

2012

Framing a Blaxicana Identity: A Cultural Ethnography of Family, Race and Community in the Valley Homes, Lincoln Heights, Ohio, 1955-1960

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Recommended Citation

Thorne, Ana Viola. (2012). *Framing a Blaxicana Identity: A Cultural Ethnography of Family, Race and Community in the Valley Homes, Lincoln Heights, Ohio, 1955-1960*. CGU Theses & Dissertations, 25. http://scholarship.claremont.edu/cgu_etd/25. doi: 10.5642/cguetd/25

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*Framing a Blaxicana Identity: A Cultural Ethnography of Family, Race and
Community in the Valley Homes, Lincoln Heights, Ohio, 1955-1960*

by
Ana Viola Thorne

Claremont Graduate University
2012

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APPROVAL OF THE REVIEW COMMITTEE

This dissertation has been duly read, reviewed, and critiqued by the Committee listed below, which hereby approved the manuscript of Ana Viola Thorne as fulfilling the scope and quality requirements for meriting the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

Framing a Blaxicana Identity: A Cultural Ethnography of Family, Race and Community in the Valley Homes, Lincoln Heights, Ohio, 1955-1960

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Ana Viola Thorne

Claremont Graduate University: 2012

Framing a Blaxicana Identity: A Cultural Ethnography of Family, Race and Community in the Valley Homes, Lincoln Heights, Ohio, 1955-1960 (Blaxicana Identity) is set within the construct of identity formation, against a backdrop of color and culture clash, and the social construction of race. The author's narrative will constitute contextual introductions to discussion topics and iterate direct correlations of her lived experience to larger community and cultural accounts that helped to shape aspects of her *Blaxicana* identity. The individual and community perceptions of what it means and what it feels like to grow up Negro, Mexican and female in an all black town will determine the scope and complexity of the identity formation factors that may be brought forth in *Blaxicana Identity*. Geographically situated in the Valley Homes housing projects located in Lincoln Heights, Ohio, just north of Cincinnati, this ethnography will engage the area's background, environment and residents in a dialogue with the larger arenas of race and racism, history, migration, critical race theory, interracial marriage, cultural studies and black towns as they inform the aspects involved in the creation of the author's *Blaxicana* identity. This multi-perspective engagement will produce a cultural ethnographic portrayal of the Valley Homes, its residents and the author and comprise the ways in which the social and cultural

phenomenon of mixed-race identity may be constructed, observed and understood – a depiction that may differ from the historical concepts of identity formation based on color and race. This research will draw its conclusions regarding the construction of a *Blaxicana* identity by using a critical, self-reflexive method of inquiry that incorporates the author's memories, impressions and artifacts from the 1950's. The author's interracial family experience, defined by an African American father from Nashville, Tennessee and a Mexican mother from Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico, presents the opportunity to examine what was then, considering the time and place, an uncommon combination.

Acknowledgements

I have long felt Alicia Prado as the interior source and force of the story that inhabits *Blaxicana Identity*. Her desires over-rode her fears and she stepped out into the unknown space. Without her persona, stories, tapes and narrative, the tale would seem past its prime. Alicia's desires and ambitions converged with those of Thomas Turner to set them along a path of racial tempest. Their half-breed squalls, along with all the other 'colored' products of a union between an African American and any other racially designated person, have found a presence on the table of relevance and have the opportunity to define the indefinable. Alicia and Tom, Mother and Dad, I love you. I observed and imitated you. I rebelled against your outlooks in order to reform myself. There would be no story to tell without you.

Tom bought an Argus camera in 1955 which produced several year's worth of 33mm slides that documented our family life in the 1950s and 1960s. Over the years, I've culled the boxes of slides and used a few of them as part of this work. Photos that Dad shot: Alicia with three kids; the Thanksgiving dinner. From Dad's collection: the horse and carriage; Hermosillo baseball uniform; *Apache Sentinel* clips; *Ft. Huachuca Scout* clips. The photo of Alicia in Hermosillo is from her collection and is inscribed to "Andreas." The photos of the Valley Homes were all taken by me at different times in the 1980s and 1990s.

My sister Olga and my brother Glenn were not directly involved in this project. Olga did, however, refer me to several of her friends from the Valley Homes. Glenn and Olga, in the role of younger siblings, shared these experiences with me, but because of their age most likely view them from different perspectives. They are part of this story and research and they were in my thoughts and heart as I worked and wrote.

Betty Jackson Turner, my step-mother from Ripley, Ohio, came into our lives early, but late into our family. Over the years, she has been a constant source of encouragement and information. She has sent books, magazines, newspaper articles, and photos of historical note from the area where she grew up – a focal point of Underground Railroad activity with a legacy of interracial relationships. Love and thank you, Lora E.

Otis Alonzo Turner, my 85-year old uncle, has been a source of Turner family facts and lore for the past ten years. His hand-written letters list names, dates, and places for information I've requested about the twelve siblings, of which he is the youngest. He has also been my *compadre* during this research period.

First cousins, Betty Francis and Raymond and Eloise/Ellie Terrell, have been committed supporters of this research. Betty supplied old family photos, articles and books, some out of print, on Glendale that proved invaluable. Raymond's encouragement and comments on early drafts of the dissertation kept me going on

the right track, and Ellie shared her stories with me. Betty, Raymond and Ellie also participated in the interview process.

Sister Althea Augustine, my fourth grade teacher, lives at the Convent of the Transfiguration in Glendale, Ohio. Uncle Otis and Sister Althea became friends in Yonkers, New York and after they both retired to Ohio, Sister became part of the extended Turner family. She has been to my home for holiday dinners and other occasions and been a source of moral support for this project.

Through Sister Althea, I was able to re-connect with Dr. Patricia Randolph Leigh, who lived in Lincoln Heights and attended St. Simon's. Pat is now Associate Professor, Curriculum and Instruction at Iowa State University. Dr. Leigh's revealing work, *Fly in the Ointment: School Segregation and Desegregation in the Ohio Valley* (2005) served as an inspiration for *Blaxicana Identity* in two ways. It introduced me to Critical Race Theory and also validated the importance of stories and voices in this era, and from this area. Thank you, Pat for your work, the lunches, and for reading.

My friend, Evelyn Perkins, let me look through the boxes in her basement for photos, articles, letters and evidence of the Valley Homes that she inherited from Emma and Paul Jones. Evelyn has also sent information over the years and kept me in touch with the major developments in Lincoln Heights. She was first to let me know that the Valley Homes had been sold, was going to be torn down and the area rebuilt as Villas of the Valley. I counted on Evelyn for contact information – phone numbers and addresses for people that I had not kept in touch with over the years. Evelyn also allowed me to interview her and she told me stories I hadn't heard before. I thank her for the rich contribution she made to this project.

My former undergraduate classmates, Jerel Lee and Rhonda Mitchell, have been my lifelines and dependable sounding boards. Jerel gave me eye-opening insights, validation, and listened to me while I 'talked it out.' Rhonda never refused a late night call and her questions pushed me deeper in thought.

We never know where our authentication might come from. In the case of this research, it was my son's father, George D. Thorne, Jr., who fulfilled the delicate task of soothing my writing anxiety by recognizing and commenting – as only he could – on the use of language and its subtleties. He showed his glee in the word "sundering." Thank you for reading and for lending your 'colored' birth certificate.

My friends – Sylvia, Liz and Herve never failed to ask "how's the work going ... how are you doing?" My friend, Linda, saved my life a few times over the past ten years and gave me the help I needed to continue this journey. Thanks to one of my favorite couples, Tom and Beth, for all the fun trips and the Amazon book gift cards. Jenell, who received her doctorate in 2011, gave me an oar so that I

could paddle the boat down the river known as ‘qualifying exams.’ Thank you, my friends.

My boss, Paula, left me alone as long as I didn’t miss any deadlines. I have been in school for as long as I’ve worked for Easter Seals – ten years and four degrees. The cooperation I received from Easter Seals made it possible to conduct this research locally and re-connect with the community.

Literally, my shoulder to cry on, Rachelle James, has pressed me in the development of the personal story embodied in this dissertation. Our conversations over more than twenty-five years have distilled and refined the narrative. Her expansive and eclectic imagination has prompted me to believe and achieve.

While the dissertation is a single work, it also represents all the knowledge that has been authenticated and affirmed for me over the past ten years of study. I would be remiss if I did not give credit to the weekend college program for working adults at Mount St. Mary’s College where I received a B.A. and M.A.; and the creative writing program at Antioch University where I received a M.F.A. in Creative Writing.

It was the great “no drama” Committee – Drs. Eve Oishi, Linda Perkins and Alexandra Juhasz – that guided me in the process of pulling together knowledge and narrative within the context of the scholarship contained herein. They let me find my own way and pulled me in when I wandered too far off track. They kept me focused on the task, and praised the results.

Without the love, hugs and kisses from my son, Jason, my granddaughter BreAna and my grandson Jason, I would have given up long ago. Knowing they were watching made me push myself and move forward toward this goal. I thank them for giving me a reason to keep working.

I am deeply grateful for the love and trust I received during the interview process from people with whom I had had no regular contact over the years, and others with whom I had never lost contact. The collective interest, cooperation, and encouragement from family members, childhood friends and my parents' friends was heartening. Each person willingly shared his/her recollections and special moments, and was wonderfully candid and diplomatic at the same time.

The familial and childhood connections have remained authentic with time and distance; and 'kicked in' when they were needed. There was no way to know what the interviews would reveal, or not reveal. I counted on the record from each of the persons I talked with to provide diverse points of view and aspects along the timeline of the subject matter. They did not disappoint. Their shared memories formed a bond that held the private to the public, and the particular to the general.

The eighteen interviews used in *Blaxicana Identity* represent only part of the memories, histories and influences of individuals who lived in and around Lincoln Heights in the 1950s. With their permission, I offer the following identifications for family and friends whose perceptions and philosophies appear in *Blaxicana Identity*.

Sy Allen, a first-cousin through marriage, turns 84 this year. His parents were from Selma, Alabama and settled in the West End where Sy grew up. He fell in love with the Village of Wyoming as he drove through it to court my cousin Gertrude Terrell who lived in Glendale. They were married for 32 years before she passed away in 1985. Their house in Wyoming and the finished basement was the site for parties among the young marrieds in the 1950s and '60s. As kids, we learned the Birdland, the Madison and the Cha Cha Cha from Uncle Sy.

Raymond Chapman, Sr. will be 95-years old this year. His family moved from Atlanta, Georgia to the West End, and then Lincoln Heights when he was 12 years old. Chapman knew the Turner family from the WPA dances held in Glendale in the 1930s. Chapman's wife, Virkette, was born in Wyoming and raised in the house across the street from Sy Allen's home. After WWII, the couple ran a resort in Michigan for many years and hosted many African American celebrities when public accommodations were strictly segregated. The family moved out of Lincoln Heights after Chapman acquired property in Avondale and it was time for their son to attend high school after graduating from St. Simon's School.

Cynthia Karen Chenault Terry, a woman in her early 60's, was a neighbor and playmate in the Valley Homes. Her parents came to the West End from Tennessee and Kentucky and moved to Lincoln Heights when she was quite young. A graduate of Lincoln Heights High School, Cynthia worked for Procter & Gamble for most of her adult life and then went into the real estate field.

Clyde Cooper, a long time friend of the Turner's and extended family member, will turn 84-years old this year. Clyde moved with his sisters and mother from Tennessee to Glendale during the Great Depression. Clyde's sister, Jeannie, was Mother's good friend. Clyde and his wife Margaret lived across from us in the Valley Homes and used to take care of me, Olga and Glenn sometimes. The Coopers are included in all Turner family events.

Minot Wayne Estese, son of Thomas Estese who was responsible for maintaining the Valley Homes, is a 67 year-old contemporary who attended St. Simon's School in Lincoln Heights and then moved to Kennedy Heights to graduate from Woodward High School in the early 1960s. Minot is a self-made man who built his house and directs a construction business. He and his wife Phyllis live in Blue Ash, Ohio.

Betty Catherine Wilkinson Francis is a first cousin; her mother, Wilson, is Tom's sister. Betty attended Tennessee State University in Nashville, Tennessee after

graduating from high school in 1948, and has traveled throughout the country as an adult. Her home address, however, has always been in Glendale; on Washington Avenue or Church Street. She and her husband, Thomas, originally from Tennessee, raised three children in Glendale, and now have five grandchildren, and one great-grandson.

Nikki Giovanni is a celebrated poet who spent a large part of her childhood living in Lincoln Heights. She also attended Simon's School where a group of us were fortunate to have Sister Althea Augustine for a teacher - the first African American nun to teach at the Episcopal school. While Nikki's talent and creativity have taken her far from Lincoln Heights, it remains a touchstone and a place to visit Sister Althea and relatives. Nikki generously lent her time and memories to this project even as she fulfilled her full time responsibilities as University Distinguished Professor at Virginia Tech. She continues to write, publish and play a significant role in the larger writer's and poet's community.

Ethel Gantt Scruggs is a 79 year-old woman who lives in Glendale. She is a member of the Gantt family from Gantt, Alabama. The Gantts were one of the first families to settle in Lincoln Heights. Ethel's friendship with Alicia Turner was a surprise to me and knowledge of it came to me through my sister. Miss Ethel proved to be an astute observer of life and revealed to me that I did not know as much about my Mother as I thought I did.

LaVerne Mitchell, aka Bootsy, was a neighbor and playmate in the Valley Homes. My sister put me in touch with LaVerne and I talked to her informally at the Ole School Picnic. LaVerne is a dedicated and committed public leader for the community. Her perseverance and presence in the Lincoln Heights City Hall arena, and her ability to get re-elected make her a political force and agent for change in the community.

James and Sharon Mobley, as can be seen from the photo included in this research, were close friends of our family at one time. They gave Alicia and her three children shelter when we needed it. As a kindred soul, Sharon understood Alicia's dilemma, and like her cousin, Ethel, had a keen eye for negotiating the racial lines. Jimmy Mobley has served as Mayor of Lincoln Heights for four terms, the school board for eight years, and is an ordained deacon in the Episcopal Church at St. Simon's. The couple has lived in Lincoln Heights since their marriage in 1954.

Killis C. Moxley, Jr. inherited a widely known and respected name in Lincoln Heights. Moxley's Market, although one of several Mom and Pop operations, was the most successful in terms of market and longevity. Moxley Sr. decided that the best way to ensure that his family wouldn't be hungry would be to own a grocery store. He also spearheaded the building of St. Christina's Catholic Church. Moxley Jr. was shunted from the white section of the hospital where he was born to the Negro section when his father showed up at the hospital for his

son's birth; and, he was thrown out of Woody Sandler Ford when he tried to buy a Mustang around 1968. Killis Jr. and his wife Joanna live in Blue Ash, Ohio.

Wanda Reid Lambert and her twin sister, Sandra lived in Glendale down the street from my grandparents and I visited them often. Her parents came to Glendale from Tennessee and Kentucky. Mrs. Reid worked and as the only girls in the house, Wanda and Sandra shared all the household chores. They also took care of their younger twin brothers. Wanda appreciated the shelter and protection she experienced growing up in Glendale. Sandra passed away a few years ago; Wanda lives in a nearby community; and the Reid house on the corner still stands and thrives as a home for the family.

Cornell Thomas is an accomplished and responsible young man with whom we played in the back yard whenever the weather permitted. Everyone called him 'Peachy' and we doted on his Mother, Miss Sue. Miss Sue and her husband Henry were from Georgia and altogether raised five boys and three girls. Cornell was part of a racial project when he was one of five young African American men who graduated from Xavier High School in 1966. His younger brother holds several patents developed with Procter & Gamble. Cornell put his younger sisters through college as well as himself and enjoys a career at General Electric.

John Williams was a classmate at St. Simon's School. I ran into him by accident at St. Simon's Church where I'd arranged to meet the Mobley's. He had memories about Alicia that I heard about for the first time. He is a former Chief of Police of Woodlawn.

Raymond Terrell, Ed. D., a first cousin, was the first person in the Turner family to obtain a doctorate degree. Raymond's pursuit of education has taken him and his wife Eloise to Michigan, Texas and California. They shared much more than is recorded here. Raymond served as Dean of Education at California State University and currently is the Distinguished Professional in Residence and Special Assistant to the Dean for Diversity Initiatives at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. Raymond attended Miami University after he was honorably discharged from the Navy. One day he was sitting in the Student Union reading a newspaper and a couple of white male students set the paper on fire. Raymond is a source of inspiration.

Carl B. Westmoreland is focused on preserving the history and the heritage of African Americans, but not necessarily as written in the history books. In the role of historical preservationist and as senior advisor for historic preservation at the Cincinnati Underground Railroad Freedom Center, Carl was kind enough to share his knowledge and the personal history he has of Lincoln Heights. He validated this research as connected to his own interests in recovering and reclaiming a promising past.

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Framing a Blaxicana Identity: A Cultural Ethnography of Family, Race and Community in the Valley Homes, Lincoln Heights, Ohio, 1955-1960

Introduction

Framing a Blaxicana Identity: A Cultural Ethnography of Family, Race and Community in the Valley Homes, Lincoln Heights, Ohio, 1955-1960

(*Blaxicana Identity*) takes a trans-disciplinary approach to access an ethnographic portrayal that highlights the internal and external forces that shaped the cultural identity of an individual whose father self-identified as a Negro and whose mother self-identified as Mexican and white. This research is set within the structure of identity formation, against the backdrop of color and culture clash, all within the process and practice that is the social construction of race. The racial implications of an interracial marriage between a Negro man and a Mexican/white woman reveal the effect of this union on the identity formation of their children, and its cultural and social expression in Mexico and Ohio.

The geographic landscape traveled in this research includes Northern Mexico and the American Southwest at the Arizona border, and Southeastern Ohio, along the Ohio River. The discussion of these landscapes takes place within the context of the contested *frontera*/border, the free state versus the slave state, and exclusionary “sundown towns.”

In the public sphere – which for the purposes of this research constitutes Sonora, Mexico, the State of Ohio, Cincinnati, Ohio, the all black town of Lincoln Heights and the Valley Homes housing projects – this research examines the issues of public education, public housing, employment, and economic

underdevelopment. Issues of family, neighbors, community, assimilation, skin color and beauty standards, and black, single custodial fatherhood are explored within the context of the community, the family, and the individual.

Interviews with residents and former residents of Lincoln Heights, the Valley Homes and Glendale, Ohio, and personal, legal documents represent in the private sphere and are used to reveal the experiential meanings of race in this specific time and place. Particular to the persona of my Mexican/white Mother and the manner in which she assimilated, this research holds an ongoing discussion of the precepts of Latina *racismo* and racism in *los Estados Unidos*, and the ways in which Mother conflated the two. According to Stuart Hall's essay "Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation" this conflation positions her character within the diaspora as a cultural identity that possesses "unstable points of identification or suture which are made within the discourses of history and culture."¹

This brief five year period following World War II is analyzed historically within the context of the legacy of Ohio's Black Laws, the issues of miscegenation, migration and immigration. Focused on the years between 1955 and 1960, this multi-perspective engagement results in a cultural, social, racial and auto-ethnographic portrayal of Lincoln Heights and the Valley Homes.

The several components of this research are significant to and satisfy Stuart Hall's criteria concerning cultural identity which posited that we "see and recognize the different parts and histories of ourselves" and use them "to construct those points of identification, those positionalities we call a 'cultural

¹ Hall, 72.

identity.”² Defined by and contextualized by history, this work engages in an ongoing dialogue with the intricacies of the intersecting arenas of race and *racismo*, critical race theory, interracial marriage, cultural and social expression, and mixed-race identity. Scholarship and individual recollections from community members are linked with the author’s individual, familial and communal lived experience as a mixed race person growing up in a black town and build a framework for a *Blaxicana* identity.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) represents the theoretical prism through which this auto-ethnography is understood and recognized. While the formalization of the tenets of CRT occurred in the 1970s and followed the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960’s, W.E.B. DuBois forecast in *The Souls of Black Folk*, published in 1903, the “problem of the Twentieth Century” as the “color line.”³ DuBois’ significant contribution to racial discourse includes the metaphoric “veil of race” and the psychological matter of “double consciousness” integral to the scholarship on race and at the foundation of critical race theory. It is along DuBois’ “color line” that the elements of CRT take root and evolve in the legal and judicial system; following in the wake of social and institutional norms, hegemonic interests, pseudo-scientific evidence and beliefs, narrative storytelling and oral history.

Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement, a collection of essays, edited by Kimberle Crenshaw, from other CRT scholars of

² Ibid., 80.

³ DuBois, 209.

note, informs that the objective of CRT is to achieve racial equality through the use of legal rights, based on the premise that accepted and practiced social racial hierarchy presents any uniformity when it comes to applying the law.⁴ Beginning with the work of Derrick Bell, Jr. – considered the founding father of critical race theory – legal scholars of color (chiefly, but not totally) questioned “basic assumptions of the law’s treatment of people of color in the leading law reviews.”⁵ Further CRT scholarship developed oppositional language and literature that revealed the “law’s role in the construction and maintenance of social domination and subordination.”⁶ It was not so much the idea that the history of the law has been at best ‘unfair’ to the African American, but more that the issues of impartiality and fairness in the law itself were brought into question, revealing the practices that serve the hegemonic function of the law rather than its declared service of equal treatment under the law.

The basic principles of critical race theory developed as the result of an examination of the issues of neutrality, objectivity, and “color-blindness” by CRT scholars and the questions and answers that surfaced from that examination. In *Critical Race Theory: an Introduction*, Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic spell out in layman’s language the tenets of critical race theory.

The first principle asserts that racism is part of the ordinary, everyday occurrences and “experience of most people of color in this country.”⁷ Racism is “not aberrational,” but considered “‘normal science,’ the usual way society does

⁴ Crenshaw. “Race, Reform, & Retrenchment,” 103.

⁵ Crenshaw. *CRT: Key Writings*, xi.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Delgado. *CRT: An Introduction*, 7.

business.”⁸ Dominant society does business in a racialized manner to reinforce the “system of white-over-color ascendancy” that serves both “psychic and material” purposes.⁹ Two aspects that further delineate this tenet include the notion of the “ordinariness” of racism, or what may be referred to as embeddedness; and the indistinct idea that a “color-blind” approach to the law results in “treatment that is the same across the board.”¹⁰ The idea of the embeddedness of racism makes it challenging to alleviate or manage and the notion of “color-blindness” provides the illusion of impartiality and fairness.¹¹

The “normal science” of racism as an embedded entity operates in tandem with and nourishes the institutional organs of racism. Like the bodies that we are used to and rarely think about unless we are ill, the “normal science” acts in a pervasive and unconscious manner. The human drivers of the “normal science” act from positions of privilege and power day after day. Patricia Randolph Leigh’s *Fly in the Ointment: School Segregation and Desegregation in the Ohio Valley* cites Cheryl Harris, a “Critical Race theorist,” on the matter of “property rights as related to race” which she asserts “in the U.S., race ‘whiteness’ is an actual property right that allows those who are white the “absolute right to exclude” those who are non white.”¹²

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Leigh, 5. Patricia Randolph Leigh grew up in Lincoln Heights in the Upper Sub and attended St. Simon’s Elementary School. Leigh’s father played a leadership role in the construction of modern, up to code single family homes into the Upper Sub in the 1950s.

The second tenet of CRT, interest convergence, illustrates a concept related to the “incentive(s) to eradicate” racism.¹³ The subject of ‘interest convergence’ is given meaning in this work in a non-legal and legal sense. In a non-legal arena, the meeting and marriage of my parents is constructed within the framework of interest convergence and is characterized in the public sphere by the customs and mores present in Sonora, Mexico following World War II and in the private sphere by the abstract notions of love and honor.

In the legal arena, the interest convergence tenet of critical race theory is illustrated by way of a discussion of the *Brown v. Board of Education* 1954 decision from the U.S. Supreme Court for the desegregation of schools. This decision also serves as a point of context for this ethnography as it concerns the educational history of Glendale and Lincoln Heights, and the legacy of education for African Americans as expressed in Ohio’s Black Laws from the 1800s.

In the *Brown v. Board of Education and the Interest Convergence Dilemma* essay in *Key Writings*, Derrick Bell, Jr. discusses that public school desegregation, upheld in the Supreme Court, accommodated certain interests of both African American and white citizens, but for different reasons.¹⁴ Bell affirms that the “validity” of segregationist policies in public education had been attacked by blacks for “one hundred years” prior to *Brown v. Board* and asks what brought about the “sudden shift in 1954 away from the separate but equal doctrine and toward a commitment to desegregation?”¹⁵

¹³ Delgado. *CRT: Introduction*, 7.

¹⁴ Bell. “*Brown V. Board*,” 22.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Contextualized by *Brown v. Board*, Randolph's *Fly in the Ointment* recounts the historical timeline of the "creation of the Black Lincoln Heights School District (LHSD) and the predominately White Princeton School District (PSD)" as a history of segregation in the upper Mill Creek Valley; and the merger of these two near-adjacent school districts almost twenty years after their separate formation, as a "unique story of desegregation."¹⁶ Leigh notes that this timeline occurred "in the shadow of *Brown*" and that

By 1954 when the *Brown* decision was rendered, the Hamilton (Ohio) County Board of Education had submitted a consolidation plan that would include seven White districts surrounding but not including Lincoln Heights. De facto segregation in this Ohio valley was being strengthened just as national attention was given to dismantling segregation de jure.¹⁷

Interest convergence or mutual interests that result in racial progress, are not necessarily accomplished because of a "desire to help blacks," but rather serves dominant power interests.¹⁸ Bell offers three reasons for this sudden change of policy toward desegregation on the part of the part of the state apparatus: 1) the global upkeep of the U.S. reputation as a nation where "all men are created equal;" 2) as a sign of guarantee to returning Negro and WWII and Korean War veterans that "freedom and equality ... might yet be given meaning at home;" and, 3) to remove segregation as an obstacle to expanded "industrialization" of the South.¹⁹

¹⁶ Leigh, 1.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Bell, "*Brown V. Board*," 23.

¹⁹ Ibid.

The change in the racial atmosphere for the three reasons delineated above also sparked renewed public interest in the private act of interracial marriage. According to Alex Lubin's *Romance and Rights: The Politics of Interracial Intimacy, 1945-1954* (2005), these reasons compelled those who defended "anti-miscegenation legislation" to rely on "states' rights arguments" to "contain interracial sex."²⁰ The significance of this issue runs parallel to the United States' racial and political history in that anti-miscegenation laws were "among the first type of laws passed" in the original colonies.²¹

In *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America* (2009), Peggy Pascoe cites Barbara Fields' observation that these early laws "shows society in the act of inventing race" in order to strengthen the practice of slavery.²² Pascoe affirms that miscegenation law was more than a mere "form of race segregation" and that it served as the "foundation for the larger racial projects of white supremacy and white purity."²³ In effect, miscegenation as a foundation for white genetic supremacy addresses, in varying degrees, all four critical race tenets – the embeddedness of racism and the social construction of race, and after a fashion, interest convergence on an individual level, and the use of personal "storytelling" as evidence.

Two years after my parents were married in Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico in 1946 by a Mexican Justice of the Peace, and six years before the 1954 *Brown v. Board* decision, the California State Supreme Court ruled in a 1948 case

²⁰ Lubin, 16.

²¹ Ibid., 3.

²² Pascoe, 20.

²³ Ibid., 6.

involving a Mexican female, “legally classified white” and her fiancé, “classified “Negro”” who were refused a “marriage license” due to “California Civil Code section 69.”²⁴ The code, which had been on the books since 1872, stated: “All marriages of white persons with Negroes, Mongolians, members of the Malay race, or mulattoes are illegal and void.”²⁵

The suit, *Perez v. Sharp*, was brought on the grounds that this action violated the couple’s religious freedom – they were both Catholic and had received “consent to marry by their parish.”²⁶ The case resulted in the majority Justices’ rule that California’s state “regulatory codes” violated the “equal protection of the laws clause” of the United States Constitution and the codes were struck down.²⁷ In this case, the arena of marriage involved both state and religious guidelines, denoted both public and private concerns, while its regulation forced a distinction between a civil right and a human right.

It would be almost twenty years later before the United States Supreme Court heard *Loving v. Virginia* in 1967 and put an end to laws prohibiting interracial marriage, thus allowing “interracial heterosexual couples” to marry in any state.²⁸ Prior to 1967, sexual intimacy and interracial marriage were subject to regulation, especially as it concerned inheritance and property.²⁹

With such important concerns as the distribution of inheritance and property on the line – which translate to economic status, private wealth, social

²⁴ Lubin, 17.

²⁵ Ibid., 18, 17.

²⁶ Ibid., 17.

²⁷ Ibid., 18.

²⁸ Ibid, 3.

²⁹ Ibid., 4.

mobility, and political power – the third tenet of CRT, the social construction of race that does not correspond to a “biological or genetic reality” - continues to play a powerful psychic role in maintaining the racial status quo, even without state laws to regulate the lives of people of color.³⁰

Kimberle Williams Crenshaw in the essay *Race, Reform and Retrenchment: Transformation and Legitimation in Anti-discrimination Law* in *Key Writings* (1995), reveals the everyday ordinariness and embeddedness of racism through a discussion of “the role of legal ideology” and the “hegemonic role of racism.”³¹ Crenshaw cites Antonio Gramsci’s concept of hegemony “as the means by which a system of attitudes and beliefs, permeating both popular consciousness and the ideology of elites, reinforces existing social arrangements and convinces the dominated classes that the existing order is inevitable.”³²

Michael Omi and Howard Winant in their progressive work *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960’s to the 1990’s* offer a definition of race that lies somewhere between the “temptation to think of race as an *essence* ... fixed, concrete, and objective” and “to imagine race as a mere *illusion*” that can be erased from the social order.³³ Their definition, however, that “race is a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies” is not without reference to phenotype.³⁴ Omi and Winant explain that any invocation of “biologically based human characteristics ... for purposes of racial signification is always and necessarily a

³⁰ Delgado, *CRT: An Introduction*, 7.

³¹ Crenshaw. “Race, Reform & Retrenchment,” 108, 112.

³² *Ibid.*, p108.

³³ Omi & Winant, 54.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 55.

social and historical process” they define as “racial formation.”³⁵ The authors place a social construction of race along a “sociohistorical” timeline that is part of a “process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed.”³⁶ Omi and Winant seem to present that the two elements of “structure and representation” have worked together to reinforce each other and sustain the ideology of human hierarchies according to racial designations.

Critical Race Theory realizes and reveals the limitations of the judicial system to correct injustice based on race – whether pseudo-scientifically or socially constructed – and the seeming willingness of the law to both advance and retreat on progressive racial projects according to the interests of the dominant group. Ian F. Haney-Lopez’ essay *The Social Construction of Race* in *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge* discredits the idea of biological race and indicts “judges and legal academics” for writing about and rendering opinions on racial issues when “few seem to know what race is and is not.”³⁷ Haney-Lopez centers his argument on the social construction of race on the fluidity and dynamics of the concept of “racial fabrication” that “implies the workings of human hands” and he cites scientific findings that disprove the “supposition that racial divisions reflect fundamental genetic differences.”³⁸

Haney-Lopez presents that the use of the notion of the “one-drop rule,” or hypodescent, persists in the Courts and can be interpreted, despite scientific proof that provides evidence to the contrary, as a “continued reliance of blood as a

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Haney-Lopez, “*The Social Construction of Race*,” p165.

³⁸ Ibid., 168, 166.

metonym for race.”³⁹ Biological determinism presents as a relentless and durable element of racial practices and projects in which pseudo-science and the power of visual appearance sustains the concept of race as a scientific fact. The persistent and principal reliance on the differentiations in human skin tone, skin color, hair texture, the shapes of noses and the fullness of buttocks and lips to set racial and social parameters represent the means by which the current of the social construction of race is maintained and flows within every aspect of society.

The personal stories of the author, family members, friends, members of the community of Lincoln Heights, and Valley Homes residents inherent in this research reflect the fourth tenet of Critical Race Theory that attaches great importance to the voices of “those who have experienced discrimination” as a source for the investigation of “law and defining the elements of justice.”⁴⁰ Mari Matsuda’s essay *Looking to the Bottom: Critical Legal Studies and Reparations* in *Key Writings* champions the “organic intellectuals [and] grassroots philosophers” who, from their position of historical suffering at the hands of racialization, can provide the “experience of oppression” recounted by a “unique voice of color” with the “presumed competence to speak about race and racism.”⁴¹ Matsuda invokes DuBois’ concept of “double consciousness” to illustrate that the “victim’s consciousness” allows also a “mainstream consciousness” and that within this duality exists a body of experiential knowledge unknown and unavailable to the mainstream.⁴²

³⁹ Ibid., 168.

⁴⁰ Matsuda, Mari. “Looking to the Bottom,” 63.

⁴¹ Matsuda. “Looking to the Bottom,” 63; Delgado, *CRT: An Introduction*, 9.

⁴² Ibid., 65; Ibid.

In the 1903 publication of *The Souls of Black Folks*, DuBois gives an example of the unheard voices of color in the description of the complexities involved in trying to make a life as a Negro living in Georgia's Black Belt. DuBois recounts the stories of abandoned plantations now occupied by the "grandchildren of slaves" and "sad and bitter tales ... of poverty, of struggle, of disappointment," of being cheated out of land.⁴³

Individual stories personalize the experience of socially constructed racism and its consequences. The strength of the stories to effect change within the dominant power structure is, however, open to discussion. While DuBois wrote his portrayal of the Black Belt at the beginning of the twentieth century, these same themes echo in the history and timeline of the development of the all black community of Lincoln Heights, Ohio and the Valley Homes housing project located at the geographic center of *Blaxicana Identity*.

The primary tenets of Critical Race Theory are clearly locked into a historically persistent, racialized context of oppositional and resistance discourse wherein the unearthing and recounting of particular oppressions lends authority to the voices at the bottom and perspective to the discussion of race and its counterpart, humanity. Through the process of looking for and finding meaning in experience, the search for what processes and practices signify rather than what they purport to be may elevate a kind of critical thinking that supports the ability of the "voices at the bottom" to effect change.

Racism and Racismo

⁴³ DuBois, 294, 298, 300.

The historically prevalent black/white racial binary that exists in the United States does not fully convey my experience of identity formation. My Father's skin color provided the evidence of his Negroness and place in the social strata. My Mother's skin color provided the basis for her claim to Whiteness. Her marriage to an African American, however, placed her in the same over-determined place in the social strata as her husband. My Mother learned quickly after she came to the United States for the first time that black and white relations in the United States comprised the center of racial discussion. However, the racial culture of Mexico in which she grew up presents an interesting variation of racialization. Through Mother, I learned a Latin American version of *racismo* founded in the denial of its Africanness.

Significant to the grounding of this research is the historical relationship between African Americans and Latinos in the United States, the subtleties that separate "racism" from "*racismo*" and the practice of forging mixed-race identities. From a political standpoint, Neil Foley's *Quest for Equality: the Failed Promise of Black-Brown Solidarity* (2010) provides a historical account of the failed efforts at alliance and cooperation between Mexicans and African Americans. Foley presents that Mexico promotes the "national ideology of *mestizaje* – the fusion of indigenous peoples and Spanish colonizers" that recognizes the mix that constitutes Mexicans as a "race" and a nationality.⁴⁴

While skin color in Mexico is important when it comes to determining who is superior and who is inferior, "racism officially does not exist" and as a

⁴⁴ Foley, 7, 8.

result there is no need or urgency to address it.⁴⁵ Language that describes the variations in skin color in *Espanol* express as black/*negro*, dark-skinned/*prieto*, brown/*moreno*, light brown/*claro moreno*, my beautiful brown skin/*mi prieta linda*. These terms are employed in a fashion reminiscent of eighteenth century “*la casta*” designations of race that attempted to organize a society of Spaniards, indigenous peoples, and Africans left over from the slave trade into a social and class hierarchy based on parental matching and skin color of the children.

According to Foley, it is “Mexico’s racial amnesia” when it concerns the origins of *mestizaje* that prevents solidarity between African Americans and Mexicans. Foley noted also that while Mexicans “celebrate their indigenous roots,” they “do not ... regard Afro-descendant people as kith or kin on either side of the U.S.-Mexico border.”⁴⁶ Acknowledging that both Latinos and African Americans occupy the bottom of the class and race pyramid in the United States, they are subject to the ordinary “divide and conquer” strategies and tactics that promote suspicion and adversarial relationships, especially on the subject of “competition for jobs.”⁴⁷ Both groups hold the worst stereotypical views of the other; Mexicans are perceived as “poor, dirty and foreign” and African Americans are identified as being “racially inferior.”⁴⁸

Nicholas Vaca’s *The Presumed Alliance: The Unspoken Conflict Between Latinos and Blacks and What it Means for America*, affirmed Foley’s account of “adversarial relationships” between Blacks and Latinos and pointed out that

⁴⁵ Ibid, 10.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 12.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Latinos have “learned the ‘lesson of racial estrangement” well.⁴⁹ The opportunity to identify as white, near white, or honorary white is perceived as a benefit and the way to a better quality of life. As an example, Foley cited that African American and Mexican American veterans returning from WWII held different perspectives on the rights they felt they had earned. The demands from African American veterans were spelled out in detail in a letter to the Governor of Texas.

The things we want are what we deserve, and that is to be able to live any place, go any place, to have equal chances in business, and public schools in which the students have the same opportunities for education. To have State Colleges in which the same is provided. To receive the same salary for the same type of work according to qualifications. To be able to travel and shop with the same privileges and conveniences as other races. And to be given a fair trial in all courts when convicted of a crime. In other words whatever privileges the White race have, the Negro should have the same.⁵⁰

In this instance, the black veterans did not want to be white, but rather based their demand for full citizenship privileges on their contribution to the U.S. war effort.

On the other hand, Mexican American veterans based “their claim for equality on belonging to the white race.”⁵¹ A letter to the Governor of Texas from a Mexican American veteran was a complaint that “‘jobs ... are given to the negro race before they are given to us ... We belong to the white race, but we are treated worse than negroes.’”⁵² This treatment primarily applied to the “darker-skinned, working-class” Mexican American and not to the “light-skinned Mexicans ... of the middle class” who had succeeded in gaining admittance to and graduating

⁴⁹ Vaca, 13.

⁵⁰ Foley, 17.

⁵¹ Ibid., 17.

⁵² Ibid., 17, 18.

from the University of Texas law school “two years” before the U.S. Supreme Court ordered the school to admit African Americans.⁵³ It appears that the dogma of skin color as a determinant for accessing employment and education worked for Mexicans in Mexico and for Mexican Americans in the United States.

The deep rift between African Americans and Mexicans has not and does not necessarily extend to the realm of personal relationships, even as the legal structure decrees the regulation of what it considers “interracial” relationships. Rachel F. Moran in *Interracial Intimacy: the Regulation of Race and Romance* (2001) reports that as a measure of control against interracial marriages between Mexicans and Negroes in the State of Texas in the 1920’s, “people of Mexican origin were [considered] white and could not marry blacks.”⁵⁴ Moran notes, however, that the Mexican’s “unofficial status as nonwhite” caused authorities to turn a “blind eye to the marriages” between Negro men and Mexican women.⁵⁵ The children of these marriages, however, could not escape the specter of segregation.⁵⁶

Moran accounts that a Black man was charged with violation of the “anti-miscegenation law” when he tried to send his children by a “Mexican-origin” wife to the white school that allowed children with “Mexican ancestry” to attend “first through third grade” but in “separate classrooms” from the white students.⁵⁷ Black children “were completely barred” from attending the “white school.”⁵⁸ In

⁵³ Ibid., 18.

⁵⁴ Moran, 59.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

order to keep their husbands from prosecution, Mexican women were given the opportunity to testify “that the women themselves were part black” or had “nigger blood” and therefore no miscegenation had occurred.⁵⁹ The authorities then surmised that “all the Mexicans were black” and put the “Mexicans and Negroes together in school” with a Negro teacher.⁶⁰ Moran characterizes the move of the Negro father as an “attempt to capitalize on an ambiguous Mexican identity” the result of which handicapped “all Mexican-origin persons” by the loss of a “tenuous hold on whiteness” and an affinity and identification with blackness.⁶¹

This example foregrounds an issue that arises several times in this ethnography as it relates to race especially in the areas of housing, employment, education, and public accommodations. Initially, it correlates to Mother’s experience of being able to live only in the segregated area where her Negro husband was allowed and could afford to live. Both my parents have lost jobs precipitated not by their own skin color, but on the skin color of the person associated with them who happened to be at their place of work. In one case, the fact that Dad was married to a ‘white’ woman lost him a job. In another, the fact of an acknowledgement of Mother in a retail store by one of her husband’s Negro nieces resulted in Mother losing her job as a sales clerk. In the realm of public accommodations, I can recall a few times when Dad refused to eat in the back, in the dark at a ‘nice’ restaurant because he “couldn’t read the menu.” When I was about five or six years old, Dad paid for Saturday tap dancing lessons for me and my sister at a downtown dance studio. After the lesson, we had lunch in the

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

Greyhound Bus Station luncheonette where Dad said it was “OK for Negroes to eat.” In a manner of speaking, the darkness of Dad’s skin over-shadowed and/or erased the whiteness of Mother’s skin, making her not an honorary white, but rather an honorary black; not the most enviable honor according to the principle of racial estrangement.

Foley and Vaca present that the political and interpersonal relationships between African Americans and Latinos shows itself to be weighted with difficulties on many levels. In spite of those difficulties, Moran accounts that marriage between the two groups is evidenced all along the historical timeline of the United States. The children that result from these marriages confront not only the issue of mixed race, but also the challenge of balancing their psyches between two different cultures and sometimes language.

Concerning the *Blaxicana* identity in question, Lillian Comas-Diaz’ article “Lati-Negra: Mental Health Issues of African Latinas” (1994) offers insight on the subject and also further illuminates the concept of *racismo*. It is in Comas-Diaz’ report that the dynamics of the overarching issues of color that harass African Americans and Latinos and what that means are played out in an individual – the woman who is both Latina and African American.

Comas-Diaz’ discourse focuses on the LatiNegra of the Caribbean and situates her as a “classic example of racial exclusion, marginality, and disconnection” that results in her being a “minority within a minority.”⁶² Comas-Diaz allows that the “African North American LatiNegra” and her sister in the

⁶² Comas-Diaz, 36.

Caribbean face the same “racial exclusions” and many other “commonalities.”⁶³

Both the African American and Latino communities emphasize the “denial of LatinNegras’ Latinness” and place her squarely in the box of what it means to be black.⁶⁴

The notion of *racismo* functions contrary to the precept that “one drop of African blood makes you Black” and takes the view that “one drop of White blood makes you at least not Black.”⁶⁵ In this way, *racismo* allows an equal acknowledgement of the “rainbow racial composition” of the Caribbean in which an individual can testify to several racial heritages and still be white. In addition, the acknowledgement of an “African heritage” remains a fact of the legacy of slavery in the Caribbean and it is recognized through the phrase, “*Y tu abuela donde esta?*” – where is your grandmother, suggesting that *tu abuela es Africana*.⁶⁶

Comas-Diaz characterizes *racismo* as “covert” to distinguish it from North American overt racism and attributes this characteristic to the statement that “the Latino Caribbean society is historically more racially integrated than the North American one.”⁶⁷ This could be interpreted to signify that Latinos have a self-interest in camouflaging and obscuring the issue of a black heritage. Couple the covertness of *racismo* with the one drop of white blood rule, and the ability to erase color with “social class,” and *racismo* could be understood as a highly visible and recognizable tool in a feudal arsenal used to maintain a concentration

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 38.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 40.

of power based on elitism and affluence. This understanding of Latino *racismo* seems to make it very much like North American racism. The tenets of racism and *racismo* seem more alike in their nature and purpose than they seem different; and they intersect on the point of color coding necessary to enjoy the privilege of whiteness, near whiteness, or honorary whiteness.

Cultural Expression

In 1955, the year that Disneyland opened and the Mickey Mouse Club show aired on television, my brother, sister and I spent a few months with our 29-year old Mother in San Diego, California and *Tecate, Mexico*. Other than our daily exposure to our white Mexican Mother who spoke accented English, our only other exposure to Mexicans and Mexican culture had been from a visit from *mi abuelo*, my grandfather Jesus Prado, who visited a few months before he died from cancer in 1949. I was not old enough to remember his visit. Mother told me that when we attended his funeral in *Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico*, she secreted me and my four-month old sister to the local Catholic Church and had us baptized. I have seen the Baptismal Certificates written in *Espanol* through the years, but now they are lost. Mother's sister, Hortensia, and their mother, Ana Prado, visited a couple of times before 1955.

Mother was hindered in the transmission of her cultural identity to her children for two reasons: 1) she was shedding part of her cultural identity as she learned how to speak, read and write English, and become acclimated to the all black family and community she had married into, as well learning the differences between what it meant to be white, black, and in proximity to blackness; 2) and,

Dad made it known that he did not want her to speak Spanish to her children. He could not, however, stop us from hearing her speak Spanish to her mother and sisters on the telephone. At will, I can conjure the inflections and accentuations of her Spanish-speaking voice and the mispronunciations of her English-speaking voice in my head.

Through interviews from Mother's friends, my own friends, and family, a ghost of Mother's personality and social expression emerge and demonstrate her engagement with the all black community. The materialization of that engagement results in a cross-cultural exchange that exhibits in both assimilation and estrangement. My own recollections of Mother's journey in the Valley Homes join the information gleaned from the interviews to portray the connections and disconnections, mediations and negotiations involved in her assimilation.

Geography and Landscape

The significance of place is central to the concept of racism in America. In his essay "Race and Landscape in the United States," Richard H. Schein offered that "Racial processes take place and racial categories get made, in part, through cultural landscapes" and that it is important to consider the "enduring role that the very geography of American life plays in understanding race."⁶⁸ Schein's argument places "long-standing and key historical-geographical tension" within the realm of the tenet of embeddedness in critical race theory when he states that this tension is "often elided, perhaps because it is such an ordinary, everyday part

⁶⁸ Schein, Richard H. *Landscape and Race in the United States*. New York: Routledge Classics. 2006. P6.

of American life.”⁶⁹ The Village of Lincoln Heights represents an all black cultural landscape subject to the racial hierarchies that surround it.

The origin of the Village of Lincoln Heights is reflected in the black migration movements from the South following the end of the Civil War and in the 1920s that demonstrate an attitude among second and third generation descendants of ex-slaves and free blacks to build a better, self-determined life for their families. Self-reliance and group cooperation mark the timeline of progression from “black shanty town” to subdivision, to municipality, to city, all without the advantage of an industrial tax base – a factor that determined Lincoln Heights’ poor prospects for a viable economic future.⁷⁰ Sufficient employment for African Americans represents a racially contested and unstable area and one that determines, to a degree, where Blacks are both permitted to live, and where they can afford to live. Post World War II housing for African Americans in and around Cincinnati was characterized as temporary, sub-standard, and government sponsored housing.

Many families that came to settle in Lincoln Heights in the early 1900s initially lived in the Basin area of Cincinnati mixed in with poor whites and immigrants in segregated buildings under an “uneasy peace” near work on the bustling docks on the Ohio River.⁷¹ As industry and business forced the poor blacks west of the Basin area, Little Bucktown became the “center of black residence” in the late 1800s.⁷² The West End, near Union Station where a

⁶⁹ Schein, 7.

⁷⁰ Taylor, 290.

⁷¹ Gerber, 103.

⁷² Ibid., 290.

network of railroads converged on the City, evolved into an all black part of town in the early 1900's.⁷³ It remains so to this day, however, its name has changed to "Over the Rhine" which alludes to Cincinnati's German origins.

Deteriorating social and overcrowded conditions caused "upper- and middle-class blacks" to seek housing in communities "away from the disease, crime, vice, and decay of congested tenement districts."⁷⁴ Mixed in with some "poorer newcomers" and the "ordinary middle-class apartment dweller," the well-off "black homeowners" lived in the central hilltop neighborhoods of Walnut Hills, Clifton and Avondale far away from the Ohio River and the West End, all within the Cincinnati city limits.⁷⁵ The degree of housing discrimination that would emerge in the 1920s with the great influx of Southern blacks into Northern urban areas had not yet "rigidly locked" this small number of affluent African Americans into "neighborhoods where they had no desire to live."⁷⁶ The role of the legacy of Ohio's Black Laws that governed the movement of African Americans in the free state of Ohio is discussed in detail in this research.

Families that moved into Lincoln Heights possessed the spirit of the newly freed slaves as expressed in Nell Irvin Painter's *The Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas After Reconstruction (Exodusters)* and the desire to work and exercise citizenship rights as characterized in Carole Marks' *Farewell – We're Good and Gone: The Great Black Migration (We're Good and Gone)*. African Americans who left the South as part of "The Great Migration" that took place following

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 288.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 293.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 289.

World War I significantly increased the Black population of the North and West.⁷⁷ The great migration of Southern blacks to the urban north situates within the matrix of labor theory which Marks asserts served as the driving force of the movement.⁷⁸ Over a million African Americans migrated out of the South from 1916 to 1930, seeking work and civil rights.”⁷⁹

Painter’s *Exodusters* discusses an earlier migratory movement that occurred in the late 1800s following the Civil War which she describes as a “rural-to-rural migration” with “limited demographic impact,” but significant political import.⁸⁰ The *Exodusters* marked a concerted effort, at all costs, on the part of blacks to migrate out of the South to Kansas in the West on the heels of the failures of Emancipation and Reconstruction to fully accommodate its black citizenry. The *Exodusters* also were spurred on by a promise of land of their own to farm. Even though the myth of Kansas as the “promised land” soon became evident, and the pledges of free transportation and free land were in error, the *Exodusters* were determined “not to return to the South” and pointed to “political terrorism” as sufficient cause for their implacability.⁸¹

Forty years after the *Exodusters*, the great migration of the 1920’s was driven by the promise of jobs. World War I “created an enormous demand for previously untapped sources of labor” and at the same time “broke the social and economic fetters that had bound Negroes to the rural South...”⁸² The combined

⁷⁷ Ross, 13.

⁷⁸ Marks, 4.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 1.

⁸⁰ Painter, 260.

⁸¹ Ibid., 191.

⁸² Ross, 11.

forces of the boll weevil on the cotton crop and Jim Crow on the social, political and economic lives of Southern Negroes acted as catalysts for returning Negro veterans and families looking for the opportunity to make more money in order to build better lives. Many jumped at the promise of jobs from “Northern businessmen [who] sent labor agents to recruit southern workers” to work in “steel mills, railroads, meatpacking plants” and other industries, and black women for domestic work.⁸³ In the urban north, these workers “took jobs at the lowest level” and the fact of a “judgment of inferiority” on the part of whites put them in a position to be exploited on all levels – employment, housing, education, and crime.⁸⁴

The driving motives for both the post-Civil War move north and the Great Migration were not extraordinary in their expectations. In both eras, African Americans wanted to make a better living, obtain education for their children, and enjoy “greater freedom of movement.”⁸⁵ According to Painter, the *Exodusters*, whom she characterized as “a class of hard laboring people” who regard their “rights as worth a severe struggle,” were “interested in land, schools, and protecting their lives and their civil rights, all of which cost money” and meant they needed paid employment.⁸⁶

Free blacks questioned the validity of remaining in the South and continuing to fight the forces of racism and violence that threatened their very lives and echoed the bondage of slavery. These similar motivations for leaving

⁸³ Hine, 388.

⁸⁴ Marks, 151.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 35.

⁸⁶ Painter, xv.

the South indicate that the quest for the democratic ideal and the contradictory prevalent racist ideology to keep blacks in “their place” had not subsided in the more than fifty years since emancipation. The other factor that had not changed in fifty years was the disappointment of a better life for Southern blacks who risked their lives, put their families in jeopardy, sold meager belongings, and “by any means necessary” joined the move to the newest “promised land.”

Marks cites a 1919 study by George Haynes, “head of the Negro Employment Division of the Department of Labor,” in which Haynes observed the effects of segregated living conditions and segregated public spaces and accommodation: “With the additional separation in churches, schools, railways, streetcars and other public places, even hospitals and cemeteries ... there is developing a racial cleavage from cradle to grave.”⁸⁷ The conditions of low wages for the worst and most unhealthful jobs, crowded and inadequate living conditions, poor health care, and physical and psychic isolation described by Marks have become the negative symbols of urban life for blacks. In the public eye, the urban conditions of black migrants in 1919 were re-produced to appear as habitual “characteristics of the race itself.”⁸⁸ These in turn translated into a network of stereotypes that fueled and reinforced the fires of racism.⁸⁹

A preference for a slower paced and less congested lifestyle near the urban center, but not in it, led some African Americans to seek residence outside the city limits. Those who chose to live in Lincoln Heights were surrounded by a residential and industrial mix of suburban villages and municipalities made up of

⁸⁷ Marks, 146.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 151.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

Evendale, Woodlawn, Lockland, Wyoming, and Glendale. These neighborhoods represented industrial, working class, or wealthy enclaves with small black populations restricted to living within a limited and pre-defined area. Separated from its logical tax base, a large General Electric manufacturing plant, by the first freeway in the area, and built on land originally located within its boundaries, Lincoln Heights, including the Valley Homes, symbolized a captive geography caught in the political economy of race that inhibited its civic, social and economic development.

In “Black Suburbia Versus the Stereotype of Suburbia: The History of Lincoln Heights,” Henrietta Smith outlines that in the late 1800s, Cincinnati’s, industry and commerce began an expansion from the downtown and Ohio River basin areas to the unincorporated areas of Hamilton County, north of the Cincinnati city limits.⁹⁰ Henry Louis Taylor’s “The Building of a Black Industrial Suburb: the Lincoln Heights, Ohio Story” adds that in the unincorporated Upper Mill Creek Valley, African American farmers and families owned and occupied land that was taken over by the federal government to build the Wright Aeronautical and Defense Plant Corporation that manufactured airplane parts and engines during WWII.⁹¹ Information provided in the interviews indicates that great-grandparents, grandparents, and parents came to the area from Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, Virginia and Kentucky.

The first four miles of the Millcreek Expressway, a planned “50-mile regional superhighway connecting Cincinnati and Dayton,” was “hastily

⁹⁰ Smith, Henrietta, 25.

⁹¹ Taylor, 280.

constructed” to accommodate access to Wright Aeronautical.⁹² Following WWII, the Wright Aeronautical Plant was taken over by General Electric and housed the “largest defense factory under one roof in the country.”⁹³ General Electric operated for several years on unincorporated terrain and became the largest employer in Hamilton County at that time.⁹⁴

Following the consolidation of eight black subdivisions in the upper Mill Creek Valley in 1936 that comprised the unincorporated town of Lincoln Heights, community leaders and residents began the challenging task of incorporation.⁹⁵ Various compromises, boundary disputes, and external provocation that stirred internal dissension were part and parcel of the process that Lincoln Heights went through to become an independent, self-governing municipality. During its five-year struggle - 1940 to 1945 – to incorporate, Lincoln Heights was forced to surrender its claims on surrounding land where any industry operated, including the 212-acre Wright Aeronautical/General Electric location.⁹⁶ The loss of this property located within the original boundaries of Lincoln Heights “was an attempt to keep industrial power out of the hands of local blacks.”⁹⁷ As a result, Lincoln Heights lost the opportunity to benefit from any tax revenue that might have come to the independent, incorporated Village from the industrial sector. Many residents “considered the elimination of industries in the new boundaries a tragedy.”⁹⁸ Lincoln Heights had been reduced significantly in size to .804 square

⁹² Cincinnati Transit, 1.

⁹³ Smith, Henrietta, 70.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 76.

⁹⁶ Taylor, 328.

⁹⁷ Smith, Henrietta, 79.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 83.

miles from an area five times that large and was “surrounded by other municipalities ... [with] no room for expansion.”⁹⁹ The loss of industrial lands left the “newly incorporated village” with a population of around 4,000 living in “poorly constructed housing and cheaply developed residential property.”¹⁰⁰

Lincoln Heights and the Valley Homes possessed what Taro J. Yosso’s essay “Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth” termed

Aspirational capital [that] refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers. This resiliency is evidenced in those who allow themselves and their children to dream of possibilities beyond their present circumstances, often without the objective means to attain those goals.¹⁰¹

Yosso’s essay also applies a definition to “resilience” that values this quality possessed by the southern migrants and their children who lived in Lincoln Heights and the Valley Homes in the 1950s.

... resilience [is] ... recognized as a ‘set of inner resources, social competencies and cultural strategies that permit individuals to not only survive, recover, or even thrive after stressful events, but also to draw from the experience to enhance subsequent functioning.’¹⁰²

The space of this limited geography represented the hopes and desires of its residents. It held the history of black migration, an anathema to northern urban living, and a desire to own land and be self-reliant by way of employment free from racism.

⁹⁹ Taylor, 352.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Yosso, 77-78.

¹⁰² Ibid., 80.

Storytelling Narrative

In addition to providing information from interviews done with family, friends and others in the community, the element of storytelling forms a continuous thread in this research. Along with the interviews, personal narrative is central to defining the experience of interracial marriage between a Negro man and a Mexican/white woman, in this era and in various geographies. Yosso's discussion on the "centrality of experiential knowledge" includes a recognition that the

experiential knowledge of People of Color is legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing and teaching about racial subordination. CRT draws explicitly on the lived experiences of People of Color by including such methods as storytelling, family histories, biographies, scenarios, parables, *cuentos*, *testimonios*, chronicles and narratives.¹⁰³

As Yosso includes both English and *Espanol* in her essay, I have included it this research where appropriate. Richard Delgado's "Storytelling for Oppositionists" makes reference also to African American and Spanish cultural representations.

Along with the tradition of storytelling in black culture there exists the Spanish tradition of the picaresque novel or story, which tells of humble folk piquing the pompous or powerful and bringing them down to more human levels.¹⁰⁴

Delgado takes a strong stand for this device and process.

Stories, parables, chronicles, and narratives are powerful means for destroying mindset – the bundle of presuppositions, received wisdoms, and shared understandings against a background of which legal and political discourse takes place.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Ibid., 74.

¹⁰⁴ Delgado. "Storytelling for Oppositionists," 2414.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., P2413

I interviewed a well-known historian, community organizer, activist and historic preservationist, and member of the Lincoln Heights community, seventy-five year-old Carl Westmoreland, who positioned storytelling as a tool for empowerment.

You're in control of the narrative and in the process, you knowing who you are empowers us. You empower you and us. You decided these voices are important. You made the decision and you acted on it, stood to it.¹⁰⁶

This tool for empowerment is illustrated in the stories of my parents, people who knew them and my own recollections.

Methodology

Framing a Blaxicana Identity is primarily a research project that is qualitative in nature and one in which its original contribution to the field of identity construction as it concerns Negro and Mexican in the Midwest in the 1950's will emerge through the thoughts, observations and opinions of individuals as sources who have not much been asked to give their comments on race, community, and identity formation.

This cultural ethnography will also draw its conclusions regarding the characteristics of framing a *Blaxicana* identity from its use of a critical self-reflexive method of inquiry that incorporates the author's memories, impressions and artifacts from the 1950's and contextualizes them within the aspects of Critical Race Theory.

The storytelling narrative that originates in the author and her parents constitutes contextual introductions to particular topics of discussion and iterate

¹⁰⁶ Westmoreland. Interview, 11/10/11.

direct correlations of lived experience to larger cultural experiences that helped to shape aspects of a *Blaxicana* identity. In this way, autoethnography as a process will provide situational and relational texture to the discussion of topics and result in an embedded ethnography (within *Blaxicana Identity*) that is in dialogue with the study's historical elements and interviews with family members, past and present residents, and friends of the author and her family in the Valley Homes from 1955 to 1960.

The communal aspects of this ethnography include a series of interviews with eighteen individuals who were and are family members, friends of the family and members of the community of Lincoln Heights and the Valley Homes, and the surrounding areas of Wyoming, Glendale, and Woodlawn. These interviews occurred from September to December 2011. The group of people interviewed range in age from early-60's to ninety-six years old.

They include family members, individuals who were my parents' friends, people who knew my Mother when she first came to Ohio from Mexico, women who befriended my Mother in the Valley Homes, people that went to school with me and my sister, and/or with whom we were friends, the resident Lincoln Heights historian, the most recent former Mayor of Lincoln Heights, my sister's former playmate, and the poet Nikki Giovanni, who grew up in Lincoln Heights. A few of those interviewed have moved away and returned to the Cincinnati area; others have remained here all their lives, although none remained living in Lincoln Heights or the Valley Homes, except the Mobleys and the Mayor.

I took old and new photos of my parents, my sister and brother and their children, and photos of my son and grandchildren, to show the interviewees; people who knew us growing up in the Valley Homes. Where possible, and to break the ice in the interviews, I brought a personal item of interest to the participant, such as an old class photo, or a newspaper clipping. In addition, I have baked brownies, cookies and cakes to take on the interviews as an advance thank you to participants for their time. The year and a half efforts expended to re-install myself into the community have been successful. Individuals have steered me in the direction of others who they think may have something to offer to the project; they have called to tell me of various community events; and, to tell me of an illness or death of someone in the community.

After deciding on *Blaxicana Identity* as the topic for my dissertation, I realized that I would have to return to Ohio for a while in order to conduct the necessary personal interviews and have access to local research materials. Rather than wait until after I had taken the requisite Qualifying Examinations to come to Ohio, I came a year early after I had finished my coursework.

During that year, I prepared for and took the Qualifying Examinations and used the time to reconnect with old friends and acquaintances. I invited key family members and friends to my home for meals, and I took a few out to lunch to discuss this project, gauge their interest, and enlist their participation. With a heavy schedule that consists of a full-time grant writing job, and reading and annotating the equivalent of ninety books, I attended family events and reconnected with cousins. I re-established lines of communication by working

with family members to construct a biographic sketch and photos of gravesites to post to a newly formed website for a historically African American cemetery where my grandparents and an aunt and uncle are buried. The cemetery is currently in the throes of revitalization, upkeep and historical preservation. In addition, I am helping to consolidate two older family cookbooks in preparation for our Family Reunion in July 2012 and was recently enlisted to act as emcee for the event.

My oldest and best friend in Cincinnati, Evelyn Perkins, with whom I have stayed in touch through the years, helped me to find and contact individuals, other than family members, that I wanted to interview. She enjoys a large circle of acquaintances by way of her own level of community involvement as a columnist for a community newspaper.

In addition, the benefit of the “grapevine” in this insular community assisted in spreading the word of this project and sparked an interest I had not anticipated. At the September 2011 “Ole School Reunion Picnic” held every year in Glendale, I was approached by about a dozen people, including the Mayor of Lincoln Heights, a childhood friend of my sister. People wanted to know more about this research project. It had taken a year, but the word had circulated throughout the community that I was in town and writing about the small community and surrounding areas where I had grown up with the rest of the “ole schoolers.”

I realize coming to this area a year before I was prepared to begin the research and writing for this project helped to re-establish my presence in the

community which has resulted in a big payoff in terms of the time in which I have been able to complete this thesis, and the level of cooperation I have received from family and friends. Everyone has allowed me into their home and been very cooperative. Only one senior participant required help with dates and places from her daughter.

The scholarship for the dissertation emanates from the writings in the area of Critical Race Theory and has evolved under the umbrella of cultural studies and history. Academic research in the areas of race and racism, the history of Ohio, geography and landscape, interracial relationships and the framing of multiracial identity comprise the investigative traditions from which this cultural ethnography is constructed.

Timeframe

The timeframe in which this ethnography is situated constitutes a parallel between the larger, public world and my smaller, private life. The years 1955 to 1960 encompassed social upheaval, racial polarization, and civil rights events that resulted in the opening of the doors of economic and educational opportunity and additional civil rights legislation for African Americans. My own life during this time was one of rupture and dislocation, instability and family breakup, and forced maturity. At age eight, I was old enough to internalize and be aware of the trouble brewing in our household and steeled myself to its inevitability. By age thirteen, I had settled into a domestic role that put me second in command of the household. Social, economic, educational, and political issues in this particular

time and place were perceived and discussed in terms of an unequivocal, black and white dichotomy that manifested in segregation and other racist practices.

The year I was born, 1947, was a good year for the Negro, symbolized in the popular black culture by the entry of Jackie Robinson into Major League Baseball; and reflected in the law by the U.S. Supreme Court ruling “against discrimination [of Negroes] in the federal civil service.”¹⁰⁷ In California a year earlier, Mexicans and Mexican Americans received a judgment from the U.S. District Court in Los Angeles that found segregated schools for Mexicans as unconstitutional and in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment.¹⁰⁸ A year later, Governor Earl Warren signed a law that repealed the remaining statutes in California law that permitted segregation in the schools for the “children of Chinese, Japanese, or Mongolian parentage.”¹⁰⁹ Seven years later, when I was ready to enter the second grade, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Warren presided over the *Brown v. Board of Education* landmark decision that ordered the desegregation of all schools for all ethnic groups and nationalities.

Television’s entry into the home brought the larger, white, public world into our private living room at a faster pace than school desegregation occurred. As cutting edge technology available to the working man, the television may be viewed as a significant event in the early 1950’s. Preceded in the home by the radio, the television screen can be characterized as part of a process that set in motion Arjun Appadurai’s concept of a set of “scapes” that includes the “techno-scape” as discussed in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*.

¹⁰⁷ Cowan & Maguire, 209.

¹⁰⁸ Tenes, 1.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

The techno-scape manifests in the private and public spheres and relies on the “reading [and] representation” of printed and electronic images to sustain “the imagination as a social practice.”¹¹⁰ It did not take long for my mind to set up the contrasting scenes of the world I lived in and the world portrayed on television.

While she ironed, Mother and I watched the soap operas *Search for Tomorrow* and *The Guiding Light* that we used to listen to on the radio. I never missed *The Howdy Dowdy Show* and I thought that Ollie the puppet dragon on *Kukla, Fran and Ollie* was a Negro. Dad liked westerns and together we watched *Annie Oakley* and *the Cisco Kid*. Cisco (Duncan Renaldo) and Pancho (Leo Carillo) were the first serialized Mexican cowboy characters on television and they were portrayed as linguistically challenged, a racial signifier. For example, at the end of each episode as the dynamic duo prepared to exit into the sunset, Pancho said to Cisco, “Let’s went!” I knew he should have said, “Let’s go.” I also knew that saying “let’s went” made the character sound ignorant, which sent the message that all Mexicans were ignorant and did not speak English well enough to be Americans. Mother said Pancho should have said, “*Vayamos.*”

It would be misleading to describe 1952 television as diverse or politically correct. The medium did, however, acknowledge the existence of Mexicans, Asians and Blacks by showing members of these groups, identifiable through physical features and behaviors contextualized within a network of stereotypes assigned to the particular group. We never missed *Beulah* (Louise Beavers), a sitcom about a black maid in a white household, or *Amos and Andy*, the height of black stereotypic behavior exaggerated for the sake of comedic victimization and

¹¹⁰ Appadurai, 36, 161, 31.

vilified at the time by the NAACP until it was finally taken off the air.¹¹¹ I stayed up late on weekends to watch the Charlie Chan movies. I was intrigued by the civil and serene manner in which Mr. Chan chastised his “Number One Son.”

For the first time, political advertising appeared on television. Adlai Stevenson, the Democratic presidential candidate, bought thirty minutes of air time and preempted *I Love Lucy*, prompting letters of complaint from viewers.¹¹² The Republican candidate, Dwight Eisenhower, won the election using only twenty second ads.¹¹³ Our next door neighbors, the Joneses, were college graduates and worked as professionals in the social services field. Active Democrats, they campaigned door to door, and other supporters nailed posters to the wooden telephone poles in our neighborhood that demanded we “Vote for Stevenson.” When I found out that the “I Like Ike” group won the election, I thought it was because only black people had voted for Stevenson and there weren’t enough of us to get him elected against the large group of very noisy white people that I’d seen on television at the convention.

Beginning with *Brown v Board* in 1954, the events of the modern civil rights movement were broadcast onto the public scene. The struggle to obtain equal education, voting rights, fair employment and housing, and inclusion in the mainstream for Negroes – who by 1960 would be rephrased as Black – went what then passed for viral. Likewise, the family drama that marked the timeline of my parents’ separation and divorce – we moved in and out of the Valley Homes three times in five years – became a topic of neighborhood interest and private distress.

¹¹¹ Bogle, 237.

¹¹² Trivia-Library.com, 1.

¹¹³ Eddins, 5.

As the fifties came to a close, Mother was no longer in our day to day lives, Dad had become our single parent, and the old Admiral Console had been replaced by a Sears Silvertone table model with remote control. By 1960, the scenes from the Silvertone appeared to signal the final dismantling of open segregation and discrimination against the Negro, and the removal of the final barriers to the realization of the 1954 ruling in *Brown v Board* for desegregated public education across the country.

I was excited to be on the cusp of becoming a teenager in the 1960s, but apprehensive about attending a predominantly white high school. I felt that I had survived childhood and had missed, by the narrowest fortune, being in a family economically worse off than we were. In my mind, it was useless to fantasize about the family that might have been. I had to stay alert and watchful to survive the family I was in and I needed to focus on finding a place where I could fit in the larger world. What I did not, however, fully realize at the time was that I was a witness to significant social change and that the physical characteristics of my mixed racial background comprised a visible symbol, with apologies to Shakespeare, of a past that was prologue.¹¹⁴

Chapter I

Within the context of the Critical Race Theory tenet, interest convergence, Chapter I relays and explores the significance of the meeting of Alicia Prado and Thomas Turner and their decision to marry. This chapter provides the background of the geography and landscape of the time and place of their meeting

¹¹⁴ Refers to a line in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* Act 2, scene 1, 245-254; "Whereof what's past is prologue ..."

south of the border. The aspect of interest convergence is examined from a non-legal perspective and is conveyed and overlaid with the storytelling feature of critical race theory. The intersection of racism with *racismo* presents the racial facets of ‘otherness’ and ‘denial’ in conjunction with a mutually color-coded message that becomes apparent when Tom and Alicia attempt to marry and live in Mexico. Their individual motivations to marry brought them to a point of merger, but without the supports of coalition and alliance. At this crossroads, their energies set new movements in motion that affected their individual lives and the social collective within their communities.

The Critical Race Theory tenet of storytelling is used in this chapter to relay the accounts of Tom’s and Alicia’s meeting as told me to over the course of more than fifty years. The fact of their different nationalities and socially constructed races questioned their right to marry in some states in 1946. The question of the right to marry is generally viewed as a private issue, but when marriage is restricted by way of racial coding, it becomes a public matter. The interplay and tension between the public and private spheres constitutes an ongoing theme in this research.

This chapter examines and analyzes Alicia’s birth certificate, her naturalization certificate, and marriage certificate to compile the case for her Mexican whiteness. These documents testify to Mother’s white identity and Mexican nationality; the marriage in Mexico to the American Negro ballplayer; her entry into *los Estados Unidos*; and her naturalized citizenship status. The

documents also illustrate the ways in which race is constructed in ordinary and everyday events, and tracked within the public, legal sphere.

The *Apache Sentinel* Army post newspaper from the 1940s is used here as witness to Tom's experience in the military special forces unit at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, and provides a glimpse into his public persona.

The scholarship for this chapter provides reference and focus for relations between Mexicans and African Americans. Neil Foley's *Quest for Equality* and Nicholas Vaca's *Presumed Alliance* make the argument for historical and current day conflict between Latinos and Blacks. Lillian Comas-Dias' work on the Lati-Negra, mixed-race female, supplies additional context for the concept of *racismo* as does Faye V. Harrison's work "The Persistent Power of Race." Kellina Craig-Henderson's work *Black Men in Interracial Relationships* provides both structure and possible interior motivation to support Tom's decision to marry a white Mexican.

Clifford James' "Notes on Travel & Theory" and "Diasporas" directs the discussion that focuses on Alicia's Mexican culture, how she expressed it and the ways in which she shared it in her new community. James' work also illustrated how Alicia may have experienced a complex and confusing diasporic circumstance.

Chapter II

Chapter II begins with a discussion of the legacy of the Black Laws of Ohio instituted in the early 1800s that continued to affect African American citizens in the areas of housing, legal protections, employment, marriage and

education. This legacy informs the background inherent in attitudes toward interracial marriage, and attitudes that restrict inclusion and press exclusion on the part of whites toward blacks.

The topic of whiteness and white privilege are explored and linked with personal accounts, legal documents and geographic location. As Ohio is situated across the river from the former slave state of Kentucky, the matter of border contestation is relevant as a topic for discussion.

Accessible housing and exclusionary communities articulate in the context of “sundown towns” and within a history of ex-slave settlements and post World War II government policy on housing. Linked to this overarching theme, the Village of Lincoln Heights is portrayed through a series of personal accounts.

The adjoining town of Glendale, where Tom and Alicia first lived in Ohio, situates as the space where Alicia began to learn the lessons of racism in the United States. Glendale also manifests as the center of the discussion on access to public education; a topic contextualized within the merits of *Brown V. Board of Education* 1954.

The history of Lincoln Heights is revealed as one that includes loss of land, geographic isolation, and economic underdevelopment. These characteristics exist, however, parallel to the principles of self-reliance, determination, and the desire for independence and self-government. Lincoln Heights did not incorporate until 1946, long after other black towns had

reached their height and had begun to decline. Its isolation and limited growth can be viewed in the context of “sundown towns” prevalent in Southern Ohio.

An analysis of white privilege, housing and educational opportunities, along with information from interviews provides testimony to the maintenance and codification of the social construction of race and the formation of racial identity. This analysis is conducted with the aid of documents, storytelling, historical facts, personal observation, and auto-ethnography.

Chapter II contains excerpts from several interviews whose information supports the formal history of Lincoln Heights and the Valley Homes and also constitutes a shared experience of the area. Their value as counter-narrative and as alternative historical narrative is supported by the work of Richard Delgado, “Storytelling for Oppositionists and Others: A Plea for Narrative,” that promotes the “hearing of diverse stories and counterstories.”¹¹⁵

The voices of Tom and Alicia come through in this Chapter to recreate a sense of their individuality. My own storytelling episodes, filtered through memory and experience, connect with a larger framework that expands the public and private conversation around the topic of being Colored and Mexican in this time and place.

The scholarship in this chapter begins with Stephen Middleton’s explication on the *Black Laws in the Old Northwest* as they concern the legacy of racism in Ohio. Peggy Pascoe’s *What Comes Naturally* provides context for the subject of miscegenation and interracial marriage and Ian Haney Lopez’ “White by Law” reveals the construction of whiteness and white privilege and its reliance

¹¹⁵ Delgado. “Storytelling for Oppositionists,” p2439

on its opposite, blackness, to maintain its position. Ruth Frankenberg's *White Women, Race Matters: the Social Construction of Whiteness* places importance on the geography and background of the white female individual in the construction of her white identity and how she might relate to people of color.

The subject of mixed race and biracial identity is examined in Teresa Kay Williams' essay "Race as Process: Reassessing the 'What Are You?' Encounters of Biracial Individuals" and provides a framework for a discussion on establishing a biracial identity within the confines of racial hierarchies.

Motivations for migration and migration patterns are assessed and interpreted by way of the information contained in Isabel Wilkerson's *The Warmth of Other Suns*. James W. Loewen's *Sundown Towns* explains the phenomenon of segregated residential areas created "on purpose" following World War II. Eugenia Kaledin's *Daily Life in the United States, 1940-1959* supplied the information needed to create a counter-narrative of post war America as seen through the eyes of residents of Lincoln Heights and the Valley Homes.

Randall Kennedy's *Nigger* and Joy Degruy Leary's *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome* combine to contribute to the argument on the use and effect of the n-word and its background and legacy. Within the context of critical race theory, the discussion of the n-word is viewed as part of the lexicon of "words that wound."

Chapter III

Chapter III relies on the interview information to do the work of exposition in the case of the Valley Homes in the 1950s. These interviews reveal

the tension between the public and private spheres of racism as they relate to beauty standards, skin color and hair texture. They also describe the ways in which Alicia expressed her Mexican culture in the black community. Through these interviews, the reader learns of Alicia's acts of racial estrangement set within the context of *racismo* and racism and their inherent color coding. Characterizations of Tom and Alicia, excerpted from the interviews, describe how they were viewed publicly and privately.

The Valley Homes presents as the 1950s African American counterpart to the white picket fence, and appears to enjoy, in a moment of transition, a brief prosperity and hopeful countenance. This short period of time ends with the disbanding of our family, Alicia's departure to California, and Tom in the role of single parent. In 1960, we prepared to leave the segregated area of Lincoln Heights and move into an integrated neighborhood where we would attend better schools and live a different lifestyle within the city limits.

In this Chapter, the prevalence of the use of interview material and the autoethnographic features of this research provides the impetus for discussions aspected by Margaret L. Hunter's *Race, Gender and the Politics of Skin Tone*, and Roberta Coles' "Black Single Fathers: Choosing to Parent Full-Time." In addition, the "scapes" in Arjun Appadurai's *Modernity at Large* are enjoined in the conversation, as well as Homi Bhabha's discussion on the "process of cultural translation" as it relates to a "hybrid location of cultural value" in *The Location of Culture*, to characterize and situate the maelstrom of cultural effects in this research.

Summary

The author's interracial family experience, defined by an African American father from Nashville, Tennessee and a Mexican mother from Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico, presents the opportunity to examine what was then an uncommon combination, considering the time and place. *Blaxicana Identity* frames the ruptures in the ethnographer/author's life within the cultural studies constructs of exile and return, escape and loss, migration and assimilation.

Blaxicana Identity as a cultural ethnography and within the context of Cultural Studies embraces a multi-faceted approach that includes academic and archival research, the individual and collective impressions and memories of the voices from the Valley Homes and Lincoln Heights, family members and the ethnographer's personal impressions and memories. This dissertation will illustrate the interplay between the larger academic arenas of *racismo* and racism, history, migration, Critical Race Theory tenets, interracial marriage and mixed race children. *Blaxicana Identity* will illustrate how these elements created tensions within the cultural flow and how they manifested in the community to create a cultural, social, economic and racial topography in which the author forged her *Blaxicana* identity

The scholarly and academic part of this work is linked to the author's lived experience and interviews with community residents who knew the author and her family in the 1950's. The author anticipates that the individual and

community perceptions of the significance of cross cultural expression will play a central role in determining the complexity of the relevant identity formation factors brought forth in *Blaxicana Identity*. The ethnographer/author posits that new kinds of information, especially as it concerns the interactions between African American and Mexican, and the time and place in which these interactions occurred, will emerge to join the conversation on race and the formation of mixed race identity.

Chapter I

Interest Convergence

Introduction

The story of the meeting of Alicia Prado and Thomas Turner provides an interstitial space on which to overlay the second tenet of Critical Race Theory (CRT), interest convergence. This Chapter explores interest convergence as it relates to the time, place, and circumstances of the couple's meeting and includes an individual, historical, social, and legal perspective. The meanings of 'otherness' expressed as racism in the United States, and the meaning of the 'denial' of African heritage as expressed in *racismo* in Mexico are illustrated in an examination of the mutually color-coded concepts, how they reflect the overarching relationship between African Americans and Mexicans, and how they are applied to the participating individuals.

This research discusses the application of the interest convergence tenet to the storytelling tenet of CRT in order to identify the point at which disparate motivations in the lives of Alicia and Tom arrive at an intersection of mutuality in which those motivations have the potential for fulfillment. At such intersections, new streams of movement are initiated in the individual lives and radiate outward to the participating social collective.

Some of the accounts of Tom's and Alicia's meeting are relayed in this Chapter in storytelling form. The details, characters, quotes, and nuances have been collected in several ways that include, my memory bank of family stories, tape recorded interviews, written interviews, and Alicia's own written narrative.

Tom and Alicia's marriage represented the coming together of two people from different cultures, different countries, race and nationalities, who spoke different languages, and who identified as Negro, and Mexican/White. The fact of their interracial marriage, illegal in many states in 1946, centers their private relationship squarely in the public arena where their stories provide the evidence of the issues that concern CRT and legal studies.

Legal documents that affirm identity and nationality played defining roles in Alicia's new life in the United States and inform another CRT tenet, the social construction of race. Delgado and Stefancic position this theme as one that

... holds that race and races are products of social thought and relations. Not objective, inherent, or fixed, they correspond to no biological or genetic reality; rather, races are categories that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient.¹¹⁶

Alicia's birth certificate identifies her as "*raza blanca, mexicana*," a Mexican of the white race. Her naturalization certificate describes her complexion as "medium" and provides the date of her entry into the United States as October 1946. The marriage certificate issued in *Empalme, Sonora, Mexico* indicates that the date of marriage preceded my birth by ten months, thereby eliminating the question of whether or not Tom and Alicia felt forced into marriage due to my impending birth. A comparison of these documents and others fashion a legal landscape that marks race and nationality. In addition, they provide an approximate timeline in which the "interest convergence" between Tom and Alicia occurred; the marriage that set in motion a new set of forces that powered their lives as husband and wife, and parents.

¹¹⁶ Delgado, Stefancic. Introduction to CRT, 7.

Racism, Racismo

As a Latina, Alicia brought her own brand of *racismo* to the relationship and into her individual assimilation process. In the Mexican culture, and as explained by Lillian Comas-Diaz' in the article "Lati-Negra: Mental Health Issues of African Latinas, Latina style racism expresses as *racismo*."¹¹⁷

Racismo or Latino style racism, permeates all spheres of the society from education, politics, religion, arts, and business; to social, personal, family, sexual, and interpersonal relationships (Zenon Cruz, 1975). *Racismo* is a classic example of internalized racism. For example, many Caribbean Latinos have difficulties accepting their own blackness and often accuse each other of being Black and/or having African ancestry (racial projection). The reply *el que no tiene dinga tiene mandinga* (the individual who does not have *dinga* has *mandinga*) asserts that Latinos who don't have *dinga* (Indian heritage) have *mandinga* (African heritage).¹¹⁸

In *Quest for Equality: the Failed Promise of Black-Brown Solidarity*, Neil Foley uses language that describes the variations in skin color in a fashion reminiscent of eighteenth century "*la casta*" designations of race that attempted to organize a society of Spaniards, indigenous peoples, and Africans. Foley conveys that it is not the words themselves that affirm or deny *racismo*, but rather their understood meanings – among Mexicans – that transcend the harsh racism that is associated with the history of the United States.¹¹⁹

The black/white binary is expressed as "*guero*" and "*negro/negrito* (*negrito* is also positioned as a term of endearment); brown, *moreno*; "light brown, *claro moreno*; dark brown, *moreno oscuro*, or *prieto* for dark-skinned or

¹¹⁷ Comas-Diaz, 38.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 39.

¹¹⁹ Foley, 11.

black, “often used in a derogatory manner” and in some cases in a flattering way, “as in *mi prieta linda*, my beautiful brown skin.”¹²⁰ Foley notes that the term *indio* for Indian “always implies dark skin and low social status and is not used in polite company.”¹²¹ These descriptors function to preserve the lines of skin-tone color that delineate class hierarchies in Mexico. Alicia had been raised on these color-coded messages.

Foley posits that Mexico adopted the idea of a “racial democracy” where citizenship, not race, forms the bedrock of national identity and belonging – and class, not race, the bedrock of inequality.”¹²² While a fine line of distinction may be drawn between racism and *racismo*, it appears that the socially constructed class hierarchies based on skin color, from light brown/*morena* to dark-skinned/*prieta*, that characterize U.S. racism and Mexican *racismo* are both part of the triumvirate of race, class and gender that compose the intersecting oppressions of race.

In the United States, the relationship between Mexicans and African Americans suffers when it comes to working cooperatively in a united political front against such oppressions. Foley attributes this to “Mexico’s racial amnesia” in which Mexicans “acknowledge and officially celebrate their indigenous roots” but “do not ... regard Afro-descendant people as kith or kin on either side of the U.S.-Mexico border.”¹²³ Foley reports that Latinos tended to “distance

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

themselves from African Americans and the stigma of blackness” even while each was “aware of the presence of the other” and at times worked closely together.¹²⁴

Nicholas Vaca’s *The Presumed Alliance: The Unspoken Conflict Between Latinos and Blacks and What it Means for America* sites Toni Morrison’s 1993 *Time* magazine article, “On the Back of Blacks” which summarizes the end of a ‘European immigrant realizes the American dream’ film in which the immigrant works a shoeshine stand in “Grand Central Station” and chases away a fellow shoe shiner, a Negro, who tries to “solicit a customer.”¹²⁵ Morrison wrote:

This is race talk, the explicit insertion into everyday life of racial signs and symbols that have no meaning other than pressing African Americans to the lowest level of the racial hierarchy ... Only when the lesson of racial estrangement is learned is assimilation complete.¹²⁶

Significant to the discussion is Morrison’s declaration that all immigrants coming to the United States learn the “lesson of racial estrangement” to complete the assimilation process.¹²⁷ The issue of “racial estrangement” presents as a sublime phrase for what African Americans know too well – no one who is not Black wants to be Black when it means relegation to the “lowest level” of the socially constructed, but all too real “racial hierarchy.”¹²⁸ Alicia’s introduction to racism U.S. style included learning the “lesson of racial estrangement” and incorporating it into her existing *Latina* style *racismo*.¹²⁹

¹²⁴ Ibid., 12.

¹²⁵ Vaca, 13.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

Interest Convergence

Tom was subject to the established practices of the United States military that manifested as part of the ‘ordinariness’ of racism. As a result, he served at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, a historical, segregated Post managed by white officers and Negro enlisted men and non-commissioned officers during World War II.¹³⁰

Tom, who claimed his two-year business degree helped him get ahead in the Army, started as a latrine cleaning PFC (private first class), progressed to heavy artillery instructor, and finished as a Staff Sergeant. He exposed himself unnecessarily to the high decibel artillery blasts and because he did not follow proper safety protocols, he developed a hearing loss and a lifelong disability.¹³¹ This disability relieved him of active duty and his unit shipped overseas without him. He became part of the Special Command Unit, or Special Services, and excelled individually as an athlete and as a leader and organizer of numerous sports activities that involved soldiers, WACs, and children.

Tom notes that by the end of the War, he enjoyed a reputation as a good first baseman and pitcher for the Service Command Unit (SCU) baseball team. The SCU team held almost four year’s worth of trophies, awards and press clippings that reflected wins over semi-pro teams as far north as Phoenix, and into México as far south as Guaymas, Sonora. In addition to baseball, Tom was more

¹³⁰ Smith, Cornelius. *Fort Huachuca*, 295. Fort Huachuca is a historical Army training post for African American soldiers, including the renowned Buffalo Soldiers of the Old West. The Fort was also a bulwark for settlers against attacks from the Chiricahua Apache whose territory included Southern Arizona and *Sonora* in Northern Mexico. Tom Turner told many stories about Fort Huachuca and we revisited the site in the late 1980s. One of Dad’s tales - the Chiricahua, who had Cochise and Geronimo for their chief, rode out of the Huachuca (Thunder) Mountains, attacked the small towns and escaped back into the mountains. We revisited the site in the late 1980s; the area in which the Fort is located is called Cochise County.

¹³¹ In 1951, Thomas Turner received treatment for his hearing loss from the Veteran’s Administration and began wearing a hearing aid.

than an average player on the base basketball, football, and tennis and bowling teams. His athletic prowess while in military service was recorded. Tom regularly sent copies of the Post newspaper *The Apache Sentinel* that contained his athletic exploits, photos and write-ups to a young woman in Xenia, Ohio whom he had dated before being drafted in 1942. A few examples include,

Pvt. Turner, in addition to being scoutmaster, is charge d'affaires at the roller skating rink and coached and managed the high school girls' basketball team.

Pfc. Thomas Turner, first baseman and captain of SCU 1943's baseball team is top ranking figure in Post sports. End on the football team, forward on the All-Star basketball team, and Interleague Post bowling champion, he also runs middle distance track events in record time. Turner's home is in Glendale, Ohio.

'He's the greatest natural athlete I've ever seen in my life,' said former Lt. James T. Chambers, about Pfc. Thomas Turner and Lt. Chambers has seen plenty of athletes during his 27 years of recreation work. The occasion for this remark was a return trip from Nogales of the baseball team from a game in which Turner had batted 1.000, field 1.000 and captained the team to an 8 to 6 victory over the Mexican lads.¹³²

As a public persona, Tom is displayed as a leader, a man who possesses versatile athletic abilities, and as an ambassador for his country and his baseball team.

¹³² *The Apache Sentinel*, 1944, issue and page unknown.

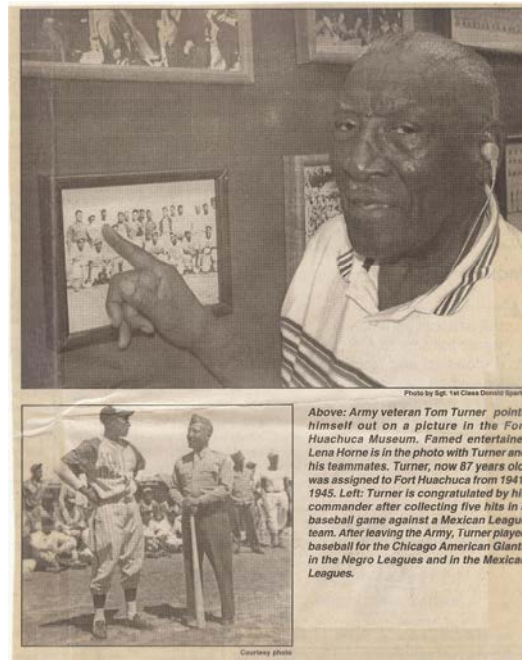


Lena Horne and the SCU baseball team, Fort Huachuca, Arizona.

Tom does not remember when or under what circumstances the papers were returned to him. Some of the dates are torn and hard to read, but for the most part these articles range over the years 1943 to 1945. Dad gave me these yellowed and frayed copies of *The Apache Sentinel* more than forty years after their printing. In addition to Tom's athletic ability, the *Sentinel* also catalogued life on the Post and connected it to life outside the Post. The events referenced here and Tom's path in the military represent a counter-history and counter-narrative to African American participation in World War II.

Negro celebrities and performing artists appeared frequently at Fort Huachuca. For example, an article and photo appeared of the Army Corps of Engineers building the Lena Horne Open-Air Theatre in anticipation of a visit to the base by Ms. Horne, singer and actress. While on her appearance at the Post, she posed with the baseball team, and the Captain of the team, Tom, introduced

her at the microphone. A picture of Ms. Horne with the team and Tom at the microphone that appeared in *The Apache Sentinel* is part of the current Fort Huachuca Museum Exhibit on the Post.¹³³



Thomas Turner's re-visit to Fort Huachuca, Arizona was featured in the renamed *Fort Huachuca Scout* post newspaper. It shows Tom pointing to Lena Horne in the photo on the wall, and is accompanied by a 1940s photo of Tom in his signature stance, in his SCU baseball uniform.

The following excerpts from *The Apache Sentinel* post up and point to a separate practice that operated within the limited and restricted Negro cultural experience. "Poet Reads from his Works" is the headline over a photo of poet Langston Hughes reading excerpts from "The Dream Keeper" at the Post's USO club. "Trumpet King and Song Stylist" headlines the photo of Louis Armstrong and singer Velma Middleton who performed during the "Victory Parade of Spotlight Bands" broadcast from the Post Field House.¹³⁴

¹³³ *The Apache Sentinel*, 1944, issue and page unknown.

¹³⁴ *The Apache Sentinel*, 1944, issue and page unknown.

The Apache Sentinel featured Franklin Delano Roosevelt's fourth inaugural address in its January 26, 1945 issue. However, the headline on the front page over FDR's likeness read, "Clarence Muse to Entertain at Huachuca Tomorrow." Muse, a well known black film actor and entertainer, and his wife Willabelle entertained patients and enlisted men for two days.



Clarence Muse headlines over FDR's Inaugural Address.

This issue also highlighted the "Negro Champs of 1944." Tom's youngest sister, Hattie, who attended Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama, was listed among the college athletes as the 'National Women's Outdoor Champion' in the discus throw and the baseball throw.

A reminder in the "Libraries" column in the February 9, 1945 issue of the *Sentinel* went out to the Post about Negro History Week which began February 11, 1945. The column lists newspapers, magazines, books by Negro authors, and books about Negroes to generate interest in Black History Week.

A headline in the March 2, 1945 issue of the *Sentinel* read, “Tombstone’s Oldest Citizen, Ex-Slave Fills Last Grave in Town’s Boot Hill.”¹³⁵ Fort Huachuca’s proximity to the old west town of Tombstone provided the connection between the ex-slave, John Swain, and the Negro troops. The article ended with a call for funds to purchase and maintain a permanent grave marker for Swain. This snapshot of life on the Post and in the world outside the Post, as it related to African Americans as a group in this isolated space and turbulent time, discloses an all but forgotten intersection on the historical and cultural timeline.

Tom has said that because of segregationist practices and to avoid confrontations with the local population of whites, Fort Huachuca was more than an Army post. It was a “town” with all the amenities and a safe place for African American military personnel. Even though Tom had traveled across the country from Ohio to Arizona to serve in the segregated Army, he and his fellow Negro enlisted men and non-commissioned officers remained isolated, confined and marginalized, at the northern end of the Sonora Desert.

Tom’s Army discharge came two days before Christmas in 1945. He was thirty-years old. It would be another two years before Jackie Robinson broke the Major League Baseball color line to play for the Brooklyn Dodgers. The Negro League Baseball teams in the U.S. would not hold tryouts until spring of 1946. The Southwest was warm year round and especially in the desert State of Sonora, Mexico where Tom had received an offer to play on the local baseball team for five hundred dollars a month, free room and board.

¹³⁵ *The Apache Sentinel*, Feb. 9, 1945 issue, page unknown.

On his way to join the team in Guaymas, located on the eastern edge of the Sea of Cortez, Tom stopped overnight in the capitol city Hermosillo. It was there that he was offered, and where he accepted a better deal from the owner of the local baseball team. Tom stayed in Hermosillo for seven-hundred and fifty dollars a month, room and board in a hotel, use of a car, and bonus pay when he pitched. Like many other African American veterans, Tom's experience in the Army had given him an expanded sense of self and worth and gave him the opportunity to enlarge his horizons via travel. Dad described to me what life was like for him as a Negro baseball player in *Hermosillo*.

I'd played against the Mexican guys on the team and I knew everyone except a couple of young white guys, Bob Lymon and Jim Baker¹³⁶, who played on farm teams in the States. They came South of the Border to sharpen their skills by playing winter ball, hoping to move up to the majors in the spring. We were the only U.S. citizens on the team and we went to practice together, ate together, and enjoyed the nightlife that *Hermosillo* had to offer. The town embraced us. Little boys used to follow us around shouting, '*dinero, dinero.*' We had invitations to weddings, baptisms, graduations, birthday parties, ribbon cutting and swearing-in ceremonies, and local political and society events. Twin sisters who owned the beauty salon in the hotel where we lived, became our sponsors. They showed us the local hot spots and improved our Spanish. No Jim Crow in México. In *Hermosillo*, I was treated as an equal citizen. No back of the bus, separate drinking fountains or colored restrooms. As an athlete from the U.S., I enjoyed the fruits of my labors on the ball field. I entered restaurants by the front door. Owners seated my party and me and brought us the best fare, on the house. Fellow diners and restaurant staff alike asked for autographs. The local tailor fitted me for pants, jackets and suits at the hotel. His cousin supplied shirts, ties and shoes. In *Hermosillo*, I felt for the first time in my life, that my color didn't matter to anyone but me.

¹³⁶ Bob Lymon and Jim Baker are pseudonyms.

Tom's account can be interpreted as a metaphor for a desire to have the capacity to live beyond the definition of his dark brown skin. Far away from the small Village of Glendale where he grew up, in a foreign country with a more diverse "colored" population, even some who looked like him, Tom sensed an opportunity to realize his interior desire in that time and place. This desire appears to have manifested in a public manner.

Alicia's retelling of the story of how she and Tom met in *Hermosillo* in 1946 is fraught with drama, desperation, and determination. She recounted it like a young woman who saw her chance to escape the restricted life of a Mexican girl and acted on it.

I met Tom in my country, México, in 1946. I cannot talk about him in his blackness because I was not at that time aware of color or any differences in the human race. I saw for the first time a Negro man, but this did not make me think twice. I did not face looks in people. When I saw in the local newspaper this Negro man, famous, making much money, baseball star, traveled all the way from God's country USA, I thought this is my chance to disappear from this boring, dusty life in *Hermosillo*. He didn't smoke or drink and he made a good presentation of himself in his tailor-made clothes. He looked especially handsome in a suit and tie. I thought the competition was hot for the tall, dark and handsome *Americano* sports celebrity. I was sure of myself and the thought never entered my mind that I wasn't pretty enough, or smart enough, or good enough to get a man like that. I thought, 'This baseball player is a fine man and I intend to make him like me.'

I asked Mother why she chose a Black man instead of a White man if she expected to go the *Estados Unidos*.

I set my sights on Tom because I thought a *gringo* would not want a woman who no *habla Ingles*. At nineteen

years old, my imagination make a movie with the Negro baseball player as the hero.

Her response expressed both the practical and the impractical sides of her personality.

Mother's account includes the legacy of denial of blackness inherent in *racismo*. At the same time, traits of racism show. In terms of the 'inferior' group trying to live up to the standards of the 'superior' group, Alicia positioned herself in the 'inferior' group – at least at this time – when it came to meeting 'gringo' standards of English. She saw herself as lacking in the eyes of a "gringo" white man because she did not speak 'good English.' In her view, therefore, a white man would be beyond her reach as a prospective partner. Mother could, however, imagine herself linked with a Negro man who appeared to have the resources to fulfill her desire to "disappear from this boring, dusty life in *Hermosillo*." Alicia may have thought that it would make little difference to a Negro man if her English was 'no good.' This point of view could also be interpreted as a sign of disrespect for the Negro baseball player and the presumption that he would be an easy ticket out of Mexico. While Alicia verbally denied Tom's blackness, she psychically acknowledged it and leveraged her 'near-whiteness' to act on her desires.

Events occurred at a rapid pace between the couple. Alicia arranged to meet Tom at a local dance. Mother said he was a good dancer and easy to follow. The following excerpt, with direct quotes, is part of a larger story that Mother told about the night he walked her home from the dance.

Tom whispered, 'What are your dreams, Alicia?'

‘Oh, I am a shy person, *Tomas*. My dreams are very small. Just to be happy. That is all.’

‘I think you're too modest. What would make you happy?’

‘I am happy now.’ Tom pulled me closer.

His *Español* was slow and he had a bad accent.

But he knew a lot of words, and he taught me a few words in English. He introduced me to his teammates, the *gringos* too. Tom and I talked and danced until it was time to leave. He walked home with my friends and me, but we were behind the group, holding hands, smiling, and laughing all the way to my house.

Tom said, ‘Your eyes are captivating. *Me gustaría casarme con tigo*, I think I'd like to marry you.’

I laughed because I thought he was joking.

I went along with the fun and replied, ‘*Seguro Tomas, me caso con tigo*, sure, Tom, I will marry you.’ We both laughed and shared a modest kiss out of sight and sound of the others. He asked if he could call on me the next evening after practice.

If this account approximates whatever may have happened between Tom and Alicia that night, it signals a connection that was both playful and serious.



Tom in his *Hermosillo* baseball uniform and Alicia in *Hermosillo* in 1946.

The accounts from both Tom and Alicia come more than forty years after their occurrence.¹³⁷ Tom's desire to escape Jim Crow in the United States is understandable. What is not as clear, however, is whether or not Tom was mindful of certain social taboos that would prevent him from the full realization of his desire to be treated as a "full citizen" with the ability to court and marry the woman of his choice. It did not take long for these barriers to show themselves.

Tom's athletic abilities and celebrity may have insulated him from the 'ordinariness' of *racismo* in Mexico, and he may have been unaware of the elements of *la casta* that constituted the social construction of race in Mexico. He did, however, come face to face with both when he first saw his future mother-in-law.

Tom came to Alicia's house the day after the dance. According to Alicia, her mother Ana Prado was at her wits end when she learned that Alicia had danced all night with the Negro baseball player. Ana kept looking out the window and when she saw Tom turn into the gate, she ran and opened the door and started shouting like a crazy woman.

"O Dios mío! El diablo! El diablo esta en la puerta. O Dios mío!"

My grandmother Ana Prado, whom I am named for, called on God to get the devil, my father, away from her door. In *Español*, the devil is one color, black. When Tom ran away, Ana Prado closed the door, went to her room, and did not come out for the rest of the day. That night, Alicia left her parents' home just after midnight and took the overnight bus to *Empalme* where Tom was playing an away game the next day.

¹³⁷ The author began recording and writing down these stories in earnest in the 1980s.

In *Hermosillo*, Jesus Prado, Alicia's father, was a minor *deputado*, a councilperson. Mother said the Prado name was known and well respected in *Sonora* because of the undocumented work that Jesus had done earlier in securing rights and fair wages for the Mexican miners who worked in and around the mines in *Nacozari*, a smaller town Northeast of *Hermosillo*. Jesus met Ana Yanes Prado when she taught night classes to the miners. They married in *Nacozari* and started a family there. Mother said Jesus' ancestors were from Spain with a little German mixed in. She also claimed that he maintained some interests in small silver and copper mines, but that he was not a rich man. Alicia said her mother Ana Yanes is descended from the Pima Apache with a mix of Spaniard. Alicia's description of her parents' individual blood lines, within the context of *la casta*, symbolizes the union of a man of a higher caste with a woman of a lower caste simply by the fact that Ana Yanes is mixed with 'indio,' a term not mentioned in polite company, according to the characteristics of *racismo*.¹³⁸

An analysis of Tom's and Alicia's accounts of how they came to be married indicates that they both glossed over the realities and complexities of the situation. Alicia's account of what she said to Tom when she arrived in *Empalme* is filled with urgency and concern. She blamed her Mother for trying to control her and she reminded Tom of his words of marriage. She also must have had some concern for salvaging the public reputation that she put at risk by pursuing her private desires to leave her parents' home to be with the Negro baseball player.

¹³⁸ Foley, 11.

‘Oh, Tomas, I am so sorry about the way my ignorant mother acted toward you yesterday. I wanted to apologize to you in person. My mother is an old, spiteful woman who would say or do anything to keep me under her control. Don't you see, Tomas? Now we can be married as you said. We can get married right here in *Empalme*. I know a judge that will perform the ceremony for us right away, today, now. Come on. It's a short taxi ride to his house.’

While Tom's recollection seems more guarded and uncertain, he presents his role as the ‘good guy’ who is just going along for the ride because it is the right thing to do.

I wondered if Alicia's parents knew where she was and then I wondered what she was doing in *Empalme* in the lobby of the hotel where the team was staying. Until she told me that we could be married on the spot, I thought she might be in some kind of trouble. First, I didn't think we could get married in a day, not even in México. Second, I wasn't at all sure that I wanted to get married. Was she in trouble and using me for an escape? What would happen to her if I didn't marry her after she had run away from home and come to me? I gave in and went to the judge's house. The judge told us we'd have to wait until the next day when we could purchase a marriage permit at the city offices. He said it was customary for the girl's parents to give their written consent, but not necessary if she was over eighteen. I got a room for Alicia at the hotel. She spent the night there, alone. I was afraid of what might happen to Alicia or me if I tried to sleep with her without being married. The next morning we went to the city offices and got the marriage permit. We returned to the judge's offices after the game.

Whatever the twisted details or motivations might have been, Tom and Alicia came together as a couple and in unacknowledged and silent agreement, found it in their best interests to under perform the particular roles they played in achieving their own brand of interest convergence.

The compressed time frame of these events adds a layer of suspense; a will they or won't they 'race against time' element. While the relationship between Tom and Alicia did move fast, documents indicate they happened over a longer period of time than their individual accounts indicate.

In 2007, Mother showed me a small box of papers that contained a re-issued copy of my parents' marriage certificate obtained in 1989.¹³⁹ The document is written in *Espanol* and numbered "22003." It names 'Maria Guadalupe Gutierrez Arballo' as the licensed registrar in the civil offices of *Empalme, Sonora* on the day of the marriage, April 24, 1946. Four witnesses – Carlos Gomez Sanchez, Fortunato Cota Camacho, Francisco Alcaraz, Olga Corrales de Alcaraz – were in attendance. With the exception of Olga, for whom my sister is named, I have never heard my parents mention the other witnesses. Two errors, deliberate or accidental, are obvious in the document. Tom's age is listed as twenty-seven; born June 22, 1915, he would have been thirty years old in April 1946. The other is that the document lists Tom's mother's middle name, Viola, as her first name and omits her first name, Ada, altogether. Assuming that Tom arrived in *Hermosillo* sometime shortly after the beginning of 1946 to play in the winter league and met Alicia soon after, their relationship, up until the date of their marriage, most likely took place over a period of two to four months.

Nineteen years old when she met Tom, Alicia's life experience was limited and restricted due to the operating cultural and religious norms of 1940s *Mexico*, in general. For example, Mother claimed her father, Jesus Prado, would

¹³⁹ See Prado/Turner Marriage Certificate, Illustrations.

not allow her to pursue a career in medicine because he did not want her to “see naked men.”

The following is derived from notes taken during a telephone conversation with Mother in answer to my question, “What were you doing in *Hermosillo* before you met Dad?”

My father put me in a private school for girls, *Instituto Soria*. He was wasting his money. I got kicked out for skipping classes. I used to climb out of the window. I wanted piano and singing and to be a performing artist. Not a teacher or office girl. I wanted to make a lot of money real fast. My Father wouldn't let me go to the *Bella Artes Escuela* in Mexico City. He claimed that women in that line of work are whores, drinkers, and take dope. I stopped going to school and started to spend time with my girlfriends, especially Dora who was Chinese. We would go for long walks and visit other friends at their homes. I didn't have a boyfriend because the boys in *Hermosillo* were too poor and too ugly. I fantasized about leaving *Mexico* and being with a foreign man. I wanted to go *los Estados Unidos*. They speak English and live a better life. Women can't do nothing in *Mexico* except get pregnant, have babies and be under the thumb of the family. I'd sneak away from home and lie about where I was going. I sang *Caminito*¹⁴⁰ and *Jalisco*¹⁴¹ in the local radio contests and won clothes, cosmetics and a little money. God created me and the world was waiting. I could be like the movie actress Maria Felix. I'd seen her in *Dona Bárbara* and read about her in the magazines. But I'd be different from *La Dona*. I'd learn English and be a Hollywood beauty queen and sing on stage.

When my Mother heard me say this, she slapped me, ‘You will be a *puta!*’ she screamed at me.

I screamed back at her, ‘You are the *puta!* Old woman! You'll be sorry. Wait and see. I'm going to marry the first *puerco* that comes along.’

Alicia's private desires and fantasies drove her actions. This dream like,

adolescent account reflects Alicia's age-appropriate naiveté and impatience. A

¹⁴⁰ *Caminito* is an Argentine Tango, lyrics Gabino Coria Penaloza; music Carlos Gardel, 1926.

¹⁴¹ *Ay Jalisco No Te Rajes*, Jorge Negrete, 1941,

sensible and realistic side also presents as she recognized the necessity of financial resources that must accompany the desired travel to *los Estados Unidos*. In the exchange with her Mother, Ana Prado, Alicia resolves her impatience and rationality in a hasty decision to wed the first ‘pig’ that she can catch.

Sometime in the two to four month time frame between their meeting and their marriage, Alicia claimed that Tom wrote a letter to her parents. She did not have the opportunity to read it because Ana Prado burned it in the stove in Alicia’s presence. It is not clear whether or not my Grandmother Ana read the letter, or showed it to my Grandfather Jesus before she burned it. Tom does not recall this letter. The contents of the letter remain a mystery. The letter served as a catalyst for Alicia’s final decision.

Here I quote my Mother’s remembered reaction, “I was so angry with my witch of a Mother for burning that letter that I made up my mind then and there to marry the Black man.”

Before the marriage took place, however, Alicia had to surmount one last hurdle – a face to face conversation with her beloved father, Jesus. As told to me by my Mother, that conversation is represented here as not only a plea for rationality from a father to a daughter determined to go against the social and cultural grain, but also as an indictment of racism in the United States as seen through the eyes of a Mexican man of some influence who had traveled in Mexico and the *Estados Unidos*. The conversation took place in the parlor of the judge who would marry Tom and Alicia.

I could only see the top of his head, but I knew
from the thinning hair and the scent of cactus wine in the

room that my father, *Jesús Prado*, was sitting in the high backed chair near the fireplace.

'*Alicia*. Daughter, come sit down. We must talk. Do you know that your mother has taken to her bed? Your rebellious behavior has made her ill. *Mi amigo*, the *Magistrado*, sent word to me that you are planning to marry this Negro baseball player from *los Estados Unidos* without the permission of your parents. Is that true?'

'*Si, Papa*, it is true. This baseball player is a good man. I want to marry him, go to *los Estados Unidos*, and live like an *Americana*. I will die if I stay in this dusty hellhole that is *Sonora*.'

'Before you die, let me tell you a few things about what it means to be a Negro north of the border, *al norte de la frontera*.'

Mother interrupted the dialogue to insert a reflection.

My father's eyes pleaded with me to listen and try to picture the disenchantment that he knew awaited me in the States. But I was too ignorant to know.

Mother continued.

'I know what you have been doing and I know what you are up to. I cannot watch you every minute and keep you like a prisoner. You are nineteen now and legally I cannot stop you from marrying this man. But I'm going to tell you how things are for the Negro man and what your life will be like if you marry him against my wishes. Negroes in *los Estados Unidos* don't have a good life. White people whip them, lynch them, kill them. Negroes cannot go wherever they want like the *gringos*. I saw a Negro man beaten and killed for asking for a drink in a bar in Arizona. No one did anything about it, not even the *policia*. Nobody says or does anything when a black man is killed. If you marry a Negro man, they will treat you the same way. The American whites are not going to accept you if you associate with a Negro. You are slapping them in the face if you marry this man. His family and friends are not going to like you. They will resent you because you don't speak English and are from another culture. You will be caught in the middle of the black and white worlds, pushed and pulled by both sides when you belong to neither one. This man will mistreat you. He likes you now because your skin is different, you

are *exotica*. But after he has you and sleeps with you for a while, he will tire of *tu palidez*, your whiteness. It will lose its luster and he will turn to women of his own color. Your children will be dark and have nappy hair and you won't know how to take care of it. They will suffer three times more. Their world will be very mixed up and they will not be accepted as Mexican, Negro, or white. This man will leave you with small children, without money, without food, without a home in a strange country far from your own people. I will be dead by the time this happens and it hurts me to know that you're going to suffer and I won't be here to help you. No one is going to help you. You are going to be lost, by yourself.'

'*Papa*, how can I believe all these bad things that you say will happen? This man is a famous baseball player. His picture is in the paper every week. He makes lots of money. He is a fine dresser, good dancer, and he speaks *Español*.'

'You have stars in your eyes, daughter, and they are blinding you to the truth and the consequences of your reckless behavior. *Los Estados Unidos* is not a country where a Negro can enjoy a good life. You will see a harsh change in how he lives his life as soon as you cross the border with him.'

'It is too late to go back. I have already run away from home and stayed out all night. *Mama* has made a big scene and by now, all of *Hermosillo* is talking about the Negro baseball player and me. My reputation here is ruined. No other man will marry me now. I must go with *Tomas*. *Mi destino esta sellado*, my fate is sealed.'

'Perhaps you are right. I have said all I can to open your eyes, but you do not want to see or hear the truth. It seems you are determined to ruin your life. Come, let us go talk to the *Magistrado*.'

The *Magistrado* greeted us as we entered the sitting room where he and Tom had been talking baseball. '*Senor Prado, Alicia*, won't you have a seat?'

'My apologies,' my father began. 'I must get back to *Hermosillo* and talk to my wife and then I have pressing business in Arizona. I will leave Alicia and her fiancé in your capable hands. *Senor Turner*, I'm sorry we were not able to meet under more pleasant circumstances. I also regret that I do not have the time to get to know you better. I'm sure you are a fine man. Please take care of Alicia. We love her very much.'

My father embraced *Tomas* and shook the *Magistrado's* hand. He held me at arms length and looked at me as if he never expected to see me again. He hugged and kissed me as he whispered, '*Adiós, hija.*' My tears kept me from seeing my father walk out of the *Magistrado's* house. I could smell the scent of cactus wine in the room after he left.

Mother related this scene to me several times since 1982. It was always a small step for Alicia from a mention of her Father Jesus to sadness and tears for "Daddy, the only one who loved me." I interpreted each telling as a reconnection with what was for her an emotional touchstone. It signified the break with her familiar, but unsatisfying way of life, and a step toward the distinct embrace of an unknown thrall. Alicia's indefinite expectations would be played out against the backdrop of a racial hierarchy in *los Estados Unidos* that she had yet to experience.

Crossing la Frontera

A copy of an 'Application for Verification of Information From Immigration and Naturalization Service Records' that belonged to Alicia is stamped February 7, 1980.¹⁴² The form is marked 'urgent' and indicates the purpose for which the form is desired – 'needs proof to be eligible for benefits.' The Social Security benefits in question were awarded to Alicia based on the earnings of her former husband, Thomas Turner, after she reached the age of eligibility. For purposes of this research, the significance of this document is that it informs that Alicia Prado, born in *Nacozari, Sonora, Mexico* on October 4,

¹⁴² See Alicia Prado Application for Verification of Information from Immigration and Naturalization Service Records form, Illustrations.

1926, entered the United States for the first time at Nogales, Arizona in October 1946.

Whenever I queried Tom to find out the who, what, and when of why they left Mexico to go to Ohio his response never varied, “I wanted you to be born in the United States.” If Alicia’s application for Naturalization Certificate is correct, she would have been twenty-years old and about five months pregnant with me when she entered the United States at Nogales, Arizona. Alicia offered a different, more colorful and disturbing story of why they left Mexico.

Alicia often asserted that Tom was ‘deported’ out of Mexico because he married ‘Prado’s daughter.’ This comment placed the ‘blame’ for the deportation like treatment at the feet of an individual, Jesus Prado and/or his business and political *amigos*. The individuals that involved themselves in arranging for Tom to leave Mexico, put legal rules and regulations in action to attain the desired result. Tom was required to return to Arizona and renew his permit to work in Mexico. In order to achieve this, a letter was required from the owner of the *Hermosillo* baseball team. The owner, however, could not be located and Tom was forced to leave Mexico.

Tom’s account that he wanted me to be born in the United States indicates that he did not want to face the fact that outside and inside forces might have been working against his staying in Mexico while married to Prado’s near white daughter. The fact that *Tomas* was an acceptable part of the *Hermosillo* community until he ventured into marriage, a hint of scandal notwithstanding, to a

woman designated as white, speaks to the possibility of the practice of discrimination or prejudice against interracial marriage in Mexico.

Alicia's birth certificate describes her as ...

... ALICIA FRANCISCA PRADO – *La nina mencionada precede de raza Blanca, Mexicana, de sexe femenine* ...¹⁴³

Loosely translated, it reads that 'Alicia Francisca Prado, the child just mentioned is of the white race, Mexican and a female.' However, when a 'personal description' of Alicia appears in a 1980 re-issue of her Certificate of Naturalization from the United States, in the space that designates 'complexion' the word "Medium" is typed in the blank.¹⁴⁴ These two documents illustrate the ambiguity of human categorization based on skin color, racism or *racismo*.

Comas-Diaz' article sheds light on the Latina concept of *racismo* that functions contrary to the precept that "one drop of African blood makes you Black" and takes the view that "one drop of White blood makes you at least not Black."¹⁴⁵ Comas-Diaz affirms that Latina "style racism" is a "classic example of internalized racism" where the individual rejects "blackness" and strives to be perceived as, if not white then at least "non-Black."¹⁴⁶ Other aspects of *racismo* allow it to move within a "dynamic, fluid, and contextual concept ... associated with social class."¹⁴⁷ A *Latina* who is perceived as being on an elevated social level is considered white.¹⁴⁸ Even if her skin is brown, or "medium," she would be less subject to *racismo* due to her "social class" – a label generally tied to

¹⁴³ See Alicia Prado Birth Certificate, Illustrations.

¹⁴⁴ See Alicia Prado 1980 re-issue Certificate of Naturalization, Illustrations.

¹⁴⁵ Comas-Diaz, p38.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 39.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

wealth and influence.¹⁴⁹ According to these definitions, Alicia counted as white on two fronts – her white skin and her social status connected to the Prado name.

Racismo is heavily laden with the symbology of color even as it denies its African connections. Neil Foley's *Quest for Equality* points out that despite the fact that several Mexican independence leaders were "afromexicanos" with acknowledged and recognized "African ancestry," blacks in Mexico are omitted from "*la raza cosmica*" that characterizes the Mexican citizen and the Mexican nation.¹⁵⁰ The idea of the "cosmic race," advanced by the Mexican intellectual Jose Vasconcelos, is based

... upon the white supremacist assumption that 'The lower types of the species will be absorbed by the superior type.' In this manner ... the Black could be redeemed, and step by step, by voluntary extinction, the uglier stocks will give way to the more handsome.¹⁵¹

Within the "national ideology of *mestizaje* – the fusion of indigenous peoples and Spanish colonizers" – blacks as a distinct group are invisible.¹⁵² Historian, Colin Palmer, an authority on "slavery and Afro-descendant peoples in Mexico" described the racial hierarchy in Mexico as one

... based on skin color, with white the higher value as opposed to those who are brown and those, God forbid, who are black. In that regard ... [Mexico's *la casta*] is worse than in the United States ...¹⁵³

From the time I was a child, I have heard Mother say, "I am no *mestiza*. I am Castilian." In this statement she denies any *Indio* or African heritage in her

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Foley, 8.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 10.

family line and declares herself as pure Spanish, European and white. Faye V. Harrison's treatise, "The Persistent Power of 'Race' in the Cultural and Political Economy of Racism" pointed out that in "Hispanic countries" there exists an underrecognized form of racial inequality" that applies to Mother's assertion of race.¹⁵⁴

As the 'master symbol of the nation,' *mestizaje* exhibits an 'uneasiness about blackness' and indigenous ethnic-bloc formation. Despite the ambivalence toward Indianness, valorizations of 'mixedness' privilege European-Indian heritage and marginalize – if not erase – blackness and Africanness from the national landscape.¹⁵⁵

Harrison presented that the issue of *mestizaje* "represents the absorption, denial, and purging of blackness through miscegenation and cultural assimilation" and that other means of hegemonic principles are applied as a counter-narrative.¹⁵⁶

Throughout Latin American, the national norm encodes an ideal of *blanqueamiento* (whitening), which 'accepts the implicit hegemonic rhetoric of the [United States] with regard to white supremacy, and often blames those classed as black and indigenous for the worsening state of the nation.' In some settings, this process of associating whitening with advancement and darkening with backwardness and stagnation has been facilitated by U.S. military occupation, colonial rule, and/or corporate presence.¹⁵⁷

The Mexico that Mother lived in had been subject to U.S. military presence, Spanish colonial rule, and the corporate presence of U.S. interests in Mexico's natural resources. Mother claimed what she perceived as the benefit of *los Estados Unidos*' historical racial policy toward Mexicans as outlined by Harrison.

¹⁵⁴ Harrison, 55.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

... after the United States annexed Mexico's northern frontier, it racialized its policy toward Mexican-American's rights to citizenship: Only those who were white were entitled to the privileges of citizenship ... Racial status was much contested and negotiated in legislative and judicial arenas ...¹⁵⁸

Alicia claimed she did not mention to her new husband her suspicions about the misguided intentions of her father or his friends to arrange the 'pseudo-deportation' in an effort to protect the Prado name from the taint of blackness. She may have realized that within the context of *racismo*, saying "I do" to the Negro baseball player in the *Magistrado's* study cast a *nube negra*, a black cloud over her family. Alicia described the train trip East to Ohio as her first glimpse of the 'promised land' across whose deserts and plains she marveled and fantasized about a new life.

Motivations for Interracial Marriage

At the risk of oversimplification, it appears obvious from her accounts that it was Alicia's dream of a better life in the United States, the expectation of access to fame and fortune, and the desire to escape the dust of *Hermosillo, Sonora*, Mexico that brought her to the point of marriage to a Negro *Americano* that she had known only a short time. On the other hand, it is more difficult to ascertain from his accounts, Tom's motivation for the marriage. In consideration of Tom's personal status – almost thirty-one years old, uncommitted to any relationship, never married, no children, enjoying financial and social privileges in *Mexico* as a celebrity athlete – taking on the responsibility of a near-white wife and family must have given him some pause.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 60.

Scholarship that examines interracial relationships, especially those involving African American men, provides an analysis of several different elements that might serve as motivation to marry a non-black woman. In her work, *Black Men in Interracial Relationships: What's Love Got to Do with It?*, Kellina M. Craig-Henderson outlines that from a historical perspective, “early social science researchers advocated a theory of hypogamy in explaining Black male/White female unions.”¹⁵⁹

According to this perspective, Black men have a lower social status in society relative to White women because of their race and can ‘trade’ certain assets like money, fame, or physical attractiveness for the status they receive as a result of coupling with a White woman ... successful Black men were more likely to marry White, or lighter complexioned Black women than they were to marry Black, or dark complexioned women. The theory of hypogamy suggested that these Black men offered their success in exchange for the greater social value of White, or in some cases, lighter skin.¹⁶⁰

Craig-Henderson posited that at one end of a continuum of theories that explain interracial relationships the “focus [is] on such things as motives, preferences, and beliefs” of the individual.¹⁶¹ Viewed within the context of the “Resource Exchange Theory,” a theory which asserts that “people in intimate relationships behave in ways that are similar to the forces at work within the economic marketplace,” preferences are motivated by beliefs.¹⁶²

These rewards can be tangible, as when one person in the relationship receives jewelry or money from their mate; or intangible, as when one partner gets a boost in self-esteem because they believe their mate to be very attractive. In

¹⁵⁹ Craig-Henderson, Kellina, 27.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 49.

¹⁶² Ibid., 55.

the United States standards of physical attractiveness and beauty are derived from European ideals. Beliefs about superior physical attractiveness continue to be more frequently associated with White people in such a way that lighter skin color accrues a greater racial (i.e., social) status.¹⁶³

Motivated by economic and social reward, and assailed by self-negating, racialized signifiers, it is possible that Tom developed a preference – surely a misnomer, as preference infers free will, unsupported by institutionalized racism and all that it sustains – for not quite white women, but women who were clearly identifiable as non-black.¹⁶⁴ Craig-Henderson presented that Black men who engage in interracial relationships “because of their beliefs about the rewards they receive” develop an “obsession” and are labeled as “status seekers.”¹⁶⁵

For Tom’s part, the human side of the interracial relationship equation is based on his assertion that he is “color-blind” when it comes to people. He has said many times that he takes people one at a time, just as they are and the color of their skin doesn’t matter. Craig-Henderson referred to this declaration of behavior as one way to explain “involvement in an interracial relationship.”¹⁶⁶ Citing July Williams’ *Brothers, Lust and Love*, Craig-Henderson draws a connection between the “color-blind” Negro and what Williams called the “‘circumstantial martyr’ – the Black man who sincerely just happened to fall in love with a woman of another race.”¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ Ibid., 49.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 54.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 88-89.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 89.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 87, 89.

Some or none of Craig-Henderson's theories, observations, and analysis may apply to Tom's motivation to marry Alicia. From what I know about him, I believe that Tom would prefer to apply the term "circumstantial martyr" to the situation that led to his marriage to Alicia. Both Tom and Alicia have proclaimed over the years that neither of them loved the other when they married. Taking their word, the concept of falling in love as applied to the "circumstantial martyr" cannot alone account for Tom's motivation to marry. In our discussions, Tom has consistently positioned himself as the guy who just wanted to do the right thing. He presents himself as the luckless 'hero' compelled to save the 'fair maiden' from a dust-filled life in *Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico*.

If I am permitted to project, Tom must have allowed himself to think that in the almost six months between the date of his marriage and his 'deportation' that life in Mexico could continue much as it had; that he would become part of the Mexican culture, continue to work in baseball or athletics, and make a life for himself, Alicia and their children. This projected vision was cut short, and it seems the only way it could have continued was if Tom had not married "Prado's daughter" under somewhat 'indecorous' circumstances. Had he disengaged himself from any type of relationship with Alicia, and foregone the projected "hero" role, Tom may have enjoyed more years living and working in Mexico. Alicia's expectations were to leave Mexico and make a life in the United States. It remained to be seen if life in the United States would meet her expectations.

Summary

The four tenets of Critical Race Theory are herein informed in a legal sense and in a personal and individual sense in the scenarios that describe the beginning of the interracial relationship and ultimate marriage between Tom, a Negro, and Alicia, a White Mexican. The storytelling form may be viewed in terms of a related concept outlined by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic in *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* that supports interest convergence as an “incentive to eradicate” racism.¹⁶⁸ If the CRT tenet of ‘interest convergence’ supports the “incentive to eradicate” racism, surely it is meant more in the initial sense of convergence or intersection, almost happenstance, where two separate and foreign entities meet at a place on the timeline where circumstances compel them to manifest the energy of the dynamic that brought them to that intersection.

It is Alicia who must ultimately adapt to a new culture. Her energy provokes a decision to move, as expressed by James Clifford in “Notes on Travel and Theory,” in the direction of “different experiences, discoveries.”¹⁶⁹ According to Clifford’s “Diasporas” this energy points to the “utopic/dystopic tension, of diaspora visions” wherein borders are crossed and hybridities are produced.¹⁷⁰

In the mode of an explorer, Alicia sought the “undiscovered” and the “excitement of the unpredictable” with some awareness of the racial stressors she might encounter as the spouse of a Negro man.¹⁷¹ Moving to a far away and

¹⁶⁸ Delgado. *CRT: An Introduction*, 7.

¹⁶⁹ Clifford. “Notes on Travel,” 1.

¹⁷⁰ Clifford. “Diasporas,” 302, 303.

¹⁷¹ Clifford. “Notes on Travel,” 1.

unknown place with its own history, and different, yet similar, set of articulations of “racial, gender, and cultural differences,” invites Alicia to embrace the new even as she “travels” with her Mexican culture, accent and *racismo* to the United States. At the same time, Mexico and *los Estados Unidos* have a long history of engagement that has been both cooperative and contested. Cast out, at least for a time, Alicia was forced to re-construct her identity and adapt it to her new home North of the border. The learned dualities and denials inherent in *racismo* and racism served as the guiding tenets of her assimilation into African American culture and white American culture.

Considering the time and place – post World War II, the Eisenhower years, Cincinnati, Ohio – the union of my parents, Thomas Turner (1915 -) and Alicia Prado Turner (1926 – 2009), represented a challenge to the Midwestern social status quo of the 1950’s. Tom and Alicia crossed national and cultural boundaries in an attempt to be more than their socially constructed selves – Negro, male, Mexican/white, female – when they decided to engage their private lives in a counterpoise to the public, racial norms of the day.

Tom and Alicia’s mixed-marriage was neither a new or unique experience in the timeline of the nation’s racialized and sexualized history. Their marriage did, however, add one more piece of evidence to the experiential process of deconstructing the concept of race as a dividing human factor. The path they chose was well-trodden and replete with social contradictions, and racial, gender and class complexities that acted in concert to bring the private issue of sexual

intimacy, and its consequences, into the public sphere and subject it to state regulation.¹⁷²

The laboratory of a mixed-marriage allowed husband and wife to create the potential for a Negro and Mexican hybrid identity to take form in their children; conceived, nurtured and tested in the Petri dish of an all black community. The multi-racial, multi-cultural children that resulted from this marriage between American Negro and white Mexican – who themselves embody a mixture of white European, Native American, and African culture and genes – represent an experiment in time and place.

Studies of bi-racial children have primarily focused on the black and white mix. Research results, however, indicate that the findings pertain to all children of interracial background and explain that these children show “characteristics associated with marginality, some of which include ambiguity, lack of self-confidence, negative self-concept, and ambivalence over racial identity.”¹⁷³ These characteristics form the basis for self-identification and can signify the degree to which an individual of mixed race may expect to access and realize the possibilities of her life.

As the offspring of an African American father who was considered a “handsome, brown-skinned man” and an attractive, Mexican mother who proclaimed herself a “white woman,” my brother, sister and I were like all other children, cultural (to a degree) and genetic hybrids – a mixture of both parents. None of us looks like, or carries the particular skin tone of one parent or the other.

¹⁷² Lubin, xi.

¹⁷³ Pope, 1.

Rather, we are a mixture of their dark and light skin tones, and coarse and fine hair. Sharon McKenzie Stevens notes in her essay “Debating Ecology: Ethnographic Writing that ‘Makes a Difference’” that brown-skinned children of mixed marriage are often left with the task of forming identities to fit into “pre-existing pattern(s) of relationships and ... reconfigure it into something new.”¹⁷⁴ Lacking models within the societal hierarchy, children of mixed race may or may not have a choice in deciding where they fall on the racial graph.

Ahead of the cultural diversity curve when they married in 1946, my parents’ past is a model for the controversial, post-racial world promoted in the twenty-first century.¹⁷⁵ The storytelling that surrounds Tom and Alicia in Mexico takes on a more difficult and complex nature when they cross *la frontera*, the border. The Jim Crow that operated in the public sphere in the United States once again became an overriding factor in Tom’s life, and by association in Alicia’s life, and in the lives of their Blaxicana/o children.

¹⁷⁴ Stevens, 169.

¹⁷⁵ Terrell, Raymond, et al. Adapted from book signing salutation to the author, 2/99. *Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders*. Thousand Oaks CA: Corwin Press, Inc., 1999.

No 22003

Gobierno del Estado de Sonora
Oficial Mayor de Gobierno
Instituto General del Registro Civil

El C. LIC. MARIA GUADALUPE GUTIERREZ ARBALLO, Oficial del Registro Civil de EMPALME, SONORA, con la facultad que le otorga el Art. 143, del Código Civil vigente en el Estado de Sonora.

CERTIFICA: Que en el libro N° UNO, del año 1946, se encuentra inscrita el -- octo N° 19 -- de matrimonio, cuyo tenor literal es el siguiente.

GENERALES DEL CONTRAYENTE
Nacionalidad MEXICANA

Oficina del Registro Civil en EMPALME, SONORA
Acto N° 19 Matrimonio del señor TOMAS TURNER y la señora ALICIA PRADO

Original de BOR GLENDOLE
CHIO, E.U.A.
Edad VEINTISIETE AÑOS
Estado Civil SOLTERO
Ocupación PROFESOR DE FISICA
Domiciliado en GUENDALE, CHIO
Hijo de padre SANTIAGO TURNER
Domiciliado en GUENDALE, CHIO
Madre VICTORIA TURNER
Ocupación CHACEROS DEL NOGAR
Domiciliado en GUENDALE, CHIO

GENERALES DE LA CONTRAYENTE
Nacionalidad MEXICANA

Original de NACIENDO SONORA
Edad DIECINUEVE AÑOS
Estado Civil SOLTERA
Ocupación CHACEROS DEL NOGAR
Domiciliado en EMPALME, SONORA
Hija de padre JESUS S. PRADO
Ocupación EMPLEADO
Domiciliado en HERMOSEILLO, SONORA
Madre ANA YANES DE PRADO

Bajo el Regimen de -- --
En la ciudad de EMPALME, SONORA, MEXICO, a las 24:00 horas del día 24 del mes de ABRIL del año de Mil Novecientos CUARENTA Y SEIS
Ante mi ENRIQUE VAZQUEZ, Oficial del Registro Civil comparecieron con el objeto de celebrar su matrimonio el señor TOMAS TURNER y la señora ALICIA PRADO quienes ratificaron sus generales dadas en su solicitud de fecha de NOY y los cuales se insertan al margen de este instrumento. Expresado por los contrayentes su espontánea voluntad de unirse en matrimonio; bajo el Regimen de -- --. Comprobado por las declaraciones de los testigos la legalidad de aquellos para formalizar este contrato civil, no habiéndose interpuesto ningún impedimento y otorgado el consentimiento de S. S. JESUS S. PRADO y de la cónyuge los señores FRANCISCO ALCARAZ N. y de la cónyuge los señores CARLOS GOMEZ SANCHEZ y FORTUNATO COTA CANACHO el primero de 22 años de edad, de estado civil CASADO y domiciliado en EMPALME, SONORA y el segundo de 21 años de edad, de estado civil SOLTERO de ocupación AYUDANTE MECANICO y domiciliado en EMPALME, SONORA y de la cónyuge los señores FRANCISCO ALCARAZ N. y de la cónyuge los señores CARLOS GOMEZ SANCHEZ y FORTUNATO COTA CANACHO el primero de 26 años de edad, de estado civil CASADO de ocupación OFICINISTA y domiciliado en EMPALME, SONORA y el segundo de 23 años de edad, de estado civil CASADA de ocupación CHACEROS DEL NOGAR en EMPALME, SONORA

En testimonio del acto celebrado se firmó la presente acta que firmaron los que suscriben: Don J. (El Oficial del Registro Civil) (Firma)
TOMAS TURNER Contrayente ALICIA PRADO
CARLOS GOMEZ Testigos FIRMA JESUS S. PRADO
FORTUNATO COTA C. Testigos OLGA C. DE ALCARAZ
Padres

Y A SOLICITUD DE PARTE INTERESADA, extendiéndole la presente copia que es --

Marriage Certificate, Thomas Turner and Alicia Prado, April 24, 1946, Empalme, Sonora, Mexico.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
Immigration and Naturalization Service

Form Approved
OMB No. 1545-0047
File Stamp

07 FEB 1946
LOS ANGELES

URGENT!
APPLICATION FOR VERIFICATION OF INFORMATION FROM IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE RECORDS

TYPE OR PRINT THE NAME AND MAILING ADDRESS OF THE PERSON TO WHOM INFORMATION OF COPIES OF RECORDS SHOULD BE RETURNED IN THE BOX BELOW:

NAME Alicia Francisco Sanguinetti
STREET 222 S. Normandie St
CITY STATE CODE Los Angeles Calif 90011
210 587-3018

PERSON CONSENTING
NAME AND ADDRESS
SIGNATURE OF PERSON CONSENTING

CHECK TYPE OF VERIFICATION REQUESTED:
☐ AGE OR DATE OF BIRTH
☐ NATURALIZATION OR CITIZENSHIP
☐ BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION
☐ OTHER (CERTIFICATE OF BIRTH DATA, ETC.)

STATE IN WHICH APPLICANT FOR RECORDS RESIDES
2A. NAMES OF BENEFICIARIES

3. NUMBER OF COPIES
4. IF INFORMATION FOR SOCIAL SECURITY, NATURALIZATION, OR OTHER FEDERAL, STATE, OR LOCAL, SECURITY NUMBER

275 38 3132

DATA FOR IDENTIFICATION OF THE RECORD TO BE VERIFIED

5. FAMILY NAME
6. ALIEN REGISTRATION NUMBER
7. OTHER NAMES USED, IF ANY
8. NAME USED AT TIME OF ENTRY INTO UNITED STATES
9. PLACE OF BIRTH
10. DATE OF BIRTH
11. PORT ABROAD FROM WHICH LEFT FOR UNITED STATES
12. POINT OF ENTRY INTO UNITED STATES
13. DATE OF ENTRY
14. NAME OF VESSEL OR OTHER MEANS OF ENTRY

15. NAME ON CERTIFICATE
16. CERTIFICATE NUMBER
17. DATE ISSUED
18. NAME AND LOCATION OF NATURALIZATION COURT OR AGENCY
19. QUESTION OFFICE SOLICITS CERTIFICATE OF CITIZENSHIP

DO NOT COMPLETE THIS BLOCK -
RESERVED FOR GOVERNMENT USE ONLY

THE RECORDS OF THE IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE REFLECT THE FOLLOWING:
☐ LAWFUL ADMISSION FOR PERMANENT RESIDENCE ON
AT LOCATION
DATE OF BIRTH
ARRIVAL RECORD DATES
UNABLE TO IDENTIFY ANY RECORD
COPIES ATTACHED AS REQUESTED

1. U.S. Civil Service on entry Passport 38 1947
United States National Naturalization Act of 1940
SHOWS SUBJECT'S AGE AT THE TIME
H 6 514 710
Signature of William
Title Bureau Clerk
Date 3/28/46
See attached affidavit

FORM 5-64 (REV. 2-1-46)

Alicia Prado Turner entered the U.S. in October, 1946, at Nogales, Arizona.

NACIMIENTO:
 Año de 1926
 Gobierno del Estado de Sonora
 Oficina del Registro Civil de NACOSARI DE GARCIA, SONORA, MEXICO
 Municipalidad de NACOSARI.-
 En Nombre de la República Mexicana y como Oficial del Registro Civil
 de este lugar, hago saber a los que la presente vieren y Certifico ser cierto
 el Libro No. 1 (UNO) del Registro que es a mi cargo, a la
 Hoja No. 218 se encuentra asentada una Acta del tenor siguiente:

AL MARGEN DICE: Acta No. 260.-Descientes Sesenta.-Nacimiente de -
 la niña: ALICIA FRANCISCA PRADO.-AL CENTRO DICE:-En Nacosari de -
 Garcia, Distrito de Nacozama, Sonora, México, a las 10 diez horas
 del día 28 de Octubre de 1926 Mil Novecientos Veintisixta, ante -
 mí Anteente A. Valenzuela, Jefe del Registro Civil de este lugar -
 compareció el Señor Jesús Prado de 27 veintisiete años de edad -
 soltero, casado civilmente, originario de Ures, Sonora y vecino -
 de este lugar y me presentó para su inscripción en el Registro -
 a una niña que nació viva en este lugar a las 13 trece horas del
 día 4 CUATRO DEL CORRIENTE MES, a quien puso por nombre ALICIA -
 FRANCISCA PRADO.-La niña mencionada precede de raza blanca, mexi-
 cana, de sexo femenino, es hija de el compareciente y corresponde
 al cuarte alumbamiento de la señora Anna Tanes de 25 años de
 edad, desolada, originaria de Cupira, Sonora y vecina de este -
 lugar, siendo nieto por línea paterna el finado Juan J. Prado y la
 señora Nieves Sete.-Abuelos maternos Disiderio Yanes y Barbara -
 León.-Fueron testigos de este acto los señores Oreste Ramea y
 Ramón C. Mercedes, mayores de edad, hábiles para testificar y veci-
 nos de este lugar.-Léida que fué la presente acta fueron confor-
 mes con su contenido y firmaron por ante mí.-Day 28.-El J. del -
 R. Civil. A. Valenzuela.-Comparecientes: J. Prado.-Testigos: O. Ramea
 Testigo: R. C. Mercedes.-Rúbricas.-

Y A SOLICITUD DE PARTE INTERESADA, extiende la presente copia --
 que es fielmente sacada de su original, la que AUTORIZO, CERTIFICO
 Y FIRMO, en Nacosari de Garcia, Sonora, México, a las tres (3) -
 del mes de Marzo del año de Mil Novecientos ochenta y uno.-
 DCY PL.-

EL OFICIAL DEL REGISTRO CIVIL
 LIC. ANTONIO SALAS MOYA.

Alicia Francisca Prado, Birth Certificate – *la niña mencionada precede de raza Blanca, Mexicana, de sexe feminine ...* child of the white race, Mexican and female

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE
 No. 7801530
 Application No. LOS 189245 8/79
 Personal description of holder as of date of issuance of this certificate: Date of birth October 4, 1926 Sex Female
 complexion Medium color of eyes Brown color of hair Light Brown height 5 feet 5 inches
 weight 135 pounds visible distinctive marks Scar on forehead Country of former nationality Mexico
 Marital status Divorced
 Alicia Francisca Sweeney
 (Complete and true signature of holder)
 *** ALICIA FRANCISCA SWEENEY ***
 residing at 222 South Normandie Avenue, Los Angeles, California
 having applied to the Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization for a Certificate
 of Naturalization and having proved to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that (1) he
 was naturalized by the United States Southern District Court of Ohio at
 Cincinnati, Ohio on August 28, 1957.
 Notwithstanding, in pursuance of the authority contained in Section 3937a
 of the Immigration and Nationality Act, this Certificate of Naturalization is
 issued this 28th day of MARCH
 in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty
 and the seal of the Department of Justice is affixed pursuant to statute.
 IT IS PUNISHABLE BY U. S. LAW TO COPY,
 PRINT OR PHOTOGRAPH THIS CERTIFICATE.
 388329
 (ACTING) David C. Sweeney
 DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
 IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE

Re-issued Certificate of Naturalization, Alicia Francisca Sweeney,
 2nd line, "complexion Medium."

Chapter II

The Social Construction of Race

Introduction

The past writes the future. Carter G. Woodson wrote that the “conditions of today have been determined by what has taken place in the past.”¹⁷⁶ The past as it relates to African Americans in Ohio is here referenced and unearthed to illustrate the foundations of the social construction of race in the southeastern part of the State. This Chapter engages in a discussion of the Black Laws of Ohio and the legacy they endowed to the African American citizens of Ohio in the areas of housing, legal protections, employment, marriage and education. This legacy also includes the background that informs attitudes toward interracial marriage, and inclusion and exclusion. Through personal accounts, legal documents, and with specific reference to geographic location, this section examines how blackness and whiteness are read and interpreted, and makes a connection to the topic of white privilege.

Included here is a dialogue about the ambiguity of race in Ohio as a ‘border state,’ across the river from Kentucky, and the northern boundary of the Mason Dixon line. In addition, the matter of contestation in this *frontera* is discussed around the issue of public accommodations.

The subject of segregated housing and communities is presented in the context of “sundown towns” within a legacy of ex-slave settlements and government policy. The all black town of Lincoln Heights is characterized through personal accounts, its economic oppression, transportation, and isolation.

¹⁷⁶ Woodson, 9.

Southern migration patterns are contextualized within the accounts of the Turner family's move from Tennessee to Ohio. Alicia Prado's migration from Mexico to Ohio crossed national and cultural borders and it is framed within the legacy of *racismo* and the "racial estrangement" she would learn in the unfamiliar Midwestern landscape of a post World War II all black environment.

A discussion focused on public education, the traditional way out of the poor, working class, is contextualized within the merits of *Brown V. Board of Education*. This research examines the timeline of accessibility to public education for African American children in both Glendale and Lincoln Heights. The educational history of the two communities intersects in several places and is resolved in eventual inclusion, or dependency, depending on the perspective.

All these elements combine to create a testimony to the hegemonic maintenance and codification of the means used to construct race and racial identity. This testimony comes in the form of documents, storytelling, history, observation, and auto-ethnography.

Legacy of the Black Laws of Ohio

Stephen Middleton's work, *The Black Laws in the Old Northwest: A Documentary History*, submitted, "Slavery influenced white actions both below and above the Mason-Dixon line."¹⁷⁷ The Ohio River which separated Kentucky, the South, from Ohio, the North, marked the northern boundary of the Mason-Dixon line.

¹⁷⁷ Middleton, xii.

Ohio began as part of the Northwest Territory following the Revolutionary War and became the seventeenth state in 1803.¹⁷⁸ Prior to statehood, the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 prohibited slavery in the Territory that included what is now Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin.¹⁷⁹ Middleton's *Black Laws* traces the challenges and arguments of the dilemma and contradictions of democracy and slavery in Ohio in the pre-Civil War era. They are briefly discussed here to inform the legacy of racialized thinking, attitudes and beliefs, and illustrate the role they played in manifesting the 'embeddedness' of racism and the social construction of race as it affected the State's African American citizens. The effects of these laws persisted in Ohio to the 1950s and beyond, and illustrate the role of law and lawmakers as it concerns the struggle for citizen rights and inclusion for African Americans in a 'free state.'

In consideration of several factors, one of which would have been the size of the African American population in a given area, the tenets of Critical Race Theory and Middleton suggest that the Black Laws reflected attempts to manage the actuality that "law and reality did not always coincide."¹⁸⁰

The clash of ideals is clearly seen in the state constitutions that included declaration's of rights, but then had to reconcile the presence of African Americans, who were clearly perceived as belonging outside the community. Most whites would probably have preferred to ignore the contradictions, but the courts often forced consideration. The black codes that emerged reflected the need to reconcile law and prejudice. The extent of that need varied.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Glendale Heritage Preservation, iii.

¹⁷⁹ Middleton, Stephen, foreword by Linda McMurtry, xii.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

In the Ohio State Senate and Congress, various representatives offered “Report(s) on petitions to repeal the black laws and counter-arguments to maintain them were recorded in the Senate and House Journals.”¹⁸²

In some Reports, the topic is referred to as “the subject of repealing the laws which make distinctions on account of color.”¹⁸³ These restrictive “provisions” of the Black Laws: required “blacks and mulattos” to post a five-hundred bond and carry a certificate that allowed them to reside in the State; prohibited blacks from giving sworn testimony against a “white person;” prohibited blacks from participation in public education; and, prohibited blacks from a “right of trial by jury.”¹⁸⁴

In addition to calling for a repeal of the Black Laws, an 1837 Report also addressed the larger issue of slavery beyond state borders and called for the

consideration of a system, providing for the gradual emancipation of the people of color held in servitude, in the United States, be recommended to the Legislatures of the several States of the American Union, and to the Congress of the United States ... predicated upon the principle that the evil of slavery is a national one ...¹⁸⁵

Eight years later in 1845, Mr. Archbold, a defender of the still existent Black Laws argued that he and his constituents felt

perfectly willing to leave the superior race to their exciting pursuits and their self-directed labors, and the inferior race to their humble enjoyments without indulging in that pragmatism which vainly attempts to produce uniformity and equality where uniformity and equality are absolutely unattainable.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸² Ibid., 49.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 104.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 58.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 57.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 103.

The Supreme Court made the position expressed here by Archbold the law of the land fifty-one years later in *Plessy V. Ferguson* (1896) which called for “‘separate but equal’ accommodations” as a “‘reasonable’ solution to prevent the mingling of the races.”¹⁸⁷ Separate but equal remained in place for fifty-eight years until the 1954 Supreme Court *Brown V. Board of Education* decision that declared segregation in the schools as unconstitutional.¹⁸⁸

Mr. Archbold presented especially strong sentiments about integrated public education in 1845.

A different state of feeling may prevail at the north, but, certainly in the southern, eastern and western parts of our State, it would require the terrors of the bayonet to people the schoolroom with a mixed assemblage of whites and blacks. We cannot permit ourselves to doubt, that gentlemen would shrink back with horror from the idea of sending their own children to associate with negroes and mulattoes.¹⁸⁹

Archbold’s opinions regarding integrated classrooms held sway for over one hundred years after their expression.

Middleton’s historical documentation presents other arguments that addressed the issues of the Fugitive Slave Law: the fear of being overrun by large numbers of “Free Blacks;” suggestions that blacks return to Africa; and, a comparison of blacks against European immigrants.¹⁹⁰ Middleton also informs that “African Americans played a significant role in achieving the rescission of

¹⁸⁷ Cowan & MaGuire, 125.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 232.

¹⁸⁹ Middleton, 99.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 78, 96, 97.

the black laws” that were nullified in 1849.¹⁹¹ This participation is evidence that African Americans engaged in the struggle for their civil rights when and where they could.

The dismissal of the Black Laws may have given reason for African Americans and abolitionists to celebrate. However, twelve years later whites in Ohio could not contain their fears about the “prospect of racial mixing.”¹⁹² To this end, the State Legislature approved an “act to prevent the amalgamation of the white and colored races” on January 31, 1861.¹⁹³ This law was not repealed until 1887, twenty-two years after the end of the Civil War.¹⁹⁴ The law against amalgamation with whites covered marriages and “illicit carnal intercourse with any negro, or person having a distinct and visible admixture of African blood.”¹⁹⁵ Middleton reported, “Laws against miscegenation appeared frequently in the Old Northwest, suggesting that they did little to stop interracial sex.”¹⁹⁶ Laws related to mulattos evidences Middleton’s statement.

In the case of mulattoes, the court believed that a person who looked white should receive all the privileges of being white. But the court denied visibly black residents this consideration.¹⁹⁷

In the case of a mulatto man and a white woman whose children were not allowed to enroll for school because the father was known to the registrar as a man of color,

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 49.

¹⁹² Ibid., 135.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 135.

¹⁹⁴ Pascoe, 238.

¹⁹⁵ Middleton, 136.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 135.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 144-145.

The court did not approve, and ordered their admission.
'Near white' children, the Court concluded, should not be
subjected to the disability of being black.¹⁹⁸

The issue of the degree of skin color and visibility was a prime factor in the Ohio Court system in its determinations to define who is white, black, or mulatto; those determinations decided the manner and degree of rights and redress received through the Courts.

The Black Laws were taken off the books prior to the Civil War. Their legacy, however, remained and expressed as social custom. Traditions became conventions that served to restrict African Americans in Ohio in the areas of housing, education, employment, legal protections, and marriage.

Blackness and Whiteness in Lincoln Heights, Cincinnati, Glendale and Mexico

In the determination of race, skin color and visibility make up the primary evidence. In the courts and in the community, skin color and hair texture are the distinctive proof of evidence of the difference between the races. It is only when the "slippery borderlines of race classification" come into question that "Genealogy, appearance, claims to identity, or that mystical quality, 'blood' ... might be mixed and matched with (il)logical abandon."¹⁹⁹ The element of absurdity in evidencing race for the purposes of creating an 'Other' is illustrated below in a case that rests on proving what constitutes a person of the Negro 'race.' In addition, the definition of Negroness is set up against what it means to be a Caucasian, a Mexican, a Native Indian, and a Spaniard.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 145.

¹⁹⁹ Pascoe, 123.

Peggy Pascoe's *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America* presents a case of annulment sought by Joe Kirby, "a person of the Caucasian blood" of the seven-year marriage to his wife Maryellen who was "a person of negro blood."²⁰⁰ The case rested on the ability of the parties to prove their 'race,' an abstract that relied on the following testimony.

The first witness was Joe's mother, Tula Kirby, who gave her testimony in Spanish through an interpreter. Joe's lawyer laid out the case by asking Tula Kirby a few seemingly simple questions:

- Q. To what race do you belong?
A. Mexican.
Q. Are you white or have you Indian blood?
A. I have no Indian blood...
Q. Do you know the defendant [Maryellen] Kirby?
A. Yes.
Q. To what race does she belong?
A. Negro.

Then the cross examination began.

- Q. Who was your father? [Maryellen's lawyer asked Tula Kirby.]
A. Jose Romero.
Q. Was he a Spaniard?
A. Yes, a Mexican...
Q. Was [your mother] a Spaniard?
A. She was on her father's side.
Q. And what on her mother's side?
A. Mexican
Q. What do you mean by Mexican [do you mean] Indian, a native[?]
A. I don't know what is meant by Mexican...
Q. Who was your grandfather on your [mother's] father's side?
A. He was a Spaniard...
Q. Where was he born?
A. That I don't know. He was my grandfather.
Q. How do you know he was a [Spaniard] then?
A. Because he told me ever since I had knowledge that he was a Spaniard...

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 109.

- Q. Then, as a matter of fact, you don't know what your blood is at all?
- A. I do know that my mother is Mexican and my father is Mexican, half Spaniard.

Next the questioning turned to Tula's opinion about Mayellen. Joe's lawyer asked Tula:

- Q. You said Mrs. [Mayellen] Kirby was a negress. What do you know about Mrs. Kirby's family?
- A. I distinguish her by her color and the hair; that is all I do know.²⁰¹

Although this case was heard in Tucson, Arizona in 1921, it is not unique.²⁰² The matter of looks and visibility were an issue of concern and discussion in the small community of Lincoln Heights.

Tom Turner's kids, as we were known, were the only discernible half-breeds in our neighborhood. My sister, Olga and I sang our mantra whenever we won a bike race, or came in first in a game of hopscotch or jacks: "We leave our mark wherever we go, from Lincoln Heights to Mexico."

There were, however, two boys, Ross and Michael Gantt, close to us in age, whom we identified as the "only white boys" in Lincoln Heights. We were mistaken. Ross and Michael were the offspring of an African American father and a White mother who lived in the Upper Sub.

Raymond Chapman, Sr., an alert and mobile ninety-four year old African American man who was an early resident of Lincoln Heights, and friend of Tom Turner, provided an example of the racial situation in the community in the 1940's related to the Gantt family mentioned above. In the interview, Chapman talked about Esther Zielinski and her daughter, Sharon – who became a friend of

²⁰¹ Ibid., 109-111.

²⁰² Ibid., 109.

Mother's – and focused on a brief account of how a white woman and her daughter came to live in the all black town of Lincoln Heights.

Racial deal was that Roscoe Gantt, a black guy, but fair skinned, was married to a black woman down here. But he met a white girl in Milwaukee who had a daughter two years old. They came here around 1945 when the war was over and they were the only white people in Lincoln Heights.²⁰³

The two-year old daughter grew up and married an African American man, James Mobley, former U.S. Marine, former Mayor of Lincoln Heights, and clergy person in the local Episcopal Church. Sharon also became a friend of Alicia's in the 1950s, even though they were about ten years apart in age.

Sharon's description of the event referenced by Chapman provides personal details that humanize the portrayal, and historicize and broaden the scope of the racial narrative.

Roscoe was stationed in Chicago and mother met him in Milwaukee down at the USO Club on Wisconsin Avenue. Kids could go too. They had food and drinks for the guys in service. Roscoe was one of the first black men to train both black and white sailors at the Navy base in Chicago. Roscoe was very light-skinned and could pass for white. My mother, Esther Zielinski, was a third generation Polack and she'd been married twice before. Once to a full Jew whose mother pronounced him dead when he married a Polack girl. The war years changed everything and everybody mixed it up with everybody else. We moved to Lincoln Heights in 1947 after my brother Ross was born because Roscoe's family was here.²⁰⁴

In her interview, Sharon said that both her birth parents were white. As a white woman, Sharon's account exhibits an awareness of race that references Ruth Frankenberg's premise in *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction*

²⁰³ Chapman. Interview, 10/6/11.

²⁰⁴ Mobley. Interview, 10/22/11.

of Whiteness that it is the connected effects of geography, “generation, ethnicity, political orientation, gender and present-day geographical location” that shaped the “terrain of whiteness” in which white women have lived.²⁰⁵ When Esther married Roscoe and in 1947 moved to one of the Gantt homes on Adams Street in the Upper Sub, she and her daughter Sharon became the first traceable white women to live in Lincoln Heights. Tom and Alicia also moved into the Valley Homes sometime in 1947.

A slight discrepancy exists between Chapman and Sharon as it concerns the year that she and her mother moved to Lincoln Heights. Her younger brother Ross was in my class in school, or one grade behind me; that would place his year of birth, and therefore the move to Lincoln Heights, in 1947, the same year I was born. Esther and Roscoe had another son, Michael who was two years younger and closer to my sister’s age. They both attended school with us.

Sometimes Mother took me with her when she visited Sharon and Esther. At the time, I knew that Esther and Sharon were white. I also knew that Ross and Michael were Sharon’s younger half-brothers. I did not know their connection to the African American Gantts and thought the boys’ father was also a white man. I do not recall ever having met Roscoe Gantt. I do not recall ever asking Ross or Michael, or anyone if they were white or mixed. I perceived both Ross and Michael Gantt as unfortunate white kids. I thought they were poorer than the average poor white families who lived next to us in Woodlawn, and that because of economic reasons, not skin color, they ‘had’ to live in Lincoln Heights.

²⁰⁵ Frankenberg, 18, 236.

With an African American father and a White mother, Ross and Michael could be termed half-breeds or mulattos, bi-racial, multi-racial or multi-cultural. However, the degree of whiteness of their father Roscoe, and the fact of whiteness of their mother Esther, made their skins white and their light-brown hair straight. They carried no ‘visible’ mark of darkness and could pass for white; unlike my brother, sister and I who, by virtue of our *café au lait* colored skin, were ‘visibly’ mixed with more than one drop of Negro blood.

It was possible that Ross and Michael Gantt, and Ana, Olga and Glenn Turner might have formed a kinship or solidarity as mixed-race children, if we had known of their African American father. The abstract reality of our skin colors kept us as separate as the legal boundaries that defined the segregated neighborhood we lived in. At the time, Lincoln Heights and the Valley Homes were considered to be desirable areas in which African Americans were allowed to live. Non-black women like Esther, Sharon and Alicia could live in the neighborhood under the auspices and protection of their African American husbands. The women and their children were accepted, with caveats, by the majority of their African American neighbors. While the community may have exhibited aloofness, it did not practice what it well understood as the matter and manner of exclusion.

Chapman’s and Sharon’s personal accounts offer examples of the social construction of race and speak to the ways in which blackness and whiteness were read and interpreted on a personal level in Lincoln Heights in the 1950s. The following discussion displays this CRT tenet as well as the accompanying

‘ordinariness’ of race, set up against the construction of whiteness within the context of accessibility to employment for the African American male in post-war America.

Eugenia Kaledin’s *Daily Life in the United States 1940-1959* revealed that World War II had increased the number of Negroes in the Army from 5,000 to 920,000 and Negro officers from five to more than 7,000.²⁰⁶ When Tom was discharged in 1945, it would be three more years before segregation in the military would be abolished by President Harry Truman who “issued Executive order 9981 in 1948” that called for the desegregation of military forces.²⁰⁷ The positive fact of the post-war presence of large numbers of skilled African American workers, made the employment field highly competitive.

On his return from Mexico, Tom traveled to Chicago to try out for the Negro League Baseball’s Chicago American Giants in the spring of 1947. Even though he was close to thirty-two years old and considered ‘old’ for the game, he made the team. He played, however, for less than a season. He said the team did not pay enough and that he needed to make more money to take care of his new family.

Back in the Cincinnati area, Dad got a job parking cars in the Shillito’s Department Store garage in downtown Cincinnati. The job came with a uniform of dark brown pants, brown leather jacket in winter, and a brown chauffeur’s cap. Dad related that the foreman hired him because he was willing to play on the company’s basketball and bowling teams. Even when the work was menial, Dad

²⁰⁶ Kaledin, 22.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 23.

found a degree of satisfaction when he could display his athletic abilities, albeit on a small scale.

The following re-enactment in Dad's words points out his willingness to do whatever was necessary to provide for his family.

Opening doors and parking cars for rich, white women proved to be a dependable paycheck and with tips, covered expenses. It wasn't Mexican or Negro League baseball, but I was a family man now and I had responsibilities.

'Yes, ma'am. How are you today, ma'am?' I asked as I opened the car door.

'Yes, boy. I'll be a few hours shopping, a stop at the beauty salon and then lunch. Take good care of my car, now. You hear me, boy?'

'Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am,' I smiled as I handed her a parking ticket stub. I figured that the bigger the smile, the bigger the tip when she picked up her car.

In this scenario, Tom acknowledges the dehumanizing hoops he jumped through in order to make a living wage. In this brief description of his job, Dad invokes the social construction of race by way of language – 'yes ma'am' and 'boy' – and behavior – the 'bigger the smile, the bigger the tip' – reminiscent of the 'shufflin darkie' stereotype.

Steady employment and economic stability rode on the tides and tenor of the unofficial Jim Crow social practices that existed in and around Cincinnati, Ohio. Tom knew the value of a job and would pay the price of a big smile for wages plus tips. Tom does not like to talk about or dwell on racially motivated events that occurred in his life. The attitude that he tries to project is that "it is no big thing." It is just something that happened and now it's over. After several attempts on my part, Dad finally corroborated the following account from Mother

about the circumstances surrounding the loss of his job parking cars at Shillito's garage, a subject he had been reluctant to discuss.

When Ana was about six months old, I took the bus to downtown Cincinnati to keep an appointment at the Shillito's beauty salon. Tom got employee discount and I meet him in the parking garage across the street.

My English getting better so I say, '*Hola*. I am Mrs. Turner and I am here for the beauty and the hair.' The lady looked up my name in the appointment book and then she looked at my baby daughter.

'What a gorgeous little girl. I've never seen such eyes and look at that smile. She is a little princess.'

All the women in the salon came out to look at my little girl. They did not know that she was the daughter of a Negro who parked cars in the store's garage. I came out of the salon with a nice cut and curl and I left the store feeling beautiful.

'*Hola, señor*. I look for Tom Turner.'

The *gringo* cashier he say, 'Yes, lady, did Tom park your car for you?'

'No car. Me esposa, the wife of Tom.'

The *gringo* picked up a microphone, 'Tom Turner to the cashier's cage. Tom Turner to the cashier's cage.' The *gringo* stood there staring at me and I talked to my daughter in *Español* until Tom came out from the darkness of the garage.

'This your wife and kid, Turner?' the *gringo* asked.

'Yes, sir. My wife was getting her hair done over at the store and since it's close to quitting time, I told her to meet me here so that we can go home together.'

The next day, Tom came home early from work.

'Why are you home so early today, Tom?' I asked him.

'I lost my job today, Alicia. The personnel guy said they have to cut back, too many workers, and I'm the most recent hire, so I'm the first to go. But the supervisor told me the real reason. He thinks I'm married to a white woman and he can't have any colored guys working in the garage who are married to white women. We're only allowed to park their cars, not marry them. I tried to explain that you're Mexican, but he said 'white was white' and that was that.'

'What you say, Tom? They take you job because of me, because I look like a *gringa*?'

‘It's not your fault. It's my fault. I should know better than to let you come to the garage. I'll just have to find another job and be more careful.’

I knew then that my skin color was a threat to our survival as a family. I heard my father's words, ‘You are slapping them in the face if you marry this man.’

In this account, Mother revealed her growing awareness of the racial tensions that existed between African Americans and Whites in Cincinnati at this time. She knew that her whiteness and her child's near-whiteness would disappear if they stood next to the Negro husband and father. On her own, and with her white looking baby, Mother could pass through the white world without trouble. However, she came to know that association with her Negro husband put her whiteness in question, the privilege of that whiteness in jeopardy, and threatened the economic security of her family.

Dad was not out of work very long. Someone at General Electric heard about his reputation as an athlete. He was offered a job and recruited to play on the company basketball team. Now that he made more money, Dad could move his family out of 79 Washington Avenue. He started looking around his hometown for a place to live. His desire for a residence in Glendale clouded the racial and social realities with which he would be confronted.

Tom wanted to stay close to his family and bring up his children in the bucolic Village of Glendale. Dad was not having any luck finding a place to live when he received a communication of some kind – letter, phone call, word of mouth – to pay a visit to the Mayor of Glendale, James R. Carruthers.²⁰⁸ In 2004, without much elaboration or detail, I heard from Dad for the first time that the

²⁰⁸ Glendale Heritage Preservation, 105.

Mayor called Tom Turner into his office to let him know that he could not live in Glendale with his white wife. Like the employer at Shillito's, Mayor Carruthers did not make a distinction between a 'white' woman and a Mexican woman who looked 'white.' Tom and Alicia lived as an interracial couple in a segregated community.

Peggy Pascoe described in *What Comes Naturally* that despite "repeated attempts to crack down" on interracial marriages, couples managed to "slip through the cracks" because of the "state-by-state coverage of miscegenation law."²⁰⁹ Pascoe related that the U.S. military provided a site in which the "geographies of evasion" could occur.²¹⁰

... because it plucked so many young men and women out of the familiar networks of friends and family and resettled them on military bases in and outside the United States, the military found itself at the center of the tug-of-war between interracial couples, who now brought a sense-of-life-and-death urgency to their decisions about marriage, and the conflicted and confusing marriage laws of forty-eight states, thirty of which prohibited some form of interracial marriage, and eighteen which did not.²¹¹

World War II was the initiating catalyst that brought Tom from Glendale, Ohio to Arizona and Mexico and put him in contact with the culture south of the border. Tom's fear of losing the perceived opportunity to live free of his skin color, and Alicia's desire to leave *Hermosillo's* dust for stardust, rather than the war, created the sense of urgency that drove their marriage.

Tom and Alicia escaped the prohibitions against interracial relationships prevalent in the United States by marrying in *Empalme, Sonora, Mexico*. Neither

²⁰⁹ Pascoe, 195.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid., 196.

Tom, nor Alicia ever mentioned having experienced any problems in regard to the validity of their marriage after they arrived in Ohio. Ohio had, after all, repealed its anti-miscegenation law in 1887.²¹² That the next state, Oregon, to repeal such a statute did not occur until 1951 illustrates not only the magnitude of the issue of interracial relationships, but also exemplifies the first CRT tenet, the persistence of the everyday, ordinary, embeddedness of racism along the historical timeline.

The matter of white privilege represents an issue that concerns Critical Race Theory and is a significant element in the social construction of race. In his essay, “The Social Construction of Race,” Ian Haney Lopez posited that in the United States, a “kind of ‘racial etiquette’ exists, a set of interpretative codes and racial meanings, which operate in the interactions of daily life ... Race becomes common sense’ – a way of comprehending, explaining and acting in the world.”²¹³ Lopez cited in his essay, “White by Law,” that whiteness is a “social organizing principle” that is accompanied by the “privilege of being white.”²¹⁴ The privilege of being white is linked to a “racial prerequisite to citizenship [that] endured for over a century-and-a-half, remaining in force until 1952.”²¹⁵ Cases argued before the Supreme Court in the early 1920’s decided who was white and who was not white; who would be privileged to apply for citizenship to the United States and who would be excluded from application on the grounds of race.²¹⁶

Applicants from Hawaii, China, Japan, Burma and the Philippines, as well as all mixed-race applicants, failed in their arguments. On the other hand, courts ruled that the

²¹² Ibid., 238.

²¹³ Haney-Lopez. “Social Construction,” 165.

²¹⁴ Haney-Lopez. “White By Law,” 625, 626.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 626.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

applicants from Mexico and Armenia were ‘white,’ and on alternate occasions deemed petitioners from Syria, India, and Arabia to be either ‘white’ or not ‘white.’²¹⁷

Mother self-identified as Mexican and white. She would have met the ‘racial prerequisite’ necessary to apply for naturalized citizenship in 1947. A 1980 re-issued copy of Alicia’s Certificate of Naturalization shows that she was “naturalized by the United States Southern District Court of Ohio at Cincinnati, Ohio on August 28, 1957.”²¹⁸ Mother said that the African American lawyer she retained as her lawyer in the divorce action against Dad advised her to become a naturalized citizen before appearing in court. The lawyer told Alicia that he did not want her citizenship to come into question as it might affect custody rights. The act of naturalization changed Mother’s nationality from Mexican to American. According to her, however, that solidified her position as a white woman.

In “White by Law” Lopez stated direct that the “racial prerequisite cases demonstrate that Whiteness, as a category of race, is socially constructed.”²¹⁹

Races are categories of difference which exist only in society: they are produced by myriad conflicting social forces; they overlap and inform other social categories; they are fluid rather than static and fixed; and they make sense only in relationship to other racial categories, having no meaningful independent existence. Race is socially constructed.²²⁰

The socially constructed and racialized individual is created from the outside-in by forces that include laws and social customs. The task for the racialized

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ See copy of Alicia Turner’s Certificate of Naturalization; her last name appears as Sweeney, the name of her second husband, Illustrations.

²¹⁹ Haney-Lopez. “White By Law,” 631.

²²⁰ Haney-Lopez. “Social Construction of Race,” 171.

individual is to recognize, critically deconstruct, and reinterpret these forces from an inner, experiential perspective. In this way, the individual can become more self-defined and less other-defined.

The embeddedness and ordinariness of racism is detectable in this memory from a first cousin, Raymond Terrell, Ed. D. He related the childhood impressions of exclusion that he experienced in the Glendale community.

Glendale was a plantation when I was growing up and it's still a plantation today. There were a number of places where blacks were not allowed to go. There were no signs. We knew, or we were told by the proprietor that we couldn't come in, or we had to go around to the back. This had a residual effect on me and there are still two places that I can't bring myself to go into.²²¹

Raymond cited the Glendale Village Charter of 1945 that names the roles it foresaw for its Negro citizens. The note of white privilege and wealth are detected in this official decree that is burned into Raymond's memory.

The Village would always maintain a green belt, no industry and a small community of Negroes who would serve as domestic help for the rest of the community. That's why I call it a plantation.²²²

Adequate evidence exists within the Turner family to substantiate Raymond's claim.

The youngest of Dad's brothers, Otis Alonzo, provided a history of his siblings – that included Otis and Tom – that worked for wealthy, white families, or as this group was coded and called, 'private families.' In fact, all of Dad's brothers and sisters, with the exception of Irene who stayed in Nashville with her husband, worked for one or more 'private families' in Glendale and Indian Hill to

²²¹ Terrell, Interview.

²²² Terrell, Interview.

earn money as both teens and adults.²²³ Otis' brothers and sisters filled the roles of household help in such capacities as chauffeur, butler, and personal maid; they cooked, cleaned, babysat, and did laundry.

Betty Wilkinson Francis, a first cousin who grew up at 59 Washington Avenue talked about her parents' work history with a private family in Glendale.

Mother worked for the H. L. Kemper family on Willow Avenue. She married young, seventeen, and didn't complete school. Dad and Mother first lived with the Kempers as a couple. At first, Mother was a nurse to the two Kemper kids, and as they got older, she became the housekeeper and cook. Dad did odd jobs, yard work, served the meals and also worked as a laborer at Stearns and Foster in Lockland.²²⁴

Betty also offered a different picture of racial relationships in Glendale than that described above by Raymond. Betty is about four years older than Raymond.

I lived there for five years after I was born. I had a wonderful childhood. Never noticed any difference in the way the Kempers treated me from their own kids. I was always included in everything. During my formative years, I had a pleasant time, not discriminated against. I felt that the Kemper kids and I were the same. They called me 'Petey.' A little boy who came over from across the street tried to be mean to me. He was told by Jim, the Kemper's son and my playmate, that if he 'couldn't be nice to Petey,' he would have to leave.²²⁵

The primary distinction that can be drawn from Raymond's and Betty's contrasting experiences centers on the space and sphere in which they occurred. Raymond's exclusion took place and was felt in the public, commercial sphere of

²²³ Irene Turner Williams worked for a private family in the Nashville area for many years.

²²⁴ Francis, Betty. Interview. 10/10/11.

²²⁵ Francis, Interview.

Glendale; Betty's inclusion took place and was felt in the private, familial sphere of the Kemper home.

Betty acknowledged a continuing relationship with the Kemper family and a benevolence that extended to her own family and children.

I worked there after high school, straightening up the house and getting dinner. I attended Tennessee State University in Nashville for a while. When I came home, I went back to work at the Kempers. When I got married, they came to my wedding. When I had my children, Mrs. Kemper would load me down with diapers and clothes for my kids. She was very good to me. She would order clothes out of the catalogs and if she didn't like them when they arrived, she gave them to me.²²⁶

Comparing these two sets of experiences further draws the distinction of public versus private sphere where race is concerned. The more acceptable position for African Americans within the Glendale society was, as the 1945 Charter states, to remain a "small community of Negroes who would serve as domestic help for the rest of the community." This in no way denigrates the individual employee, or implies an inferior status to the type of work. It is, however, indicative of the socio-spatial boundaries in which African Americans could operate in Glendale in the 1930s and 1940s. My cousin, Raymond, would disagree that the racial situation has changed for the better since then, even as he understands the parameters that defined economic survival for African Americans in Glendale, in that time and space.

Raymond related that his mother Lara Lavada worked as a cook for almost thirty years for the Matthews family.

²²⁶ Francis, Interview.

Mr. Matthews was a member of the Procter and Gamble family. Most of the money in Glendale was from that family, relatives, Procter and Gamble executives and their families. Glendale was and is the home of the Procter folk. Closed society.²²⁷

Raymond iterated that he married shortly after being discharged from the Navy and that sometime in 1959 his wife, Eloise, a young woman from the West End, made a call to a realtor handling a house in Glendale that had a “For Rent” sign on the lawn.

Ellie called the realtor’s office and asked in her proper white voice if the house would be available for Negroes to rent. The realtor responded, ‘Oh let me assure you ma’am, there will no Negroes. There will be none of those in this neighborhood.’

In Raymond’s experience, Glendale proved itself a closed and restricted area for African Americans across more than a generation. And while he was not asked to move out of Glendale, he was limited in his choice of living options as proscribed by the racial customs. The contested neighborhood in Glendale is now home to more than a few African American families in Glendale.

I began to realize the forces of racism more clearly in the summer of 1955 when Mother traveled with us by train from Cincinnati to San Diego during a period of marital separation. I also developed an appreciation for the modern life we lived in *los Estados Unidos*. We left Ohio in mid-August and returned just before Christmas. We stayed with Mother’s relatives in Chula Vista and San Diego and finally with my Grandmother Ana Prado, then a widow, in *Tecate, Baja California, Mexico*.

²²⁷ Terrell, Interview.

I told Mother that I needed to go to school and one day she sent me with Rebecca Esperanza who lived a few doors away. The nuns chattered in Spanish, pointed at me and whispered “*negrita*.” When I heard the nuns whisper ‘*negrita*,’ I thought that racism had also crossed the border with us. I thought they were calling me “nigger.” It made me feel mad and sad. They put me in the first grade instead of the fourth because I didn’t speak Spanish. I felt insulted to be put in the first grade. I decided that I couldn’t be a *Mexicana*. I refused to go back to that school.

I came face to face with Mother’s Mexican culture in *Tecate*. I was at a disadvantage because I did not speak Spanish well enough to converse, although I picked up key words and phrases during our sojourn. In Mexico, my looks made me Mexican, even though I was singled out as ‘*negrita*,’ little black girl. I did not mind being ‘*negrita*;’ I just did not think it was necessary or in good taste to point it out. Much later, I discovered that ‘*negrita*’ is considered a term of endearment. The fact that it is color-coded diminishes its appeal.

The complex set of official and unofficial tenets based on physical attributes and cultural and social behaviors that construct race are euphemistically coded as “racial etiquette.” Some evidence of racial etiquette as the grid for the social construction of race can be demonstrated through an examination of my birth certificate. Date of birth, February 18, 1947 signified what is now called a ‘baby boomer.’ “F” for of the female sex, marked my gender and all that gender implies in a patriarchal society. The address on my birth certificate listed 79 Washington Avenue, my grandparents’ home, as my mother’s residence. That

located me geographically in the Negro part of Glendale and economically in the black, working class community hierarchy. Dad's race is listed as 'Colored' and Mother's as 'Mexican.' Dad said that in 1947 the word 'colored' was in popular use in Ohio and it would not be until the mid-1950's that it was replaced with 'Negro.' In reference to Mother's designation as 'Mexican,' Lopez allowed in "The Social Construction of Race" that "... the transformation of 'Mexican' from a nationality to a race came about through the dynamic interplay of myriad social forces" when it came into contact with United States racial etiquette.²²⁸ While the deconstruction of my birth certificate accounts for vital statistics, and defines my parents' race as 'Colored' and 'Mexican,' it fails to furnish me with an official racial identity.

In search of a readily comparable document, I examined the birth certificate of my son's father, George Thorne, Jr., who was born in New York City in 1941. George was born in Harlem Hospital where his father worked as a doctor and his mother as a registered nurse. In addition to the vital statistics, George's certificate of birth has three boxes for the designation of "Color or Race" – one for each parent, and one for the child. On George's certificate, all three boxes are marked "Colored."

There is no space on my birth certificate where any indication of my race or nationality is required. The State of Ohio, in effect, either had no interest, or did not see the necessity for making a determination of race for a child. Perhaps, an inherent assumption existed wherein the State took for granted that both parents would be of one race and the race of the child would simply be apparent.

²²⁸ Haney-Lopez. "Social Construction of Race," 169.

Michael Omi and Howard Winant's work, *Racial Formation in the United States from the 1960s to the 1990s*, informed that race should be thought of as an "element of social structure rather than as an irregularity within it; we should see race as a dimension of human representation."²²⁹ If this is the case, my birth certificate lacks an assigned race code and positions me outside the dimensions of "human representation" and makes me socially ambiguous.

Interracial children "question the one-dimensional racial structure upon which America has founded and built its national identity," according to Teresa Kay Williams' essay, "Race as Process: Reassessing the 'What Are You?' Encounters of Biracial Individuals" in *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the New Frontier*, edited by Maria P. P. Root.²³⁰ Williams recalled indirectly the historical stigma associated with the 'mulatto' and cast a more modern assessment on the fact of a biracial individual who is difficult "to code, categorize, and attach racial meaning to ..."²³¹

Within a social landscape where race plays an important role in one's livelihood, the socially ambiguous white/nonwhite biracial person has often been portrayed as confused, lost, and homeless. These so-called poor, mixed-up biracial children are whom one is supposed to think of, a racist society cloaked in compassion warns, before one selfishly involves oneself with a romantic partner of another race. However, the growing social scientific research on multiracial identity indicates that biracial individuals often employ innovative coping strategies to make sense of their social ecology and to transform their social ambiguity into complex identities.²³²

²²⁹ Omi & Winant, 55.

²³⁰ Williams, 193.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.

The essay, “Racial-Identity Issues among Mixed-Race Children” by Ruth G. McRoy and Edith Freeman, published in Nathaniel E. Gates’ compilation of essays that comprise *The Concept of “Race” in Natural and Social Science*, agreed with Williams’ point of view.

The racial-identity development of these mixed-race children may be particularly complex because these children belong to one racial group that has been positively valued by society and another that has been devalued. Such children are often confronted with a double bind, and they learn to calculate quickly the social mathematics of being black versus white.²³³

McRoy and Freeman admitted that historically the choice of a mixed race individual to be either black or white had not been available.

Society has historically tended to categorize any person who has any amount of Negro blood as a member of the black, or Negro, race. Therefore, when whites married blacks, their children, regardless of skin color, became black – not black-white.²³⁴

Growing up I thought of myself as neither, Negro, White or Mexican. I had no race to which I could comfortably assign myself, even though my social and educational worlds were all black.

My attempts to incorporate ‘Colored’ and ‘Mexican’ into my psyche have been subject to place, time, circumstance, and imagination. There have been few guides or models available to me from which I could develop a ‘mixed identity.’ The integration has occurred through an ongoing process of sensation, observation, absorption, and rejection. Over time the learning curve has become less steep. I no longer worry over whether I am “Colored” or “Mexican.”

²³³ McRoy & Freeman, 165.

²³⁴ Ibid.

Contested Frontera

Cincinnati was still referred to as the “Queen City of the West” in billboard and magazine advertisements in the 1950s based on a legacy of “trade and industry” and “business relationships ... with the South, the largest purchaser” of the City’s goods.²³⁵ History connects the area and the State of Ohio more solidly with slavery and the South. Separated from the South by the Ohio River that marks a Northern boundary of the Mason Dixon line, Cincinnati and smaller towns along the river represented the first ‘free’ Northern stops on the Underground Railroad that extended to Canada. Cincinnati’s proximity to the Southern State of Kentucky positioned the Ohio River as the symbolic divide between a perceived and mis-perceived, ‘southern’ versus ‘northern’ racial ideology.

A record of migration of southern women is documented in Beverly A. Bunch-Lyons’ *Contested Terrain: African-American Women Migrate from the South to Cincinnati, Ohio, 1900-1950*. Bunch-Lyons situated Ohio as a state with a foot in both the north and the south.

In spite of the fact that Ohio was a free state, strong business connections to the South made business owners and government officials prone to the kind of racial protocol common in the South.²³⁶

Bunch-Lyons made use of interviews conducted with black women who made the journey from the south to the north across the Ohio River and described what they found.

Many ventured north with the hopes of finding a less hostile social, political, and economic climate than they had known in the South. What some discovered was that

²³⁵ Bunch-Lyons, 110.

²³⁶ Ibid., 110.

the city on the northern side of the Ohio River had a long tradition of ‘southern style’ race-relations, forcing many to confront the same color-coded dilemmas faced in the South. Evoking the language of W.E.B. DuBois, scholar Henry Louis Taylor Jr. aptly described Cincinnati as a city with a ‘dual personality,’ and further stated, ‘Across time Cincinnati would feel this duality – a northern city, a southern city, two cultures, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in a single city.’ As Taylor suggests, Cincinnati was indeed a site of contested terrain; blacks not only challenged the codified and defacto practices of racial discrimination found within the city, but they also wove their own cultural yarn into the fabric of the city, making it their own.²³⁷

In spite of the ideologic tension, Cincinnati was a “desirable place for African-American southerners to settle ... [because of] the railroad system, its physical location, and status as an industrialized city ...”²³⁸

In characterizing the role that African American women played in resettling and building community, Bunch-Lyons included an interview with Clara Long, a black woman who settled in Lincoln Heights in the 1930s. Long’s description aligns with Raymond Chapman’s and Sharon Mobley’s accounts of early Lincoln Heights as cited in Chapter III.

They didn’t have streetlights in Lincoln Heights, and they still had outhouses. We started going door-to-door collecting money, you know. First a light where Wayne Avenue comes through ... then one on what you call Laughlin [Lockland] Road down there. And that’s how we got lights.²³⁹

Southern Ohio and Northern Kentucky characterize the application of the “ethnoscape” as characterized by Arjun Appadurai in his work, *Modernity at*

²³⁷ Ibid., 107.

²³⁸ Ibid., 113.

²³⁹ Ibid., 114.

*Large: Cultural Dimension of Globalization.*²⁴⁰ The area may not have been considered part of a global cultural flow in the process of deterritorialization in the 1800s. It was, however, a prime example of an area that separated the “holds between people, wealth and territories” by liberating identity from geography, but not skin color.²⁴¹

The Ohio Historical Society accounts that even while the 1803 Ohio Constitution prohibited slavery, a portion of the “337 African Americans” that lived in Ohio in 1800 “were slaves.”²⁴²

Despite this legal protection, some black Ohioans were actually slaves. Slaveowners lived especially in southern Ohio. If a sheriff or some other law enforcement official accused the white man of violating the law, the slaveowner would simply transport his African American property across the Ohio River to the slaveholding state of Kentucky.²⁴³

Stephen Middleton’s work submitted that, “Slavery influenced white actions both below and above the Mason-Dixon Line.”²⁴⁴ Even though Ohio enjoyed a reputation as a ‘free’ state for African-Americans, racial tolerance in this *frontera* border area along the Ohio River was a socially ambiguous and legally contradictory affair. Right before the Civil War, Cincinnati exhibited a color-coded environment that would set the stage for African Americans to move outside the city limits proper to places like Lincoln Heights, when the future opportunity arose.

²⁴⁰ Appadurai, 48.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 49.

²⁴² Ohio Historical Society. “African-Americans,” 1.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Middleton, xii.

... demographic studies show that African Americans in Cincinnati's black neighborhoods clustered together in a manner largely determined by the color of their skin. By 1860, mulattos, who made up more than half of the city's black population, were over represented in three of the five districts with the largest number of African Americans. In two of those districts – a substantial distance from the worst areas of black poverty – they comprised 63 percent and 85 percent of the population. On the other hand, darker African Americans constituted 60 percent and 70 percent in other, less attractive areas, and were concentrated most heavily in 'Bucktown,' a poor, undesirable neighborhood with little sanitation and generally unhealthy environment.²⁴⁵

In *The Warmth of Other Suns*, Isabel Wilkerson describes that “borders could be deceptive ... a blend of the two lands they straddle, not fully one or the other, ripe for ambiguity and premature assumption.”²⁴⁶ Wilkerson's description stands as a metaphor for the distinctions and indistinctions that existed between the former “slave” state of Kentucky and the “free” state of Ohio. Wilkerson's description can also be a metaphor for the process of this research as it regards identity formation. Balancing an African American and Mexican cultural experience required that I learn how to navigate the geographic and social space of an all black neighborhood.

The navigation of racial boundaries and borders can be a small or complicated affair. In 1953, crossing invisible racial lines from the segregated South to the desegregated North and back again constituted a “spectacle ... until Jim Crow died a violent death in the 1960s.”²⁴⁷ Wilkerson notes that between “Mississippi and Chicago, Jim Crow went out of effect in Cairo, Illinois,” the

²⁴⁵ Schomburg Center, 2.

²⁴⁶ Wilkerson, 199.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 200.

southernmost part of the State.²⁴⁸ The train ride over the Ohio River from Kentucky into Cairo was a lesson in procedure.

Once over the river and officially in the North, the colored cars had to be removed in a noisy and cumbersome uncoupling and the integrated cars attached in their place to adhere to the laws of Illinois. Colored passengers had to move, wait, reshuffle themselves, and haul their bags to the newly attached integrated cars. Going south, the ritual was reversed. The railroad men now had to reattach the colored-only cars and remove the integrated cars in a clamorous ordeal to meet the laws of Kentucky. Colored passengers had to gather up their things and take their second-class seats, reminded, in that instance, that they were now reentering the South. Such was the protocol of a border crossing.²⁴⁹

Even as the color line seems rigid, it wavers and shakes in the winds of time that continue to test it. In about 1959, Dad took a weekend trip to Louisville, Kentucky to see the regional college basketball playoffs. He would cross the Ohio River from Ohio into Kentucky and back by car. On his return, he told us how he had come to spend the night in a motel right outside Louisville.

Three places turned me down and I decided to try one more further from the city limits. It was late in the afternoon, about four o'clock. I went into the office and the manager looked me over and told me to come back after dark and he would have a room for me. When I came back, the manager came running out to the parking lot before I could get out of the car. He gestured for me to drive around in back and park. I followed him to a small lean-to that passed for a room, stuck onto the back of the motel. It had an army cot, toilet and sink. No lock on the door. The manager said, 'Six dollars cash. Be out 'fore sun up.'

This incident evidences further the ambiguity of the meanings of race and its social construction. Tom Turner the veteran, working man, and family man,

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

could not openly pay for and occupy a motel room in Louisville, Kentucky in 1959. The trappings of segregation, however, were being called into question. This episode indicates the uncertainty of citizenship rights as they pertain to Tom, and the clandestine nature of integration as it pertained to the motel owner; and positions this dilemma in the public, private and legal spheres.

In a reaffirmation of fundamental citizenship rights granted in the Fourteenth Amendment, the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 explicitly granted Negroes the right to engage public accommodations.²⁵⁰ Even then, the constitutionality of the Civil Rights Act was challenged in the “Heart of Atlanta Motel, Inc. v. United States” case in 1964. The Supreme Court ruled against a white motel owner and based its argument on the section of the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution that states:

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside. No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.²⁵¹

Justice William O. Douglas asserted that he “would prefer to rest on the assertion of legislative power contained in Section 5 of the Fourteenth Amendment.”²⁵²

Under my construction, the Act would apply to all customers in all the enumerated places of public accommodation. And that construction would put an end

²⁵⁰ U.S. National Archives & Records Administration, 2.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Chemerinsky, 141.

to all obstructionist strategies and finally close the door
on a bitter chapter in American history.²⁵³

Justice Douglas recognized and acknowledged the history of segregation that had been upheld by state laws and looked upon in ‘benign neglect’ by the federal government and the Supreme Court. This recognition and acknowledgement, however, was a long time coming.

Crossing the Ohio River “did not mean that you had ‘made it.’”²⁵⁴
Cincinnati as a contested *frontera* presented as an ambiguously racial geography and landscape.

Sundown Towns

Referencing the cyclical nature of the social construction of race, the period between 1890 to the 1930’s as cited in James W. Loewen’s *Sundown Towns* is known historically as the “Nadir of race relations in the United States” and signifies a period of deterioration of race relations owing to several factors.²⁵⁵
The Ohio Historical Society noted that the “growing black population in Ohio” in the 1930s “dramatically altered the state” and the majority of “African Americans were forced by racism to live in segregated communities, separate from the whites.”²⁵⁶

The idea of excluding and restricting African Americans in Northern states dates back to the slavery era as witnessed by Ohio’s Black Laws.²⁵⁷ To counter that kind of legislation, the Civil Rights Act of 1866 guaranteed that “‘citizens of

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Bunch-Lyons, 126.

²⁵⁵ Loewen, 25.

²⁵⁶ Ohio Historical Society. “African-Americans, 2.

²⁵⁷ Loewen, 25.

every race and color ... shall have the same right ... to inherit, purchase, lease, sell, hold, and convey real and personal property.”²⁵⁸ Unfortunately, in the 1950s, almost twenty-five years after the ‘Nadir,’ the phenomena of all-white towns that enforced residential boundaries against African Americans, sometimes with the complicity of the federal government housing entity, became widespread across the heartland. In the West “sundown towns” were “closed to Mexicans and Mexican Americans, Asians and Asian Americans, and Native Americans.”²⁵⁹ When it came to housing and mixing in a diverse neighborhood, neither my African American Dad, nor my Mexican Mother would have been welcome.

Loewen’s *Sundown Towns* notes that a sundown town is any organized area that has barred African Americans and other minority groups from living within its boundaries, thus making the town “‘all-white’ on purpose.”²⁶⁰ The term “sundown” derives from the fact that Blacks were allowed in the town during the day to work or handle business affairs, but the popular signs of the day warned, “Niggers don’t let the sun set on you in this town.”²⁶¹ Waverly, Ohio, with just over twelve-hundred in population and located south of Columbus, was established as a “sundown town since before the Civil War.”²⁶² Loewen informs that

... around 1890 and lasting until at least 1968, towns throughout Ohio and most other states began to emulate the racial policy of places like ... Waverly. Most independent sundown towns expelled their black residents, or agreed not to admit any, between 1890 and

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 29.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 409.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 4.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 310; photo spread.

²⁶² Ibid., 9.

1940. Sundown suburbs arose still later, between 1900 and 1968. By the middle of the twentieth-century, it was no longer rare for towns the size of Waverly to be all-white. It was common, and usually it was on purpose.²⁶³

Loewen cites that the suburbs that “incorporated between 1900 and 1968” did so in order to become sundown towns.²⁶⁴ Loewen quotes John Denton, an authority on housing: “One of the principal purposes (if not the entire purpose) of suburban incorporations is to give their populations control of the racial composition of their communities.”²⁶⁵ All white communities were established across the Midwest and in Ohio sundown towns are “found from Niles in the north to Syracuse on the Ohio River, and sundown suburbs proliferate around Cincinnati and Cleveland.”²⁶⁶ Mariemont, Greenhills and Forest Park (a community near Lincoln Heights that is now populated primarily by African Americans) were named as sundown suburbs in Cincinnati.²⁶⁷

These findings from Loewen indicate there was little space or choice for African Americans to move around in once they managed to cross the Ohio River. African Americans still operated under limitations of movement. For free African Americans it was almost impossible to “get fair treatment” and “they often formed their own communities away from whites for protection.”²⁶⁸

African Americans sought to establish communities and towns all over the United States once they had gained Emancipation. One legacy of the creation of black towns can be found in settlements set up by former slave owners. As cited

²⁶³ Ibid. 9.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 113.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 67.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 112.

²⁶⁸ Ohio Historical Society. “Gist Settlements,” 1.

by Toni Costonie in *African American Slavery, Indenture and Resistance in Illinois 1720 to 1864*, Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua notes in his work, *America's First Black Town, Brooklyn, Illinois, 1830-1915* that "there were dozens of black towns and settlements all over the state."²⁶⁹ According to Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua

... just as reformers were establishing several Euro-American utopian communes, Freedom villages and 'organized black communities' came into existence. 'Most were located in the states of the Old Northwest Territory,' that included what became Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. 'Organized Black communities often represented philanthropic efforts by slave masters to divest themselves of their slaves.'²⁷⁰

In Ohio, the best known of these types of settlements were known as the "Gist Settlements" named after the Virginian Samuel Gist who freed about 500 of his slaves and arranged for land to be bought for them to live on in Ohio.²⁷¹ Gist Settlements were established in opposite ends of the state in Erie County near Sandusky on Lake Erie, and Adams, Brown and Highland Counties clustered together about fifty miles and more southeast of the City of Cincinnati.²⁷²

While none of these areas currently exist as black towns, "The Gist Settlement Archaeological Project" reports that the "last of the original Gist Settlement lands in descendants' hands is located in Highland County" which is the "last established settlement and the smallest."²⁷³ In addition, Gist's will called for the sale of his "American estates ... and the profits be put in a trust for

²⁶⁹ Cha-Jua, 263.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ohio Historical Society. "Samuel Gist," 1.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Richards, 1.

the slaves and their families forever.”²⁷⁴ An Editor’s Note informs that the Highland County site is subject to “ongoing questions about the title to the land and the status of property taxes, lending some degree of uncertainty over the ownership and disposition of the land in the future.”²⁷⁵ The issue of land ownership and title in the Gist Settlement in Highland County reflect the legacy of unfulfilled responsibilities and broken promises to its African American citizens that dates back to the post Civil War program that pledged “forty acres and a mule” to every free black person.

Following the Nadir, and in the Jim Crow Era it was probably wise for African Americans to stay in their own isolated neighborhoods and even wiser not too appear too civic or prosperous, lest they suffer the fate of other Black towns, or thriving Black communities like the Greenwood District that was burned to the ground in the “infamous 1921 Tulsa Race Riot” in Oklahoma.²⁷⁶

Lincoln Heights fits somewhere between the bustling atmosphere of a Boley, Oklahoma and a South African black township.²⁷⁷ Loewen describes these townships as the “flip side of sundown towns”

... often located at the edge of sundown towns or a few miles away ... smaller black communities ... many with dirt roads, off the beaten path ... places to which the excluded have retreated to live, yet close enough to nearby white towns to work.²⁷⁸

As a suburb of Greater Cincinnati, Lincoln Heights began as an unincorporated area that did not have “zoning ordinances and building codes” and allowed

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Johnson, 187.

²⁷⁷ Loewen, 84.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

“African Americans to build their own homes, keep animals, and thus create” semi-rural “pockets” near “urban areas.”²⁷⁹

Loewen posited that the history of sundown towns is one that is obscure and suppressed and has been maintained as such because it “implicates the powers that be.”²⁸⁰

The role played by governments regarding race relations can hardly be characterized as benign or even race-neutral. From the towns that passed sundown ordinances, to the county sheriffs who escorted black would-be residents back across the county line, to the states that passed laws enabling municipalities to zone out ‘undesirables,’ to the federal government – whose lending and insuring policies from the 1930s to the 1960s *required* sundown neighborhoods and suburbs – our governments openly favored white supremacy and helped to create and maintain all-white communities.

Perhaps, the best known and largest of these communities were the “three Levittowns, in New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania, begun in the 1950’s,” constructed by Levitt & Sons, “the largest home builder in America after World War II.”²⁸¹

By one estimate, the firm built 8% of all postwar suburban housing – all of it sundown. As Kenneth Jackson notes, “The Levitt organization ... publicly and officially refused to sell to blacks for two decades after the war.”²⁸²

This degree of segregation reflected Southern ideology, and was not generally addressed until the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 86.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 16, 15.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 127.

²⁸² Ibid.

Lincoln Heights eventually incorporated, but not before the loss of original land claims that included lucrative industrial tax lands. Characterized by “ramshackle” dwellings and dissimilar housing standards, and lacking amenities like indoor plumbing and gas until the infusion of WPA funds in the 1930s, Lincoln Heights became primarily an all black residential community of never more than five-thousand in population.

Lincoln Heights

The all black town of Lincoln Heights, less than one square mile in area, is a small part of the Upper Mill Creek Valley light industrial and residential area. Early Lincoln Heights residents who settled in the area prior to World War II were driven by a desire to escape the overcrowding and anonymity of urban life in Cincinnati’s West End and Bucktown. Raymond Chapman, Sr. described his family’s move to Lincoln Heights.

My parents came to Cincinnati from Atlanta, Georgia and we lived in the West End till I was about twelve years old. My mother wanted a house of her own and she heard that white builders were selling new houses to blacks for two to three thousand dollars in what you call now the Upper Sub in Lincoln Heights. We bought a house on Adams Street and a couple of black builders, one of them James Hunter, came in and started building homes too.²⁸³

Sharon Mobley, age seventy-five, who lived in both the Upper Sub and Lower Sub in the 1950s, gave a vivid account of her step-grandfather’s background and how he came to live in Lincoln Heights.

Grandpa Gantt was part white and born on the Gantt plantation in Gantt, Alabama, one of thirteen children of a slave woman. After the KKK shot up the town, Grandpa

²⁸³ Chapman. Interview, 11/10/11.

went to live with the Osceola Indian tribe in Florida.²⁸⁴ When folks started coming north in the 1920s he bought a horse for five dollars, paid twenty-five to have him shoed and rode up here. He lived downtown somewhere at first and when land went up for sale in Lincoln Heights he bought four mud lots at the end of Adams Street for twenty-five dollars each. He built three houses and left the lot on the corner vacant. The Gantts were one of the first nine families to settle here and Grandpa was the only carpenter in town and he was friends with James Hunter, who was in construction. Other families that moved here lived in tents until Grandpa could help them build their houses.²⁸⁵

These accounts from Chapman and Mobley indicate a shared history of south to north migration, and a shared knowledge about Lincoln Heights and the people who first settled there.

The economics of the town were depressed and public transportation was not easily accessible. During the period from 1955 to 1960, I can recount that the Village of Lincoln Heights boasted two parochial and one public elementary schools, one high school that opened in 1958,²⁸⁶ one doctor, one dentist, several churches of varying denominations including Baptist, African Methodist Episcopal, Episcopal and Catholic, two drugstores (one with a lunch counter), one five and dime store, and several “mom and pop” grocery stores, and a couple of Pony Kegs, a kind of Midwest precursor to the 7-Eleven chain. One of my cousins married a woman whose family ran a venetian blind cleaning business in the Lower Sub. The Club Ebony was open every night on Anthony Wayne Avenue which ran north and south and formed the western boundary of Lincoln Heights. A skating rink opened in 1958 on the corner of Wayne Avenue and

²⁸⁴ Osceola was a leader of the Seminole Tribe in Florida in the 1800’s

²⁸⁵ Mobley. Interview, 10/22/11.

²⁸⁶ Leigh, 48.

Shepherd Lane, the southern boundary of Lincoln Heights. The skating rink was the only recreation within walking distance, discounting the high school gym and playground athletics. For banking, food and clothes shopping, haircuts, dry cleaning, library access, post office services, and movies, Lincoln Heights residents had to go outside of their community to nearby Lockland and other places, including downtown Cincinnati.

When I was quite young, I remember riding a jitney bus with my parents and sister from the Valley Homes to Lockland to go to the Roxy Theatre where we saw Victor Mature and Hedy Lamar in *Samson and Delilah* (1949). Shortly after that, Dad came home in a 1952 blue and white Pontiac coupe, our first family car. Having a car allowed us to leave the neighborhood anytime we wanted. As a result, we drove to white communities to do our Friday night grocery shopping, downtown to the department stores to buy clothes, and took long weekend trips.

For a few years from Monday to Friday, the number 78 bus ran between downtown Cincinnati to Lockland, to Lincoln Heights, through Woodlawn and up to Glendale where it turned around. This provided transportation to working people without cars to get to other parts of the city where they had employment. The 78 curtailed its route sometime in 1954 and came only as far north from downtown as Lockland where it turned around. People who lived in Lincoln Heights could either walk the more than twelve blocks to Lockland, and even further depending on where one lived in the Village, or call one of the two taxi services that charged twenty-five cents for a ride down the hill to Lockland.

Several small, family-owned and operated grocery stores existed in Lincoln Heights. In the Upper Sub, I passed three of them daily on my way to and from school: Gibson's, also known as 'The Voice of Love,' was at the end of Douglas Walk in the Valley Homes near the corner of Douglas and Adams Streets; Butler's was one block farther north on the corner of Douglas and Jackson Streets; and Jenkins still further north on the corner of Douglas and Van Buren. The largest, most well-known, and longest lasting food establishment in Lincoln Heights was Moxley's Market located in the Lower Sub, first on Steffens Street and then settling at 1109 Simmons Street. Killis Moxley, Jr., a lifelong resident of Lincoln Heights, described the role of Moxley's Market and summarized its existence as a food market for the community.

Dad opened the store in the early 1940s and it closed in 1993, so we operated for over 50 years. Dad was the primary person at the store, but he also worked for the foundry in Cummingsville on Beekman. Our advantage was that Moxley's was a full-service store with a full line of meats, and ethnic foods like hogs head and chitterlings that people wanted at the first of the year. Dad didn't pay himself. He just took money out of the store to pay bills. If I had to make an educated guess about what he made in a good year, I'd say about thirty-thousand dollars. Dad helped out people in the community by extending credit and lots of times he didn't get paid. He wrote off a lot of IOUs.

This part of Moxley's account reflects that the grocery store was not a big money maker and required Moxley Sr. to take an industrial job. It also shows Moxley Sr.'s sense of service and responsibility to support the community in the ways that he could.

Even doing that didn't stop him from providing for his family. From the time you could count in our family, you

had a job in the store, taking money for candy, handling empty pop bottles, anything. Dad gave us a good living. We had a nice house, never hungry, had proper clothing and a car.

Moxley Sr. provided an avenue for family members toward the acquisition of skills that could be applied in the home and for gaining employment.

Back then it was about transportation, being mobile. Everyone didn't have cars and access to go outside the community. Businesses in the community had a locked-in clientele. People walked to the store and walked home with their groceries. We delivered large orders. The nearest other full-service markets in the 1950s were in Lockland, Geraci Brothers and Scheff's Market.²⁸⁷

Sensitive to the issue of isolation, Moxley Sr. recognized the marginalized status of his neighbors and customers, and sought to compensate for the lack of transportation and accessibility imposed on the community by providing a full service market and extending credit.

Appadurai's work suggests that the limited economy of Lincoln Heights can be viewed through the lens of the "financescape" that encompasses "perspectival constructs" changed by

... the historical, linguistic, and political situatedness of different sorts of actors: national-states, multinationals, diasporic communities ... and even intimate face-to-face groups, such as villages, neighborhoods and families.²⁸⁸

The longevity of the market, although not a part of a global market, marks it as a neighborhood institution.

Hannibal B. Johnson's *Acres of Aspirations: The All-Black Towns in Oklahoma* uses the early 1900's Greenwood District of Tulsa, once known as the

²⁸⁷ Moxley. Interview, 10/19/11.

²⁸⁸ Appadurai, 33.

“Black Wall Street,” as an example of “African-American accomplishment and achievement” even in a “separate but equal” environment. While Lincoln Heights developed much later as a black town, it operated under the same racialized restrictions as Greenwood.

... Greenwood pioneers in Tulsa took full business advantage of Jim Crow. They seized the opportunity to create a closed economy that defied Jim Crow’s fundamental premise of Black inferiority. The success of the Greenwood District could scarcely be tolerated, let alone embraced, by the larger White community.²⁸⁹

Lincoln Heights never bloomed or boomed as a black economic center. However, the Civil Rights Movement and the call for full integration caused “economic interests and incentives” to shift, further dismantling what little economic life the town did experience.²⁹⁰ Integration takes the blame for the deterioration of the black business in the black community.

The ‘Black market,’ the mass of African-American consumers not previously cultivated by White merchants, suddenly became fair game in the new desegregated marketplace. Gradually, White merchants chipped away at the dam that once held Black dollars within the confines of the African-American community.²⁹¹

Moxley confirms this scenario by characterizing the demise of the family enterprise.

Business started to decline when more people in Lincoln Heights were able to buy cars and could get out of the community. Kroger built a new store in Woodlawn on Springfield Pike and we couldn’t compete with that. My younger brother, Mike, has a degree from Hampton Institute in business and accounting. He told Dad that the store was losing money and we decided to close it. We

²⁸⁹ Johnson, 172.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 180.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

shopped the store for a buyer in the black community and an investment group looked it over but they had no one with experience in their network to manage a grocery business. We offered the inventory to an Indian family who had bought Scheff's Market. They offered to buy the store for a family member coming from India. Dad was eighty years old when he retired from the store.²⁹²

Moxley's account illustrates a spirit of hard work and self-reliance exhibited by African Americans during segregation and Jim Crow eras. It also records the economic thread that accompanies migration and immigration and connects that thread with the globalized and disparate immigrant groups that endeavor to attain an economic foothold.

Lincoln Heights may be characterized as a black town, but in retrospect it appears more of what Loewen described as a township – small, isolated, and non-self supporting. Its residents chose to be near urban life, but not in it.

My first and best friend, Evelyn Perkins, who lived next door at 902 Medosch in the Valley Homes, explained in an interview that her parents, Emma and Paul Jones bridged the gap that separated the black "country" folk in the Valley from the black "city" folk that lived within the Cincinnati city limits.

Emma and Paul graduated from Wilberforce.²⁹³ Daddy belonged to Omega Psi Phi and Mother to Delta Sigma Theta. They both were very active in the community. Socially, politically, religiously. I remember the floor of the living room being covered with campaign material to elect the first female mayor of Lincoln Heights, Mrs. Spears. They campaigned for the Democratic Party, attended meetings and were involved with things going on in the city. There was this division between the city and

²⁹² Moxley. Interview, 10/19/11.

²⁹³ Wilberforce University is the first private historically black college in the U.S., established in 1856; also the first college or university sponsored by a religious order or denomination, the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME). "The Amazing History of Wilberforce, OH," Robin Mazyck. CBN News, www.cbn.com/cbnnnews/109084.aspx, accessed 5/6/11.

Lincoln Heights. We were considered the ‘country’ because we weren’t in the city limits, but rather part of Hamilton County, Millcreek Valley.²⁹⁴

Lincoln Heights is surrounded by, and adjacent to, several other small towns, villages and townships also outside the Cincinnati city limits.²⁹⁵ They are comprised of poor and working class neighborhoods, and wealthy white enclaves. In the 1950s, each of these adjoining towns had developed particular areas within its boundaries designated for its small numbers of Negro residents.

Woodlawn on the north and west, and Lockland to the south were considered poor and working class neighborhoods. Evendale to the east was an all-white town, created from land that originally had been part of Lincoln Heights. More middle-class and economically solvent than the other towns mentioned here, Evendale benefitted financially from the General Electric (formerly Wright Aeronautical) airplane engine manufacturing plant located within the town’s boundaries. The residents of Wyoming, located east and south of Lockland, and Glendale, north of Woodlawn, were primarily white and wealthy.

Migration and Employment

The Turner’s were part of the “first mass movement out of the South” accompanied by “industrial employment, and the initial exercising of the rights of citizenship.”²⁹⁶ The Great Migration of southern blacks to the urban north occurred from 1916 to 1930 and numbered about one million according to Carole

²⁹⁴ Perkins. Interview, 11/12/11.

²⁹⁵ See map of Lincoln Heights and surrounding communities, 165
<http://ohio.hometownlocator.com/oh/hamilton/lincoln-heights.cfm>

²⁹⁶ Marks, 1.

Marks' work *Farewell We're Good and Gone: The Great Black Migration*.²⁹⁷ I heard the story several times from Dad about what happened in Nashville to make his father, Samuel H. Turner, Sr. uproot his family and migrate north to Glendale, Ohio in 1927.

Pop walked on the outside, eyes straight ahead, and held tight to my right hand. He walked easy, but sometimes picked up the pace and I had to run to keep up. His hand was rough, like sandpaper. He was missing two fingers on his left hand. Lost in a hunting accident. Out of the corner of my right eye, I saw a white man come up close behind Pop. At the same time that I tugged on Pop's shirt sleeve, the man's booted foot left the ground and pounded into Pop's behind. He let go of my hand and his body sprawled forward on the wood planks. Two other white men came toward Pop. The three of them stopped and laughed at Pop. Then they turned around and walked away. I helped Pop get up. His white shirt was all dirty. The treasured Panama that Mom had given him on his fortieth birthday had only been knocked from his head. Pop picked it up, put it on, and reached for my hand.

'You ready to go?' he asked me.

'Yes, sir,' I answered.

We walked a little further and cut off the street into an alley and around to the back of a grocery store. Pop put his head under the water pump, took a big gulp of water and spit it out.

'Your shirt's getting all wet,' I told him.

'That's OK. It'll dry. Take yourself a drink,' he said in a voice like ice.

That was July in Nashville, Tennessee. By the time school started, we had moved to Glendale, Ohio.

One of Sam's daughters, Lara Lavada, called Lavada, had met and married William Lester Terrell, who she described as a 'foreigner' because he was from Georgia. They couple lived in Glendale on Washington Avenue. It was into Lavada's and Terrell's basement that Sam moved his family, according to Dad.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

The dispersal of the Turner family of thirteen siblings, one of whom passed away as a young teenager in Glendale, reflects the urban migration patterns of the 1920's. According to Dad, by the time the Turner's moved from Flat Rock, Tennessee to Glendale, Ohio in 1927, the four oldest girls had married; one remained in Tennessee with her husband; two others married and lived with their husbands in Detroit, Michigan and Covington, Kentucky, respectively. The second oldest daughter had moved to Glendale, Ohio where she met and married her husband.

Of the four boys who remained at home, all would graduate from high school, work, and either enlist or be drafted into the military. The youngest son was the first college graduate in the family, graduating from Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee – where the Turner family was from – in 1951. He followed the westward migration pattern and moved to Los Angeles, California for several years during the 1950s. Tom lived in Lincoln Heights, and the second oldest brother lived in Glendale. In the 1950s, another son lived in several communities near Glendale, including Lincoln Heights and Woodlawn, and in Cleveland, Ohio.

One of the four girls at home passed away from either an undiagnosed, or mis-diagnosed case of scarlet fever. The youngest daughter, Hattie, attended Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama. Hattie and two of her sisters married and settled in Glendale, Lincoln Heights and Lockland.

Washington Avenue was one of a handful of streets where African Americans could own or rent in Glendale. By the 1950's four families of the Turner tribe lived on Washington Avenue: at 105, William and Lavada Terrell; at

79, Samuel and Ada Turner, dad's parents; at 67, Josephine and Edward Smith; and, at 59, James and Wilson Wilkinson. Samuel Turner Jr. and his wife Lula lived at 1085 Church Street, right around the corner from 59 Washington Avenue. This group, plus Dad, and J.B. and his wife who lived in the Valley Homes, a sister Catherine who lived in the Upper Sub, and Hattie formed the hub of the Turner family north of the Mason Dixon line and the Cincinnati city limits.

Per Dad's account, the oldest brother, Albert had moved to Chicago to study voice and music. He found work as an elevated train station custodian and lived at the Wabash YMCA on the Southside. A young woman whom he met at the music school where he studied became his wife and accompanist. Several 'programmes' found in Albert's home after his death, and dated in the 1950s, attest to his limited, local success as a baritone singing at churches and secular venues throughout Illinois, Indiana and Ohio.

During the brief period in 1947 that Dad played baseball in Chicago, Mother and I stayed with her in-laws, Samuel and Ada Turner, at 79 Washington Avenue in Glendale. Once, with me in her arms, Mother traveled by train from Cincinnati to Chicago to visit Dad. It was during this trip that she experienced what she named her first racialized encounter, and also her first travel experience, since migrating north of the border. I relate it here in Alicia's words (with corrected spelling) taken from two pages of her story, written in her hand on notebook paper in purple ink, dated 2002.

Grandma and Grandpa Turner put me on a train. They didn't want me in their house with a baby. My English no good. Thom was in Chicago and I went alone with a baby in my arms. What kind of angel was with me? I had a

beautiful baby. Ana was the most beautiful baby to see. I was a good mother, untouchable. I kept her clothes so neat and her basket covered so she could not be exposed to germs. I was nursing her. I was a very sophisticated lady. I made my own garments and designed a beautiful brown suit with a brown hat. Joan Crawford type. I always dressed elegant. I must tell that my baby got taken by a white lady. I missed one of the Chicago stations. Didn't get out at the first station and went to the next station. Albert was driving fast trying to catch the train. I could see him and Thom outside the train. I didn't know where the white lady was taking me and my baby. When Thom and Albert catch the train, Albert talked to the lady and Thom snatched the baby from her. We walked fast to Albert's car. The white lady went to call the police because she couldn't believe that we were any part of the black man. My baby and I smell like perfume.

During one of the tellings of this tale, I asked Mother why she let an unknown white woman take me. Her face took on a horrified look and she waved her hands in the air.

What could I do, Nita? I thought the woman wanted to look at you. And then she drag me off the train. You Daddy come. He save us.²⁹⁸

Mother was no longer a stranger in a strange land when she realized that being "part of the black man" was an issue played out on a public stage. I find this particular story amusing as I picture Mother rising above it all, beginning to understand, and at the same time, transcend the brutality of racism in a spray of perfume; small defense against the vestiges of slavery.

Post World War II America experienced the "greatest era of prosperity in human history" and the "gross national product increased" by sixty percent.²⁹⁹

Eugenia Kaledin's *Daily Life in the United States 1940-1959: Shifting Worlds*

²⁹⁸ "Nita" is what my Mother called me after 1982; diminutive for "Anita," Little Ana.

²⁹⁹ Kaledin, 22.

quoted historian Carey McWilliams who noted that he witnessed more progress in “race relations during the 1940’s than had occurred” in all the years between the Civil War and 1940.³⁰⁰ The War effort and its preparation required man and woman power and this “need for workers” opened up opportunities for Negroes and Asian Americans.³⁰¹ President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s 1941 Executive Order 8802 called for

the full and equitable participation of all workers in defense industries without discrimination because of race, creed, color or national origin.³⁰²

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission reported that Executive Order 8802 was the “first presidential action ever taken to prevent employment discrimination by private employers holding government contracts” and the first civil rights action since Reconstruction.³⁰³

This accessibility to employment for those who had been historically excluded is an example of interest convergence and military necessity. The counter-narrative to this employment expansion for Negroes during and following World War II is noted by Faye V. Harrison in “The Persistent Power of Race” as the driving force for those formerly considered ‘immigrants’ to move into ‘whiteness.’

Euro-ethnic mobility into whiteness was facilitated by shifts in social climate that the 1940s war effort engendered and by state policies and subsidies ... The growing economy of the postwar period demanded more technical, professional, and managerial workers than were available. That labor force grew out of a massive

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 23.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ EEOC, 1.

affirmative action program designed especially for white GIs: The GI Bill, Veterans Administration and Federal Housing Administration mortgages, and federal highway funding produced a suburban life-style and opportunity structure that rewarded the abilities of Euro-ethnics.³⁰⁴

Kaledin recorded that manufacturing contracts attracted all races, creeds and colors to the locations where “war production flourished.”³⁰⁵ This sudden influx of migrants, both black and white, was not met without some rancor and “many people did not want to share jobs or housing.”³⁰⁶ Based on a long-held, stereotypic fear of large numbers of African Americans, Kaledin noted that Blacks

forced out of the South by the invention of mechanical cotton pickers were particularly vulnerable to hostility because they came North in such tremendous numbers.³⁰⁷

Stephen Middleton’s analysis of Ohio’s Black Laws in force in the 1800s included, as mentioned in the discussion on the Black Laws at the beginning of this Chapter, arguments in the state senate that brought up the fact of the fear by whites of being overrun by large numbers of “Free Blacks.”³⁰⁸ More than one hundred years later, Kaledin indicates the same expression.

In 1940, “77% of all black Americans lived in the South” and that after that year “5 million headed north” on the promise of industrial employment.³⁰⁹ Carole Marks recorded that in the urban north, these workers “took jobs at the lowest level” and the fact of a “judgment of inferiority” on the part of whites put

³⁰⁴ Harrison, 64.

³⁰⁵ Kaledin, 23.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Middleton, 78, 96, 97.

³⁰⁹ Kaledin, 23.

them in a position to be exploited on all levels – employment, housing, education, and crime.³¹⁰

Kaledin recorded an incident in Detroit as an example of how the “judgment of inferiority” can manifest.

In Detroit in 1942, a federal housing project segregated for African American workers was attacked by Polish Americans even as it was being built. The police – at least one participant reported – were on the side of the whites. In June 1943 massive racial violence erupted in Detroit. Thirty-four people died, 25 of whom were black, and over 700 were injured.³¹¹

Prosperity notwithstanding, the manifestation of this “judgment of inferiority” resulted in marginalization, especially when it came to finding a place to live. Negroes who had come North for employment and to exercise their citizenship rights sought residence in those areas where they were permitted to rent or buy, and in areas where other Negroes lived. Restricted by whites and designated for blacks, the assigned residential areas that served as safe areas for African Americans were also perceived as invasive and a threat to their neighbors in adjacent white communities.

The attitudes toward Negroes in the 1940s and 1950s reflected here by Kaledin, again reference the legacy of the Black Laws of Ohio instituted in the 1800s to control, restrict, intimidate, and exclude Negroes from full participation in citizenship. In place of the 1849 nullification of the Black Laws, and for the more than next one hundred years, separation of the races was established as the social and legal custom.

³¹⁰ Marks, 151.

³¹¹ Kaledin, 24.

Assimilation

From Glendale, Mother began the process of assimilation into American culture and an African American sub-culture transported direct from the segregated South. Various relatives and friends of the family befriended Mother, who was twenty when she came to *los Estados Unidos*. One of those was a young man, two years younger than Alicia, named Clyde Cooper. Clyde's family had come to Glendale from Knoxville, Tennessee during the Depression. In an interview, Clyde recounted that his mother worked and lived with a private family in Glendale while he and his three siblings boarded with a local African American family; not an uncommon occurrence. His first memory of an event involving Mother came from the mouth of Georgia born Mrs. Anna Lee, who with her husband, Frank, lived next door to my grandparents.

Frank Lee had an old Ford and he used to come flying up the street. Mrs. Lee dipped snuff and if she had a watermelon, she'd say, 'I got a letter from home, you want a piece?' When Alicia first came around and was expecting you, Mrs. Lee asked me, 'Clyde, what's that child gonna speak?',³¹²

Mrs. Lee highlighted the dilemma inherent in culture clash and brought to light the choice that would have to be made as to which side of the border the culturally mixed individual would choose.

The short-lived and infrequent interaction I would have with Mother's Mexican relatives and culture could not compete with the overwhelming fact of my blackness within the segregated confines of the neighborhoods in which we lived and moved. My choice was inevitable, but not final.

³¹² Cooper. Interview, 10/19/11.

Clyde explained that the community was shaken up a bit by the news of Tom and Alicia's marriage and arrival in Glendale.

Coming back here with a Mexican girl! People didn't say much because they were more or less shocked. Interracial marriage was probably going on here, we just didn't know about it or see it in our community. I think people saw Alicia as white, not Mexican. I knew she was Mexican, but it didn't make any difference. It just didn't bother me.³¹³

Contact with people from other countries was a rare occurrence in this time and place, although Clyde related an experience he recalled from childhood.

When I was young, during the War, some Mexicans came up here to work on the railroad tracks. They'd go to the Friendly Star Bar on Congress and we'd go over to watch and see what they looked like. We'd only seen them in the movies. Don't know where they lived when they worked up and down the tracks. They left when the job was over. We didn't come into contact with any foreign people. Nothing to come here for.³¹⁴

Clyde's comments reveal more curiosity than xenophobia. They also reflect an isolationist polity that relates directly to Raymond's observation of Glendale as plantation like.

My cousin, Raymond Terrell, born in 1935, grew up as a member of the small, relegated black population of Glendale. He was eleven years old when Tom and Alicia arrived in Glendale. In an interview, Raymond expressed his impressions of Mother and provided an idea of her attitude about being in a 'new world' and learning its customs.

The term would be exotic. Alicia was seen as exotic. She was pretty well embraced by most of the family and she seemed to get along with everyone very well. We had a

³¹³ Cooper. Interview, 10/19/11.

³¹⁴ Cooper. Interview, 10/19/11.

good relationship and she took on a major project to teach me to dance, even though it wasn't very successful. I got to know her quickly. She was outgoing, open and friendly. She made it easy to embrace her. There was a language barrier and some imitation of her attempts at English and pronunciations that were done in jest. She also made it clear to Uncle Tom that she wasn't all that impressed with his Spanish speaking abilities either. But she caught on pretty quickly.³¹⁵

Raymond's observations about Alicia show that she was open, not shy about expressing herself, and a quick study. Mother spoke with an accent until her passing. She poked fun at her own mispronunciations, some of which have become part of the family lexicon. It was the one marker that prevented her from being as white as she wished.

My first cousin, Betty Wilkinson Francis, lived down the street at 59 Washington Avenue, a few doors from our grandparents' home. She was about sixteen years old when Tom and Alicia came to Glendale. In an interview, Betty accounted her perceptions of the couple.

Before your Dad went to the Army he used to take me to downtown Cincinnati and the movies all the time. When he left, he sent me chewing gum which was hard to get during the War. Your Dad was close with Mom [Wilson Turner Wilkinson] and I kind of got the impression that your Mother wasn't too thrilled about that. But I remember coming up to see you, hold you and play with you. Your Mother must have trusted me because she let me take you to Cincinnati on the bus. We'd go to the movies. The black theatres in the West End. The Roosevelt, the Lincoln, and the Regal were the theatres blacks could go to. I noticed your Mother seemed to be closer to the young men in the family. She liked Ed Junior because he was funny. She liked Uncle J.B. and his wife Aunt Lena.³¹⁶

³¹⁵ Terrell. Interview, 9/27/11.

³¹⁶ Francis. Interview, 10/10/11.

It was Dad's slightly older brother, James Benjamin, J.B. for short, who took it upon himself to indoctrinate Alicia into the ways of black folks. A lesson in racial estrangement recalled here by Alicia, set a precedent for Mother's future racial outlook.

Tom's brother J.B. took me in his wing and say he teach me all that I need to know to live with Tom. I didn't know that J.B. was a black sheep like me. I disgrace the Prado name when I married the black baseball player and J.B. was a big drinker. Everyday. The Turners were respectable family.

J.B. say, 'Now, Alicia, what do you say when Tom makes you mad?'

'Tom, you a black neeger.'

'That's good. That's good. Say it with a little more feeling. Like this, 'you a black neeger'!'

I tell him, 'J.B., Tom no like.'

'Si, Tom no like, but I like.' He let out a loud laugh and took a sip from his flask.

Uncle J.B. may not have realized the allusion he was helping to create in Mother's assimilation process. In a peculiar and problematic way, J.B. labeled himself and Dad, and Mother via proximity, with the racial epithet that carries the weight of alienation in the United States of one or more drops of blood of color. Faye V. Harrison adds to the conversation surrounding "blackness and race mixture" in the article "The Persistent Power of 'Race.'",³¹⁷

In regions where blacks have been demographically and economically concentrated, race mixture historically has had minimal impact.³¹⁸

However, where and when race mixture has occurred, and blacks have won "acceptance, their stigmatized color is not forgotten."³¹⁹ If a peek could be had

³¹⁷ Harrison, 55.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

into J.B.'s racial interiority, it might be seen that the stigma is impossible to forget; even more so for the stigmatized. To this reminder, Harrison added a disclaimer on mixed marriage.

In sexual and marital relations, racial meanings are 'rehearsed and acted out.' Marriage is an important arena where color has exchange value in 'the game of inter- and intra-class alliances.'³²⁰

J.B. rehearsed Mother in the racial arts and she acted them out on the familial and community stage.

In his book *Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word*, Randall Kennedy examines the origins and ramifications of the n-word.

No one knows precisely when or how *niger*³²¹ turned derisively into *nigger* and attained a pejorative meaning. We do know, however, that by the end of the first third of the nineteenth century, *nigger* had already become a familiar and influential insult.³²²

Kennedy cited *A Treatise on the Intellectual Character and Civil and Political Condition of the Colored People of the United States: and the Prejudice Exercised Towards Them* written by Hosea Easton and published in 1837 that offers an explanation of the purpose of the n-word.

... *nigger* is an opprobrious terms, employed to impose contempt upon [blacks] as an inferior race ... The term in itself would be perfectly harmless were it used only to distinguish one class of society from another; but it is not used with that intent ... [I]t flows from the fountain of purpose to injure.³²³

³²⁰ Ibid., 55-56.

³²¹ Kennedy. *Nigger*. Explains that "*Nigger* is derived from the Latin word for the color black, *niger*, 4.

³²² Kennedy, 5.

³²³ Ibid.

Whenever my parents argued, the first thing Mother would call Dad was a “black neeger!” For a split second, he looked stunned. Then he would recover his composure, re-center himself and walk away. I remember feeling that my mother used that phrase to deliberately hurt him and that he absorbed the blow of the wounding n-word from her in order to maintain his sense of dignity. Mother may not have been fully aware of the implications of the lesson of ‘proximity to Negro’ demonstrated in the Chicago train station and Shillito’s garage incidents. She may not have known that the “socially destructive epithet” could be applied to her as well.³²⁴

The term nigger lover continues to be heard amid the background noise that accompanies racial conflict. Whites who refrain from discriminating against blacks, whites who become intimate with blacks ... whites who merely socialize with blacks are all subject to being derided as ‘nigger lovers.’³²⁵

I never heard any stories about Mother being called a ‘nigger lover.’ Much later, she did relate a comment made by Grandmother Ana Prado that came close.

My mother, the witch, she hurt my feelings. You know that time we went to Mexico? My mother hug and kiss me on our last day. She look me in my face and said I’ve been around Negroes so long that I had *ojos chango grandes*. Big monkey eyes.

Ana Prado observed not so much that Alicia was a ‘nigger lover,’ but rather that Alicia was being physically transformed into a ‘nigger’ by virtue of association. This scenario is burdened with the denial of blackness inherent in *racismo* and the weight of alienation inherent in racism. More than Mother’s ‘big monkey eyes,’ I find it paradoxical that it was my African American uncle who introduced my

³²⁴ Ibid., 30.

³²⁵ Ibid., 27.

Mexican Mother to the n-word in this way to use against and denigrate his brother.

The n-word, as a branding symbol, burns into dark skins and stands in for the social, psychological, and emotional injuries inflicted and endured in slavery. Joy Degruy Leary's work, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing (PTSS)* represents a well-organized discussion on the legacy of slavery and its negative effects on generation after generation of African Americans. The theory of *PTSS* is based on the fact that slaves experienced a lifetime of trauma that was neither addressed, nor eased, and endured the sundering of their most intimate relationships.³²⁶ Leary asserts that the inter-generational and multi-generational transmission of this legacy of trauma has resulted in, among other things, issues of abuse, ineffectual parenting, violence, and educational disillusionment.³²⁷

According to Leary, several effects of the oppressive beliefs contained in the patterns of *PTSS* are illustrated in African American lives as "vacant esteem" or lives without value; "ever present anger" or using anger as a response to blocked goals; and racist socialization, the accommodation of white prejudice and the adoption of white standards.³²⁸ On these three pillars, Leary rests the proofs of her argument that the belief is strong in the African American community that white equals power and black equals impotence.³²⁹ J.B.'s lesson to Mother on the n-word exemplifies and is writ large on these three *PTSS* tenets.

³²⁶ Leary, 118, 119, 120.

³²⁷ Ibid., 124.

³²⁸ Ibid., 127-138.

³²⁹ Ibid., 180.

Critical Race Theory addressed the issue of words like the ‘n-word’ within a framework that required legal attention and action. In *Words That Wound: Critical Race Theory, Assaultive Speech, and the First Amendment*, Richard Delgado points out in his essay “Words That Wound: A Tort Action for Racial Insults, Epithets, and Name-Calling” that

Racial tags deny minority individuals the possibility of neutral behavior in cross-racial contacts, thereby impairing the victims’ capacity to form close interracial relationships. Moreover, the psychological responses of self-hatred and self-doubt unquestionably affect even the victims’ relationships with members of their own group.³³⁰

Even if J.B. had not taught her the n-word, it is likely that Alicia would have heard or learned it somewhere along the way. Delgado’s comments, however, make it clear that the “words that wound” do internal as well as external psychic damage, and form their own racial barrier. Indeed, even in the face of our African American father, Mother told us repeatedly, “You kids are not Negroes. You are white like me.”

Education

During the time that the 78 bus ran between Lincoln Heights and Glendale, I attended kindergarten, and first and second grade at Eckstein Elementary school, designated for the Negro children in Glendale. When he moved to Glendale in 1927, almost twenty-five years previous, Dad and a few of his siblings also attended Eckstein. Dad related that at age twelve, he had been put back a year. Eighth grade Eckstein graduates went on to the integrated Congress Avenue High School, about four blocks away.

³³⁰ Delgado. “Words That Wound,” 91.

Eckstein was located at the eastern end of Washington Avenue, less than a block away from my Grandparents' home. My parents could not live in Glendale, but somehow I was permitted to attend the segregated elementary school there even though we lived in Lincoln Heights. Dad did not entertain sending us to the all black public school in Lincoln Heights. We did, however, attend both of the parochial schools there at different times during our rites of passage in the community in the 1950s.

My experience with schools and efforts to get an education are bounded by the issues of 'getting in' and 'staying in.' I was enrolled in kindergarten at age four and had to leave three weeks later because the class was over-crowded and I would not turn five until February. I would not return to school until age six in the first grade, more than two years later. By the time I arrived in Mrs. Viola Burr's first grade class at Eckstein, my reading and spelling had improved. With first and second grades in one classroom, Mrs. Burr assigned second grade work as soon as I had completed the first grade assignments. As a result, I finished both grades in one school year and was 'skipped' to the third grade.

The Glendale Heritage Preservation in its publication, *The Village of Glendale 1855-2005*, recorded that the first public school in Glendale was established in 1852.³³¹ The publication does not indicate whether or not this school was available to African American children in the community. A book edited by Angeline Loveland Faran, *Glendale, Ohio 1855-1955*, recorded that the Glendale School Board added a "standing committee on a colored school ... to

³³¹ Glendale Heritage Preservation, 33.

the list of active committees” in 1867.³³² It may well have taken fifteen years to consider the education of the children of its black residents.

The repeal of the Black Laws in 1849, including the stipulation that prohibited blacks from participation in public education, occurred three years before Glendale’s public school opened.³³³ It could be assumed that the 1852 school was open to all children in Glendale; however, by omission that assumption becomes suspect. In addition, there is no mention of a school for Negroes in Glendale until Eleanor Eckstein, a resident and former teacher, “began instructing a small group of black children in a barn at the rear of her home ...” following the Civil War.³³⁴ The Glendale School Board minutes recorded in 1869 that

the Board deems it expedient to establish a separate school for the education of the colored children of the district in pursuance of the law in such cases provided.³³⁵

By 1870, eighteen years after the first public school operated in Glendale, the Glendale School Board allotted funds for a teacher and small building next to the icehouse; the school became known as the “Icehouse School.”³³⁶ Black families petitioned the board in 1876 for the “appointment of a black teacher and the procurement of another room for the school.”³³⁷ It took another three years before the Board purchased a piece of land and built a “one-story schoolhouse” for “black children.”³³⁸

³³² Faran, 64 .

³³³ Middleton, 49.

³³⁴ Glendale Heritage Preservation, 34

³³⁵ Faran, 64.

³³⁶ Glendale Heritage Preservation, 34.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Ibid.

The first public school, opened in 1852, eventually developed into the Congress Avenue School which housed elementary and high school grades.³³⁹ The Glendale Heritage Preservation publication recorded that beginning in 1887, and until 1915, the “black children attended the Congress Avenue school” because the former one-story schoolhouse and lot had been sold.³⁴⁰ The purchase of a home at the eastern end of Washington Avenue on the north side of the street by the School Board was prompted by “overcrowding” at the Congress Avenue School. In 1915, the board alleviated the overcrowding by providing “additional room for the black children of the first five grades” at the recently acquired Washington Avenue site.³⁴¹ After twenty-eight years of classroom integration, the Glendale School Board re-segregated the first through fifth grades; and sometime between 1915 and 1927, the segregated Eckstein School began to educate all the Negro children in Glendale, from kindergarten through the eighth grade.

The Eleanor Eckstein School for black elementary pupils added a gymnasium and an additional classroom in 1928.³⁴² Tom said that Eckstein had grades kindergarten through eight at that time. Dad corroborates the Preservation publication’s assertion that the “high school in Glendale was always integrated, and graduates of the Eckstein School” attended and graduated from Congress Avenue High School.³⁴³

³³⁹ Ibid., 33.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 34.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Ibid.

Dad, who graduated high school in 1934, did indicate that the school athletic teams were segregated at that time. Jack Brock, who grew up next door to the Terrell family on Washington Avenue, noted that he recalled a time when only the football team had been integrated. However, by the time he graduated from Congress Avenue School in 1946, the basketball and tennis teams had been integrated.³⁴⁴ Brock went on to become a noted tennis player and coach in the area.

When I enrolled in kindergarten at Eckstein in 1951, and when I re-enrolled in the first grade two years later in 1953, all the students and teachers were African American. With the exception of kindergarten, one teacher taught two grades in each of the four large classrooms. Patricia Randolph Leigh's work, *The Fly in the Ointment* provides a summary of the state of Eckstein School around this time.

In 1950 [Eckstein] accommodated 92 pupils, kindergarten through eighth grade, and employed four teachers, yielding a pupil/teacher ratio of 23/1. This building had been a residence before its conversion into a schoolhouse. It was quite small in comparison to the main building [Congress Avenue School] and lacked many of the facilities enjoyed by students accommodated in the latter. Obviously Glendale maintained segregated elementary schools through the mid 1950s because of its desire to do so.³⁴⁵

The timeline that marks the segregation, integration, and re-segregation cycle of educational experience for Glendale's African American children validates Leigh's assumption of motivation. In addition, it reflects the same motivation as the "on purpose" exclusionary devices present in the creation and maintenance of

³⁴⁴ Phone conversation with Jack Brock relayed to author by Otis Turner, 02/12/12.

³⁴⁵ Leigh, 68.

“sundown towns.” The link between residence and accessibility to quality education represents a dependent co-existence in two overarching arenas of intersecting oppressions.

The mid-1950’s are significant for the *Brown V. Board* Supreme Court decision because it broke the back of the “separate but equal” rule of law that had held force for fifty-eight years in public education.³⁴⁶ Derrick A. Bell, Jr.’s essay *Brown V. Board of Education and The Interest Convergence Dilemma* in *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*, edited by Kimberle Crenshaw, et al, allowed that the 1954 case was a “land mark decision” that marked the “end of state-mandated racial segregation of public schools.”³⁴⁷ Bell quoted Judge Robert L. Carter who affirmed that the Case “transformed blacks from beggars pleading for decent treatment under the law as their constitutionally recognized right.”³⁴⁸ Statements from Alan David Freeman’s *Legitimizing Racial Discrimination Through Antidiscrimination Law: A Critical Review of Supreme Court Doctrine, also in Key Writings*, put forward that,

While there is no way to prove ‘objectively’ what the opinion in *Brown* meant with respect to a right to educational equality, both a claim for equal resources and a claim for the choice of an integrated education can be supported from the text of the opinion.³⁴⁹

Freeman, however, tempered this reasonable expectation based on language in the text of the Case which

... suggests that the detrimental effect [of segregation], with its attendant denotation of inferiority, would persist

³⁴⁶ Cowan & MaGuire, 125, 232.

³⁴⁷ Bell, 20.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ Freeman, 32.

even in the absence of state sanction, the case may be read as addressing not the *practice* but the *fact* of racial separation.³⁵⁰

Freeman posited that “the court recognizes only the right of the black children to attend schools that are not intentionally segregated by the jurisdiction that runs them.”³⁵¹ Freeman and others argue that, “This right ... is all that Brown stands for anyway, since all the case did was outlaw *de jure* segregation.”³⁵²

Bell and Freeman present *Brown V. Board* as a “land mark,” yet ambiguous and open to interpretation Supreme Court decision. Considering the obstacles associated with and the violence committed by whites in the defense of the segregated classroom, it seems as if Mr. Archbold’s 1845 statement recorded in the House Journal that “it would require the terrors of the bayonet to people the schoolroom with a mixed assemblage of whites and blacks” held true more than one hundred years later.³⁵³

On the local level, it could be suggested that Glendale’s plan for consolidation, submitted in 1953, a year ahead of Brown V. Board, and finalized in 1955, was designed to forestall any immediate government interference in the area design for school districting. Glendale’s consolidation plan called for: the closure of Eckstein School; all elementary school students, black and white, would attend Congress Avenue School; Congress Avenue School would become an elementary school and a “fixture of the Princeton School District.”³⁵⁴ A new high school was built on land donated by Marianna Procter Matthews (1861-

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Ibid., 33.

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Middleton, 99.

³⁵⁴ Glendale Heritage Preservation, 133-134.

1958), from the same family of benefactors mentioned earlier who developed the Matthews Homes in Lincoln Heights.³⁵⁵ These changes also involved the formation of an enlarged Princeton School District based in Glendale.

These decisions would have far reaching implications for the all black town of Lincoln Heights. Patricia Randolph Leigh offered the underpinnings of both these decisions and their implications in *Fly in the Ointment*.

By 1954 when the *Brown* decision was rendered, the Hamilton (Ohio) County Board of Education had submitted a consolidation plan that would include seven White districts surrounding but not including Lincoln Heights. De facto segregation in this Ohio valley was being strengthened just as national attention was given to dismantling segregation de jure.³⁵⁶

In alignment with Freeman's argument, Leigh's statement announced a racial sleight of hand that involved the replacement of one type of segregation for another – fact versus practice, *de jure* versus *de facto*. Leigh provided an explanation for the continuation, “ordinariness” and “embeddedness” of racial separation trends in this geographic area. The unusual title of her work serves as a summary descriptor of the “perpetrator perspective” of Lincoln Heights.³⁵⁷

The name *Fly in the Ointment* seems appropriate for this body of work for the following reasons. The racism that abounded in Cincinnati during the early 1900s gave rise to the Black community of Lincoln Heights. This community, dense with unwanted African Americans, sat on rich industrial properties and was located in the midst of surrounding wealthy White communities. From the White racist perspective, Lincoln Heights not only visually resembled a ‘fly in the ointment’ but also represented the fly that threatened to ruin plans for building and maintaining a ‘pure and uncontaminated’

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 132.

³⁵⁶ Leigh, 1.

³⁵⁷ Freeman, 33.

consolidated school district while, at the same time,
capturing all the rich industrial land.³⁵⁸

Despite the CRT interest convergence aspect that frames *Brown V. Board*, Leigh's work positioned the tenet of the embeddedness of racism as overriding interest convergence, in the case of public education in Lincoln Heights.

Lincoln Heights did not benefit from *Brown V. Board*. The all black school in the all black town operated in the "separate but equal" shadow of *Plessy V. Ferguson*. Even it delivered on only half its promise. Lincoln Heights was "separate" and shut out.

By 1955, the Princeton School District consolidation was in place and Lincoln Heights was not a part of it. In the summer of 1954, the number 78 bus cut off the part of its route that connected Lincoln Heights with Glendale, and the 78 route from downtown Cincinnati stopped in Lockland, just south of Lincoln Heights. This lack of public transportation further isolated Lincoln Heights from the "surrounding wealthy White communities," made it difficult to access shopping and schools outside the community, and hindered movement to downtown Cincinnati and other parts of the city.³⁵⁹

Since the 78 bus stopped running that summer between Lincoln Heights and Glendale, I had no way to get to school in the fall of the new school year. This effectively severed my everyday connections with family, school friends and school in Glendale. My routine activities became centered more in the Valley Homes. In third grade, I would go to a new school.

³⁵⁸ Leigh, 7.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

Our neighbors, Emma and Paul Jones, sent their daughter, Evelyn, to St. Simon's Episcopal school, one of the parochial schools in Lincoln Heights. Then a case worker for Aid for the Aged, Emma had once taught at St. Simon's School.³⁶⁰ Evelyn had attended school there since nursery school. Dad enrolled me in St. Simon's and together, Evelyn and I entered the third grade classroom managed by Miss Fannie Piersawl, a force in her own right.

St. Simon's had a twenty-year history of providing aid and assistance to the desperate Negro families in the Upper Sub during the Great Depression.³⁶¹ It also had strong ties to Glendale. St. Simon's began in 1931 as "the mission house of St. Simon of Cyrene," founded and run by the Episcopal Sisters of the Transfiguration whose convent was located in Glendale. On the convent grounds, the Sisters also ran a residential and educational facility known then as Bethany Home (now Bethany School).

Starting out in a "small, two-story frame house," St. Simon's offered the community sewing classes, vacation bible school, and eventually a primary day school and church. Sister Olivia, selected to direct the new mission and its development, was the daughter of Mrs. Mortimer Matthews of the Matthews family noted earlier in this work, who donated ten thousand dollars toward the building of St. Simon of Cyrene Episcopal Church in 1931.³⁶² Matthews Drive, where the Church and grounds still stand, was named in honor of Mrs. Matthews.³⁶³ In 1935, an additional building adjacent to the Church was used for

³⁶⁰ St. Simon of Cyrene, 20.

³⁶¹ Sister Esther Mary, 1.

³⁶² Ibid., 3.

³⁶³ Ibid., 13.

classrooms and as a recreation center.³⁶⁴ The center was named St. Monica's after the "mother of St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo in Africa, which made her name especially appropriate for a Black community."³⁶⁵

By 1953, St. Simon's School supported the full complement of elementary grades, kindergarten through eight, and graduated its first eighth grade class.³⁶⁶ The school's tuition had started out at two dollars a year in 1945 and by 1950 was raised to fifteen dollars a year.³⁶⁷ The 157 students enrolled in 1950 received the services of the Bookmobile of the Cincinnati Public Library and physical examinations given by physicians through the Visiting Nurse Service. In the 1954-1955 school year, four white nuns and five female Negro secular teachers were on staff.³⁶⁸

It was in Miss Piersawl's class that I began to create racial distinctions as a result of the bullying behavior I experienced in the Valley Homes. Two girls a year or so older than I, made me a target for their aggressions. They shook their fists at me, pulled my hair and called me half-breed. I did not like to fight, but somehow I thought that if I acted aggressively and physically assaulted someone that I knew would not fight back, then I would have made a reputation for myself and that would stop the bullies. I also knew that I had to make up a really good reason to pick on someone for no reason.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 9.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 5.

³⁶⁶ Ibid., 9.

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 8.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 10.

I challenged Darlene Miller,³⁶⁹ the meekest girl in the third grade, on a trumped up charge. Darlene was tall and overweight. The school ordered a large-sized, left-handed desk to fit her. She wore glasses, had short, thin hair, and talked in a soft voice. She sat in the last seat in the row of desks nearest the windows. She was isolated in the class and marginalized among the students.

After school on Friday, I followed Darlene off the grounds and confronted her before she turned off in another direction to go home.

‘Hey, Darlene!’ I yelled as I ran in front of her and stood in her path.

‘What you want, Ana?’ she asked in a faint voice. Several kids started to gather round to see what would happen.

‘I heard you called my Mama a name,’ I challenged.

‘I don’t even know your Mama.’

‘You don’t have to know her to call her a name. I heard you called my Mama a nigger!’

‘I don’t know what ...’

I didn’t give Darlene a chance to answer. I reached up and smacked her once across each of her fat cheeks. She turned red and started to cry.

‘My Mama is white and Mexican,’ I said in a mean, third-grade voice. ‘Don’t forget it, Darlene.’

I walked home with Evelyn who told me, ‘You know you’re going to get in trouble. Darlene will tell her mother and her mother will call Miss Piersawl.’

I knew Evelyn was right. I would pay for my lie and my aggression.

The Monday morning after the Darlene Miller incident, Miss Piersawl brought me back behind her desk as soon as the bell rang. She sat down in her chair, pulled me down so that I hung across her knees, pulled up my dress, and with a wooden paddle gave me five heavy swats on my cotton panty covered bottom. I howled and screamed in front of the whole class. But I knew that I

³⁶⁹ Darlene Miller is a pseudonym

deserved every lick for the story I had cooked up and what I had done to Darlene Miller.

It hadn't been easy to rouse fake anger over a fake insult on an innocent girl. I wanted to feel powerful. I wanted to feel what I did not understand then as vindication. Instead, I felt scared and ashamed. Scared because I knew I would pay for this at the hands of the adults. Ashamed because I did not understand what compelled me to do such a thing.

Looking back on this incident, I am tempted to frame it within the context of a coalesced imprint of *racismo* and racism that plotted onto the graph of my developing psyche, all under the influence of Tom and Alicia, the time and place, and my own self-negating perceptions. On reflection, this event symbolized a psychic face-to-face confrontation with the racial history I had absorbed, and the racial messages I had heard and witnessed until then. The message that spoke with the most force grew out of the denial of blackness inherent in *racismo*. Mother's insistence on her whiteness placed her totally at odds with the evidence of our environment. By slapping Darlene Miller, I made sure that Mother could never be viewed as a Negro or honorary Negro in my eyes. I mark this incident as the conscious starting point of the sift and separation that constitutes my *Blaxicana* identity.

Summary

This chapter highlights the time and space that existed historically and in the 1950s in the Village of Lincoln Heights. This research exposes the personal and legal associations with the adjacent Village of Glendale, the connections and

influence on the lives of African Americans in both communities. This connection with Glendale is also illustrated through the experiences of Alicia Prado Turner as she was indoctrinated into the ways and meanings of racism and Jim Crow, and how she was experienced in the family and community.

This Chapter also illustrates the third tenet of Critical Race Theory, the social construction of race that does not correspond to a “biological or genetic reality” – and how it continues to play a powerful psychic role in maintaining the racial status quo, even without state laws to regulate the lives of people of color.³⁷⁰ Omi and Winant in their work *Racial Formation*, place a social construction of race along a “sociohistorical” timeline that is part of a “process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed.”³⁷¹ Haney-Lopez centers his argument on the social construction of race on the fluidity and dynamics of the concept of “racial fabrication” that “implies the workings of human hands” and he cites scientific findings that disprove the “supposition that racial divisions reflect fundamental genetic differences.”³⁷² The use of family documents such as birth certificates demonstrate the ways in which lives are socially constructed from their very beginnings.

The interest convergence tenet of Critical Race Theory applies here in the legal sense in a discussion of *Brown V. Board* and its relation to local school board politics. A companion to the social construction of race, the CRT tenet of the “embeddedness or ordinariness” of racism continues to show along the timeline as the legacy of a racialized past. The long-term effect of Ohio’s Black

³⁷⁰ Delgado. *CRT: An Introduction*, 7.

³⁷¹ Omi & Winant, 55.

³⁷² Haney-Lopez, “Social Construction,” 168, 166.

Laws in the areas of housing, employment, education and due process are central to the discussion of the social, economic, educational, and housing conditions for residents of Lincoln Heights.

The history of Lincoln Heights presents as one that reflects loss, isolation, and economic oppression, as well as characteristics of self-reliance, determination and a desire for independence and self-government. A brief history of Lincoln Heights shows that the area lagged behind the black town movements that followed post-Reconstruction migration patterns to the West and “The Great Migration” patterns to northern urban areas that began in 1915 and lasted until the 1970s.³⁷³ As in the move out of the South following the Civil War and at the turn of the twentieth century, Southern blacks not only experienced discrimination in housing and employment, they also were subject to restrictive movement and civic participation enforced often in violence. As they had done in the south beginning in the 1800s, blacks worked to establish their own towns north of the Mason Dixon line and on the margins of hostile urban areas. The Village of Lincoln Heights came late to incorporation in 1946 and in the shadow of the development – and eventual demise – of black towns such as Brooklyn, Illinois, Nicodemus, Kansas, Boley, Oklahoma, and Mound Bayou, Mississippi, whose establishment was “marked by a sense of self-respect and competition: they wanted to outdo white towns” according to James W. Loewen’s *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism*.³⁷⁴

³⁷³ Wilkerson, 8.

³⁷⁴ Loewen, 82.

Excerpts from several of the interviews of people who lived in Lincoln Heights, Glendale, or Wyoming from 1955 to 1960 – conducted as research – have been presented in this Chapter. Their revelations support the formal history of Lincoln Heights and the Valley Homes, and also represent a shared experience of the area. At the same time, the interviews disclose individual histories and experiences that evidence and underlie a counter and alternative historical narrative. Richard Delgado’s “Storytelling for Oppositionists and Others: A Plea for Narrative” informs that – as well may apply to former Lincoln Heights residents – “racial and class-based isolation prevents the hearing of diverse stories and counterstories.”³⁷⁵ The value and importance of such storytelling to “oppressed groups,” Delgado asserts, is “an essential tool to their own survival and liberation” that can be used as a “means of psychic self-preservation” and as a way to minimize “their own subordination.”³⁷⁶ Stories strengthen the core of what Delgado terms the “outgroup.” Stories can also translate as the creation of a compelling ‘insider’ ideology that engages and changes the “prevailing mindset.”³⁷⁷

Lisa Lowe’s *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* places great emphasis on the importance of location. Lowe informed that “Culture is the medium of the *present* – the imagined equivalences and identifications through which the individual invents lived relationships with the national collective.”³⁷⁸ Lowe continued, however, that it is the “site that mediates the *past*, through which

³⁷⁵ Delgado. “Storytelling for Oppositionists,” 2439.

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 2436.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 2413.

³⁷⁸ Lowe, 2.

history is grasped as difference, as fragments, shocks, and flashes of disjunction” and discovery.³⁷⁹ This chapter explores a small part of the past of Glendale, the Valley Homes and Lincoln Heights and the part that past played in forming the Blaxicana identity.

Through Mother’s and Dad’s accounts and my own memory reports, this research attempts to create interiorities for them as individuals and for myself as a representational, combined form, replete with its own peculiarities. In anticipation of connecting the defining public and private episodes that contributed to the creation of a *Blaxicana* identity, I have endeavored to link the storytelling, filtered through memory and experience, to a larger framework from which to invoke a dispassionate reclamation and psychic resolution of this time and place.

Storytelling episodes track the awareness and creation of personal core values, as well as the struggle to achieve a quality education. One or two stories reveal my confusion about race and what it meant to be black or white in Lincoln Heights. These stories also track Alicia’s progress with assimilation, her early encounters with racism, and the effect of my parents’ mixed marriage in an all black community. The storytelling is also used to reveal typical human behaviors that may not be pleasant to face, but necessary to deal with and reconcile. The sum of the storytelling highlights the contradictions inherent in life and in forming an identity for oneself, especially when caught in the crosshairs of being Colored and Mexican in Ohio in the 1950s.

³⁷⁹ Lowe, Lisa. *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics*. Duke University Press: Durham & London, 1996. p 2

OHIO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
COLUMBUS

Reg. Dist. No. 404 State File No. 5417
Primary Reg. Dist. No. 6227 **CERTIFICATE OF LIVE BIRTH** Registrar's No. 5417
Department of Commerce—Bureau of the Census

1. PLACE OF BIRTH:
(a) County Hamilton
(b) City, Village, Township Cincinnati
(c) Name of hospital or institution Cincinnati General Hospital
(If not in hospital or institution, give street or location)
(d) Mother's stay before delivery: In this community 1 day (Specify whether years, months, or days)

2. USUAL RESIDENCE OF MOTHER:
(a) State Ohio
(b) County Hamilton
(c) City or village Cincinnati (If outside city or village, write RURAL)
(d) Street No. 77 Washington St. (If rural, give location)

3. FULL NAME OF CHILD Ana Viola Turner
5. Sex: Female 6. Twin Triplet 7. Number months of pregnancy 9 7a. Weight at birth 7-1/2 7b. Congenital malformation No 8. Is mother married? Yes

4. DATE OF BIRTH Feb. 18, 1947
(Month) (Day) (Year)

FATHER OF CHILD
9. Full name Tom Turner
10. Color or race Colored Age at time of this birth 32 yrs.
11. Birthplace Cincinnati Ohio (City, town, or country) (State or foreign country)
12. Usual occupation Prof. Athlete
13. Industry or business
14. Children born to this mother not including this child 0
(a) How many other children of this mother are now living? 0
(b) How many other children were born alive but are now dead? 0
(c) How many children were born dead?
(The total of a-b-c should equal item 14)

MOTHER OF CHILD
15. Full maiden name Alicia Irado
16. Color or race Mexican Age at time of this birth 20 yrs.
17. Birthplace Mexico City Mexico (City, town, or country) (State or foreign country)
18. Usual occupation Housewife
19. Industry or business
20. Date serologic test for syphilis 2-18-1947
(a) If none, give reason
21. Mother's usual mailing address

24. I hereby certify that I attended the birth of this child who was born alive at the hour of 6:27 A.M. on the date above stated and that the information given was furnished by Alicia Turner related to this child as Mother

25. Registrar's signature Grace Jo Lewis-Jep. Signature B. Hooper, M.D.
26. Date received by local registrar FEB 24 1947 Address Cincinnati General Hospital
Do not write in this space Date signed

THIS CERTIFICATE BEHALF OF THE OHIO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IS HEREBY CERTIFIED TO BE A TRUE AND CORRECT COPY OF THE ORIGINAL FILED IN THE OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR IN COLUMBUS, OHIO, ON FEBRUARY 24, 1947, IN CASE OF ANA VIOLA TURNER, CHILD OF TOM TURNER AND ALICIA IRADO, IN ORDER OF BIRTH, 5417.

Ana Viola Turner Birth Certificate, Feb. 18, 1947; father "Colored;" mother "Mexican;" child, no space for "Color or Race."

CITY OF NEW YORK
BUREAU OF VITAL RECORDS

OCT 20 1980

Certificate of Birth Certificate No. 25830

FILED
1947 SEP 15 AM 11 01
1. Full name of child (never)
George Desmond Thorne Jr.

2. Sex Male 3. Color or race Colored 4. Number of children born of this marriage 1 5. Date of birth September 14 1943 (Month) (Day) (Year) 6. Hour 10:30 A.M.

7. PLACE OF BIRTH
(a) NEW YORK CITY (b) Brooklyn
(c) Name of Hospital Brooklyn Hospital
(d) Length of mother's stay (in years and months) 1 year 10 months

8. USUAL RESIDENCE OF MOTHER
(a) New York (b) New York
(c) Brooklyn (d) Brooklyn

9. FATHER
(a) Full name George Desmond Thorne
(b) Color or race Colored
(c) Age at time of this birth 37 (years)
(d) Birthplace Brooklyn New York
(e) Usual occupation Police Officer
(f) Industry or business in which he is engaged Police Officer
(g) Length of residence in New York City (in years and months) 1 year 10 months

10. MOTHER
(a) Full name Norma Thorne
(b) Color or race Colored
(c) Age at time of this birth 26 (years)
(d) Birthplace Brooklyn New York
(e) Usual occupation Housewife
(f) Industry or business in which she is engaged Housewife
(g) Length of residence in New York City (in years and months) 1 year 10 months

11. I hereby certify that I attended professionally at the birth of this child, who was born alive at the hour and on the date stated above, and that all the facts stated in this certificate and report of birth are true to the best of my knowledge, information and belief.

Given name added from a supplemental report: (State it) (Date it) (Signature)
(Signature) Norma Thorne M.D.
(Address) Brooklyn Hospital
(Date of Report) September 14 1947

BUREAU OF RECORDS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CITY OF NEW YORK

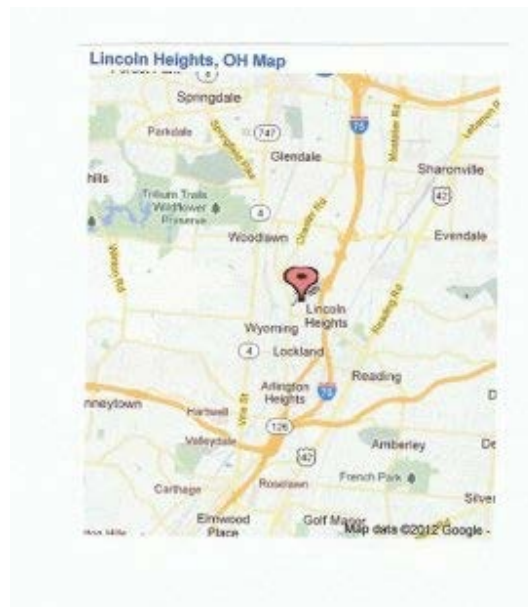
This is to certify that this (birth, death, marriage, divorce) record being certified.

CITY RECORDS

The Department of Health does not certify to the truth of the statements made therein, as no inquiry as to the facts has been provided by law.

DO NOT ACCEPT THIS TRANSCRIPT UNLESS THE OFFICIAL SEAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IS AFFIXED THEREON. REPRODUCTION OR ALTERATION IS PROHIBITED BY LAW.

George D. Thorne, Jr. Birth Certificate, New York, Sept. 14, 1943 – both mother and father designated "Colored" and male child designated "Colored" also.



Map of Lincoln Heights and surrounding communities
– Evendale, Lockland, Woodlawn, Wyoming, Glendale

Chapter III

Space, Place and Time

Introduction

This Chapter examines the aspects of housing, employment, social expression, skin color and hair texture, cultural expression and single black fatherhood all within the geo-spatial context of the Valley Homes housing complex in the 1950s. An abundance of private thoughts that reflect and point to the larger overarching issues addressed in this research are brought to light in the interview information. They reflect a private and public reality that constitutes the community.

A portrait of the Valley Homes is presented in this section accompanied by testimony that the community represented a ‘step-up’ for African Americans living in this era. The success of the Valley Homes depended on the accessibility and availability of work that was present in the area in the form of one large employer and several satellite industries.

The interviews also serve to present a rough sketch of the inner workings and outer behaviors of Tom and Alicia as observed in the community by people who knew them. The issues of skin color and hair texture are discussed within the context of beauty standards, connected to the concepts of racism and *racismo* and their relation to color coding.

Discussions with my contemporaries illustrate the ways in which Alicia’s Mexican-ness and her cultural symbols were understood and represented in the Valley Homes. These discussions also reveal the ways in which Alicia engaged

in the practice of racial estrangement and the ways in which she both participated and set herself apart from the community in which she and her children lived.

This brief five year period of auto-ethnography ends with the dissolution of my parents' marriage and the fact of Tom becoming our single, parental caregiver; a rare role for an African American man in the 1950s. This chapter also marks the end of our time living in the segregated Village of Lincoln Heights and our move to a new, more diverse community where several other families from the Valley Homes resettled.

Housing

Mother's racial and cultural learning curve, with the exception of J.B.'s influence, had moved along a gentle slope in pastoral Glendale in the bosom of family and friends of family. After Mayor Carruthers made it clear that Tom and Alicia could not live as a couple in the same community where Dad's family and the Mayor's family lived, they moved into a less genteel, nearby all black community. In the new neighborhood, people lived closer together in attached town-homes, and life moved faster.

Sometime in late 1947, my parents moved into a two-bedroom, one bath, town-home apartment at 904 Medosch Avenue in the Valley Homes. A housing project built for Negro workers at Wright Aeronautical Plant during World War II, the government sponsored community was located in the center of the Village of Lincoln Heights.

The construction of Wright Aeronautical attracted a great number of African Americans who sought work and were hired as laborers, both during and

after World War II when it became General Electric. In wartime, the federal government took on the responsibility of housing the Black employees and constructed and opened the Valley Homes in 1941.³⁸⁰ Built on a small expanse of undeveloped land that provided a buffer between the Upper and Lower Subdivisions of Lincoln Heights (known as the Upper Sub and the Lower Sub), the Valley Homes housing project was “constructed as temporary shelter for African-American workers” and “intended to remain in use for only six years.”³⁸¹

Medosch, the main street in the Valley Homes, ran through the middle of the housing project. Inside the complex, a network of “walks” – Carey, Leggett, Douglas, Lindy – ran parallel to and intersected Medosch. At the time, the Valley Homes was considered a very nice place to live for Black families who could not afford to purchase land, or a home.

Many returning veterans flocked to this area to live because it was modern and the rent was affordable, if not cheap. The Valley Homes differed from housing in the Upper and Lower Subs where most residents had homes on lots they owned. By the early 1950’s, however, a few four-unit apartment buildings existed in the lower and upper subs. The condition of homes in the upper and lower subs, populated since the early 1920’s, ranged from shanty to brick, from self-made to contractor built, and from one-room to several. By the 1950s and thanks to WPA funds, all residents enjoyed the essential services. The fact that families who lived in the Valley Homes were renters who could move in and out of the area more readily than a home owner, made the Valley Homes a more

³⁸⁰ Taylor, 296.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

transitional and temporary place to live – a stepping stone to a better community and better school system.



The Valley Homes: 904 Medosch, front and back views;
and 952 Medosch.

The fifty-three multi-family buildings contained four to eight units for a total of three-hundred and fifty housing units spread across thirty-two acres.³⁸² The housing units were laid out in a neat, geometric grid intersected by one main street and navigable via several walkways. For residents, the Valley Homes provided five parking lot areas, a recreation center, baseball field, and playground. I learned how to roller skate on a set of very smooth, twenty by five foot, white concrete strips located on the side of the community center building that also housed a kindergarten.

³⁸² NSP, 22; Smith, Henrietta, 72; Cincinnati Enquirer, 8/5/98, www.enquirer.com/editions/1998/08/05/loc_valley05.html, 10/21/11

The Valley Homes and the smaller townhome complex called Matthews Homes (named for philanthropist Mrs. Mortimer Matthews of Glendale), located next to St. Simon's Church and school and at the northern border of Lincoln Heights adjacent to Woodlawn, improved the "image of the city."³⁸³ A look of modernity and uniformity characterized the Valley Homes where every unit had a front and back door, screen doors, and green, well-kept, front and back lawn areas. Inside, families enjoyed modern amenities such as gas, heat, indoor plumbing, hot water heater, stove, and what we called an 'icebox.' Downstairs, the cement floors in the living room and kitchen were usually covered with carpet or linoleum, and later tiles. The thirteen steps that led upstairs and the floors in the bedrooms were hardwood.

In the 1950's, the Valley Homes and its residents represented a range of life styles that were determined by a family's economic resources, its educational achievements, and the degree to which it had assimilated into post-World War II modern, urban life. In 1953, a residents' cooperative homeowner's association purchased the Valley Homes from the federal government and operated as the Valley Homes Mutual Housing Corporation (VHMHC) until 2005 when it went into receivership.³⁸⁴

During the period from 1955 to 1960, the Village of Lincoln Heights and the Valley Homes was a robust and safe place to live. My impression of the Valley Homes was that no one was homeless, shoeless, or hungry. Most families had cars.

³⁸³ NSP, 22; Smith, Henrietta, 74; Taylor, 285.

³⁸⁴ LeMaster, 1.

Raymond Chapman Sr. gave the Valley Homes a glowing report and recalled the first African American couple to move into the community.

The Valley Homes was better than the Lower or Upper Sub. We thought it was something to have multiple dwellings. It was nicer. Valley Homes was something new. We didn't know about multiple dwellings. Valley Homes was big time back in those days. Streets were paved. People came from everywhere. The first couple that moved into the Valley Homes was Nish Belcher and his wife. Nish came from Atlanta and he used to caddy for Bobby Jones. He and his wife were a real classy couple.³⁸⁵

My best friend and next door neighbor, Evelyn, shared her memories of the Valley Homes in an interview.

I vividly remember the Valley Homes in the summertime. You could look out the front door on Saturdays and see every man cutting his grass and taking care of his lawn. If you looked out the back door, you could see that every woman had white laundry on the clothesline blowing in the breeze. It was safe and we could leave our doors open and unlocked. When it was hot, our parents turned on the garden hose and let us run through the sprinkler in our drillies. We didn't have bathing suits. After we dried off, we had Cheez Whiz on crackers which we considered a gourmet treat.³⁸⁶

Evelyn added that as children we were safe in a community where people looked out for each other.

Everyone knew whose child belonged to whom. You couldn't get away with much because an adult would either tell your parents, or chastise you and tell your parents. The advantage was the safety factor. Although we may not have appreciated it then, we were safe because neighbors kept us within that circle of propriety that applied to everyone.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁵ Chapman. Interview, 9/27/11. Nish Belcher was Evelyn Perkins godfather.

³⁸⁶ Perkins. Interview, 11/12/11.

³⁸⁷ Perkins. Interview, 11/12/11.

Evelyn's Dad, Paul Jones, was President of the VHMHC. In that position, Paul and the office staff saw to it that the Valley Homes maintained certain community standards. Clyde Cooper recalled an incident that occurred after he moved in the Valley Homes with his wife, Margaret when they first married.

We paid about ninety dollars a month rent for a two-bedroom in the Valley Homes, which included utilities. We lived there to save money to buy a home. We bought a refrigerator when we first moved in, larger than the one supplied by the Homes. We didn't have any shades or curtains on the front window so we took the box the refrigerator came in and put it up to cover the window. The manager, Mr. West, knocked on our door and told us we had to take the box cover down and get some shades or curtains. We did and we lived there a couple of years before we moved out and bought this house in Glendale.³⁸⁸

Another neighbor, Minot Estese, a grade ahead of Evelyn and me in school, was the son of the head of the maintenance crew for the Valley Homes.

My Dad was the maintenance supervisor for the entire Valley Homes. He had a support staff that at one time numbered ten men working under him. He directed all the work orders and they took care of the hot water tanks, electricity and plumbing. The maintenance office had about three dozen lawnmowers that residents could check out to cut their grass. I used to hang out in the office and tinker with the tools. I learned a lot from my Dad.³⁸⁹

These interviews recount the Valley Homes as a safe and well-maintained place to live. Its proximity to General Electric, only a half mile away, made the Valley Homes an ideal location for the African Americans who worked at the plant.

Cornell "Peachy" Thomas lived two doors down from us at 908 Medosch and was one of five boys in the Thomas household. A grade behind me and

³⁸⁸ Cooper. Interview, 10/19/11.

³⁸⁹ Estese. Interview, 12/10/11.

Evelyn, Peachy offered another dimension to his characterization of the Valley Homes.

The Valley Homes had a few professional people, like teachers and social workers, but for the most part it was a working class neighborhood. Really no division line between upper, lower, and middle class that I could see at that time. No one knew or worried about the fact they were poor. Lot different than it is now. We were all in the same boat then. The majority of dads worked and moms were at home with the kids.³⁹⁰

Descriptions of the Valley Homes from former residents show the community as a more modern place than the dusty streets of *Hermosillo*. Mother's description that she conveyed to me after I was an adult, more or less agrees, but only in terms of her own life and status; and it shows a focus more on the self and than the community.

Los Estados Unidos was faster and noisier than I thought it would be. I listened to the soap operas on the radio, but my life with Tom was not like that. We had our own apartment and furniture. I don't see nobody get lynched or beat up. I was so stupid I believe that my life was good because I had food in the icebox, shoes and clothes in my closet, another baby on the way, and a husband that worked every day.³⁹¹

Employment was a major concern for family breadwinners, and in the 1950s General Electric was a primary source of income for families in the Valley Homes. This research reveals the context in which this employment occurred via interviews from older men who worked at General Electric.

³⁹⁰ Thomas. Interview, 12/15/11.

³⁹¹ The time described would have been sometime in 1953 prior to the birth of Glenn in July 1953.

Employment

Chapman provided history and context for the employment picture for African Americans in the 1950s. He informed in the interview that Wright Aeronautical and then General Electric “had to hire blacks because of government contracts” and that it “hired black women” and got them “temporarily out of the kitchens during the war effort.”

In the fifties, GE was the biggest hirer and the bulk of the people in the area worked there. Of course, there was work to be had in nearby fertilizer plants, a cotton factory in East Lockland, Stearns & Foster who made the best mattresses. Ford built in Madisonville and GM in Fairfield. Shivers, a former mayor of Lincoln Heights, got me into GE. In those days, everybody started as a custodian, janitor.³⁹²

Chapman and others were part of a group of ‘firsts’ when it came to hiring, employment and training practices at General Electric. Chapman recounted how he was first admitted to the International Machinists and Electricians Union (IMEU).

They called me into the office and asked if I’d be interested in going up to the North Shop, the machine shop. They offered training and more money, so I said I’d take it. The union was lily white. At first the guys walked out of the Shop when I arrived, but after thirty days they had to take me into the union. I won them over and after three months I was elected committeeman. I was the first black in all of GE in that union. I broke the ice.

³⁹² Chapman. Interview, 9/27/11.

A cousin through marriage, close to us when we were growing up, Sy Allen, described his sojourn at General Electric, which began approximately five or six years after Chapman “broke the ice.”³⁹³

I went to GE right out of the Navy. Started in 1950, mopping and sweeping. Arthur Shivers was over all the black people at GE and he was hiring guys mostly from Lincoln Heights and Woodlawn, the Valley, where he lived. Some guys hired from Walnut Hills area and they came through Joe Black from Walnut Hills who worked under Shivers. I made a dollar nineteen an hour, which was good money then. You were a big shot if you worked for GE. Majority of workers belonged to UAW 647. Your dad, Tom, too. I thought the working conditions were fine. I was just out of the Navy and the Korean War was starting.³⁹⁴

Even though Chapman started working at General Electric before Allen, their experiences coincide on the employment front, but in separate time and spaces. It is evident also that Allen’s subsequent success drew on Chapman’s pioneer performance.

With a twinkle in his eye that I well remember, Allen told me to take a look at the group photo of his basic training graduating class in the Navy and see if I could find him. He was easy to identify as the only African American in the picture. He proudly commented that he graduated “second in command.”

I worked hard, but I was always recognized and I got paid for it in the Navy and at GE. I had leadership qualities and eventually they forced me out on the floor to be a supervisor to people that I’d worked with all the time. I knew the people and I recognized what they would or wouldn’t do, could or couldn’t do. I was always

³⁹³ Sy Allen was married to my first cousin, Gertrude Terrell, sister of Raymond Terrell. Gertrude passed away in 1985. Gert and Sy were married for 32 years.

³⁹⁴ Allen. Interview, 10/13/11.

recognized. But I knew I had to do a little more than the rest, especially in the Navy.³⁹⁵

Dad worked at General Electric for as long as I can remember until he left

Cincinnati around 1966. Allen related what he knew about Tom's experience at the plant.

Tom was an expeditor in a different building from where I worked. I built engines. He managed the parts. He was one of the first to be offered a salary job. He was older than me and I talked to him about the offer I got to do the same thing. It was something to consider because the union was seen as job protection. Tom's reputation at GE was that he was the baseball player.³⁹⁶

My memory recounts that Dad always had more than one job. He worked full-time at General Electric, part-time for a wealthy private family in Indian Hill, part-time mail carrier during the Christmas rush, Little League baseball umpire on Saturdays in the summer time, and basketball referee at black high schools in Southern Ohio and Northern Kentucky on Friday nights in winter. In addition, and due to his hearing loss, he received a lifelong, monthly disability income from the federal government.

Allen bought a lot in the primarily wealthy suburb of Wyoming from an African American couple who were moving to Arizona, built a house and moved into it in 1953. In the 1960s, he put a swimming pool in his backyard; only one of two pools in the neighborhood.

I've led a pretty good life. I'm well blessed. Nothing that I ever wanted that I didn't get, eventually. Not right away, but I got it. I've achieved my vision of the piece of the pie, the American dream.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁵ Allen. Interview, 10/13/11.

³⁹⁶ Allen. Interview, 10/13/11.

³⁹⁷ Allen. Interview, 10/13/11.

Allen summed up the relatively uncomplicated goal of most African Americans of the post war era.

The U.S. Census records that the median income for African American males in 1950 was just shy of \$10,000, with whites earning about twenty-two percent more.³⁹⁸ The economy began to move toward the expansion of consumer credit and the installment plan allowed families to purchase large items like cars, furniture, and appliances.³⁹⁹ The period following World War II offered Negroes a brief look under the veil and a shadowy glimpse into the potential to participate in the American dream. This would be enough to spur the changes that lie ahead in the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

Social Expression

Alicia Prado's move out of Mexico to *Estados Unidos* and the small communities of Glendale and Lincoln Heights, Ohio could place her, according to James Clifford's "Traveling Cultures," among the displaced, the nomadic, the immigrants and the pilgrims.⁴⁰⁰ Prior to the move from *Hermosillo* to Cincinnati, a distance of about 2,062 miles, Mother had never moved further than the 160 miles between *Nacozari*, near the Arizona border in the mid-northern part of the State of Sonora, to Hermosillo, the capitol city in the southwestern part of the State. By virtue of the distance traveled from West to East, and across the Mexico/U.S. *frontera*, Mother became an informal cultural "informant" who

³⁹⁸ US Census Bureau.

³⁹⁹ Kaledin, 55.

⁴⁰⁰ Clifford. "Traveling Cultures," 110.

arrived on the scene first as a ‘foreigner.’⁴⁰¹ Through her efforts to participate and become part of the community, Alicia’s Mexican culture became a “site of travel for others” in the community of the Valley Homes.

In his interview, I asked Mr. Chapman to give me his impressions of my parents as a couple.

I drove through Medosch on my way to GE. I didn’t see anything. Your mother was accepted. Seemed to fit in well. The bulk of the people liked her. Overall, I think she and Tom were pretty close. Economics dictated that they stay close. Seemed like an ideal couple, other than she was Spanish. That wore off. People adjusted to it.⁴⁰²

This idyllic portrayal corresponds to my own view of my parents’ marriage prior to 1955, the year of demarcation for our family of five in the Valley Homes.

Ethel Gantt Scruggs, a friend of Alicia’s, and Sharon Mobley’s cousin, lived in Lincoln Heights in the Upper Sub. In an interview, Ethel recounted that she met Mother through a relative.

I met Alicia in the early fifties through my cousin Lydia. I was modeling off and on and I sewed and so did Alicia. We started spending time together. We’d go shopping for material to make clothes. We went to Ripley to visit a family she knew out there. You kids didn’t go with us, but I remember seeing you. Most of the things we did together had to do with fashion. She and I both made our own clothes. She seemed well adjusted to a new culture. When she was around me, she was always happy. She would just drop by to go shopping. She had a car and she used to drive with her left hand on the steering wheel and her right arm draped over the seat. That’s what our relationship was about, just girlfriends.⁴⁰³

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., 97.

⁴⁰² Chapman. Interview, 9/27/11.

⁴⁰³ Scruggs. Interview, 11/7/11.

This friendship between Ethel and Alicia came as a surprise to me because I had no recollection of Miss Ethel from when we lived in the Valley Homes. It occurred to me that Mother had people in her life that I did not know and that she did things and had adventures that did not always include her children. Mother had a life that I knew nothing about.

I asked Miss Ethel if Alicia ever talked to her about any problems she might have encountered in being accepted in the Valley Homes.

She never said anything about it. From all the people I knew that knew her, I heard she was well accepted. In those days when you were as attractive as she was, she was a target, and I was too. We were young and attractive so people try to find something to pick on you about. I guess some women gave her a hard time.⁴⁰⁴

For Mother, Ethel must have represented friendship and a place of refuge where she was not tied to the roles of wife and mother and she could more fully and freely express herself. Miss Ethel stated that Alicia did not talk to her about race or color, nor did she complain about her marriage.

She never talked about your dad. But from what other people said, I wondered why she married him. I heard that he was a very mean person. I don't know. I never met your father. Just heard he was a mean person and not nice to her. It wasn't anything I heard from her, but from other people.⁴⁰⁵

This description of Tom contrasts with the accounts from Chapman and Cooper, but it matches information provided by Sharon Mobley.

I first met Alicia by accident in my neighbor's back yard. She was visiting and she had Glennie with her. In the

⁴⁰⁴ Scruggs. Interview, 11/7/11.

⁴⁰⁵ Scruggs. Interview, 11/7/11.

beginning, we'd just talk about everyday stuff and then she came one day and she was very upset.⁴⁰⁶

At this point in the interview that had lasted nearly an hour, Sharon had to excuse herself for a few minutes after she became visibly upset from the memory of Alicia's ordeal. She did, however, return and continue.

Alicia was upset and crying. All I remember is her and Glennie were at my house. Her and Tom had an argument. She was very upset and she sat and talked with me for a long time. I really felt bad for her. She had three little ones and being treated like that. I had a real hard time with it. I only saw him a couple of times in all the time we knew each other. I only went to your house to pick her up if we were going out somewhere. I didn't want to see him.⁴⁰⁷

I showed Sharon a photo of her and her husband Jimmy with their young daughter, Cheryl, at our house for the last Thanksgiving we spent together as a family. Another couple, John and Catherine Sweeney (now deceased) are also in the picture with me, my brother and sister. Conspicuously absent are both my parents. Dad was taking the picture and Mother is not in the picture, although she was at the dinner.

⁴⁰⁶ Mobley. Interview, 10/22/11.

⁴⁰⁷ Mobley. Interview, 10/22/11.



Left, Glenn, Cheryl, Sharon & Jimmy Mobley; John & Catherine Sweeney, Olga, Ana. John Sweeney was the brother of Alicia's second husband, Paul Sweeney.

Sharon related that she remembered neither the photo, nor the occasion.

I never saw your Dad doing anything in public, but it was the mistreatment at home that bothered me. Alicia said he stayed out all night and sometimes didn't buy groceries. I couldn't deal with that. All I could do was listen. Just opened my door to her as a friend.⁴⁰⁸

I was fortunate to be able to interview Mrs. Louise Gray, a long time friend of Alicia's, a few months before her passing at age ninety-two. Mrs. Gray lived in the Valley Homes, but moved to a small house on Adams Street, right at the northern end of the Valley Homes where she operated a one-woman beauty shop. My cousin, Betty Francis, who lived in Glendale, went to Mrs. Gray for years to get her hair done. Although Mrs. Gray's memory was not as substantial as some of the other people I talked with, she was able to express those things that impressed her most about Mother.

⁴⁰⁸ Mobley. Interview, 10/22/11.

With the people she liked, she learned a lot and life became easier for her. She had a tough time with some people in the Valley Homes. I was one of the close people that she liked. She didn't get close with everybody. She was selective about who she would be friends with. She didn't stick to everybody and some other people didn't like her that well. She didn't show any prejudice to me, but she did clash with her neighbors sometime.⁴⁰⁹

Mrs. Gray also offered a little insight into Mother's interests that coincided with Ethel Gantt Scruggs' account.

Alicia could crochet and sew. She was on the artistic side. She altered clothes for me.⁴¹⁰

Mrs. Gray's observations about Alicia and Tom's marriage agreed with the accounts from both Sharon Mobley and Ethel Gantt Scruggs.

I remember one thing about her and that is that she was hardly with her husband. Little things were said about that. They stopped being together long before they split up. They grew apart. Alicia wasn't that close to everybody, but she came to me and talked about her problems. They had a close marriage early on, but had grown apart.⁴¹¹

Mrs. Gray's oldest daughter, Darlene, was present during the interview and offered her own memories of Alicia.

She described coming here and not knowing a soul, how isolating it was for her. I thought she was pretty courageous to do that. And in an all black community. She was adventurous. She had a positive spirit and could always tell you a story.⁴¹²

These accounts of Alicia show a private side of her life. This is in contrast with accounts of Tom that demonstrate the public sphere in which he operated.

⁴⁰⁹ Gray. Interview, 11/13/11.

⁴¹⁰ Gray. Interview, 11/13/11.

⁴¹¹ Gray. Interview, 11/13/11.

⁴¹² Gray. Interview, 11/13/11.

Mr. Chapman indicated that he and Tom were good friends and enjoyed each other's company socially.

Tom used to have to leave GE and go straight to his other job at the Kilgour's. He would give me his signed check to give to your mother and I would take it to her on Medosch. That went on for a while. Tom and I were close. Plus, he got a disability check. He didn't drink or smoke.⁴¹³

In reference to Tom's job with a private family in Indian Hill, his interest in sports, and his reputation as a "sharp dresser," Chapman iterated the following.

He'd get tickets from Kilgour to the Reds' baseball games and we'd sit in his box in Crosley Field. We played tennis together with his sister Hattie and Nikki Giovanni's mother on the courts in Glendale. We'd go to Dunlap's Men's Store in downtown Cincinnati and go up to the second floor to the Italian tailor. Tom would say, 'You know what I want. You know what I need. Just fix me up.' A hundred dollars was a lot of money then.⁴¹⁴

Chapman's account of Mother with Dad's paycheck is difficult for me to reconcile. I do not recall that she ever cashed a check, or went to the bank. After my brother was born in 1953, Mother learned to drive and Dad started giving her an allowance so that she had a little money to take us places when he worked on weekends.

Clyde Cooper from Glendale provided some examples of Dad's behavior and personality that fits what I know of his public persona.

One day I was hanging around the older guys and Tom was there. He said, 'Let's go over on Kemper and look at the new houses they built over there.' We all piled in his car, drove over to Kemper, parked and started to get out when a white guy busted out of the front door of one of the houses, almost tore the screen door off. He started

⁴¹³ Chapman. Interview, 9/27/11.

⁴¹⁴ Chapman. Interview, 9/27/11.

yelling, 'We don't sell to colored! We don't sell to colored!' Tom wanted to do whatever he could to push the envelope. If he failed or not, he would try it.⁴¹⁵

Clyde reminded in his interview that Dad did not give up easily on his quest to play major league baseball.

Like when he went to the walk-on Reds camp, trying to get on the team. He said they told him that he knew the game, but that he wasn't quite fast enough and he couldn't hit that high, hard one. Another time, we were trying to play ball on the Eckstein field but it was too muddy. We went over the municipal athletic field and old man Straub was in charge and said we couldn't use it. Tom was talking to him and mentioned that he might have to tell Mrs. Matthews that we couldn't use the field. When Tom said that, Straub relented because Mrs. Matthews had that field made for us.⁴¹⁶

These accounts reveal Tom as a man who worked hard for himself and his family; a man of many interests; and a man who possessed powers of persuasion.

The information from these interviews provides a certain texture to the relationship between Tom and Alicia that appears on the face to be conventional for its time. Yet, the coupling between a white Mexican woman and an African American man in an all black environment seems to have been fraught with both private and public drama that reflects emotional longing and lost dreams. Their marriage appears to have been bounded by and subject to the time and place in which they tried to live it.

Shades of Brown

"You kids are not Negroes, you are white like me," Mother told us repeatedly in her accented English. In support of her claim to whiteness, Mother

⁴¹⁵ Cooper. Interview, 10/19/11.

⁴¹⁶ Cooper. Interview, 10/19/11.

asserted the purity of her European-Spanish bloodline, and at the same time, denied her Pima Apache great-grandmother by announcing periodically, “I am no *mestiza*, I am *Castilian*!” My Mexican mother was partially correct that she was white, and not totally wrong in the claim that her children were not Negro. Like her English, and by virtue of how we looked, we were “accented” Negroes, and in *Espanol, negrita/os*.

Our identifiable golden brownness, especially in summer, and in Mother’s view, was a social disadvantage. Nicholas Vaca made the point in *The Presumed Alliance* that the “lesson of racial estrangement” provides the opportunity for Mexican-Americans to identify as white, near white, or honorary white; and that that identification is perceived as a benefit and the way to a better quality of life.⁴¹⁷ In *Quest for Equality*, Neil Foley affirmed that the light-skinned Mexicans were not subject to the “same degree of exclusion as their darker-skinned, working class compatriots.”⁴¹⁸ On this point of color coding, the principles of racism and *racismo* converge.

In the interviews conducted for this research, this subject surfaced in unexpected ways from the recollections of African American women and one white woman. Miss Ethel commented on the skin color issue in a personal way as expressed within the private sphere of her family.

I had an advantage because of the way I looked. I had light brown skin and good hair and I had lots of white friends in high school at Our Lady of Angeles, or OLA as we called it. Your mother’s friends were very fair, Rose

⁴¹⁷ Vaca, 13.

⁴¹⁸ Foley, 19.

Freese and Lydia Bright. I'm light but I was the brownest one in my family. They called me 'little honey.'⁴¹⁹

Ethel followed these comments with an example of how this color coding was applied to a group of young girls in the public sphere.

In the forties, when Madonna High School closed downtown, they sent the few colored girls who lived in the Valley to other schools. The dark-skinned girls were sent to St. Gabriel's in Glendale and the light-skinned girls went to OLA. My girlfriend was brown-skinned and they sent her to St. Gabriel's. She had to walk all that way from Lincoln Heights to Glendale 'cause at that time there was no bus that came to Lincoln Heights. They gave us tokens to catch the trolley bus in Lockland to OLA. When I went to OLA, I was the brownest thing there.⁴²⁰

Ethel's observations show the interplay between skin color and the element of color proximity. Ethel's little bit of honey color in her skin made her darkest in her 'bright' family. When she stood next to her "dark-skinned" friends, she became "light-skinned." In a third scenario, Ethel becomes the "brownest" girl in a sea of white female high schoolers. That Ethel was aware of these differences then and now demonstrates the two tenets of critical race theory prevalent throughout this research – the embeddedness of race and the social construction of race.

Margaret Hunter's work, *Race, Gender, and the Politics of Skin Tone*, provides additional exposition on the subject of skin color as it applies to women. Hunter made plain in the work's Chapter One, titled "Colorstruck" that,

Women compete with one another over many traits including educational credentials, income, family status, and perhaps most importantly, beauty. Skin color is

⁴¹⁹ Scruggs. Interview, 11/7/11.

⁴²⁰ Scruggs. Interview, 1/7/11.

closely tied to the definition of beauty such that light-skinned or white women are considered more 'beautiful' than darker-skinned women of color. In this way, beauty works as a form of social capital for women. Beauty is capital because it is transformable into other types of capital, such as economic capital or money. The amount of beauty a woman possesses may help her land a well-paying job or marry a high-status, wealthy man.⁴²¹

The topic of beauty, according to Hunter, is one that operates across what Arjun Appadurai described in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* as the "ideoscape."⁴²² In other words, it is the imagined standards of beauty that permeate public and private thinking and outlook on the value of beauty and the ways in which it can be achieved.

The ideoscape, along with the ethno, media, techno, and finance scapes, operates primarily in the public sphere, where the private individual is positioned as the "last locus of this perspectival set of landscapes."⁴²³ While Appadurai positioned this set of scapes as the sites where the work of hegemony and homogeneity are performed and function to move societies toward globalization, in the space and time in which this research is situated, the hegemonic aspect mainly applies.

Hunter assigned two cultural categories that are maintained in part through the standards of socially constructed beauty.⁴²⁴

Skin color, racial, and gender hierarchies all work at the ideological level to construct beauty as a tool of patriarchy and racism. Because beauty is an ideology, its standards serve the interests of the dominant social groups. In this case beauty is a hegemonic ideology and

⁴²¹ Hunter, 5.

⁴²² Appadurai, 33.

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ Hunter, 5.

its existence serves the interests of whites in that it maintains white privilege. Beauty as an ideology also serves the interest of men because it maintains patriarchy as it divides women through competition and reduces their power.⁴²⁵

Hunter allowed that “racial discrimination is alive and well, and so insidious that communities of color themselves are divided into quasi-racial hierarchies.”⁴²⁶

Both patriarchy and racism rest on the supports of “skin color stratification” and as the scenarios presented by Miss Ethel above show, demonstrate its public and private effects.⁴²⁷

In her interview, Sharon Mobley, one of two ‘white’ women married to African American men who lived in Lincoln Heights in the 1950s (the other being her mother), shed light on several different aspects of skin color and the ways in which her whiteness was interpreted and translated for her in the African American community. The fact that she was very young when she first experienced Lincoln Heights could have awakened her awareness of the differences of color at an early age. Sharon first recalled the times she spent in Milwaukee and after her mother had married Roscoe Gantt and lived in Lincoln Heights.

I was used to being around different kinds of people. I grew up and played in a diverse, wealthy neighborhood of Blacks and Jews in Milwaukee. Milwaukee had already started mixing black and white. Grandma would say things every once in a while, she would nudge me if somebody black got on the bus.⁴²⁸

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

⁴²⁶ Ibid., 7.

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

⁴²⁸ Mobley. Interview, 10/22/11.

These experiences of early and consistent contact between whites and blacks recounted by Sharon relate to the issues of race and class. Ruth Frankenberg's work, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Race*, suggested a "link between class position and cultural style" and a preference on the part of some white women for a "more down to earth, more honest" lifestyle that can be accessed via a relationship and/or marriage to a "Chicano" male and by extension, an African American male.⁴²⁹

The following three sentences represent Sharon's identification with blackness and show that it is in opposition to Mother's constant claim to whiteness.

I could go anywhere in the city and never had any problems from anybody. I had one fight and we ended up being best friends. She called me a 'paleface.'⁴³⁰

This incident made me laugh because it reminded me of my own encounter with Darlene Miller where I accused her of calling my mother a 'nigger.' I knew that my mother did not want to be associated with blackness as it applied to her personally, and even though I made up the charge, I was defending her honorary whiteness. In Sharon's case, she was defending the status she enjoyed in Lincoln Heights as an honorary black.

Sharon's next comment brings the discussion back around to class, but not before it exposes an awareness of an implied equivalency between being black and what Sharon termed 'white trash.'

No one ever called me 'white trash.' Because you know they used to say if a black man married a white woman he

⁴²⁹ Frankenberg, 66.

⁴³⁰ Mobley. Interview, 10/22/11.

was marrying white trash. But I never heard that from anyone. They always respected me and treated me like I was one of the group.⁴³¹

As a member of the ‘group,’ Sharon enjoyed the privileges of honorary blackness and at the same time, was bound by its internecine racial rules.

Girlfriends told me that I wasn’t allowed to date the light boys, and that only dark-skinned girls could date light-skinned boys to lighten up the race. That’s what old folks would tell them. You know, white is right, black get back, brown stick around, yellow you’re mellow. Color was a big thing then.⁴³²

To emphasize that point, Sharon offered an additional comment that moved the discussion of skin color once again from public to private. Of her cousin, Ethel, she remarked.

Ethel is a little dark, but not the rest of her. She has good hair.⁴³³

This remark shows that Sharon and Ethel are in agreement as it relates to Ethel’s position in the racial hierarchy in their family and in the community.

In the part of her interview where she related the scene in which Alicia called her out of her name, Evelyn added a reflective note.

In hindsight, I knew there was a problem, but am not sure. Something about my hair. I wasn’t supposed to have long hair and I did.⁴³⁴

Evelyn’s reflection brought out an important point about the issue of good hair, echoed by both Ethel and Sharon, and reveals that hair texture, as well as skin

⁴³¹ Mobley. Interview, 10/22/11.

⁴³² Mobley. Interview, 10/22/11.

⁴³³ Mobley. Interview, 10/22/11.

⁴³⁴ Perkins. Interview, 11/12/11.

color, carries a nuance within the black community. Hunter's *Politics of Skin Tone* affirmed this connection by example via an interview.

Margaret Hunter interviewed an African American woman, Delilah, who had a "medium brown complexion and very long, curly black hair."⁴³⁵ Delilah reported that she had "much tension over 'the hair issue'" in school where the students were "Filipino and African American."⁴³⁶

... my mother took me out of that school because ... girls tried to cut my hair off, they said black girls aren't supposed to have long hair. Black girls hated me.⁴³⁷

Hunter contextualized Delilah's experience as an "extreme example of jealousy and distrust among African American girls."⁴³⁸

Long hair is highly sought after in the black community and is typically associated with whites ... Long hair, often called 'good hair' is an important corollary to light skin for high status and beauty in the African American community.⁴³⁹

Hunter iterated that hegemonic dominance rests on the "notion that dark skin represents savagery, irrationality, ugliness, and inferiority," and characterized the effect of its binary opposite.⁴⁴⁰

White skin, and thus whiteness itself, is defined by the opposite: civility, rationality, beauty, and superiority. These meanings are infused into actual body types to create the system of racism as we know it today.⁴⁴¹

The white beauty standard stands as a fortifier for whiteness and as a negating experience for blackness.

⁴³⁵ Hunter, 76.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., 76-77.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., 2-3.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

Mother's proclamation of appropriated whiteness may have played a role in the overthrow of her former concept of beauty as symbolized in the Mexican culture. Mother did not forget completely her young dreams of becoming an *actriz muy famosa de pelicula* (famous movie actress). As she aged, she would periodically look into the mirror, stroke her face from the neck up, and comment:

You know, Nita, I kill myself long ago if it hadn't been for this Elizabeth Taylor face.

Mother's identification with Elizabeth Taylor indicates a cultural disconnection with her former compatriot and actress idol, Maria Felix. Alicia changed her model of what a movie actress looks like, and adopted an American ideal of beauty.

As much as she may have wanted to remain a 'white woman' married to a black man, living in an all black town, the breakdown and eventual dissolution of her marriage brought reality home. Much later, when I was an adult and we were discussing our past family life, Mother stated, "I was a divorcee white woman with three brown children, what could I do?" In this statement Alicia realized the limitations of her whiteness when it came to sharing a life with her brown children.

For my own part, the subject of beauty standards in my imagination was settled early. At about eight or nine years old, I was working with my African American grandmother in her kitchen and telling her how people thought that I was pretty.

"Pretty is as pretty does," she commented.

That adage almost immediately became part of the foundation of my philosophy for survival. I may not have been able to articulate what I sensed, however, it took only seconds before my body and psyche encoded her message. I internalized what she was trying to tell me long before I could speak of it. My Grandmother's wisdom provided a platform from which I was free to define my own version of "pretty."

Cultural Expression

Evidence shows that the Valley Homes as Mother's 'community' held true to Clifford's description that it "can be a site both of support and oppression."⁴⁴² It also shows that her oppression seem to come from within her house, and her support from the outside.

James Clifford's discussion in the essay "Diasporas" interrogates the disposition of the subjects of diaspora, among which Alicia can be counted. The essay "asks what is at stake ... in contemporary invocations of diaspora?"⁴⁴³ Clifford informs that

Diasporas usually presuppose longer distances and a separation more like exile: a constitutive taboo on return, or its postponement to a remote future.⁴⁴⁴

The circumstance of pseudo-deportation under which Alicia left Mexico with her African American husband could be interpreted as both social and physical exile. Ana Prado's comments regarding her daughter's '*ojos chango grandes*' (big monkey eyes) could certainly stand in as the symbol of a "constitutive taboo" against a possible return. If Alicia's association with Tom, his Negro family and

⁴⁴² Clifford. "Diasporas," 314.

⁴⁴³ Ibid., 302.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., 304.

the black neighborhood in which they lived had transformed Mother's whiteness into blackness, the tenets of *racismo* would not serve to make her white again.

Clifford assigns specific criteria that affect women who experience the state of diaspora.

... diaspora women are caught between patriarchies, ambiguous pasts, and futures. They connect and disconnect, forget and remember, in complex, strategic ways. The lived experiences of diasporic women thus involve painful difficulty in mediating discrepant worlds. *Community* can be a site both of support and oppression.⁴⁴⁵

Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* affirmed that in "displacement, the borders between home and world become confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting."⁴⁴⁶ On the home front, Mother received messages to subdue her cultural expressions; and in the public arena, she was both encouraged to and enjoyed sharing the fundamentals of Mexican culture. Mother was both a student of American culture and a teacher of her Spanish-derived culture.

I could read and write in English at age four. Dad had forbidden Mother to speak Spanish to us. He said we would get confused. Mother did not strictly follow Dad's orders, but at the same time she struggled to learn English. She came to count on my 'good English' to write letters and grocery lists. We taught each other. Mother's English improved as the years passed, but she never lost the distinct pronunciation that I could recognize from across a room. The voice of my conscience speaks in her accent.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., 314.

⁴⁴⁶ Bhabha, 13.

Mother and I learned the alphabet and numbers together from phonics and math workbooks that Dad brought home. We wrote our names and address and phone number on the chalk board that Dad hung on the kitchen wall. Mother called out the name of a food, I would spell it aloud and she drew a picture of the food item on the easel poster paper. We studied the color pictures of birds in Volume III, Banff to Boxing, and butterflies in Volume IV, Boy to Caucasoid, in the *American People's Encyclopedia* set that Dad had purchased from a door to door, white salesman.

Mother did not shop for the house, or for her clothes. All purchases were made by Dad. Mother praised anything Dad bought for her, and then proceeded to alter the item to suit her taste. She made most of the matching dresses, skirts, blouses, and pants that my sister and I wore. Mother tried to teach me how to sew, but I had little interest and never learned. It seems that Alicia was not happy with a ready made world. She wanted to redesign, reshape and beautify according to her own standards of style and beauty. Mother wanted to stand out, be different; more different than she already was as a white Mexican living in a black town. I came to appreciate Alicia's talent to transform the ordinary into the extraordinary.

In *Traveling Cultures*, James Clifford asked, "... how is a culture also a site of travel for others?"⁴⁴⁷ Mother answered this question by displaying the symbols of her south of the border culture into the north of the border Midwest. During the day when Dad was at work, Mother played his 78 rpm records. We sat around the console record player to listen to and memorize the words to the songs.

⁴⁴⁷ Clifford. "Traveling Cultures," 101.

We sang Nat King Cole's *Mona Lisa* and *Too Young*. Kay Starr's *Wheel of Fortune* was our big finish, "*Oh, wheel of fortune, I'm hoping somehow, if you ever smile on me, please let it be now!*" Later in the evening, when she bathed me and my sister before bed, the three of us would sing the Mexican songs she had taught us. We imitated mother's pronunciations without understanding the words that we sang. *Solamente Una Vez* (*Only Once in My Life*). *Cielito Lindo* (*Heavenly Pretty*). *La Cucaracha* (*The Cockroach*). Our home contained Mexican artifacts like Mother's hand-painted wooden platters and two pairs of *castanets* that we tried to learn to use to accompany the music.

I learned more about the ways in which Alicia expressed her Mexican side from interviews done with my contemporaries in the Valley Homes and Glendale. Wanda Reid, one of a set of twin girls – along with her sister, Sandra (now deceased) - who lived at the corner of Washington Avenue and Church Street in Glendale, related that her Mother and mine were good friends. Two years older than I, Wanda recalled what she knew about Alicia.

My mother taught me how to sew and I knew that your mother sewed very well. She gave me advice on what to charge when I began to sew for people later on. I remember her accent, so different. I respected your mom and we liked you kids. I remember that Sandra and I took the bus from Glendale to the Valley Homes to spend the day playing with you guys. When I was about twelve years old, your mother came to Eckstein and performed the Mexican Hat Dance in a program in the auditorium.⁴⁴⁸

I did not remember Sandra's and Wanda's play dates with us in the Valley Homes. In addition, I did not remember Mother performing the Mexican Hat

⁴⁴⁸ Reid. Interview, 10/28/11.

Dance at Eckstein. Wanda related that the dance occurred in 1957; by that time I attended school at St. Simon's in Lincoln Heights.

A third grade classmate at St. Simon's, John Williams, former Chief of Police of Woodlawn, told me that he remembers Alicia coming to our class on "Show and Tell" day and performing the Mexican Hat Dance.⁴⁴⁹ I did not remember that incident either.

Cornell Thomas experienced Mother's Mexican culture through her food.

Your mother used to make this Mexican dish with ground beef. It was so good. I guess it was like tacos, that kind of taste.⁴⁵⁰

I did not remember the food that Cornell referred to. I do remember that we used to beg Mother to make what we called a "Mexican breakfast." It consisted of home fries, mixed with onions, green peppers, and eggs with bacon on top and hot, buttery flour tortillas.

Minot Estese recounted that he held Mother in high esteem and that she was more of a friend than an adult figure.

Me and some of the other young guys in the community had a special relationship with your mother. She was a very pretty woman, very outgoing. She talked to us young guys in that Spanish accent and we loved to talk to her. She didn't treat us like normal older people did. She related to us a bit different. She allowed us to call her 'Alicia' which was contrary to how we were raised. We had to address adults as 'Mister and Misses So and So.' She was more like a big sister than an adult, and she liked kids. I knew she was Mexican and she was unique because of her accent. She was exotic and we were impressionable young boys.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁹ Williams. Interview, 11/3/11.

⁴⁵⁰ Thomas. Interview, 12/15/11.

⁴⁵¹ Estese. Interview, 12/10/11.

While I interviewed her mother, Louise Gray, Darlene chimed in: “Your mother loved to sing. She sang songs in Spanish when she visited my mother.”⁴⁵²

Evelyn remembered Mother’s music also.

I remember the music, her Spanish records and the castanets. I can see her playing baseball. One day she came down to the field and got a hit and ran the bases. She was so tickled that she got a hit. I can see her running and giggling from first base to home.⁴⁵³

The interviews also revealed some not so positive experiences as they related to Alicia and my neighborhood friends. Evelyn recounted two incidents that did not show Mother in a good light.

I don’t remember the background, but one day your mother cut my fingernails all the way down to the nub. I must have been about eight years old. Emma had a fit when she saw a little bleeding and she put Mercurochrome on it. As far as I know, she didn’t say anything to your mother about it.⁴⁵⁴

Evelyn related another story about an encounter with Alicia that exhibited what James Clifford termed, the “painful difficulty in mediating discrepant worlds” as applied to the “lived experiences of diasporic women.”⁴⁵⁵ In Alicia’s case, the discrepant worlds are represented by Mexico and the segregated community of the Valley Homes.

I don’t know what I had done, but I remember your mother called me a little black nigger.⁴⁵⁶

I interrupted Evelyn’s story to ask if she knew if it had been said in anger. She replied that it had, and continued the account.

⁴⁵² Gray. Interview, 11/13/11.

⁴⁵³ Perkins. Interview, 11/12/11.

⁴⁵⁴ Perkins. Interview, 11/12/11.

⁴⁵⁵ Clifford. “Diasporas,” 314.

⁴⁵⁶ Perkins. Interview, 11/12/11.

She was on the back sidewalk and I was looking out my bedroom window. She hollered up there. My parents were at work. I smarted off and said ‘well you need to go home and look at your husband.’ I never told Emma because I knew she would have been angry at your Mom, but she would have been furious with me. I would have gotten in trouble if I had been caught talking back to an adult. I never told. She was angry about something, but I don’t know what.⁴⁵⁷

Before the interview ended, Evelyn related another surprising incident; this time with Tom Turner.

We were up at the other end of Medosch on our bikes. I had a paratroopers bicycle from World War II. Your Dad said, ‘Let’s see you race down the street.’ And at ‘ready, set, go’ he held the seat of my bike while you took off. Then he let go. There was a tension there.⁴⁵⁸

The fingernail, name calling and bicycle incident were all new information to me when I heard them in the interview with Evelyn. We know a lot about each other, but I was unaware of these events. It was enlightening and distressing to hear these stories, and even more upsetting to visualize them as I was able to do. I could envision our backyard and Evelyn’s bedroom window as well as the sturdy, red bicycle that she rode. These incidents lifted the veil that covered the parental symbol in my child’s eye; and, an aspect of unkindness and unfairness showed through.

I was more surprised by Tom’s behavior than Alicia’s because I had heard and seen her in action against certain neighbors; she resorted quickly to the n-word and name calling. Tom’s actions caused me to question what I had

⁴⁵⁷ Perkins. Interview, 11/12/11.

⁴⁵⁸ Perkins. Interview, 11/12/11.

considered his sense of fair play; a quality attributable, I thought, to his involvement in sports as a player, coach, umpire and referee.

In her use of n-word, Mother's raises the issue of racial estrangement and also her selective use of it as a word that wounds. Like J.B., who introduced her to the phrase, 'black neeger,' Alicia may not have realized that her use of the n-word wounded not only her neighbor's daughter, but also her husband and her children, and herself by association.

Mother's culture was not transmitted to us from birth. We received only flashes and scraps of her cultural representation. In her case, assimilation was paramount for her survival. Learning her language was not a necessity for her children's survival. We were not involved in a Spanish speaking community; in the Valley Homes, Alicia was the odd woman out. The list of Spanish words we learned from her and from living in Mexico and California for a few months in 1955 is a short one.

Alicia embodied and inhabited what Homi Bhabha termed a "hybrid location of cultural value."⁴⁵⁹ Bhabha posited that history and "testimony" can lose their influence in displacement, thus making the "process of cultural translation a complex form of signification."⁴⁶⁰ One of the questions posed by Bhabha seems to fit Alicia's circumstance, albeit in a skewed light because she is the only individual standing in for her culture against a bloc of African American cultural beliefs and practices. Bhabha asked:

How do strategies of representation or empowerment
come to be formulated in the competing claims of

⁴⁵⁹ Bhabha, 248.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., 26, 247.

communities where, despite shared histories of deprivation and discrimination, the exchange of values, meanings and priorities may not always be collaborative and dialogical, but may be profoundly antagonistic, conflictual and even incommensurable?⁴⁶¹

Bhabha's question brings to the surface all the contradictory and ambiguous aspects of culture faced by Alicia in her efforts to maintain a connection to her Mexican culture and form ties to a new and different culture within a racialized context.

Mother self-identified as white and tried to make us believe we were white. Yet, she married a black man, selecting him to be the father of her children and the family's provider. This position seems puzzling on the surface. It represents, however, the uncertainties and contradictions inherent in a hundreds of years old, color-coded, racial prototype. The excerpts from the interviews contained in this section bring the cultural "sites of displacement, interference, and interaction ... more sharply into view" and offer a perspective from the outside looking in.⁴⁶² Alicia's efforts to "negotiate" an identity within a new cultural paradigm, and to present herself as a source of information from one group to another across the cultural divide, constituted an unnatural phenomenon in the space and time of the Valley Homes in the 1950s.

Single Black Dad

Just as we were the only visible half-breeds in the family, so we became the only family headed by a single Dad in the Valley Homes. How it happened was a lesson in futility. A series of separations and reconciliations occurred from

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., 2.

⁴⁶² Ibid., 101.

the summer of 1955 until the final divorce decree issued in the fall of 1957 dissolved the marriage between Tom and Alicia. Alicia took an unsuccessful turn at being a single, unemployed mother of three for about nine months. Economic circumstances and concern for her mental and emotional well-being forced her to return to her family in California and Mexico. She left us for our father to care for; he was taken quite by surprise in the whole affair. After his initial shock wore off, Dad moved us back into the apartment we had lived in with mother.

The notion of a single dad in the Valley Homes in the 1950s was uncommon, to say the least. Studies of single fathers center mostly on the fact of their absence. In addition, most of these fathers are young. When Dad took full custody of us, he was almost forty-three years old. Roberta Coles' "Black Single Fathers: Choosing to Parent Full-Time" iterated that "no study has looked at single African American men who parent full-time."⁴⁶³ The demographic that Coles targeted in this study included "fathers who are young, have never been married, and have low incomes and fewer children."⁴⁶⁴ Tom Turner as a single parent did not fit this set of criteria. His children, however, did fit the demographic that "found nonwhite children more likely than white children to reside in father-only families."⁴⁶⁵

As an adult, I asked Dad about the circumstances under which he became a single parent. He admitted that he was taken by surprise that Mother left and that he also received offers from family members and friends to take us and raise

⁴⁶³ Coles, 413.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid. .

us in their homes, but not as a group. My brother and sister and I would have been split up.

The incident that sent Mother over the edge and made her decide to leave has been impossible to forget. One morning we all came down for breakfast before going to school. Only one egg and a bottle of cold water were in the ice box. Mother broke down and cried and seemed to wither before my eyes. When she recovered, I suggested to her that she should leave us in Ohio and go back to her family in California. I told her that Dad would have to take care of us. I was eleven and she listened to me.

Mother's departure took on the characteristics of an escape from Tom in which she made me her accomplice. She left one day after school. Our clothes had been laundered and folded into two laundry baskets. Her clothes were packed in a set of white American Tourister luggage that had been purchased for the trip to California three years previous. Glenn had made the day a living hell for mother. He set a fire in the laundry area, and while Mother was putting it out, he smeared red lipstick all over the white luggage. By the time Olga and I arrived home from school, the scene was chaotic. Mother loaded us all into Mr. Larkin's cab and he drove us to Glendale. We were dropped off at the house of a friend of Mother's and told that when we saw Dad drive up the street to his parents house we should walk up there and tell him that Mother had left.

I could not have anticipated his anger and fury at this news. He loaded us into his car and demanded to know where she was. I had been instructed by Mother not to tell him that she was catching a flight to San Diego until a certain

time, by which she would have been sure that the plane had taken off. I had to stall for about thirty minutes so I led Dad on a wild goose chase down one street and then another in areas that I was unfamiliar with. Finally, he pulled the car over and confronted me with the fact that Mother could not possibly be in any of the neighborhoods I had led him to because they were “all white.”

Dad’s observation has stayed with me and caused me to consider that I deliberately took him to these unfamiliar areas where I knew no black people lived. They were not “sundown towns,” but they were “sundown” neighborhoods. If mother was ‘white,’ she would have been able to access these areas, move around in them, and be safe from any potential harm. Tom, however, after twelve years, must have seen Mother in a darker light and at some level realized that her lot in *los Estados Unidos* had been cast in the African American community.

I relented and told him that she had gone to the airport to catch a plane to California. The Greater Cincinnati Airport is located across the river in Northern Kentucky and it took another thirty to forty minutes to get there. By that time, Mother’s plane was in the sky.

Mother settled in San Diego near her family and worked in a laundry with one of her sisters. She wrote and called frequently and I wrote back. She sent a portable red typewriter so that I could write more in my letters to her; even though I did not yet know how to type. When the ribbon ran out of ink, Dad would not replace it. Mother was gone almost three years, however, in that time she visited twice.



Cincinnati Union Station, summer 1960. Olga, Glenn, Ana; Alicia wearing sunglasses.

Coles reported that a “sense of duty and a desire to fulfill parental responsibility” drove most of the single fathers in her study to take on the role of full-time single parent.⁴⁶⁶ Next to that imperative, a “preexisting bond with the child and the desire to be a role model” were secondary to the call to duty.⁴⁶⁷

Like some of the fathers in Coles’ research, Tom had been absent – physically not living with us and geographically removed from us by long distances – for a total of about sixteen months by the time Mother left. These kinds of absences, Coles recorded, were used by fathers for “personal development” like education and/or training for employment.⁴⁶⁸

During these periods, Tom lived with his parents in Glendale on Washington Avenue in the attic bedroom. And in 1957, he traded in the 1954 two-toned Pontiac Chieftain for a state-of-the-art 1957 Oldsmobile ’98 with automatic windows, power brakes and power steering, pink with black interior.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., 415-416.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., 416.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid. .

These two facts indicate the need for Tom to maintain a certain public persona that reflected prosperity.

The sense of duty in a general sense was well instilled in Tom Turner. My impression of those confusing years is that the three of us were part of a turf war. In the divorce case, Tom requested custody, but did not get it. When circumstances became such that he ‘had’ to take us, or farm us out to relatives, he made the decision to become a single dad. This indicates that his decision came out of “his own desire that he, not anyone else, have the responsibility and accountability for raising his child.”⁴⁶⁹

Because Dad could fill all the domestic requirements of a household, like cooking, cleaning, laundry and even a little sewing, the household ran smooth when it came to meals and maintenance. The things Dad learned growing up in a household of thirteen, combined with his military training, leadership and organizational talents, made him a perfect candidate for a drill sergeant. He was a good provider – never saw that one egg and bottle of cold water again – but we did fall on some trying economic times when General Electric experienced cutbacks and strikes. Tom was a “proactive” father when it came to involving us in sports and athletic activities.

Coles study showed that only one single father in the group had “found his own father to be nurturing, and that was qualified by ‘somewhat.’”⁴⁷⁰ The chances of Tom exhibiting any “*nurturing*” qualities were, in the vernacular ‘slim and none’ due to a “lack of a nurturing father” in his own childhood

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., 418.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid., 419.

experience.⁴⁷¹ While the fathers in Coles' research said their parents "served as role models," they added that "it should be noted that sometimes it was a role model for what *not* to do as a parent." Coles cited uninvolved and distant as the culprits that prevented the nurturing spirit.⁴⁷² Tom, however, was with us everyday and involved to the extent that he could be in determining our behavior, actions and movement. His parental style was more 'show' than 'tell' and his hearing disability was a barrier to communication in more ways than one.

The fact that we were forced to speak in loud tones to make ourselves heard, sometimes accompanied by repetition, created a degree of emotional stress. The fact that Dad spoke in commanding and loud tones maintained the level of stress. And in what I could not describe at the time, the isolation that Dad sometimes experienced because of his disability worked against a harmonious environment. Most of the time he assumed that if we were laughing and he did not know what we were laughing about, that he was the butt of our joke. It was not always true. Other times when he did not want to hear what we were saying, he made a grand gesture of removing the hearing aid plug from his ear.

With Tom working the 7am to 3pm shift at General Electric, Olga and I got ourselves ready for school and arrived home shortly before Dad. Glenn had not yet started school and required attention during the day. The "human support system" that Dad created worked very well for exactly the amount of time that it needed to.⁴⁷³ Dad's family lived in Glendale and it was not considered feasible at that time for someone to drive from Glendale to the Valley Homes to watch Glen

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

⁴⁷² Ibid.

⁴⁷³ Ibid., 430.

on a daily basis, or vice versa. To resolve this issue, Tom seems to have leveraged one of the characteristics of single parenting as reported by the men in Coles' study, i.e., the "favorable reaction from friends, family, and acquaintances, often making them attractive to women."⁴⁷⁴

Norma Parker and Theresa Smith were the cogs in the triangulated system that revolved around our household and the care and feeding of the kids, while Tom worked. Norma and Theresa were both married women. Norma was childless and Theresa had a son in college. Theresa worked full time as a secretary downtown and Norma worked a few hours a week for an elderly white lady in Bond Hill. Norma's husband worked full time at General Electric on the midnight to 7am shift. He was a bit of a drinker, but in today's parlance would most likely be termed a 'functioning alcoholic.' Theresa's husband suffered from Parkinson's and underwent treatment and therapy at the local Veteran's health facility.

Coles reported that the single fathers in her research lived "within five miles" of their support system. Norma lived less than a block west of us, and Theresa lived less than a block east of us, all within the confines of the Valley Homes complex.

The daily schedule ran something like this: Norma came in the morning to get us up, make breakfast and get us out the door to school. Glen went with Norma. When Olga and I came home for lunch, Norma had something waiting for us to eat. She cleaned up the dishes and the kitchen and she was there when we came home from school close to three o'clock. She stayed until Dad arrived

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., 418.

from work. Dad started dinner and we ate when Theresa and her husband arrived. Olga and I did the dinner dishes and Theresa sometimes did a load of laundry, or some ironing on the Ironrite mangle.⁴⁷⁵ Theresa's husband usually fell asleep on the couch right after dinner with the paper shaking in his hand. After Theresa and her husband left, we took our baths and got our clothes ready for the next day. When Dad thought we were asleep, he would walk down to Theresa's house. When he left there, he walked up the street to Norma's house.

The group of us traveled and went to the lake and on picnics. Norma's husband did not usually go with us, but Theresa's husband never missed out on an event.



Glenn, Olga, Ana, Theresa Smith, Norma Parker (outside front);
George Smith and Thomas Turner.

Glenn started school full time and I as got older, I took on more responsibilities for the care of Olga, Glenn and myself. I started dinner. I did

⁴⁷⁵ The Ironrite mangle is a 1950's professional laundry like iron made for the home. The model in question is stored in Tom Turner's garage.

laundry. I ironed. I answered the telephone. My sister related to me a few years ago that a therapist once told her that I had been a ‘surrogate wife and mother.’

I talked to one individual who lived near us at this time who recalled our circumstances. Cynthia Terry, now a realtor, and then a friend of Olga’s, had several impressions that are worth noting.

I thought you were in charge of the house, seemed like the parent getting the kids in line, had them doing chores and stuff during the day. I remember you hollering out the door to Olga and Glennie to come in and do their work. I can see you ironing on that funny iron you all had. I thought you were so much older than you were. I don’t remember your mom, but I knew she was Mexican. I think Olga must have told me. I thought you all were such beautiful people, even as children, and well mannered.⁴⁷⁶

Cynthia surprised me when I asked what she remembered about Tom Turner.

Your Dad had a great responsibility in keeping you all. I knew he was raising you by himself and that made an impression on me. I thought it was very honorable for your Dad to be able to do that. To manage a family as a man. I hadn’t seen that before. Most families around were two parent families, few single mothers. Your Dad did a good job.⁴⁷⁷

Cynthia’s sentiments echo some statements from the fathers in Coles study. One is quoted as saying, “Okay, this is the way it is – I’m going to handle my business.”⁴⁷⁸ He added, “I like the fact that I’m doing something that not many men do.”⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁶ Terry. Interview, 11/10/11.

⁴⁷⁷ Terry. Interview, 11/10/11.

⁴⁷⁸ Coles, 432.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

Another father responded that, “I wanted to let people know that we are here and we care. Not all black fathers give up on their children.”⁴⁸⁰

The fact that no previous studies have been done on single black fathers who care for their children full time, and that Coles’ research results were published in 2002, positions Tom Turner ahead of the curve in this area.

My friend Evelyn offered another view of Dad as a single parent that reflected an insider’s view, as opposed to Cynthia’s more public, outside view.

Seemed like things got worse. He got sterner and I wasn’t sure that was possible. We couldn’t visit or play together as much because you had to watch Olga and Glennie. You know we weren’t allowed to use our voice. We came up in a time when the standard was ‘do what I say because I tell you to do it.’⁴⁸¹

Coles’ research agreed that Dad was a near perfect candidate for single fatherhood because of his age, level of employment, support system, residence, and degree of commitment to fulfilling the parental role.⁴⁸² Evelyn’s characterization, however, anticipates the breakdown that Tom experienced.

At some point in this single father sojourn, Tom experienced an emotional and mental breakdown and spent a few weeks in a hospital designed to treat such issues. Theresa was the one who told me that Dad was in the hospital. We did not visit him there and when he came home, he seemed the same as he was before. Dad will not talk about it and sometimes claims that it did not happen. The hospital that he was admitted to no longer exists.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁸¹ Perkins. Interview, 11/12/11.

⁴⁸² Coles, 431.

Norma's husband died of a heart attack over Labor Day Weekend right before I went into the ninth grade. I took the call and gave the message to Dad when he came home from visiting Miss Miller, a single lady he knew who lived in Kennedy Heights. Dad had talked about moving out of the Valley Homes to this newly integrated neighborhood that would put us in a new school district. The new high school, with African Americans in the minority, was considered diverse and one of the best in the city.

When it became evident that Dad was not going to marry Norma Parker, and that Theresa Smith was not going to divorce her husband because of her Catholic faith, Dad became engaged to Miss Miller. The following year, we moved out of the Valley Homes into a more modern apartment in Kennedy Heights.

Mother came back to Cincinnati to stay shortly after I started tenth grade. She remarried and we resumed our relationship with her, visiting on weekends and staying with her in the summer.

Summary

Our family located, dissolved and reconstituted itself over a period of five years between 1955 and 1960 in the Valley Homes. This time is characterized by an accumulation of exile, moving, homelessness, economic and emotional stress, abandonment and return. The Valley Homes through this time remained the touchstone in our lives. Glendale housed our African American roots. Our Mexican roots were only visible and viable in Mother's presence. The three-year break from her presence in our daily lives essentially negated any ties to her

culture and erased any sense that we may have had of ourselves as being a part of any other racial paradigm than Negro. Dad represented economic stability and it was with him that we cast our lot as a matter of survival.

Through the recollections of the individuals who lived the Valley Homes during this period, a portrayal of the area presents as a robust place to live. The community held itself to certain standards and saw that they were maintained. Employment was accessible and available to men and women.

The interviews have also provided private and public portraits of Tom and Alicia within the context of their mixed marriage and its life within the segregated community. Some insight into the couples' motivations and interiorities can also be gleaned from the information offered in the interviews.

The social construction of race is on display in the discussion of skin tones and hair texture. Viewed from the personal perspective, the conversation about color remains applicable in the African American community more than sixty years later.

Even though Mother had to leave her children, she could not separate completely from us or the African American community that we claimed as our own and that accepted us as its 'little honey.' Dad's attempts to exile us did not take and when he came face to face with the situation, he took on the parenting role and became the only single father in the Valley Homes.

My eventual departure from the all black environment of the Valley Homes and Lincoln Heights further extended my world view to include the presence of more white people than black, although not on a personal basis. The

fact of subsequent travel, work experiences, strong ties to family in Glendale and friends all over the country, has positioned me beyond the pale of color that once shrouded my identity, but not without the daily acknowledgement of my experience with color and the recognition that I do not yet live in a color-blind world.

Conclusion

This research has attempted to assemble a frame that depicts the aspects of identity formation in an individual whose parents self-identity as Negro and Mexican/White within a post World War II, all black, Midwest landscape. Race, as the overarching feature of the frame, exhibits as perhaps the most enduring tenet of Critical Race Theory (CRT), the ordinary, everyday, embeddedness of racism. The history and development of the now less than one square mile that makes up Lincoln Heights, Ohio, according to historian Carl Westmoreland, could be seen, in the 1950s as “black America in microcosm.”⁴⁸³

The distinctive and contrasting racial components of the frame, African American and Mexican/White, invite a comparative dialogue that results in an individual and personal characterization of the social and cultural phenomenon of blackness north and south of the border. Racism in the United States equates with Mexican *racismo* on the point of color coding. Racism allows that “one drop of African blood makes you Black.” *Racismo* alters the paradigm and takes the view that “one drop of White blood makes you at least not Black.”⁴⁸⁴ This distinction denies the existence of any African heritage in the Latino bloodline and aligns Mexicans with whiteness. The rule of hypodescent, in the United States, overrides all others as it concerns skin color.

Mother’s insistence on her whiteness set her apart from my blackness. Her departure provided the time and space in which the overwhelmingly African American culture in which we lived cemented the seed of black culture in me and

⁴⁸³ Westmoreland. Interview, 11/10/11.

⁴⁸⁴ Comas-Diaz, 38.

enlivened an awareness of the affects and effects of racism. In this research, the ongoing discussion of blackness and whiteness has relied on and referenced the CRT principle of the social construction of both black and white races. The models of *racismo* and racism background the frame of this research and are central to the cohesion of the identity formation explored here.

The locus of the frame is situated primarily in the Valley Homes all black housing project in Lincoln Heights. Influenced by and connected to residents in the Upper and Lower Subs in Lincoln Heights, and Tom's family and friends in the nearby wealthy, white enclave of Glendale, place and time worked together to produce socially constructed behaviors and events that reveal the legacy and history of this part of the nation.

Growing up in a black community in the 1950s, however, had its distinct set of benefits. Carl Westmoreland shared his thoughts on these benefits.

Lincoln Heights was not a ghetto. You got a sense of yourself just by being in the community. Just by being around all black people. Growing up in a black neighborhood allowed me to understand my potential.⁴⁸⁵

Carl recalled the models in the community and admitted that he was influenced by "men who wore three-piece Harris tweeds" and by adults who kept him safe in the black community and at the same time exposed him to the world outside that community.

I met Paul Robeson when I was five. *Othello* was playing at the Taft Theatre downtown. Then I saw Ray Chapman in the role of Othello at St. Simon's, and my mother played Desdemona. Miss Hattie Palmer took me to see Althea Gibson play tennis.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁵ Westmoreland. Interview, 11/10/11.

⁴⁸⁶ Westmoreland. Interview, 11/10/11.

The Ray Chapman referenced here is the same Chapman whose interview information appears earlier in this research. Miss Hattie Palmer, athlete and avid tennis player, is my Aunt Hattie, the youngest of Dad's sisters. Westmoreland agreed that we lived in a community of strivers who worked and pushed to stay even.

Westmoreland's observations spoke directly to the issue of "vacant self-esteem" introduced by Joy Degruy Leary in *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing (PTSS)* and discussed in Chapter II under "Assimilation."⁴⁸⁷

You don't learn to be a leader in an integrated community. You learn to be second. You learn to be the best 'colored boy.' We see ourselves in a very limited scope. That's why my work has been about discovery, about us reinforcing our self image.⁴⁸⁸

Westmoreland provided an indirect reference to racism and *racismo* in a contrast of the image of African Americans against the image of Mexican Americans in this country.

Blacks have become an expendable burden to America now. They're not even going to spend the money to lock us up anymore. They're just going to lock us out. Isolate us. On the other hand, people from the lowest rung in Spanish speaking America say 'you will treat me like an adult.' All the public signage printed in Spanish is as a result of demanding respect and getting it.⁴⁸⁹

Westmoreland's point is well taken and reflects that a transformation must occur in the African American psyche. Westmoreland, as senior advisor for historic

⁴⁸⁷ Leary, 127.

⁴⁸⁸ Westmoreland. Interview, 11/10/11.

⁴⁸⁹ Westmoreland. Interview, 11/10/11.

preservation at the Cincinnati Underground Railroad Freedom Center, and author and lead researcher of the slavery exhibit at the Center, the “largest of its kind in the world,” expressed that “history is not about only preserving the past, it’s also about a step toward securing an honorable future.” This statement spoke to the core of this research as a reclamation project in search of an identity framework.

At a point in the interview, Carl commented that the poet “Nikki Giovanni could not have come from anywhere else” other than Lincoln Heights. Giovanni grew up in Lincoln Heights and spent time with her grandmother in Knoxville, Tennessee. Nikki also attended St. Simon’s a few years behind Carl, and a few years ahead of me.

In a phone interview from Blacksburg, Virginia where she is a University Distinguished Professor at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Nikki expanded the conversation about slavery and history.

I think it’s important to explore slavery looking for new information so that we can imagine it in new ways. New information allows us to reinterpret a past that has already been given to us, laid out on a plate.⁴⁹⁰

This statement from Giovanni demonstrates that the past as history is not carved in granite and that it is open to re-interpretation that allows new and different frames of reference to emerge.

Giovanni spoke to the media images available to African Americans on television in the 1950s and added a new slant on how they could be viewed.

We didn’t see ourselves on TV, but we did see ourselves. My parents didn’t have any particular white friends and Ozzie and Harriet didn’t have any black friends. I didn’t say that I lived in a segregated world. I said this is my

⁴⁹⁰ Giovanni. Interview, 12/13/11.

world. And it worked. Everything that has gone before has put us in this position and we can be proud of that. We had to find our place in the world without the worry of meeting expectations.⁴⁹¹

These observations illustrated Giovanni's step out of the world of "vacant esteem" to a self-assigned state of intrinsic worth and value on the world stage. This step reminded me of my own conscious decision to displace a 'negro' psyche with a 'black' psyche and ultimately to move beyond any color designation of my psyche. At the same time, I maintain a partiality for and an affinity to blackness, along with an awareness of how it is represented through socially constructed racist processes.

This research uses the CRT tenet of storytelling as an overlay to the principle of "interest convergence" that frames the motivations of Tom and Alicia to marry in Mexico in 1946. Because their motivations to engage in an endeavor of mutual interest are conveyed in a narrative supplied by the parties, it is at times dramatic and contained, and also somewhat unexplainable. Faye V. Harrison's "The Persistent Power of Race" provides some context for this coming together which was unusual for the time and place in which the couple lived as a family.

Racial meanings and hierarchies are unstable, but this instability is unconstrained by poles of difference that have remained relatively constant: white supremacy and the black subordination that demarcates the social bottom.⁴⁹²

Either with an awareness of the social taboos they were going up against, or an attitude that they would be able to overcome the obstacles of mixed race marriage in the 1950s in Ohio, Tom and Alicia, spurred by their own personal

⁴⁹¹ Giovanni. Interview, 12/13/11.

⁴⁹² Harrison, 58-59.

desires, took a stand in the public sphere against the “complex and often covert structures and dynamics of racial inequality.”⁴⁹³ Operating within a “nexus of material relations within which social and discursive practices perpetuate oppressive power relations between populations presumed to be essentially different,” the couple sought to merge their individual desires into a larger frame that all the while worked against their marriage in both the private and public arenas.⁴⁹⁴

Tom and Alicia’s marriage originated in *Sonora, Mexico*, and provoked by the intervention of family and friends and their connections to institutional and legal forces, traveled to the outskirts of Cincinnati, Ohio. The private and public outside forces can be interpreted as an indication of the covertness of *racismo* at work against the couple. The unanticipated interference opens the door to speculation on their individual intents to arrive at a point of interest convergence.

Within the context of Critical Race Theory, “interest convergence” is generally accepted to result in outcomes that are in the best interests of both parties, although not for the same reasons.⁴⁹⁵ Delgado and Stefancic cite that “racism advances the interests of both white elites (materially) and working-class people (psychically) ... [and] large segments of society have little incentive to eradicate it.”⁴⁹⁶ For this reason, interest convergence is perceived as an “incentive to eradicate racism.”⁴⁹⁷ As discussed in the Introduction to *Blaxicana Identity*,

⁴⁹³ Ibid., 47.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁵ Delgado. *CRT: An Introduction*, 6.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid., 7.

Derrick Bell Jr. challenged and repositioned the benefits of *Brown V. Board of Education*, as an example of interest convergence, from a sign of racial progress to an object that served the dominant power interests.⁴⁹⁸ Tom and Alicia's motivations align with CRT's motivations for interest convergence – material gain for Alicia and psychic gain for Tom.

The geography of this ethnography is situated across borders, between Mexico and the Midwestern United States, and in proximity to contested and ambiguous Southern and Northern ideologies concerning race. Lincoln Heights, established in the 1920s, and the Valley Homes created in the 1940s, represent two tiers of a historically segregated landscape. Less than one square mile in size, Lincoln Heights has long been identified as a black town by way of the race of its residents. According to Faye V. Harrison, Lincoln Heights' location could be viewed as a site for the “construction and deconstruction of race as both an intellectual device and a social reality.”⁴⁹⁹ Lincoln Heights, as a black town, also can be perceived as a cultural survival tool. Stuart Hall provides an applicable definition of culture as

... the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action though which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence.⁵⁰⁰

The celebration of Lincoln Heights sixty-fifth year in existence in 2011 was testament to the first southern migrants who crossed the Ohio River to be in the

⁴⁹⁸ Bell, 23.

⁴⁹⁹ Harrison, 47.

⁵⁰⁰ Hall, 81.

‘north’ where they came to escape the remnants of slavery and begin to live free with full citizenship rights. The erosion, however, of the area is apparent.

The most current former mayor of Lincoln Heights, LaVerne Mitchell (my sister’s childhood friend), shared that the population of Lincoln Heights is about thirty-three hundred, compared to an average population of around four-thousand. Prior to 1990, Lincoln Heights enjoyed ‘City’ status with a population of five-thousand plus.⁵⁰¹

An Ohio State University graduate, who has recruited many students from Lincoln Heights to the University in Columbus, Mitchell confessed that on her college application essay she wrote that she would “like to be mayor of my community one day.” Mitchell has realized that goal and more, having served two terms as Mayor and seven terms on City Council.

Mitchell considered that the most important developments for Lincoln Heights have been the merger with the Princeton School District, and a new elementary school for grades kindergarten through five, which solidified the educational resources for the Village; and the Health Center, both built in 2004.

The health center serves eighteen jurisdictions, some north of Hamilton County. There are sites in Forest Park and Mount Healthy, but Lincoln Heights is the headquarters. We serve the Princeton population too, which includes a large number of Hispanics. The health center is our number one source of income and it houses an independent black-owned pharmacy.⁵⁰²

Mitchell allowed also that the area has lost some ground.

People began to move out in the 1960s. As Cincinnati opened up, black teachers went to the City’s public

⁵⁰¹ Mitchell. Interview, 12/7/11.

⁵⁰² Mitchell. Interview, 12/7/11.

schools to teach. They could pay more. At one time, we had Texaco and Sohio gas stations. The mom and pop businesses have no family around to keep them going. We're landlocked and don't have anywhere to go other than back there on Shepherd Drive.⁵⁰³

The former mayor conveyed some disappointment around issues that she felt could have helped the community.

Our former state senator Bill Bowen arranged for Lincoln Heights to have the opportunity to be a site for a pre-release center. It would have brought in revenue and jobs. It was voted down by the community and went to Warren County, in Lebanon, Ohio, just north of us. The facility wouldn't have been seen from the street and it would have replaced an old junk yard that's still there. Also, it would have brought in more law enforcement engagement and activity in the area, and we may not have had the drug problem that we had. I felt bad because we let down our Black State Senator.⁵⁰⁴

Mitchell described an ongoing environmental issue that has plagued Lincoln Heights and its residents for several generations.

The City of Cincinnati owns a police target range that sits on Evendale property right next to Woodlawn and Lincoln Heights. Every ten to twenty years, someone approaches Cincinnati about the firing range. It's right next to our Marianna public housing projects. It's an environmental hazard, not environmentally safe. Shooting lead from eight in the morning until nine at night. You become insensitive to the sound of gun shots. It's still there, like the junkyard.⁵⁰⁵

A memorandum dated February 13, 2002, written on City of Cincinnati interdepartmental letterhead from the Director of Community Development to the Mayor and Members of City Council, identified as a topic for discussion, the

⁵⁰³ Mitchell. Interview, 12/7/11.

⁵⁰⁴ Mitchell. Interview, 12/7/11.

⁵⁰⁵ Mitchell. Interview, 12/7/11.

“Police Target Range Property, owned by the City of Cincinnati ... located ... in Evendale ... [and] which abuts Woodlawn and Lincoln Heights.”⁵⁰⁶

The memorandum also communicated that at the request of a “Commissioner” the City will convene

To discuss the land use issues related to the future disposition of the Mill Creek Psychiatric Center and the Police target range properties.⁵⁰⁷

Ten years later, the target range continues to operate in the same location.

Mitchell, however, accounted that change is on its way in the form of outside forces. Mitchell stated, “Interstate 75 freeway is planned for expansion and its widening may affect a couple of businesses located right off the freeway. And we’re probably going to lose some housing.”

Some housing has been lost, but in Mitchell’s view new structures have given the area a new and more modern look.

The Valley Homes went into steady decline after going into receivership in 2005. By way of a Neighborhood Stabilization Program Grant, a developer came in to tear down the Valley Homes and rebuild the Villas of the Valley. Lincoln Heights monies were used to demolish dilapidated housing. We made code enforcement a priority. We bought some houses and tore them down and now we’re making sure that all housing is up to code.⁵⁰⁸

Part of the demolition of the Valley Homes occurred since I came to Ohio in August 2010. New single-family bungalows, designed especially for senior citizens, now fill one side of Medosch. The other side of Medosch consists of

⁵⁰⁶ City of Cincinnati. 1.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁸ Mitchell. Interview, 12/7/11.

updated, multi-use, townhome units. The structures are painted in bright yellows, blues, and oranges. Mitchell characterized Villas of the Valley as a positive step.

Villas of the Valley brought in some money, new sense of hope, a breath of fresh air because the Valley Homes had gotten so bad. Now we have new homes for seniors, rejuvenation for the area, and plans for some single family homes to be built on Wayne Avenue.⁵⁰⁹

Lincoln Heights and its history reflect the legacy and currency of its racial landscape. According to Mitchell, the town lives with the good ...

We're not in fiscal trouble now. We're fiscally sound. We've conserved the funds we have and we're not engaged in frivolous spending.

and the bad ...

The community is resistant to change and we need more community participation, especially young people, in local government.⁵¹⁰

The Mayor indicated that there has been a give and take involved in keeping the town afloat. For example, Lincoln Heights sold land to the Princeton School District for the site of the new elementary school; and sold land to the Health Center for the site of the new facility. Mitchell sees a future for Lincoln Heights.

I don't see the city deteriorating and going away. No. We have a good manager ... former managers and mayors on the council now with a wealth of experience.⁵¹¹

Perhaps that experience will count toward a future for Lincoln Heights. Like its past, the future of Lincoln Heights is dependent on its present.

This insular community is subject to outside forces, isolation and neighborhood apathy. A summary of the factors working against the town's

⁵⁰⁹ Mitchell. Interview, 12/7/11.

⁵¹⁰ Mitchell. Interview, 12/7/11.

⁵¹¹ Mitchell. Interview, 12/7/11.

survival seem to echo the same issues that plagued its beginnings and its incorporation process: housing code enforcement; low population numbers; cumulative environmental issues; sale of land to achieve fiscal stability; encroachment of boundaries via public policy; and, limited local educational opportunities.

At one point in the interview with Mitchell, she leaned in and brought me into her confidence to tell a story that recreated the inauspicious beginnings of Lincoln Heights as an independent and incorporated entity. The gentleman that she mentions, his wife and family, lived in the Valley Homes in the 1950s and were good friends of my parents.

Mr. Corbett Harvey told me at church one day that a group representing Lincoln Heights went to Washington D.C. to talk to President Roosevelt [FDR] about the incorporation of Lincoln Heights. Mr. Harvey said they were told to put off the incorporation efforts which would have put GE in Lincoln Heights until after the war was over. When the war was over, they didn't honor their deal.⁵¹²

The loss of General Electric as a revenue source for the city sealed its economic development fate from the very beginning. Observing Lincoln Heights' high and low points, and etching its progress on the historical timeline, has the same effect as water running over a rock. Erosion is slow and almost imperceptible. Rocks, however, become pebbles under the slow grind of time.

The communities of Lincoln Heights and the Valley Homes present through the lens of their former and current residents in the interview excerpts used primarily in Chapters II and III. Arranging and conducting these interviews

⁵¹² Mitchell. Interview, 12/7/11.

posed almost no issues, however, I experienced unanticipated difficulty when it came to listening to these voices in my ear and transcribing the words to Microsoft Word. It was not until about the tenth transcription that I was comfortable enough to complete an interview in one session without interruption. I could not figure out why I felt anxious and experienced a mental block against listening to the tapes.

In search of an answer, a friend led me to an online article that discussed transference and counter-transference issues in a counseling setting. Kevin C. Jackson, an employment and career counselor, wrote that “Transference ... occurs ... in all of our relationships” whether we are aware of it or not.⁵¹³ In my view, Jackson described what I felt when listening to the interview tapes.

The feelings that are unconsciously projected in transference and counter-transference are very real, come from the center of one’s being and are based upon past experiences with other people and/or events that have combined to formulate an individual’s mental models or schemas.⁵¹⁴

Because I did not give up on the task of listening to the tapes, after a while the experience lost its emotional charge. Jackson posited that, “When transference is accepted, the client will often resolve it independently.”⁵¹⁵ The entire experience of returning to Ohio and reconnecting with friends and family on a daily basis, as opposed to the once a year visit, has raised and resolved lingering emotional issues. Jackson might equate this experience as an exploration of the “past as a

⁵¹³ Jackson, 1.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., 2.

separate entity from the present.”⁵¹⁶ In the “safe environment” of friends and family, I was able to revisit our collective pasts, and “issues [began] to surface.”⁵¹⁷ It was, however, the “acceptance, awareness, and respect” that I assigned to this experience that swung the “emotional pendulum” in my favor.⁵¹⁸

The practice and process of this research, as well as the finished product, are part and parcel of the resolution of these personal issues. To convey this account and align it with the geography and history of the Valley Homes in the 1950s was the reason I returned to school in 2002. It was a story that I wanted to deliver and pass on simply because of the unique nature of its time, place, and principal players. That I have been able to benefit psychically from its production is a bonus.

This research extends the conversation of mixed race individuals as representations of not only racial disorder, but also unacknowledged secrets and shadows of a society where “race will always be at the center of the American experience.”⁵¹⁹ The task of removing race from the center of the conversation seems monumental, if not impossible. Its ordinary, embedded instances of exclusion, isolation, disadvantage, and psychic wounds that give it definition are self-reinforcing and self-sustaining. A mixed race identity may be perceived as providing options and alternatives not otherwise accessible to persons who are identifiably and visibly African American; it does not, however, transcend racism.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid., 3.

⁵¹⁹ Omi & Winant, 5.

The futile task of trying to invalidate racial categories based on skin color, religion or national origin can only be accomplished in the place where they reside – in the imagination where the hold is strong. It has been in the constant struggle, resolved in a progressive reinvention of self that the ethnographer/author has imagined an identity rooted in African American culture, accented by a Latino experience, assimilated in the dominant paradigm, and content to draw on any and all of those imaginings as survival and the situation require.

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