

Who Dat Say (We) “Too Depraved to Be Saved”?: Re-memembering Katrina/Haiti (and Beyond): Critical Studyin’ for Human Freedom

JOYCE E. KING

Georgia State University

In this essay, Joyce King attempts to interrupt the calculus of human (un)worthiness and to repair the collective cultural amnesia that are legacies of slavery and that make it easy—hegemonically and dysconsciously—for the public to accept myths and media reports, such as those about the depravity of survivors of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and the earthquake in Haiti. King uses examples of Black Studies scholarship within a critical studyin’ framework to recover and re-member the historical roots of resistance and revolution and the African cultural heritage that New Orleans and Haiti have in common. Within this framework, teachers, students, and parents can combat ideologically biased knowledge, disparaging discourses of Blackness, and dehumanizing disaster narratives.

Mutilations were common, ears, limbs and sometimes the private parts . . . Their masters poured burning wax on their arms and hands and shoulders, emptied boiling cane sugar over their heads, burned them alive, roasted them on slow fires, filled them with gunpowder and blew them up with a match . . . these bestial practices were normal features of slave life [in Saint Domingue].

C. L. R. James, The Black Jacobins (1963)

Evidence indicates that black female slaves were often placed in sexual relationships with men not of their choosing with the intention of producing children, as one might breed domesticated animals for profit.

Ron Goodwin, “Control After Dark” (2008)

It's just unbelievable . . . how people are behaving [in New Orleans], with the shootings and now the gang rapes and the gang violence and shooting at helicopters who are trying to help out and rescue people.

Tiger Woods, at a golf tournament in Boston, September 2, 2005

Since the January 12, 2010 earthquake in Haiti, women and girls living in the internally displaced persons (IDP) camps face alarming rates of rape and other gender-based violence (GBV).

Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti, "Our Bodies Are Still Trembling" (2010)¹

Two years into the historic administration of the first Black American president, in Atlanta, where I live, Black American males' saggin' pants have reached a new low. On any given day, able-bodied but most likely never-employed Black males can be seen waddling down the street with their pants cinched around their thighs—below their behinds—artfully and carefully exposing colorful undershorts. My generation—the Sixties-Black-Studies-Building-Hope-of-the-Race folk—often feel . . . exasperated. From our vantage point of the Black Freedom Struggle (Ransby, 2005), we see invisible chains that shackle their feet (and their minds). Perhaps by saggin' their pants they are resisting their abject disposability, thereby turning what was a jailhouse mandate into a fashion statement. Applying Carter G. Woodson's (1933) observations about the effects of miseducation for second-class citizenship to this context, it would appear these young Black men are willfully joining what amounts to a twenty-first-century slave coffle, shuffling along, going nowhere if not to jail. Saggin' now violates local ordinances in several cities, including indecent exposure laws.² Thus, this youthful expression of agency and collective identity is controversial and problematic. Is it possible, however, that these are the *same* type of young Brothers, whom the media depicted as rapists, who mobilized to aid their neighbors, and were the *first responders* in New Orleans and Haiti?

In September 2005, just weeks after our government's inept and wanton abandonment left thousands of New Orleans's most vulnerable residents devastated, demonized, and dying in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, rumors of marauding young Black men "murdering, looting and raping" women, young girls, and babies "flew across the globe via at least 150 news outlets, from India to Turkey to Spain" (Welch, 2005). In my class at Georgia State University, one of the White women students—a teacher—told us she and her friends had received the same anonymous e-mail: "The Katrina rapists are here in Atlanta. Beware."

She shared this information, and her fear, with us during a discussion of hegemony and structural racism—key concepts that I teach in the social foundations of education course. I used the global corporate media's distorted depictions of Black people's supposed depravity during the Katrina crisis in New Orleans to illustrate students' own ideological knowledge (or lack of

knowledge). The point was to demonstrate to them how they are affected by hegemony in education and society and, thereby, to make their outrage and resistance as educators more possible—not only out of concern for others but also for their own freedom and well-being.

I asked if anyone had read or heard news reports about Black males raping babies, women, and young girls in the New Orleans Superdome and the Ernest Morial Convention Center. The entire class confirmed: they had all heard about this and believed it was true. Indeed, New Orleans police chief Eddie Compass asserted on the *Oprah Winfrey Show*, "We had little babies in there [the Superdome]; some of the little babies were getting raped" (Flaherty, 2010, p. 34). At the Convention Center, where thousands had gathered or were dropped off—hoping to be rescued—it was rumored that a young girl had been raped, murdered, and left with her throat cut and that as many as forty dead bodies were stuffed in the freezers inside. Yet none of these salacious headline-grabbing reports were proved to be true: no babies were raped, nor was it confirmed that stranded residents shot at helicopters—a rumor that even the police and soldiers believed (Welch, 2005).

This is not to argue that if babies were not raped, then reports of sexual assault during the Hurricane Katrina crisis—and in Haiti as well—must, therefore, be suspect (Crooked7, 2010; Lakhani, 2010). Indeed, in a number of publications, women residents of New Orleans, feminist-activist scholars, and domestic violence prevention advocates have written about reports of rape that surfaced after Katrina, including sexual assaults that occurred in host homes outside of New Orleans (Burnett, 2005). These published reports indicated that "sexual violence was perpetrated both by officials of the state (such as the police, the National Guard, and the FBI) and by men and boys of the New Orleans community" as well as by strangers and gangs (Bierra, Griffin, Liebenthal, & INCITE!, 2007, p. 34; see also Burnett, 2005; White, 2005).

With regard to teaching and learning beyond the disaster narratives of Katrina/Haiti, my concern is about curriculum and pedagogy that can address the ideological knowledge problem of hegemonic miseducation and collective cultural amnesia that undergird denigrating discourses of Blackness/African-ness in so far as the humanity of African people is concerned. These discourses also overshadow and obscure economic, political, and cultural realities of Black people's dispossession. Thus, my lesson objective was validated when my students indicated that everyone had heard about the "Katrina rapists" but *no one* had read or heard any of the statements of government officials or journalists who disavowed that particularly depraved acts of sexual violence, which were widely reported as fact, had actually taken place (Garfield, 2007; Gray, 2006). Moreover, my students were unaware of the real reason the television news captured those painfully disturbing images of helpless women, crying dehydrated babies and young children, as well as sick and elderly people suffering and dying in the sweltering heat outside, in front of the Convention Center.

Why were the most vulnerable there? Because young Black men had actually *organized* the people who had made their way to the Convention Center. They were told that buses were coming to evacuate people, so these unheralded first responders made sure the women and children, the sick and the elderly—the most vulnerable—were out front, ready to be picked up first. As I told my class, eyewitnesses—my friends and family—described to me how young Black men had played heroic roles during these “saddest days” (King & Robertson, 2007). This account has since been reported in the news and in at least one book (Flaherty, 2010; Moore, 2005). Questions to consider, however, are: Why is the “Black rapist,” a standard trope of racist rationalizations of slavery and Jim Crow segregation, such a preponderant theme in the media’s stories about Katrina and the earthquake in Haiti at this time in our history? Why are women and children in Black communities—or anywhere—likely to be victimized in disasters nowadays?

I want to underscore two points here. First, the young Black men who aided their families, neighbors, and, in many cases, strangers were acting in concert with the best of traditional Black cultural ideals, such as generosity, respect for women and elders, and collective care for the community’s children—that is, a community-minded consciousness—ideals that are actually under assault by the broader society’s politics of abandonment (Asante, 2009; Chang & Cool Herc, 2005; Heath, 1989; Tedla, 1997). Despite exponentially high rates of incarceration, intensifying poverty, gentrification, and joblessness, these cultural ideals—which are simply human values—had not been totally obliterated from Black life in pre-Katrina New Orleans. This is particularly so among the Black Mardi Gras Indians—warriors—who remain deeply rooted in their neighborhoods and Black community traditions and who “do not bow down” (Kennedy, 2010; Sublette, 2009; Woods, 2010).³

My second point is that the heroic acts of young Black men (and women) were overshadowed by the exaggerated reports of sexual assaults that projected racialized and sexualized representations of Black men. As such, these representations that dehumanized the Black community were not only possible to imagine, but also were so readily believed—even by Black people—because of the historical distortion and erasure of the “African presences” from the nation’s cultural heritage and its public memory (Young & Braziel, 2006). This historical erasure, akin to what Joseph Young and Jana Braziel refer to as “racial cultural amnesia” (2007, p. 2), undermines our ability to mobilize in the long tradition of the Black Freedom Struggle. This assault on Black people’s collective cultural memory and identity must be added to the loss of lives and livelihoods, as well as the “traumatic stress reaction” to “forced displacement” and the loss of community life that is so central to all New Orleanians (Fullilove et al., 2008, p. 305). Psychiatric researcher Mindy Fullilove (2008) calls this reaction “root shock,” a concept that recognizes that the harm caused when people lose their emotional ecosystem goes far beyond the loss of their

"human habitat" (p. 305). Such loss remains incalculable. Another inestimable cost of this tragedy for Black people, the Gulf Coast region, and the nation is the idea that Black New Orleanians were "unworthy victims"—too depraved to be saved—an idea that has historical roots that still linger in the public's imagination long after the floodwaters have receded (Garfield, 2007).

Who Dat Say (We) Too Depraved?⁴

This essay attempts to interrupt this calculus of human (un)worthiness and to repair the collective cultural amnesia, both of which are legacies of slavery—legacies that make it so (hegemonically and dysconsciously) easy to accept the depravity myth as an explanation for the Black predicament in New Orleans and in Haiti as well (King, 1991). First, I revisit and recover historical connections between New Orleans, an important cradle of the Black Freedom Struggle, and Haiti, the first independent Black nation in the Western Hemisphere. Second, in contrast to the discourses of socially constructed Blackness that existed prior to Hurricane Katrina and the earthquake in Haiti, I recall and make more visible certain truths about the humanity and historical freedom struggles of African-descent people, truths that are overshadowed in the narratives of these disasters as well as in school curricula and textbooks, in teacher education, and in popular perceptions. I make these missing dimensions of the cataclysmic disasters in New Orleans and Haiti the focus of what I have discussed elsewhere as *critical studyin'*. This morally engaged approach to curriculum and pedagogy is a form of praxis that takes its name from the "thinking/theorizing of enslaved Africans who, when they were 'contemplating their enslaved existence and how to be free,'" stated they were "studyin' freedom" (King, 2006a, p. 338). S. E. Anderson (1995) suggested the updated term, *critical studyin'*, which refers to the process of "becoming cognitively and emotionally free of ideological constraints on knowledge, thought and morally engaged pedagogy" (p. 338). That is to say, "Educators have a moral obligation to counter-act alienating ideological knowledge that obstructs the right to be literate in one's own heritage and denies people the rights of 'cultural citizenship'" (p. 338).

The praxis of *critical studyin'* generates knowledge of African people's heritage that can engage teachers, students, and parents in culturally grounded critical reflection and analysis within the Black Studies intellectual tradition in the interest of the group well-being of African-descent people. Adapted from John Henrik Clarke's (1994) understanding of *heritage teaching*, I have conceptualized *Heritage Knowledge* as an outcome of *critical studyin'*; it is a group's memory of their history—a cultural birthright that "permits 'a people to develop an awareness and pride in themselves so that they can achieve good relationships with other people'" (Clarke, 1994, p. 86; cited in King, 2006a, p. 345). *Diaspora literacy*, which is the "ability to read certain cultural signs" in

the lived experience of African-descent people, is also a dimension of critical studyin' that generates Heritage Knowledge and consciousness of being part of the larger Black community (King, 1992).

Third, the examples of Heritage Knowledge for *re-membering* Katrina/Haiti (New Orleans and Haiti) are proposed to support learning beyond these disasters—that is, to combat ideological conceptions of Black people as depraved/inferior as well as collective cultural amnesia regarding African people's humanity. Both are legacies of slavery. This essay is intended, therefore, as an intellectual and pedagogical contribution to Black community healing and human freedom from ideological discourses and disaster narratives that denigrate and dehumanize Blackness/Africanness.

Interrogating the Untenable Calculus of Human (Un)Worthiness

In *Teaching What Really Happened*, James Loewen (2008) explains that racism is a legacy of slavery—a legacy that has permeated American culture in two ways: through the structural inequality that mitigates against the equitable inclusion of Black people in the society and through beliefs about Black inferiority. However, scholarship in the Black Studies tradition—by Black scholars and others—takes this analysis further. History records European fascination with African sexuality in their earliest encounters on the continent and the changing conceptions that occurred with the advent of slavery (Jordan, 1969). Within the context of slavery, the belief in their inferiority meant believing that Africans were subhuman, which permitted one group of (White) human beings to “breed” other (African) human beings like animals. Thus, slavery's legacy includes enduring, always-already, and deeply held conceptions of Black males' innate sexual prowess (e.g., “the Katrina rapists”) as well as the innate promiscuity and lasciviousness of Black women and girls (e.g., from plantation “Jezebels” and concubines to “welfare queens” and “bootylicious” video vixens) (Jewell, 1993; White, 1999).⁵ These conceptions were the stock-in-trade of the business of slavery and “slave breeding,” and they continue to influence media representations of Black males and females as well as the commercial success of hip-hop, which shapes the identities and aspirations of so many young people (Charnas, 2010). It is also ironic that the image of the Black male as rapist is a predominant part of the story of the disasters in these two historic sites of memory that represent pivotal moments in the Black Freedom Struggle—the Haitian Revolution in 1804 and the largest slave uprising in U.S. history, the 1811 Louisiana slave revolt (also known as the “Deslondes slave revolt of 1811” or the “German Coast Uprising”) in St. John the Baptist Parish along the German coast of the Mississippi River (James, 1963; Paquette, 1997). In addition, the way slavery is typically taught in the United States (e.g., “your own African brothers and sisters sold you into slavery”) alienates Black students by nihilating their identities and identification with their ancestral African heritage (King, 1992). A story reported in *The Root* is indicative of this.

Nikko Burton, a 10-year-old student at Chapelfield Elementary in Ohio, says he was humiliated by his teacher when she tried to demonstrate what it was like to be a slave on an auction block. Burton, one of two black students in his class, was chosen to be a slave. Students who were the "masters" inspected the "slaves" to see if they would be able workers. "The masters got to touch people and do all sorts of stuff," Nikko said. "They got to look in your mouth and feel your legs and stuff and see if you're strong and stuff." (Evans, 2011, para. 1-2)

While history and history teaching may be sanitized, or the quest for "historical thinking" (Loewen, 2008) may take precedence over morally engaged critical analysis that includes the point of view of the enslaved, a number of my colleagues—who are social studies and history teachers, teacher educators, parents, counselors, and community organizers—responded to an informal poll I conducted about the teaching of enslavement at the elementary and secondary school level. These colleagues agree that slavery and its brutality should be taught. But at what age? Using which pedagogical methods? Where is the research to inform our teaching? Would such a pedagogical approach help these young men "pull up their pants," as one parent suggested? Would learning about the sexual violation of our foremothers affect the attitudes of young Black girls who say *only* the boys who are saggin' can even talk to them? Moreover, considering the epigraphs at the beginning of this essay, a number of questions arise.

How might ongoing debates among historians about "slave breeding," for example, inform teachers' and students' thinking and learning (Bennett, 1966; Goodwin, 2008)? Should these matters be left to historians? Should such important learning be reserved only for high school students? Would learning about how their ancestors' spirituality was embedded in their sacred and secular music and enabled them to endure the brutalizing dehumanization of slavery help Black students identify with the humanity of their African ancestors and empathize with the plight of the victims of Katrina and the earthquake in Haiti? Would learning about the atrocities and bestiality of the "world the slave traders made" (Blight, 1991), as well as the world that made *them*, enhance teachers' critical engagement with the knowledge production process and their capacity for empathic, socially engaged teaching, as some progressive educators urge (Masur, 2005; McLaren & Jaramillo, 2007; Porfilio & Watz, 2008)?

Should parents be involved in determining what "difficult knowledge" is developmentally appropriate and in assessing their children's learning and development (Marshall & Toohey, 2010)? How might younger children learn about the history of the nation and this hemisphere from the perspectives and experiences of both the most vulnerable and the most powerful? Even young children experience damaging, stereotypical images of Africa and African people (Keim, 1999). In addition, they are overexposed to sexual messaging and violence—in music, videos, video games, and other forms of popular culture (Villani, 2001)—so what exactly should children be taught about the sexual

violence that took place during and after slavery, in the aftermath of these disasters, and about that which they see in the media as well as that which is likely occurring in their own neighborhoods? Is the universal phenomenon of sexual and gender-based violence during disasters any more predominate in Black people's history than it has been among other populations?

These questions have implications for the practice of teachers and teacher educators as well as their research. However, the societal context in which teaching and learning occurs includes discourses and myths about Black people that are legacies of slavery of which many teachers/teacher educators are unaware (King, 1991, 2004; Loewen, 2008).

Disaster Narratives of Depravity/Inferiority

Post-Katrina/Haiti disaster narratives of depravity melded seamlessly with discourses of Black (un)worthiness that existed prior to these crises (Garfield, 2007). For example, a predominant narrative asserts that willful nihilism is why Black people in the United States have such high rates of incarceration (Alexander, 2010), such pervasive unemployment, and such low levels of academic achievement. What is not usually included in the litany of Black people's deficiencies (at best) or depravity (at worst) is any concern about Black children's and adolescents' racial socialization, group belonging, and identity needs. Yet, there is growing evidence in psychology, counseling, educational sociology, social work research, and the arts that academic achievement and psychological well-being are a function of positive racial socialization (Caughy, O'Campo, Randolph, & Nickerson, 2003; Hughes et al., 2006; King, 2005; Mandara, 2006; McKay, Atkins, Hawkins, Brown, & Lynn, 2003; Oyserman, Kemmeilmeier, Fryberg, Brosh, & Hart-Johnson, 2003; Sanders, 1997; Smith, Atkins, & Connell, 2003; Stone-Hanley & Noblit, 2009; West-Olatunji, 2010). But when Blackness itself is so reviled—also one of slavery's legacies in the United States and in Haiti—chosen "self-owned Black consciousness" (Robinson, 2007) and any Pan-African sense of self, belonging, or peoplehood cannot be assumed.

For example, the people of the (Super)Dome and the Convention Center were vilified and terrorized; they were called "refugees," identified as "looters," criminalized, "shot on sight," turned back from bridges that lead out of city by gunfire, and then blamed for not getting themselves out of harm's way. While New Orleans evacuees were welcomed and aided in various communities, many were also treated like pariahs in cities with large Black majorities (like Atlanta, Houston, as well as neighboring Baton Rouge), where even Black residents succumbed to the racially inflected propaganda of depravity and shunned Katrina survivors (King & Robertson, 2007). Children who had evacuated from New Orleans to other cities were traumatized and teased in their host schools. For example, at one high school, students from New Orleans were greeted by resident students wearing T-shirts with the message:

"Learn to swim" (Lewis & King, 2009). In addition, as a result of "security concerns" that were exacerbated by media reports, emergency aid workers in New Orleans and medical personnel in Haiti were at times afraid to provide their services to the poor who were branded as dangerous (CNN, 2010; Polman, 2010). In fact, Haitians have been subjected to racialized "othering," demonization, and discrimination for centuries since the 1804 revolution (Robinson, 2007; Umoja, 2011). The racism Haitians have experienced in the neighboring Dominican Republic, which is emblematic of what Sylvia Wynter (1984) has analyzed as the White/normative belief structure of race, is legendary and fundamentally anti-African (Danticat, 1999; Schwartz, 2002). As Wynter (2003) has aptly observed, the incorporation of some of us into the "ethno-White" middle-class mainstream conception of what it means to be human continues at the expense and extrusion of our brothers and sisters who are inexorably relegated to the Cité Soleils and prison archipelagoes of the modern Western world.⁶

Following Wynter, I have proposed that this nihilation (e.g., total abjection) of Blackness is inherent in the U.S./Western cultural model of what it means to be human/civilized/worthy of life (King, 2006a; Wynter, 1992, 2003). Whites also pay a cost for this socially constructed Black/White duality: the attenuation of their own humanity (King, 2005, 2006b). This theoretical conceptualization of nihilated Black identities offers an alternative to social theorizing that emphasizes Black people's:

- Nihilism/depravity/irresponsibility (Cosby & Poussaint, 2007; West, 2001)
- Hybrid identities to the exclusion of culturally affirming, group-based Black identity and consciousness (King, 2004)
- Speculation about the (un)worthiness of Black life in provocatively racist political punditry, such as the proposition former U.S. Secretary of Education Bill Bennett advanced on national television in the weeks after Hurricane Katrina: "If you want to lower crime . . . abort every black baby." (CNN, 2005)

This notion of "life unworthy of life" (Wynter, 2003), which was also central to Nazism, is at the heart of explanations that blame the Haitian people themselves for having the highest rate of poverty and "societal dysfunction" in this hemisphere.

The enormity of the cataclysmic January 2010 earthquake in Haiti—arguably one of the worst natural disasters in the Western Hemisphere—captured the world's attention and an outpouring of sympathy, however briefly. Amidst this continuing catastrophe, there are reports of women and girls being brutalized and raped while they are struggling to survive in overcrowded make-shift camps where more than a million internally displaced people remain, mostly without even the most basic necessities and security. Meanwhile, aid for rebuilding—like the buses in New Orleans—has been stalled or just not delivered. For example, a mere 19 percent of the promised assistance for recon-

struction from the international community was actually provided in 2010 (UN News Centre, 2010).

While one might reasonably be skeptical of media exaggeration, as was the case in New Orleans, an official investigative team has documented increasing gender-based violence against women and girls in Haiti one year after the earthquake (Amnesty International, 2011; Thomas-Richard & Levasseur, 2011; UNICEF, 2010). This collaborative investigation identified circumstances that have contributed to these sexual assaults. These include the prolonged societal upheaval of ongoing displacement and the breakdown of security and civil authority—all of which have exacerbated the particular vulnerability of women and girls. Following Hurricane Katrina, irresponsible news coverage and racially biased rumormongering contributed not only to the wide dissemination of the most sordid fabrications of socially deviant behavior, including gender-based violence, but also made the normal difficulty of documenting sexual assaults even worse (Welch, 2005).

Not mentioned, moreover, in the disaster news coverage is that such gender-based violence is a predictable (and preventable) dynamic in natural disasters. From tsunamis to earthquakes, hurricanes, and floods across the globe, the most vulnerable are more likely to be victimized in disasters (Bergin, 2008; Zack, 2009). Lacking such contextualization of *human* behavior in the wake of natural disasters, as well as wars, the stereotypical image projected in the aftermath of both Hurricane Katrina and the Haitian earthquake is the Black male's craven depravity and *inhumanity*—the proverbially “wilding” Black rapist. However, immediately after the earthquake, Haitian men, young and old, like Black men of all ages in New Orleans, performed heroic deeds as community-minded good Samaritan first responders.

Dis(re)membered African Roots, Resistance, and Revolt

The continuing tragedy of the disasters in both New Orleans and Haiti also involves the denigration of their shared but dis(re)membered African roots. Curricula and pedagogy are needed to address this fundamental problem. Ongoing disasters and large-scale humanitarian crises in Africa and the Diaspora periodically garner superficial media attention, if not broad-based public empathy or sustained concern (e.g., Darfur, Rwanda, the Congo). Before Hurricane Katrina and the earthquake, the media represented both New Orleans and Haiti as iconically dangerous, crime-ridden places. When I lived in New Orleans in the 1990s, airport tourist brochures advised visitors not to venture into the Lower 9th Ward for their own safety.

Haiti is denigrated for its poverty, abstracted from the historical and continuing processes of imperialism's economic, cultural, and political domination that have *impoverished* the Haitian people. One scholar observed that “Haiti appears in the North American media as the furthest extreme of pov-

erty, dysfunction and savagery" (ACLS, 2010, para. 4)—metaphors for Blackness (e.g., Africanness) that applies just as well to popular images of pre-Katrina New Orleans before the city was racially "cleansed." Scholars and citizen activists pointed out that the demolition of public housing after Katrina—much of which was undamaged and habitable—effectively denied Black people, who are mostly poor, and mostly women and children, the right to return (Harden, Walker, & Akuno, 2009; Moorehead, 2007). According to Tanya Williams (2009), "The U.S. government has developed policies and practices that specifically prevent internally displaced African American residents of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast region from returning home through an unprecedented scheme of privatization" (p. 27). Criminalization, or the *thug-ification*, of Black males, to be more precise, justified this policy as well as fictions about the benefits of Black removal.

Furthermore, as in the case of the imagined exoticism of New Orleans that is rooted in the city's Vodou (Voodoo) African religious heritage, Haiti has been seen as the place of "Voodoo and Zombies, something to be feared" (ACLS, 2010, para. 4). Vodou Queen Marie Laveau's house on Bourbon Street and her tomb in St. Louis Cemetery No. 1 are popular tourist stops where dis(re)membered African spirituality/humanity remain marketable, even without the presence of the people whose heritage made both the city and this "exotic" tourism possible.⁷

Vodou (also spelled Voudou or Vodun), which means "spirit" or "deity" in the Fon language of Benin, West Africa (formerly Dahomey), is one of Haiti's official religions (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.; Mulira, 1990). Some condemn Haiti's African religious heritage, such as right-wing religious leader and television show host Pat Robertson, who demonized the Haitian people when he quipped on his show that the earthquake was the result of their "pact" with the devil.

Something happened a long time ago in Haiti, and people might not want to talk about it. They were under the heel of the French, you know, Napoleon the Third and whatever, and they got together and swore a pact to the devil. They said, "We will serve you if you'll get us free from the French." True story. And so the devil said, "O.K., it's a deal." (Fletcher, 2010)⁸

What was Robertson referring to? The article in *Time* in which Robertson's statement appears offered this explanation:

The theory that Haiti is a nation built on a pact with the devil has circulated on a number of websites, each tracing back to an apocryphal tale of Haitian voodoo priests sacrificing a pig and drinking its blood in 1791 in order to secure Satan's aid in expelling the French occupation. In return, the priests are said to have promised Haiti to Satan for the next 200 years. The French were soon beat back, and in 1804, Haiti became an independent nation. But even if you believe the story (something many historians doubt), Satan's lease on the tiny island nation should have expired in 1991. (Fletcher, 2010, para. 3)

Which historians doubt what? That the authenticity and power of an indigenuous African religion served as a source of spiritual resilience and inspiration to revolt? That enslaved Africans had the intelligence, military prowess, and courage to defeat the most powerful armies of the French colonial regime without making a pact with the devil? Why is belief in their own human right to be free not considered plausible, inasmuch as the French had also articulated the “Rights of Man” in their own fight for freedom? Even though the French Revolution’s concept of “Man” excluded the enslaved Africans, their mind-set, nonetheless, included precisely this “self-owned Black consciousness” (Robinson, 2007) and sense of their own humanity as well as a sacred pact with *their* god. As Trinidadian scholar C. L. R. James (1963) reported in *The Black Jacobins*, his quintessential account of the Haitian Revolution from the point of view of enslaved Africans:

Voodoo was the medium of the revolt . . . The plan was conceived on a massive scale and they aimed at exterminating the whites and taking the colony for themselves. Boukman, a Papaloi or High Priest . . . was the . . . first of that long line of leaders whom the slaves were to throw up in such great profusion and rapidity in the long years that followed. (p. 86)

The following section revisits the themes of African people’s supposed sexual/spiritual depravity in examples of contexts for critical studyin’ to re-member Katrina/Haiti as sites of struggle for human freedom.

In contrast to the aspersions regarding Haiti’s history and African religious roots that Robertson’s theorizing cast on all Haitians—that denigrate their African heritage and deny their humanity—Alan Gilbert, an American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) fellow, rightly asked educators to think about “how high school students, particularly blacks, Latinos, Native Americans, and poor whites, would react to learning the story of 50-year-old black slave Toussaint L’Ouverture’s defeat of Napoleon *as an event fundamental to the history of the Americas* [italics added]?” (ACLS, 2010, para. 6).

Framed in this way, Gilbert’s question would actually enable us to contextualize teaching and learning about the history of the Americas—the crisis in Haiti as well as historical connections to New Orleans—within the Black Freedom Struggle. This is also an opportunity to engage students beyond the discourse of depravity/inferiority and with African people’s humanity within the context of the struggles to end slavery in Haiti and New Orleans. However, students cannot fully appreciate the humanity of African people if they meet them in the curriculum first and only as slaves. That is why African-centered education theory within the Black Studies intellectual tradition posits that it is imperative that we begin the stories of Haiti and New Orleans not with the disruption slavery wrought but with African people’s life, cultural ideals, and social vision as part of the story of human history (Asante, 2007; King & Goodwin, 2009). This means we should also consider how Haitian students, for example, might benefit from recovering history that contextualizes their

nation's past and their future within African people's story of human progress.⁹ Here I offer examples of the Heritage Knowledge and critical understanding required.

The disasters in New Orleans and Haiti constitute important and urgent *historical-cultural junctures*, or sites of memory that, within a critical studyin' framework, can give Black students, in particular, and all students the opportunity to recognize and make a personal connection with African people's humanity (King, 2006a). This framework also includes the African cultural continuum wherein connections between the past and the future become more visible and available to inform the present (e.g., from the philosophical ethos of justice and harmony, that is, Ma'at in ancient Egypt, to African retentions in the Americas [Karenga, 2003; Mulira, 1990; Walker, 2001]). Available curriculum resources about the Katrina crisis include "Teaching *The Levees*" (Crocco, 2007), based on Spike Lee's HBO documentary film, *When the Levees Broke*, and a smattering of Web-based lesson materials. Teaching for Change (n.d.) also offers a comprehensive document online, "Teaching about Haiti," and Akinyele Umoja's (2011) article "Hating the Root: Attacks on Vodou in Haiti" provides a concise update on historical and political developments there. While relevant scholarship focused on "learning through disasters" emphasizes educational goals such as "critical literacy" and "critical analytic" and "compassionate global citizenship," support and direction for curriculum and pedagogy that can combat ideologically biased knowledge and collective cultural amnesia reflected in the predominate narratives of Katrina and Haiti are lacking (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Patton, 2008; Porfilio & Watz, 2008).

The Praxis of Critical Studyin': Re-membering Katrina/Haiti in the Black Intellectual Tradition

The praxis of critical studyin' generates Heritage Knowledge through a Diaspora literacy "reading" of certain "cultural signs in the lives of Africa's people" on the continent and in the Diaspora—that is, cultural retentions or cultural continuity (King, 2006b). For example, what can we learn about the extant values among Black males—the ones who might very well be saggin' their pants? A number of scholars lament the disappearance of the Black community, including traditional values and community coherence (Heath, 1989). How shall we understand the collective responsibility demonstrated by the local first responders, the Black males in New Orleans and Haiti? Is this a sign of the African cultural value of collective responsibility? The morally engaged praxis of critical studyin' is a pedagogical approach that seeks answers to such questions centered within the Black Freedom Struggle in the political interest of African-descent people and human freedom (King, 2006a, p. 338). For students in the United States, in New Orleans, in Haiti, or elsewhere, what would teachers (and teacher educators) have to know about theory and pedagogy for centering students' learning within an authentic engagement with the African

(Black) experience? What kind of student materials and learning experiences would be needed given the ideological bias in existing (American) textbooks, the limitations of teachers' (and professors') knowledge, and students' post-disaster emotional needs in New Orleans and Haiti (King, 1992, 2006a; King & Robertson, 2007; Swartz, 2007)? What can we learn from the way that Black males are represented in the Katrina/Haiti disaster narrative to best prepare students for a world they did not make but will inherit? (Warren Crichlow, personal communication, March 3, 2011).

Ellen Swartz (2007) has developed a methodology for producing student materials, which she calls "re-membered" texts, to recover, rewrite, and reconnect fragmented, omitted, and distorted historical knowledge for teaching social studies. Grounded in the *praxis* of Afrocentric theory (Asante, 2007; Karenga, 2003), as well as culturally responsive principles (inclusion, representation, accurate scholarship, indigenous voice, critical thinking, and collective humanity) and Black Studies scholarship, the methodology Swartz (2007) has developed for re-membering history—that is, "putting members of history back together"—can support and enhance critical inquiry instruction (p. 173). For example, Susan Goodwin and Swartz (2009) include re-membered texts in an instructional guide for "Document-Based Learning, Curriculum, and Assessment," which make this pedagogical approach more accurate and comprehensive.

Swartz posits that it is the *praxis* of Afrocentric theory, guided by these culturally responsive principles, that consciously locates and centers African people "as subjects, participants, and agents in history." However, this is a "human-centric model that is open and applicable to other cultures and groups" (Swartz, personal communication, March 2, 2011). Thus, Swartz's approach is more rigorously inclusive than simple historical "perspective taking" or teaching for "critical literacy," which, if not centered in the political interests of the marginalized, remain monocultural (Swartz, 2009). This *praxis* includes: (1) identifying relevant groups involved in a particular historical moment or process (e.g., Americans, Native Americans); (2) drawing on indigenous scholarship that theorizes and represents the diverse traditions of these identity groups (actors); (3) developing and comparing narrative themes that represent the distinctive experiences, knowledge, principles, and/or actions of each identity group; and (4) illuminating the "perspective advantage" that their inclusion makes possible (King, 2006a, p. 346).

Accordingly, Swartz (2011) is worth quoting at length:

It is important to note here that the process of historical recovery is political work. Notwithstanding the increased accuracy and comprehensiveness of "re-membered" texts, the writing of history is a political process that selects from among numerous pieces of data to produce an account contextualized by the worldview and political interests of its authors. The national grand narratives presented in standard social studies materials since their inception are clearly political—even though textbook publishers . . . continue to claim objectivity and

neutrality as their hallmark. Acknowledging that the writing of "re-membered" texts is also political work avoids making the same error of claiming objectivity. (n.p.)

The next section presents additional examples of the Heritage Knowledge that critical studyin' generates. These examples are focused on the theme "Shared African Roots, Resilience, and Revolution" and incorporate the praxis of integrating Afrocentric theory, culturally responsive principles, and the Black intellectual tradition to re-member the cultural and historical roots of resistance and revolution that New Orleans and Haiti have in common.

Learning Beyond Disasters: Recuperating Nihilated Blackness

A critical studyin' framework within which to re-member Katrina/Haiti beyond these disaster narratives in order to recuperate nihilated Blackness is a three-fold task that involves: (1) re-Africanizing New Orleans and Haiti; (2) generating Heritage Knowledge through reading the cultural signs of African humanity in the lives of the people and sites of memory; and (3) recovering history from myths of objectivity and neutrality. Re-membered Heritage Knowledge contextualizes the crises of Hurricane Katrina and the Haitian earthquake within the African and Diaspora experience and makes visible the ways not only Africans but also Native Americans and others interacted and contributed to the forward flow of human freedom. What follows are examples of sites of memory, or significant culture-historical junctures for generating Heritage Knowledge that can combat ideological representations of Blackness as well as the omissions in what is taught about New Orleans and Haiti. Teachers, students, parents, and teacher educators who become knowledgeable about these junctures will be better prepared to address ideological biases and omissions in the curriculum (Wynter, 1992). Using the three examples of Heritage Knowledge and critical studyin' detailed in the following subsections, educators can generate a list of additional actors/groups and contexts in which re-membering can and should occur.

African Influences on the Haitian Revolution

African influences on the Haitian Revolution should be well understood—in the indigenous religious tradition of African people and their conception of human freedom in addition to the influence of the French Revolution. This illustrates the principles of Authentic Scholarship and Inclusion. Afrocentric scholarship such as *The Black Jacobins* (James, 1963) provides the point of view of the Africans as well as other groups. Not only did this revolution end slavery and establish the first independent Black nation in the Western Hemisphere, it also shook the foundations of slavery in the United States. This year New Orleans celebrates the two-hundredth anniversary of the 1811 slave revolt, the largest uprising of enslaved Africans in the history of the nation, which very likely took inspiration from the Haitian Revolution (Geggus, 1997;

Lewis, 2011). However, this significant event is omitted from standard historical accounts (Rasmussen, 2011; Thrasher, 1996).

As noted above, we can teach *beyond* the predominant dehumanizing narratives of Katrina and Haiti by making the implications of the freedom struggles for people of the Americas and the world visible. Key actors would include Toussaint L'Ouverture and Jean Jacques Dessalines (in Haiti) and Charles Deslondes (in Louisiana), as well as French and American actors and Native American allies. Questions worth considering are: What *human* values informed the future African peoples envisioned during the Haitian Revolution and Louisiana's 1811 slave revolt? What factors led to the richest colony in the Americas becoming so impoverished?

The Slave-Breeding Industry

The "slave-breeding industry" replaced the importation of African captives after 1808. The dynamics of plantation life changed accordingly. The race and gender-based sexual violence and terror inflicted on Black women, men, and children during their enslavement and also later, in the Jim Crow South, provide a relevant site of memory for deciphering the trope of innate Black inferiority/depravity, given the sexual predations of White men (McGuire, 2010; Murakami-Ramalho & Durodoye, 2008). Ned Sublette (2009) asks us to consider why the slave trade was banned in the United States in 1808, the earliest moment allowed by the Constitution. He concludes that it was because "South Carolina's massive importations of slaves from Africa had ruined the market for Virginia-bred slaves. But the prohibition was packaged as anti-terrorism, and sold as keeping out the fiends who had burned down Santo Domingue [Haiti]" (p. 227).

This is an important connection between Haiti and New Orleans that should be understood. Indeed, uprisings of the enslaved challenged ideological justifications for slavery based on the fiction that slavery was beneficial, and the notion that slavery prevented Africans from reverting to their natural state of bestiality and sexual depravity is a predominate ideological representation that undermines African people's humanity and nihilates Black identity. As James (1938) noted, however, in *A History of Negro Revolt*:

Of 130 Negro revolts that took place between 1670 and 1865 in America, there is not a single case recorded of a white woman being raped by the revolting slaves. In the West Indies, since the abolition of slavery, there has not been one single case of rape or sexual assault by a Negro against a white woman. While of the thousands of cases of Negroes lynched in America during the last half-century, charges of rape have been made in only twenty percent of cases. With what justification some of these charges have been made the Scottsboro case has within recent years given a glaring example. (p. 65)

Thus, students also need opportunities to understand the nature of the sexualized and racialized brutalization of women, the profit motives involved, and

the justifications that are part of slavery's past as well as the ways in which economics and ideology continue to influence the degradation of Black women and men that remains a part of our present reality. Sublette's (2009) observation about what is taught (and not taught) in schools is instructive:

The child's version of U.S. history. . . did a very poor job of explaining slavery and certainly never mentioned this aspect of it [the "slave-breeding" industry]. Partly that's because slavery is not a subject fit for children. It's embarrassing to have to explain what it consisted of. It gets into things we would prefer children not know about—middle-aged men fornicating with adolescent girls, women used for breeding purposes, children sired and sold, black men dehumanized, and families routinely shattered. (p. 223)

Ironically, *NightJohn* (Paulsen, 1993), a story situated on a Georgia plantation and then in New Orleans just after the Civil War, and its sequel *Sarny: A Life Remembered* (Paulsen, 1999), both written for children as young as the fifth and sixth grade, deal more forthrightly and directly with the issue of "slave breeding" than any student textbook. The story begins, from the perspective and experiences of a twelve year-old girl, Sarny, whose mother, a "breeder," was sold away. A *Teacher Guide* presents lessons that include "breeder" in the vocabulary list (Herman, 2006). However, suggested discussion questions address the topic of breeding only from the point of view of the "Master"; as such, this approach is not a good example of re-membering or critical studyin'.

Both novels (and the lesson ideas and learning activities offered to teachers) present the courage of the characters to resist their enslaved condition, and the violence of slavery is presented in graphic detail. However, the *Teacher Guide* offers little guidance about teaching students in *particular* school settings about slave breeding. Should a teacher's pedagogy vary if the children come from different racial backgrounds? What social knowledge do students bring with them to such topics (Epstein, 2009), and how might these topics be troubling for different populations?

Additionally, while the story does attempt to include the viewpoint of the enslaved community regarding African spiritual beliefs, this dimension, which consists of references to "witchin," is fragmented and somewhat superficial, given the available scholarship on the retention of African spirituality in the Diaspora (Cone, 1992; Hall, 1990). Thus, developing lessons that re-member African American spirituality as a context for critical studyin' requires a deeper engagement with authentic voices and scholarship.

Finally, a central character in *Sarny* (Paulsen, 1999) is a free woman of color with money, property, and power—gained through her relationships and business dealings with White men of influence. Marie Laveau, whose real life in New Orleans was regarded as saintly by some and by others as morally depraved, embodies the contradictions and ambiguities of freedom in a slave society (Ward, 2004). Her story represents a context for interrogating the complexities of women's power as practitioners of traditional African spir-

ity—women who were demonized and feared but who also wielded both their economic and spiritual power to defend and aid the Black community (James, 1963; Mulira, 1990).¹⁰

In summary, the first example of a site of memory for rewriting knowledge and recovering history from ideology makes visible connections between the Haitian Revolution and the 1811 Louisiana slave revolt (Rasmussen, 2011; Thrasher, 1996). The second context points to contradictions between the reality of the sexual predations of slaveholders (including “slave breeding”) and dehumanizing myths about Black men’s and women’s sexuality. A related example provides a context for recovering and re-writing the lives of free women of color. Some were “mistresses” or concubines or, like Marie Laveau, were business women and practitioners of African spirituality, which was a “heritage of power” (Bibbs, 1992).

Further Examples That Recover Heritage Knowledge

— Other Actors/Groups

1. Songhoy emperors Sunni Ali Ber and Askya Mohammed (Maiga, 2010); Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte, Haiti’s King Henri Christophe, and Simón Bolívar, who received money and soldiers from Haiti to lead the fight for the independence of Latin America from Spain
2. Slave owners, slave traders, and their wives; Black and White abolitionists; and free people of color (Baker, 2009; Lester, 2005)
3. Boukman, a Haitian Vodou priest (*Papalò*) and revolutionary leader (James, 1963)
4. Black Mardi Gras Indians (Big Chiefs and Big Queens) and Native Americans, whom this tradition honors (Kennedy, 2010; Sublette, 2009), as well as other African-descent peoples who “mask” in Brazil, the Caribbean, and the Hooley Hooray of Songhoy culture in Mali (Fournillier, 2009; Maiga, 2010)

— Other Sites of Memory

1. African educational excellence traditions, such as the systems of learning in ancient civilizations of Egypt and the universities in Djenné, Sankoré, and Gao in West Africa’s fifteenth-century Songhoy Empire (Maiga, 2010)
2. African language as repositories of African conceptions of the world and other linguistic sources of Heritage Knowledge, such as Black Language (Smitherman, 1994/2000), Haitian Creole, and the linguistic heritage of New Orleans, including the language tradition of the Mardi Gras Indians (Kennedy, 2010)
3. African music and dance legacies—from Congo square to jazz, gospel, the blues, and hip-hop—as sites of cultural authenticity, African retentions, and collective resistance (Cone, 1992; Gottschild, 1998; Jabir, 2010; Sublette, 2009)

4. Indigenous systems of domestic servitude, social control, and punishment in Africa (and Europe) and in prisons in the United States, especially the experiences of prisoners in New Orleans and Haiti¹¹
5. Organizing traditions, including acts of resistance and revolt in Africa (e.g., on slave ships) and plantations; civil rights mobilizations (e.g., *Plessy v. Ferguson* [1896], the Deacons for Defense and Justice [Hill, 2006], the Peoples Fund for Hurricane Relief); citizen's action campaigns for voting rights (Scott & Brown, 2003), equitable educational opportunity (King, 2009) and the right of return;¹² democratic economic participation (Nembhard, 2005) in Louisiana; and sustainable development versus "disaster capitalism" dependency in Haiti (e.g., sweat shops, maquiladoras, and the dumping of genetically engineered seeds on vulnerable Haitian farmers)

Incorporating Authentic Voices

The incorporation of authentic voices as a culturally responsive principle is important in the Black Studies intellectual tradition for centering teaching and learning within the interests of African and Diaspora people. By collapsing time and geography, as shown in the lists above, it is possible to remember their experiences more accurately and authentically. Contextualizing the perspectives and experiences of African descent peoples and others with whom they interact(ed) within a cultural continuum—one that moves backward to illuminate connections with the past, make these connections more visible, and bring them forward to connect to the present—can give students an opportunity to imagine their roles and future more fully informed by history recovered and re-membered (King, 2006a). In accord with the principle of Collective Humanity, for example, this continuum identifies critical cultural-historical junctures in the lived experiences of and interactions among the peoples of Europe and Africa (as they *became* White/"Europeans" and Black/"Africans") as well as the indigenous peoples of the Americas—such as the Tainos of "Ayiti" and Pawnee and Sioux warriors (of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show that visited New Orleans) and the Choctaw and Blackfoot, who are native to the New Orleans area (Louisiana and Mississippi) and also inspired the New Orleans Black Mardi Gras Indians.

The "child's version" of history fragments the collective human experience. Resources for addressing the problem include African American adult and children's literature (Courlander, 1970; Dickerson, 2005; Hamilton, 2004; Lester, 2005; Paulsen, 1993; Walker, 1999) as well as the tradition of the Black Arts Movement. The periodization of history (before 1860 and after slavery) separates "new" world developments from the "old" worlds of Europe and Africa. Yet, a re-membered teaching approach makes it possible to grasp the complexity of African/Diaspora and American experiences across time and geography. In contrast to a simple critical reading of historical events that does not address the ideological meaning and function of Blackness (as [un]worthi-

ness), re-membered Heritage Knowledge and Diaspora literacy can facilitate the reclamation of nihilated Black identities and illuminate the worlds (cultural models) that made and dehumanized both conceptual Whiteness and Blackness (King, 2006a; Wynter, 1992). Developing what teachers and parents together determine to be age-appropriate instructional materials and learning experiences can evoke the *humanizing* question, *what has happened?*

Teachers are understandably focused on teaching standards-based content that is aligned with the student assessments for which they will be held accountable. However, parents and teachers need to work together to incorporate a broader set of standards, including those based on universal human rights conventions, for example, that underscore the importance of students' cultural identity and capacity for engaged citizenship. This, too, is the meaning of human freedom. While the African Union recognizes the Diaspora as the Sixth Region of Africa, there is very little in the formal experience of schooling in the United States that encourages a Black child to "enjoy his or her own culture," as Article 30 of the UN Human Rights Convention on the Rights of the Child states, if the referent is our African cultural heritage and identity.¹³

Conclusion

Former first lady Mildred Aristide, who was interviewed on her return to Haiti with the former president Jean Aristide after seven years of forced exile in Africa, remarked:

I would stop talking about the past if it were not so present . . . And I think what I've learned from Africa is how much Africans carry the past with them, and the past being lessons from their ancestors, the lessons from their culture, all of which happens in time, in a time space. So it's not that you live in the past, but you carry the lessons and the good . . . experiences of the past. (Democracy Now, 2011)

What can truths about Europe's and Africa's historical development with respect to slavery, African-descent people's resistance, and our humanity in the vibrant cultural milieux of New Orleans and Haiti contribute to human freedom and the well-being of all? Answers to the questions this essay poses will be found within the communities affected by the policies and politics of cultural, economic, and political dispossession that are beyond the narratives of disaster. The praxis of critical studyin' offers cultural-historical contexts in which to recover Heritage Knowledge and critical tools for "studyin' freedom" in this moment. As the passage that follows from a play about Marie Laveau reveals, there are "cultural signs" to be deciphered and collective memory and identity to be recovered within the Black Studies intellectual tradition in the African heritage that New Orleans and Haiti share. What educators, in partnership with students and communities, learn should interrogate but also go beyond the hyperbolic distorted discourse and even racist responses to Hur-

ricane Katrina and the earthquake in Haiti to address the historical and cultural contributions of these two interrelated sites to the ongoing Black Freedom Struggle.

Coda: Who Dat Say?

Legend has it that Marie Laveau was last seen in the eye of a storm, flying in her little house over Lake Pontchartrain, partying with High John the Conqueror, Baron Samedi, Frieda Erzulie, and a host of family, friends, and lovers. High John the Conqueror is the champion of displaced persons, of little people oppressed by power. He soared alongside the slave ships, reminding the people that once they could fly . . . I wonder what Madam Laveau would have to say . . .

Glenda Dickerson, 2005

Notes

1. See also Transafrica.org and Lakhani (2010). A comment following this news item, also reported on CommonDreams.org, is worth noting: "I hate to be skeptical about rape allegations but remember all the reports by the media of rape in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina that for the most part turned out to be false. There is a very racist tendency in the U.S. media (that was very evident in the reporting from Hurricane Katrina) to exaggerate or falsely report violence, rape, etc., when the reported perpetrators are not white. I am not saying this is necessarily the case here, but I do have to wonder given the track record" (Crooked, 2010).
2. "Georgia Mayor to Sign Law Making Saggin Pants Illegal," *News One for Black America*, September 6, 2010, <http://newsone.com/nation/newsonestaff4/georgia-mayor-to-sign-law-making-sagging-pants-illegal/>. See also "Long Beach Tells Teens to Pick Up Saggy Pants," *CBS Los Angeles*, February 3, 2011, <http://losangeles.cbslocal.com/2011/02/03/long-beach-tells-teens-to-pick-up-saggy-pants/>; and "Sagging Pants Now Banned in Florida Schools," *BlackAmericaWeb.com*, March 11, 2011, http://www.blackamericaweb.com/?q=articles/news/moving_america_news/26787.
3. Clark (1999) writes: "The Black Mardi Gras Indians of New Orleans are a unique subculture of a highly diverse and complex group of the local population. The tradition of these masking Indians dates back to the 1700's" (para. 3).
4. The catch phrase "Who dat say?" dates back to minstrel shows in which White actors in blackface mimicked and mocked the speech of enslaved Africans—whom they depicted (in a racist manner) saying, "Who dat say, 'Who dat?' when I say, 'Who dat?'"—when Black people supposedly saw a ghost. The callout "Who dat say dey gonna beat dem Saints?" became the anthem when the New Orleans Saints played in the 2010 Superbowl and was featured as the closing, syncopated choral chant in Spike Lee's second documentary film about Hurricane Katrina, *If God is Willing and Da Creek Don't Rise*. That title is also phrased in local New Orleans "vernacular" Black speech.
5. For a discussion of stereotypes of Black women in the history of the United States, see Jewell (1993) and "Jezebel Stereotypes," *The Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia*, <http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/jezebel/>.
6. Cité Soleil is described in a UNICEF "At a Glance-Haiti" publication as "one of the most violent neighborhoods in the Western hemisphere" (Skoog, 2006). It is described in a Wikipedia (n.d.) entry as an "extremely impoverished and densely populated commune" located in the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area in Haiti with 200,000–400,000

residents, the “majority of whom live in extreme poverty . . . with virtually no sewers, stores, electricity, health care or schools.”

7. See New Orleans official Historic Voodoo Museum Web site, which provides a history of the Voodoo Queen of New Orleans: http://www.voodooomuseum.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=15.
8. Also worth noting are recent attacks on Vodou practitioners by Christians in Haiti. Historian Akinyele Umoja (2011) reports: “Assaults on Haitian Vodou are an attack on the African roots of Haiti and the very essence of the Haitian identity, culture and personality” (para. 17).
9. A recent report titled “Education and Conflict in Haiti” proposes that Haitian students should study peace education and “develop a plural identity” grounded not in their African heritage but “based on the concept of Créolité” (Luzincourt & Gulbrandson, 2010, p. 14).
10. A contemporary of Marie Laveau in San Francisco, California, Mary Ellen Pleasant, provides a comparative case (Bibbs, 1992; Hudson, 2008).
11. A recent ACLU report revealed that thousands of prisoners at the Orleans Parish Prison, including juveniles, were abandoned by the authorities—*left in locked cells* as the flood waters rose (Onesto, 2006). Kofi Anyidoho, Distinguished Scholar of the African Humanities Institute at the University of Ghana, explained to the DeWolf family, visiting the Cape Coast “slave castle” in Ghana: “Before the European presence we did not have prisons. The first prisons from the colonial period were located in the slave forts . . . In my own language, the word for prison is slave fort and the word for government is slave fort” (DeWolf, 2008, p. 95). The slave forts or dungeons along the West African coast are incorrectly called “castles”; the slave ships functioned as floating prisons (Rediker, 2007). No indigenous word for “prison” exists in the Songhay language of Mali (Maiga, 2010) either. Domestic servitude, an indigenous form of bondage or indenture, and military impressment served as functional systems of social control in Africa instead of prisons before the European presence.
12. The International Katrina-Rita Tribunal, “We Charge Genocide,” organized by the People’s Hurricane Relief Fund, is one example of citizen mobilization using the universal human rights conventions. Among the human rights of “internally displaced persons” that the tribunal investigated are mass forced deportation with no right of return and military occupation versus humanitarian aid (Moorehead, 2007).
13. UN Commission on Human Rights, Convention on the Rights of the Child: Article 30 states: In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, *to enjoy his or her own culture*, to profess and practice his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language. Retrieved from <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>.

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FABIENNE DOUCET is an assistant professor in the Department of Teaching and Learning at the New York University Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development. Her research program addresses the educational experiences of immigrant and U.S.-born children of color and their families, with a particular focus on Haitian immigrants. She was a postdoctoral fellow at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education with fellowships from the National Science Foundation and the Spencer Foundation. There she studied the adaptation and schooling experiences of 1.5- and second-generation Haitian youth and their families under the umbrella of the Longitudinal Immigrant Student Adaptation study. Doucet is chair of the Haiti Working Group at the NYU Steinhardt Institute for Human Development and Social Change and an affiliated faculty member of the NYU Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies. Doucet has a PhD in human development and family studies from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

LORELLE L. ESPINOSA is the director of policy and strategic initiatives at the Institute for Higher Education Policy in Washington, DC. Her work on the intersection of gender and race/ethnicity in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) higher education was first published in the *Journal of Women and Minorities in Science and Engineering* in 2008. Since that time, she has become a regular contributor to professional journals and writes a widely read blog on the imperative of diverse perspectives in STEM education. Her dissertation on the persistence of women of color in STEM majors was cited for excellence by the Association for the Study of Higher Education in 2010.

JOYCE E. KING holds the Benjamin E. Mays Endowed Chair at Georgia State University, where she is also a professor of educational policy studies. Her publications address the role of cultural knowledge in effective teaching and teacher preparation, Black teachers' emancipatory pedagogy, Black Studies epistemology and curriculum theorizing, community-mediated research, and *dysconscious racism*, the term she coined. Her publications include four books—*Black Mothers to Sons: Juxtaposing African American Literature with Social Practice* (1990/1995), *Teaching Diverse Populations* (1994), *Preparing Teachers for Diversity* (1997), and *Black Education: A Transformative Research and Action Agenda for the New Century* (2005)—and numerous articles and book chapters.

LINDSEY E. MALCOM is an assistant professor of higher education administration and policy in the Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Riverside. Her research centers on the relationship between higher education policy and access and success for underrepresented minorities (URMs) in the sciences and related (STEM) fields. In addition to exploring the ways in which institutional and college financing pathways structure opportunity and outcomes for URMs in STEM, she is interested in better understanding the roles of minority-serving institutions and community colleges in expanding STEM educational opportunity for historically disadvantaged populations. Her work has appeared in the *Review of Higher Education*, *Journal of African American History*, and *New Directions for Institutional Research* and in volumes published by Routledge, SUNY Press, and Stylus.