within the performance matrix as iconographic elements which reduced enormous amounts of information and data about the lived histories of Black Africans. Syncretism, diffusion, and domestication are strategies which though outwardly accommodationist, were inwardly mechanistic.

The "underground" as a site of South African, African-American and Afro-Brazilian resistance was the sacred twilight where cultural forms were reworked until function followed form. The function-resistance, the form-cultural production. In almost any taxi in the African diaspora one can hear hand-pressed audio tapes which offer the latest resistance music as genius subversion. In terrorist regimes throughout Pan-Africa, 'speaking in tongues' can mean speaking in locally understood metaphors in traveling street theatre, or the emergence of women's singing groups which "dis" polygamy as obsolescent African patriarchy. It is interesting to note that Africans are

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<sup>61</sup>See Samella Lewis' *Art: African-American* (1990) for a brief mention of "street art"; also see Eugene Grigsby's *Art and Ethnics* (1977); the videotape *Stories of Illumination and Growth: John Biggers' Hampton Murals* (VHS-1993) covers the philosophical research into the sacred and historical use of metaphors and symbols in African life as a means of narration and social and political empowerment;

<sup>62</sup>*ibid.*, Biggers in Grigsby, 136. See this authors' article, "Performing Arts for the People: Master Muralist Creates Renaissance in Western Massachusetts," *International Review of African American Art*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Winter 1978:17-27.

<sup>63</sup>See Michael Harris' "Ritual Bodies-Sexual Bodies: The Role & Presentation of the Body in African-American Art," *Third Text*, 12, Autumn 1990: 81-95. The literature on the symbolic meaning of the body is extensive, but is not the subject of this paper.

more recently talking repatriation of tribal art objects and setting national limits on the exportation of artifacts and have given serious consideration to the Mexican Government's guidelines regarding archaeology that counts "anything underground as a national treasure". A considerable blow, hopefully to western museumification. Somehow it doesn't concern western imperialists that, after all the years of colonialist thievery, leaving something behind in the way of conservation facilities in the countries it has plundered might be preventative prudent political economy.

The culture and politics of "a new South Africa" is a potential forum for the in gathering of "the family", an African globalism and an intercontinental language of literacy which weds the traditional to the modern and which rests out there just at the edge of light. The spiritual linkage of cultural producers emerges in South Africa with their counterparts in the United States, Brazil and the diaspora. South Africa's Black film industry-in-exile will upstep the cottage industry of handmade videos which, however inadequately, depict American popular culture. In *Darkest Hollywood* (1992) depicts a two-fold analysis of the impact of Hollywood on the Black South Africans, the escapism from political disempowerment whereby, through film "we were carried way by the dream of these American movies"(John Kani) and "for a moment we forgot apartheid."<sup>64</sup> However, the issues of social control, representation, and commodification rekindle a question raised earlier in this document through Gordimer's nagging interrogatory essay "Where Do Whites Fit In?"

The litany of films by whites on Black South African subject matter is an arresting genre of films which novelist Lewis Nkosi asserts constitute serious tensions between white filmmakers and Black activists in the past. The video then embarks on an analysis of the tensions in representation of the South African experience by white South Africans in such films as *The Gods Must be Crazy*, (1979) *Cry freedom* and *A Dry White Season*. *Mapantsula* (1988), co-directed by Oliver Schimidz and Thomas Mogotlane, a Black/White collaboration attempts to repossess the value of individual life. Screenwriter, Mfundi Vundla comments on the politicization of *Mapantsula's* main character, a street criminal, whose characterization reflects strategies of Black consciousness raising and the importance of direct resistance to apartheid. Vundla and Nkosi anticipate a Black South African film industry which moves "away from the oppressive constraints of the Hollywood film industry"<sup>65</sup> whose iconographic and filmic brainwashing have been influencing Black South African film audiences since the Fifties.

In *Jim Comes to Joburg* (1949), actress/singer Dolly Ratebe does the Lena Horne thing in a Pan-African cabaret genre which promoted Black music within the film context of apartheid. A year later the South African white film industry saw the potential profits in the commodification of Blackness producing *Zonk* (1950) a deprecating minstrel show. Nkosi suggests these

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<sup>64</sup>In *Darkest Hollywood* (VHS-1992).

<sup>65</sup>ibid.

satisfy two agendas of western formula filmmaking in that they exploit Black audiences and parade state propaganda in far more insidious ways than documentary film.<sup>66</sup> With the release of *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1951), the screen version of Alan Paton's classic, American actors Canada Lee and Sydney Poitier succeed in giving weight to Black characterization, but as is pointed out, criminality is "ascribed to the figure of Absalom without ascribing criminality to the system of apartheid." The film was released to segregated audiences in South Africa. When premiered at the Coliseum in Johannesburg that year there were no Blacks in the audience nor were Black actors present and the evenings proceeds went to the South African Institute for Race Relations. Nkosi, Lionel Rogosin and Bloke Modisane collaborated on *Come Back Africa* (1959) in an attempt to create sensitive first-person accounts of the lived histories of South African's intellectual/ street communities and the locus for the shebeen as a stage for political engagement. In harsher times, the funeral as a regenerative politic site for consciousness-raising was appropriated in similar fashion.

There is a clear distinction between feature films and documentaries as narrative texts. In each there exists, however, a partisan message, whether implicit or explicit. Films which attempt to span politics and entertainment have a rough time in the marketplace. In the case of western filmmaking the history of 'Cecil B. DeMille' genre in which wide-screen, special effects, fantasy spectacles appeal to the sublimation of political and social inequalities, there may not be a vast theoretical leap between D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915) and South Africa's *The Voortrekkers* (1916). The latter reads as the former with rapacious Zulu marauders terrorizing the South African patriots in a 'cowboys and Indians' formula of manifest destiny then popularized by Hollywood. Paton's book classic, *Cry the Beloved Country*, in its paternalism, resembles Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* penned a century earlier in another country. The problematic of shifting priorities between ethics and market realities and the inability to construct films which reconcile the two remains for the developing film industries in the U. S., Brazil and South Africa. In a panel discussion on the relative merits of public access to Griffith's film, a widely acknowledged racist diatribe on white supremacy, historian John Hope Franklin revisited civil rights histories from Reconstruction to the present in remarking that the film was a reinforcement of "the rightness of the disenfranchisement of African-Americans . The lesson it taught was that it was a tragic mistake to give African- Americans the vote during Reconstruction."<sup>67</sup> Nonetheless, this exemplifies the

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<sup>66</sup>ibid.

<sup>67</sup>William Grimes, "An Effort To Classify A Racist Classic," *New York Times*, April 27, 1994; also see American film critic, Clyde Taylor's "The Master text and the Jedi Doctrine," *Screen*, September 1988 and "Black Cinema in the Post-Aesthetic Era," in Pines, ed., *Questions of Third Cinema* (1990), "Black Spirit in South Africa," *The Black Collegian*, September-October, 1985:43-44, and "FESPACO 85 Was a Dream Come True," *Black Film Review*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 1985:1, 6-9 for a transcultural perspective on Black cinematic production and criticism.

pernicious (ab)use of the cinematic text as masked entertainment and reveals the ways in which entertainment serves can serve as covert propaganda.

We return to questions of epistemology and language. The pressing requirements of the Pan-Africanist discourse on matters such as social welfare and poverty to economic enfranchisement in cultural production supports an over-arching agenda of sweeping changes in African-based social organization, given institutional racism. Bessie Head, writer and exile to Botswana from 1964 until her death in 1986, approached her craft with great trepidation often experiencing the futility of translating "the South African scene into human language. How does one communicate with the horrible?" she queries.<sup>68</sup> In 1962 she wrote: "Perhaps I have my ear too keenly attuned to the political lumberjacks who are busy making capital on human lives. Perhaps I'm just having nightmares."<sup>69</sup> Wole Soyinka calls upon Dennis Brutus' poem *Their Behavior* as a "cautionary moment in an otherwise predictable self-representation...the moral equipment required for the reconstruction not merely of society but of man."<sup>70</sup>

Paralleling Civil Rights movements of the 1950's and the Black Consciousness movements of the 1960's in the United States, forms of social and political discontent in the struggle for liberation from white domination greatly shaped the visual strategies of resistance regarding theory and praxis. Easel art, street art, mural art, and community-based organizing of artists with their constituencies, whatever means available, artists contributed to the overall climate of social change. In Chicago (for example) OBAC (Organization of Black Art and Culture) convened artists and writers who went on to produce tidal waves of institution-building which concretely constitute an infrastructure of Black museums, galleries, community centers, critics, and curators. The Black subject as a contested theme in the street and on canvas continued a long tradition of African-American art which evolved into a discrete art world. James Porter, painter and art historian, chronicled the seminal years of this tradition in textual form followed by Lewis and Waddy in the late Sixties and Seventies, David Driskell's Two Centuries of Black American Art (1976), Lewis again in 1990 and Black Art: Ancestral Legacy, an exhibition catalog/text in 1989.<sup>71</sup> As early as 1958 Porter, considered the Father of the African-American Art History, was writing on "The Transcultural Affinities of American Negro Art," published in *Presence*

<sup>68</sup>Bessie head, A Woman Alone, 102.

<sup>69</sup>ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Soyinka, Myth, Literature and the African World, 75.

<sup>71</sup>See James Porter's Modern Negro Art (1969), Samella Lewis and Ruth Waddy's Black Artists on Art (1969, 1971), and Art: African-American by Lewis reissued in 1990, and the Dallas Museum 's 1989 exhibition which traveled from Dallas to The High Museum of Art in Atlanta, the Milwaukee Art Museum, and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond. As white writers on this subject Cedric Dover and Elsa Fine in American Negro Art (1960) and The Afro-American Artist (1973), respectively, have covered the field. Dover's text, more obscure and considered patronizing is less than a critical benchmark. Extensive documentation in book, slide ad video/film is available on this vast field of cultural production, critical, historical, and socio-political.

Africaine. Of significance here is the construction of a visual arts heritage and history within a conceptual framework conditioned by artist performance practice. That is, these writers, many of whom were artists themselves, defined this tradition, its parameters, its theories and methods out of their own lived histories.

In the western press article, "The Artists of South Africa-Separate, and Equal"<sup>72</sup> the writer is unlettered in the formal elements and the context of Black production outlined above. As such, we read about Noria Mabasa, David Koloane, Willie Bester, Helen Sebidi and Durant Sihlali from an ethnographic frame which comprehends Blackness in cultural production as isolationist and the white South African artists who work presumably on the resistance edge as obsessive. Hampered by the inability to weave a tapestry of apparent contradictions, the best writing on Black South African visual artists has yet to be written. The conflation of white and Black artists is problematic on many levels. The historical segregation instincts of apartheid forced like-minded progressives to collaborate on certain political fronts to combat racism. White progressives will admit the benefits of white privilege, yet they must also surrender to a new definition of South African nationalism that exists beyond the scope of whiteness. Whiteness might be reconstructed in ways other than wire-tapping Black culture and its historicism. Solidarity with cultural producers in the diaspora will inevitably shape this new historicism and Black South African artists will reproduce this text by their own sense of reason and memory. Black South African art can be staged, critiqued, written about, composed by its own producers whose sense of social responsibility to Blackness will gradually unfold powerful histories of cultural production in the coming years. The treasured and hard-won alliances between white, Black Indian and colored art cultural practitioners can be used as a landing field from which each must take flight, returning home when sanctuary is needed.

Apart from nationalist sentiment shaped from within South Africa, the social problems of African-based communities breed an endemic social realism in the form of art which are produced. Transcultural collaboration is an easy strategy in Black cultural production. The Crossroads Theatre Company has been among the pioneers of new theatre bringing to the stage *Sheila's Day* and *Woza Albert!* both collaborations between South African and African-American actors and theatre producers.<sup>73</sup> Monie Love from London and Queen Latifah from the U.S. collaborated on the latter's *Ladies*

<sup>72</sup>Andrew Solomon, *The New York Times*, March 27, 1994: 44-49. Earlier texts include Esme Berman's *Art and Artists of South Africa* (1970) which mentions Sydney Kumalo, Ephraim Ngatane and Maqhubela.

<sup>73</sup>Barbara Ross, "'Crossroads Theatre -Nurturing a New Generation of Black Theater,'" *American Visions*, October 1990: 32-36. For coverage of popular theatre see Hilary De Vries, "Drama Lesson," *The Boston Globe*, June 24, 1990, an interview with playwright/director, Lloyd Richards and Rhett S. Jones, "History and Cultural Sensibilities: Suggestions for Black Theatre," *The Griot/Southern Conference on Afro-American Studies*, Vol. 10, No.1, Spring 1991:48-55.

First rap record to regale audiences with Black female orature in a call-and-response which combines rap and house music assuring elder cultural practitioners that the tradition lives on intergenerationally.<sup>74</sup>

While the American artist, Jacob Lawrence composed *Praying Ministers* (1962), South African artist Boyskin Siphon composed *Guguletu* (1976) in the year of the Soweto uprising, both calling down religious themes with similar points of view. The uprising lasted nearly six months, pupils protesting the dehumanization of Bantu education. In a retaliatory protest to the execution of 600 by the police, hundreds of these children went into exile joining the ANC and PAC urged on by the Black Consciousness movement and the images which they saw and were a part of in real life which visual artists then recreated. In the wake of Steve Biko's torture and death in detention a year later, a radicalized identity for Black South African children conjures a visual memory of these "storm troopers of political change" who valorized social justice in Soweto by dying for education, a sad commentary on the electronic images which recall Black children escorted to school in Little Rock, Arkansas by the 101st Airborne Division. And the question begs: 'What is so scary about little Black children?' This radicalized identity constitutes a disruption of a conscientization of audience in Smart Gumedé's "Take Care of the Young" (1987). Given South Africa's nomadic removals, land becomes the territory of youth, territories which they rapidly appropriate as People's Parks in South Africa or train graffiti in urban centers, New York, Los Angeles and Rio. It is difficult to speak about civic responsibility when have been made landless in their own land.

Along with the themes of exile and loss of childhood, the theme of violence is partnered in an all-too-easy tension. As with the first UPI/AP/Black Star visual bytes of Black protesters set upon by police dogs in the U.S. in the Fifties, then the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960 and more recently the disappearance, prostitution and death of Rio's street children, the conscientization process has served either to horrify the spectator out of inactivity and into socially responsibly behavior or to mesmerize the viewer into a cyberspace where actors are indistinguishable from real life victims. As cultural producers committed to spiritual transformation which leads to structural formation care must be given not to change those prepubescent martyrs of the anti-apartheid movement into glorified props of popular culture in future films and music, theatre and painting, but to act in our artist performance practice to change the circumstances of life for Black children who disproportionately suffer our neglect. So that we do not look away from the brutal histories, art shows us a way in, a refuge from madness.

When Langston Hughes, "the poet laureate of the Negro race" articulated the enormous impact censorship has made on his career as a writer, he tread in the footsteps of a long line of African/descendants whose cultural production has been summarily banned since the Eighteenth

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<sup>74</sup>Jon Pareles, "The Women Who Talk Back in Rap," *The New York Times*, October 21, 1990:33.



Century in America. "Censorship for us" said Hughes "begins at the color line."<sup>75</sup> Hughes would experience the bliss of reclamation were he to see the reaction of New York IRT riders who read his poems as a matter of course in daily train rides.<sup>76</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The context of the Black diaspora is enclosed as well as opened up by the operation of reason and memory in artist performance practice. A reason which departs from western rationalism at the crossroads of color. A memory which anchors at the wellspring of memory laboriously engineered by the humanism in Black cultural production. The Pelourinho District in Salvador was, up until 1980, a haven and fortress for Black artists despite the architectural collapse of its neighborhood. Assiduously caretakered by Clarindo da Silva a his plaza cafe, and numerous other cultural patriots. The \$30 million restoration of the Pelourinho of state-financed colonial conservation was spearheaded by cultural institutions such as the Jorge Amado Institute and Olodum, the resident Samba school and helped along by UNESCO which declared the District world historical patrimony in 1979.<sup>77</sup> Sitting in the shade you can eavesdrop or participate in histories of the "Deao", or deans/masters of the arts in Afro-Brazilian art and culture. The printmaker, Edmundo Oliveira Santos is recounting an aural tabloid which includes Lourdes de Almeida Nobre who learned her skill as a weaver from her famous father, Abdias who was then 79 years old, Zu Campos and Yeda Maria, woodcutter and printmaker respectively who teach in art schools/universities, the ceramist Betanha, Cachoeira woodcarvers Fory, Jose Goncalves Oliviera, painter Terciliano and environmental sculptor, Edson da Luz. They are not, most of them, in the standard texts on Brazilian art since Brazil exists in a racial fog of myths around the color line. Farther outside of Salvador, Edson da Luz muses on the contextual, political Black experience, a quintessential crucible where art and life are inseparable.

This conversation ebbs and flows from the marginality of Black artists, the shame historically associated with Black African roots given the climate of *blanqueamento*, and the danger that the religion of his African forebears, Candomble, will be caricatured. A participant in numerous international Biennial exhibitions from Sao Paulo to Venice, he continues to give his work away to Black Brazilians. "Economics is not the only front-line of battle" says da Luz "we need our history."<sup>78</sup> In his own work, struggle is a tempestuous

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<sup>75</sup>Langston Hughes, "Negro Writers Have Been on the Blacklist All Their Lives" in Philip S. Foner, ed. The Voice of Black America: Major Speeches by Blacks in the United States, 1797-1973 (Two Vols.-1972). The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (New York) produced an exhibition entitled "Censorship and Black America" in 1984.

<sup>76</sup>Joe Sexton, "Langston Hughes on the IRT," New York Times, March 2, 1994.

<sup>77</sup>op. cit. ,Brooke, New York Times, April 11, 1993.

<sup>78</sup>Interview with Edson da Luz, August 1990.

theme, gnarled into a figurative whole which mirrors the integrative elements of the Black experience.

What we mean by 'democracy', 'progressive art', radical politics, political reform, 'resistance', and human agency within the African macrocosm is dynamically re-enacted in the lived histories of its creative people. Whether hard-line or hairline, the boundaries which determine the motive force of cultural production among Black artists are metamorphosing. Political change, economic underdevelopment and the discontent of the African global neighborhood, are counter-balanced in a delicate historical moment. At this moment, if Black cultural producers do nothing more than 'Phone-Home', ours will be a monumental contribution to emergent African civilization.

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