

Identity and Ideology  
in the Haitian U.S.  
Diaspora



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By

Paul C. Mocombe

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*This work, as with everything I pen, is done in the name of the ancestors,  
lwa-yo, manbo Erzulie, my grandparents (Saul and Eugenia Mocombe),  
my sons (Daniel and Isaiah), and my wife (Tiara Mocombe) ...*



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# INTRODUCTION

This work puts forth the argument that in the Haitian Diaspora in the United States of America a new Haitian identity, “the my nigga Haitian,” has emerged among Haitian youth, which is tied to the black practical consciousness of the black American underclass. The black American in the postindustrial capitalist world-system of America are no longer Africans. Instead, their practical consciousnesses are the product of two structurally determined dominant identities, the negro, i.e., black bourgeoisie, or African Americans, on the one hand, under the leadership of educated professionals and preachers; and the “my nigga,” i.e., the black underclass, on the other hand, under the leadership of street and prison personalities, athletes, and entertainers vying for ideological and linguistic domination of black America. These two social class language games were historically constituted by their relations to the forces and relations of production and their different ideological apparatuses, the church and education on the one hand; and the streets, prisons, and the athletic and entertainment industries on the other, of the global capitalist racial-class structure of inequality under American hegemony, which replaced the African ideological apparatuses of Vodou, peristyles, lakous, and agricultural production as found in Haiti, for example. Among Haitian youth in the US diaspora, post-1986 following the topple of Jean-Claude “baby doc” Duvalier, the latter social class language game, black American underclass, would come to serve as the bearer of ideological and linguistic domination, forming the “my nigga Haitian” identity emerging today in the age of American postindustrial capitalism against the practical consciousnesses of the Haitian Bourgeoisie and Vodou Community.

## **The Constitution of Haitian Practical Consciousnesses**

If the African and diasporic experience as encapsulated in slavery, colonization, abolitionism, and decolonization dialectically represents the intent of former slaves to be like their masters amidst racism, slavery, colonization, and their structural differentiation, the Africans of Haiti who met at Bois Caïman, August 14<sup>th</sup>, 1791, and other congresses to commence the Haitian Revolution attempted to do the contrary. That is, they, anti-dialectically, rejected not only their slave status, racism, and colonization,

but the very practical consciousness of their former slavemasters for their own structuring structure or form of system and social integration, i.e., lakouism and the Vodou Ethic and the spirit of communism social class language game, which emerges out of their Haitian ontology and epistemology, Haitian/Vilokan idealism (Mocombe, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019). Their discourse and discursive practices would eventually be supplanted by the practical consciousness or language game of the *Affranchis*, free (creole) blacks and mulattoes, *gens de couleur*, bourgeoisies, seeking, like their liberal bourgeois black counterparts in America and the diaspora (the black Atlantic), equality of opportunity, distribution, and recognition with their *blanc* counterparts within the capitalist world-system via the Haitian state and its ideological apparatuses. Prior to this usurpation, however, the Vodou and Kreyol ceremony or congress at Bois Caïman under the leadership of Dutty Boukman, Edaïse, Cecile Fatima, the Vodou manbo priestess, is a rejection of both slave status and European civilization, and cannot be, contrary to Susan Buck-Morss's (2009) work, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*, and others, conceptualized within the framework of Hegel's master/slave dialectic, or within postmodern, post-structural, or postcolonial theories. Whereas the purposive-rationality of the two bourgeoisies, free landowning blacks and mulatto elites, can be conceptualized within a Hegelian dialectical, postmodern, post-structural, and postcolonial struggle, that of *oungan yo*, *manbo yo*, *gangan yo*, and *granmoun yo* of Bois Caïman, who would assume the leadership of the masses of the provinces and mountains, cannot. The purposive-rationality of the latter was not a structurally differentiated identity as found amongst the creole blacks and mulatto elites. Oungan yo, manbo yo, gangan yo, and granmoun yo of Bois Caïman offered an alternative structuring structure (form of system and social integration), social class language game, for organizing the material resource framework and the agential initiatives of social actors, and must not be enframed within the structurally differentiating dialectical, postmodern, post-structural, and postcolonial logic of the West and the *Affranchis* (today's Haitian mulatto, Arab oligarchy, and petit-bourgeois blacks) (Du Bois, 2012; Mocombe, 2016, 2018).

In fact, when the Haitian Revolution commences in 1791, there are three distinct groups vying for control of the island, the whites (*blancs*); free people of color and mulattoes (*Affranchis*), and the enslaved and escaped (maroon) Africans of the island. The latter, over sixty-seven percent of the population, were not a structurally differentiated other. They had their own practical consciousness, what Paul C. Mocombe (2016) calls the "Vodou Ethic and the spirit of communism," by which they went

about recursively (re)organizing and reproducing the material resource framework. The former two, free blacks and *gens de couleur* (Affranchis), were interpellated, embourgeoisied, and differentiated by the language, communicative discourse, mode of production, ideology, and ideological apparatuses of the West and shared the same European practical consciousness, the Catholic/Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism social class language game, as the whites. The latter social class language game stood against the Vodou Ethic and the spirit of communism social class language game of the majority of the Africans who were interpellated and ounganified/manboified by the language, communicative discourse, mode of production, ideology, and ideological apparatuses of *oungan yo*, *manbo yo*, *gangan yo*, and *granmoun yo* (James, 1986; Fick, 1990; Du Bois, 2004, 2012; Ramsey, 2014; Mocombe, 2016, 2017, 2018).

The whites, were divided between large plantation owners, *grand blanc*, and *petit-blancs*, i.e., managers, slave drivers, artisans, merchants, and teachers. The former, *grand blanc*, were independent-minded, and like the American colonists wanted political and economic independence from their mother-country, France, where their rights and economic interests were not represented in the National Assembly. The *petit-blancs* were more racist and feared the alliance between the larger landowners and the Affranchis. The Affranchis were free people of color and mulatto, *gens de couleur*, property and slave owners on the island who shared the religion, culture, language, and ideology of their white counterparts and wanted then Saint-Domingue to remain a French colony. Although internal antagonism based on race (color) and class existed between the free (creole) blacks and *gens de couleur*, I group them together under the nomenclature, Affranchis, to highlight the fact that their interpellation and embourgeoisement via the ideology and ideological apparatuses of the West rendered their practical consciousnesses identical even though there were racial/color (based on phenotype, not ideology) tensions between them (racial tensions, which still plaques Haiti today). Unlike the majority of white large plantation owners, however, the Affranchis, like Vincent Ogé, André Rigaud, Alexandre Pétion, Pierre Pinchinat, Toussaint Louverture, for examples, did not want independence from France. In the case of the mulattoes, who after independence would come to be referred to as the children of Alexandre Pétion, the first mulatto president of the Haitian Republic, they simply wanted their social, political, and economic rights recognized by France within the colony, not an independent nation-state or the end to slavery. In regards, to the children of Dessalines/Toussaint, metaphorically here representing creole slave drivers and free blacks, they sought equality of opportunity, recognition,

and distribution vis-à-vis the whites and mulattoes. The enslaved and escaped Africans, metaphorically speaking the children of Sans Souci (the Kongolese general of the Haitian Revolution who was assassinated by the Affranchis Henri Christophe), of the island were divided between field slaves, domestic slaves, and maroons. The domestic slaves, like their African-American counterparts, house slaves, more so identified with their slavemasters. However, for the most part, the field slaves and maroons, because of their relative isolation from whites, domestic slaves, *gens de couleur*, and free blacks, were interpellated and ounganified/manboified by the modes of production, language, ideology, ideological apparatuses, and communicative discourse of the Vodou Ethic and the spirit of communism, and many sought to reproduce their African ways of life in a national position of their own. In the end, the Revolution would come down to a struggle between the *Affranchis* and the enslaved and maroon Africans of the island, the latter of whom commenced the Haitian Revolution on August 14<sup>th</sup>, 1791 at Bois Caiman and other congresses (Genovese, 1979; James, 1986; Fick, 1990; Du Bois, 2004, 2012; Mocombe, 2016). Following the Revolution, between 1804 and 1806, the purposive-rationality of the enslaved and maroon Africans would become a part of the *modus operandi* of the Haitian nation-state until October 17, 1806 when Jean-Jacques Dessalines was assassinated by Alexandre Pétion and Henri Christophe. At which point, the purposive-rationality of the *Affranchis* with their emphasis on integration into the mercantilist and free-trade dialectic of the global capitalist world-system, capitalist wealth, French culture, religion, and language became dominant at the expense of the African linguistic system, Kreyol; Vodou ideology; its ideological apparatuses; and modes of production, subsistence agriculture, husbandry, and *komes*, of the African masses on the island who took to the mountains and provinces following the death of Dessalines (Fick, 1990; Nicholls, 1979; Du Bois, 2004, 2012).

Contemporarily, the continuous struggle between the mulatto-Arab merchant/professional class and the black landowning managerial (middle) classes for control of the state and its apparatuses, at the expense of the African masses in the provinces and mountains whose children they arm and use against each other as they migrate to Port-au-Prince amidst American neoliberal policies seeking to displace the masses off their land for tourism, agro and textile industries, and athletics (basketball and soccer), continues to be a hindrance for the constitution of a sovereign Haitian nation-state. The former two, interpellated and embourgeoised in Western ideological apparatuses, seek to constitute Haiti, with the aid of whites (France, Canada, and America), as an export-oriented periphery

state within the neoliberal logic of the capitalist world-system under American hegemony against the desires of the masses of Africans in the provinces and mountains seeking to maintain their *komes*, subsistence agriculture, and husbandry, which are deemed informal. The *grandon* class, composed of educated professionals, former drug dealers, entertainers, and police officers attack the former Affranchis class, which is now a comprador bourgeoisie (composed of mulattoes, blacks, and Arab merchants) seeking to build, own, and manage hotels and assembly factories producing electronics and clothing for the US market, under the moniker the children of Dessalines against the children of Pétion in the name of the African masses of the island, the majority of whom are peasant farmers interpellated and ounganified by the Vodou Ethic and the spirit of communism social class language game (Mocombe, 2016, 2018). Instead of focusing on vertically integrating the lakou system and infrastructure (artificial lakes, potable water, food security, mache—modern market spaces for *komes*, universities, and state-owned companies for the peasant class to sell, etc.) to augment national agriculture and the productive forces of the latter group, who constitute eighty-five percent of the population as the socialist opposition attempted to do during the Boyer presidency of the nineteenth century, the mulatto-Arab elites and petit-bourgeois blacks emphasize the constitution of the Haitian nation-state via neoliberalism, i.e., individual freedoms, personal responsibility, job creation through foreign direct investment in tourism, agro and textile industries, privatization of public services, deregulation, austerity, infrastructure for an export-oriented economy similar to the one they had under slavery, and the constitution of a political bourgeoisie in control of the state apparatuses. However, their inabilities—given the voting power of the majority—to constitute two dominant rotating political parties to implement the neoliberal desires of their former colonial slavemasters, leaves Haiti in perpetual turmoil. As in slavery, the African masses continue to fight, against their interpellation, embourgeoisement, and differentiation as wage-earners (commodities) in the tourism trade and textile factories of the Catholic/Protestant Ethic and spirit of capitalism of these two power elites seeking to displace the masses off their lands and into urban centers of Haiti and elsewhere to facilitate capitalist development. This displacement and dislocation of the African masses of Haiti to urban centers at home and abroad have led to the emergence of new, structurally differentiated, identities amongst them as they scatter throughout the world in search of better opportunities in the face of neoliberal policies on the island. For example, Haitian immigration to the United States most recently has seen the rise of what is more appropriately

labeled the “my nigga” Haitian identity, which is tied to the “my nigga” black American underclass consciousness of the inner-cities.

## **The Constitution of Black American Practical Consciousness**

Black American practical consciousness and social agency were constituted by and within the dialectic of the American Protestant capitalist social structure of racial-class inequality. As such, black practical consciousness in America are a product of Protestant capitalist structural reproduction and differentiation. Unlike the African Haitians, the children of Sans Souci, no African ideological apparatuses were put in place to reorganize and reproduce (i.e., socially integrate) an African worldview on the American landscape. The African body, which embodied its initial African practical consciousnesses that were reified in Africa, were thrown in, interpellated by, and socialized (embourgeoisied) in new “white” capitalist ideological apparatuses that they would subsequently adopt and reproduce, i.e., the black church, nuclear family, etc., in regards to the politics of their black bodies not an African worldview. That is, their social agency centered on their identification as members of the (Protestant capitalist) society who recursively reproduced its ideas and ideals as people with black skin not as Africans with a distinct worldview or social class language game (language, communicative discourse, ideology, ideological apparatuses, and modes of production) from that of their former slavemasters and colonizers. As such, American blacks, as interpellated (workers) and embourgeoisied agents of the American dominated global (Protestant) capitalist social structure of inequality, represent the most modern (i.e. embourgeoisied) people of color, in terms of their “practical consciousness,” in this process of homogenizing social actors as agents of the protestant ethic or disciplined workers working for owners of production in order to obtain economic gain, status, and upward mobility in the larger American society and the world. Whereas, they once occupied the social space in relation to the forces of production as agricultural and industrial workers, the former less educated than the latter, which were much wealthier because of their education and industrial work and therefore made education and industry the means to economic gain and upward economic mobility during the period of industrial capitalism in America. Today, they continue to constitute the social space and their practical consciousness in terms of their relation to the means (forces) and relations of production (and their ideological apparatuses) in post-industrial capitalist America. This relation



differentiates black America for the most part into two status groups, a dwindling middle and upper class (living in suburbia) that numbers about 25 percent of their population (13 percent) and obtain their status as preachers, doctors, athletes, entertainers, lawyers, teachers, and other high-end professional service occupations; and a growing segregated “black underclass” of criminals, unemployed, and under-employed wage-earners occupying poor inner-city communities and schools focused solely on technical skills, multicultural education, athletics, and test-taking for social promotion given the relocation of industrial and manufacturing jobs to poor periphery and semi-periphery countries and the introduction of low-end post-industrial service jobs and a growing informal economy in American urban-cities (Wilson, 1978, 1998; Sennett, 1998). Whereas street and prison personalities, rappers, athletes, and entertainers, many of whom refer to themselves and their compatriots as “my niggas,” are the bearers of ideological and linguistic domination for the latter; the former, once called negroes, the black bourgeoisie (E. Franklin Frazier’s term), and now African-Americans, is predominantly influenced by preachers and educated professionals as the bearers of ideological and linguistic domination. As structurally differentiated determined identities, both groups share the same ideals and goals, i.e., economic gain, status, and upward social mobility, within the class division and social relations of production of the Protestant capitalist world-system under American hegemony. Therefore, their practical consciousness is neither progressive, nor counter-hegemonic. It is reproductive and structurally differentiated.

However, America’s transition to a postindustrial, financialized service, economy beginning in the 1970s, decentered the negro (black bourgeoisie/African American) practical consciousness, and reified and positioned black American “my nigga” underclass ideology and language, hip-hop culture, as a viable means for black American youth to identify with and achieve economic gain, status, and upward economic mobility in the society over education and succeeding academically as emphasized by black bourgeois discourse. Finance capital in the US beginning in the 1970s began investing in entertainment and other service industries where the inner-city language, street, prison, entertainment, and athletic youth culture of black America became both a commodity and the means to economic gain, status, and upward mobility (forces of production) for the black poor in America’s postindustrial economy, which subsequently outsourced its industrial work to semi-periphery nations thereby blighting the inner-city communities. Blacks, many of whom migrated to the northern cities from the agricultural south looking for industrial work in the north following the Civil War (1861-1865), became concentrated in

blighted communities where work began to disappear, schools were underfunded, and poverty increased. The black migrants, which migrated North with their Black/African-American English Vernacular (BEV/AAEV) from the agricultural South, became segregated sociolinguistic underclass communities, ghettos, of unemployed laborers looking to illegal, athletic, and entertainment activities (running numbers, pimping, prostitution, drug dealing, robbing, participating in sports, music, etc.) for economic success, status, and upward mobility. Educated in the poorly funded schools of the urban ghettos, given the process of deindustrialization and the flight of capital to the suburbs, with no work prospects, many black Americans became part of a permanent, BEV/AAEV speaking and poorly educated underclass looking to other activities for economic gain, status, and upward economic mobility. Those who were educated became a part of the social class language game of the Standard-English-speaking black middle class of professionals, i.e., preachers, teachers, doctors, lawyers, etc. (the black bourgeoisie), living in the suburbs, while the uneducated or poorly educated constituted the social class language game of the black underclass of the urban ghettos where the streets, prisons, athletics, and the entertainment industries became the ideological apparatuses for their socialization. Beginning in the late 1980s, finance capital began commodifying and distributing (via the media industrial complex) the social class language game of the underclass black culture for entertainment in the emerging postindustrial (service) economy of the US over the ideology and language, social class language game, of the black bourgeoisie. Be that as it may, efforts to succeed academically among black Americans, which constituted the ideology and language of the black bourgeoisie, paled in comparison to their efforts to succeed as speakers of Black English, athletes, “gangstas”, “playas”, and entertainers, which became the ideology and language of the black underclass living in the inner-cities of America. Authentic black American identity became synonymous with black underclass hip-hop ideology and language represented by young athletes and entertainers, LeBron James, Derek Rose, Lil ‘ Wayne, Jay-Z, Kanye West, Tupac Shakur, Biggie Smalls, etc., over the social class language game of the educated black professional class under the ideological and linguistic domination of black preachers, TD Jakes, Creflo Dollar, Jamal Bryant, Juanita Bynum, etc., and other educated black professionals. In other words, in the postindustrial economy of the US black bourgeois traditional ideology and language with its emphasis on personal responsibility, individualism, economic gain as a sign of salvation and grace, and family values became juxtapose against

the narcissistic exploration of self, sexuality, and identity of the black underclass for economic gain.

The black underclass in America's ghettos has slowly become, since the 1980s, with the financialization of hip-hop culture as an art form and entertainment by record labels such as Sony and others, athletics, and the entertainment industry, the bearers of ideological and linguistic domination for the black youth community in America. Their language and worldview as constituted by and through ideological apparatuses such as the streets, prisons, hip-hop culture, athletics and the entertainment industry financed by finance capital, has become the means by which black youth (and youth throughout the world) attempt to recursively reorganize and reproduce their material resource framework against the purposive-rationality of educated black bourgeois or middle-class America. The upper-class of owners and high-level executives of the American dominated capitalist world-system have capitalized on this through the commodification of black "my nigga" underclass culture, which mainstreamed it. This is further supported by an American media and popular culture that glorifies the streets, athletes, entertainers, and the "Bling bling," wealth, diamonds, cars, jewelry, and money. Hence the aim of many young blacks in the society is no longer to seek status, economic gain, and upward mobility through a Protestant Ethic that stresses hard work, diligence, deferred gratification, and education; on the contrary, the Protestant ethic in sports, music, instant gratification, illegal activities (drug dealing), and skimming are the dominant means portrayed for their efforts through the entertainment industry financed by post-industrial capital. Schools throughout urban inner cities are no longer seen as means to a professional end in order to obtain economic gain, status, and upward mobility, but obstacles to that end because it delays gratification and is not correlative with the means associated with economic success and upward mobility in black urban America. More black American youth (especially the black male) aspire to become, football and basketball players, rappers and entertainers, like many of their role models, LeBron James, Derek Rose, Lil ' Wayne, Jay-Z, Kanye West, Tupac Shakur, Biggie Smalls, etc., who were raised in their urban underclass environments and obtained economic gain and upward mobility that way, over doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc., the social functions associated with the status symbol of the black and white middle class (negroes) of the civil rights generation. Hence the end and social action of the larger society remains the same, economic success, status, and upward economic mobility, only the means (forces of production) to that end have shifted with the rise, financed by finance capital, of the black underclass as the bearers of ideological and linguistic

domination in black America given the commodification of hip-hop culture and their high visibility in the media and charitable works through basketball and football camps and rap concerts, which reinforce the aforementioned activities as viable professions (means) to wealth and status in the society's postindustrial economy, which focuses on services and entertainment for the world's transnational bourgeois class as the mode of producing surplus-value.

This linguistic and ideological domination and the ends of the power elites (rappers, athletes, gangsters) of the black underclass are juxtaposed against the Protestant Ethic and spirit of capitalism of the educated black middle and upper middle classes represented in the discourse and discursive practices of black American prosperity preachers in the likes of TD Jakes, Creflo Dollar, Jamal Bryant, Juanita Bynum, Eddie Long, etc. who push forth, via the black American church, education, and professional jobs as the more viable means to economic gain, status, and upward economic mobility in the society over the street life of the urban ghettos. Hence, whereas, for agents of the Protestant Ethic in the likes of Jakes, Dollar, Bryant, Bynum, and Long the means to "Bling bling," or the American Dream, is through education, obtaining a professional job, and material wealth as a sign of God's grace, salvation, and blessings. Rapping, hustling, sports, etc., for younger black Americans growing up in inner-cities throughout the US, where industrial work has disappeared, represent the means (not education) to the status position of "Bling bling."

## **Discussion and Conclusions: Haitian Integration into the American Capitalist Social Structure**

Beginning in the late 1950s Haitians immigrated to the US differentiated within the racial-class socio-culture of Haiti previously highlighted, mulattoes, petit-bourgeois blacks of the Affranchis, and Africans of the Vodou Ethic and the spirit of communism. Post-independence, the first wave of Haitian immigrants to arrive in the US were predominantly young upper-class mulatto elites and members of the black grandon class escaping the Francois "papa-doc" Duvalier regime. They deemed the regime racist as it emphasized Duvalier's noirisme ideology, which highlighted Haiti as a black country that should be ruled by blacks (a black middle technoclass educated in the technical schools during the US occupation, 1915-1934) against the mulatto elites who for so long dominated the nation's politics via what is referred to as *politique de doublure* (the politics of having a dark-skinned Haitian as the face of the government while the mulatto elites directed its politics and their racial-

class interest) (Du Bois, 2012). Highly educated, upon their arrival to the US, however, they became segregated from the larger mainstream society because of race, language, and culture, and the black American class structure because of language and embourgeoisied French culture. Hence, Haitian practical consciousness early on evolved, segregated, by emphasizing the embourgeoisied praxis of the mulatto elites and petit-bourgeois black grandon class of the island seeking to reproduce French culture, ideals, and ideas among their children. In public, they established small businesses catering to the segregated Haitian population, drove taxicabs, worked in factories and restaurants, and emphasized upward economic mobility, the French language, the Catholic religion, playing a musical instrument, i.e., the piano, and professional education, i.e., law, medicine, and engineering, over the Kreyol language and Vodou religion of the African masses on the island.

Following the fall of the Duvalier regime in 1986, more Haitian immigrants from the provinces and mountains began emigrating from the island to the US escaping the political repression of anti-Jean Bertrand Aristide forces and the American embargo, which sought to get the latter to adopt neoliberal policies. The push-pull forces (dictated by the US and international organizations such as the IMF, World Bank, United Nations, etc.) of neoliberal capitalist relations of production seeking to convert Haiti into an export-oriented periphery state within the global capitalist world-system forced many Haitians off of their lands in the mountains and provinces of the island and into the urban centers of the capital city, Port-au-Prince, and other countries seeking industrial and low-end postindustrial service work. Proselytized early-on by American Protestant missionary forces allowed on the island during the American occupation and under the Duvalier regime which used these missionaries to provide social welfare to the masses in place of government institutions as governed by the neoliberal logic of privatization, austerity, personal responsibility, etc., many of these recent immigrants to the US were darker-skinned, anti-Vodou (given their Protestant indoctrination), poorer, less educated, Protestant, and Kreyol speaking. Upon their arrival to the US they became segregated in poorer Haitian communities in proximity to the black inner-city communities of the black American underclass as wealthier Haitians had, following the black American bourgeoisie, relocated to the suburbs given the process of deindustrialization that had plagued US urban cities beginning in the 1970s. As late arrivals in the American post-industrial service economy, they obtained low-wage work as poor service workers, i.e., taxi drivers, hotel and restaurant workers, etc., while simultaneously facing the discriminatory effects of racism and classism in predominantly

poor inner-city communities. In facing the discriminatory effects of the black underclass of these communities, the practical consciousness of their children became divided between the embourgeoisied aspirations of their parents seeking to follow the practical consciousness of the previous immigrant generation and the shifting American postindustrial economy, which began to valorize the practical consciousness of the black underclass as enframed by the athletics industry and “Hip-Hop” culture as means to economic gain, status, and upward mobility in the larger society. As such with the rise of the Haitian rapper Wyclef Jean to prominence in the early 90s, the “my nigga” practical consciousness of the black underclass took hold among young Haitian immigrants who integrated and reproduced elements of it amongst themselves in their own segregated poor communities. Against the embourgeoisement of their parents, which took and takes place via Protestant churches, they sought economic gain, status, and upward mobility via athletics, hustling, and the entertainment industry. Becoming Haitian flag-waving, Jesus-loving, tattoo-wearing, Vodou-hating, and Ebonics-speaking Haitians whose only connections to Haiti were and are a broken form of Kreyol synthesized with English (Kreenglish), Wyclef, Kodak black (another rapper), zo pound (a Haitian gang that developed in the inner-cities of Miami to protect Haitians who were discriminated against by African Americans), soup joumou (the independence day pumpkin soup eaten by Haitians on January 1<sup>st</sup>), griot (fried pork prepared by Haitians), and the annual Haitian flag day festival in Miami, Florida held annually on May 18<sup>th</sup>.

Like many black Americans of the late 1980s and 90s who turned to roots and an Afrocentric culture to combat both the black capitalist pathologies of the black bourgeoisie and underclasses, in response to both the “my nigga” Haitian identity and the French embourgeoisement of earlier generations, the middle-age children of the first generation of Haitian immigrants have begun to return to their Vodou and Kreyol roots as constituted in the provinces and mountains of the island in search of an authentic Haitian/African identity by which to recursively reorganize and reproduce their being-in-the-world against both the “my nigga” Haitian practical consciousness and its bourgeois counterpart. For now, in the age of globalization and post-industrialism, “the my nigga” Haitian identity dominates in large urban centers in the US (Miami, Brooklyn, Boston, etc.) and is starting to take hold on the island over the latter two with the emergence of “rap” Kreyol and its accoutrements, which patterns the Hip-hop culture of the black American underclass, on the island. Concentrated in Haitian and US ghettos, the “my nigga” Haitian identity in both Haiti and the US have reproduced and are reproducing the same practical

consciousnesses that characterized the Hip-Hop cultural and violent (gang) practices of the urban ghettos of the USA in the early 1980s and 90s to the detriment of any counter-hegemonic forces, which seeks to undermine the capitalist relations of production and its structures that is responsible for its constitution.

To begin this analysis, chapter one deconstructs contemporary postmodern/post-structural understandings regarding the nature and origins of black identity/practical consciousness. In the place of postmodern and post-structural thoughts on identity constitution I offer the structurationist theory and methodology Paul C. Mocombe (2019) calls phenomenological structuralism. Against postmodern/post-structural emphasis on the fragmentary or the decentered subject, this work, using the aforementioned Haitian idealist and structural Marxist perspective grounded in structuration theory, phenomenological structuralism, suggests that the constitution of black practical consciousness/identity must be understood predominantly as the struggle between two social class language games, a black bourgeoisie and underclass, of the Catholic/Protestant Ethic and capitalist racial-class divisions, social relations of production, and ideological apparatuses of the two bourgeoisies as constituted by the global capitalist world-system under American hegemony. Be that as it may, chapters three and four, respectively, highlight the nature and origins of globalization under American hegemony and the constitution of black American consciousness within a (phenomenological structural) structurationist framework. Chapter five explores the constitution of Haitian identity within the phenomenological structural approach. Concluding that in Haiti, unlike blacks elsewhere, Haitian practical consciousness became constituted within two forms of system and social integration, i.e., the Vodou Ethic and the spirit of communism of the African majority on the one hand, and the Catholic/Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism of the Affranchis on the other. Chapter six concludes the work by highlighting how the dialectical response of the Affranchis class to reproduce the capitalist system of their former colonial masters on the island, consequently, gave rise to the “my nigga” identity in the US Haitian diaspora and subsequently Haiti. Concluding, in this structural approach to the constitution of Haitian practical consciousness, that in the historical denouement of the Vodou Ethic and the spirit of communism and the Protestant Ethic and the discursive practices of the spirit of capitalism from slavery to globalization under European and American Hegemony, Haitian practical consciousness emerged and became dominated for the most part by three social class language games, the *grandon* class, composed of Western educated professionals, middle managers, former

drug dealers, entertainers, and police officers; the Affranchis class/comprador bourgeoisie of landowners and merchants, seeking to build, own, and manage hotels and assembly factories producing electronics and clothing for the US market; and the African masses of the island, the majority of whom are peasant farmers and *komesans*, whose practical consciousness, the Vodou Ethic and the spirit of communism and its lakou system, are marginalized and discriminated against by the two bourgeoisies who are interpellated and embourgeoisied by the Protestant/Catholic Ethic and the spirit of capitalism of the West. Amidst these three identities, the chapter concludes, a new, structurally determined, Haitian identity, “the my nigga Haitian,” which is influencing the Haitian youth on the island, has emerged as a result of the implementation of (neo) liberal policies in Haiti and the Haitian diaspora in the United States of America by the aforementioned Haitian bourgeoisie classes against the Vodou Ethic and spirit of communism and the Lakou system of the Vodou community.



# CHAPTER I

## BLACK CONSCIOUSNESSES AND IDENTITIES IN AMERICA AND THE DIASPORA

From slavery, to colonialism, to the present, race and class distinctions within black communities in the United States (US) and the black diaspora must be understood as being predominantly constituted within and by the two dominant structurally determined social class language games, a black bourgeoisie and underclass (a racial caste in class), created by the racial-class division and social relations of production of global capitalism or the Protestant capitalist world-system and its ideological apparatuses. This structural Marxist dialectical perspective, I am purporting, stands against contemporary postcolonial, postmodern, and post-structural theories, which focus on local formations, heterogeneity, the diverse, the subjective, the spontaneous, the relative, and the fragmentary as the basis for understanding the constitution of black identities and consciousnesses in the US and the diaspora in the age of globalization and neoliberalism. The latter positions, I argue here, are also the product of class division and social relations of production in late postindustrial capitalist development and organization. The concepts, i.e., ambivalence, double consciousness, hybridity, *négritude*, *créolité*, and intersectionality, coming from, or out of, these theories represent the concepts, psychological pathologies, and practical consciousnesses of the black bourgeoisies and other bourgeoisies of once discriminated against others in their dialectical quest to obtain equality of opportunity, recognition, and distribution with their former slavemasters and colonial administrators within capitalist relations of production. As a result, they fail to adequately address the issues regarding the origins and basis for the constitution of black identities and consciousnesses in America, the Metropoles, and the diaspora. Using a variant of structuration theory, what Paul C. Mocombe (2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019) calls phenomenological structuralism, this work, against contemporary postcolonial, postmodern, and post-structural theories, seeks to offer a dialectical understanding of the constitution of black American and diasporic lives within the class division and social

relations of production of the global capitalist world-system (and its ideological apparatuses), while accounting for black social agency. In the end, I utilize Mocombe's phenomenological structuralism to explore the emergence of the "my nigga" Haitian identity in America and Haiti in the age of neoliberal globalization or the contemporary capitalist world-system under American (Protestant) neoliberal hegemony.

Since the 1960s, there have been four similar schools of thought on understanding the origins and nature of black practical consciousnesses, the ideas blacks recursively reorganize and reproduce in their material practices, in the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK), and the diaspora: the pathological-pathogenic and adaptive-vitality school in the US; and the anti-essentialist and anti-anti-essentialist schools in the UK and the diaspora. In the US, the pathological-pathogenic position suggests that in its divergences from white American norms and values black American practical consciousness is nothing more than a pathological form of, and reaction to, American consciousness rather than a dual (both African and American) hegemonic opposing "identity-in-differential" (the term is Gayatri Spivak's) to the American one (Elkins, 1959; Frazier, 1939, 1957; Genovese, 1974; Murray, 1984; Moynihan, 1965; Myrdal, 1944; Wilson, 1978, 1987; Sowell, 1975, 1981; Stamp, 1956, 1971). Proponents of the adaptive-vitality school suggest that the divergences are not pathologies but African "institutional transformations" preserved on the American landscape (Allen, 2001; Asante, 1988, 1990; Billingsley, 1968, 1970, 1993; Blassingame, 1972; Early, 1993; Gilroy, 1993; Gutman, 1976; Herskovits, 1958 [1941]; Holloway, 1990a; Karenga, 1993; Levine, 1977; Lewis, 1993; Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990; Nobles, 1987; Staples, 1978; Stack, 1974; West, 1993). Just the same in the UK and the diaspora, the two main opposing schools of thought are the anti-essentialist and the anti-anti-essentialist (Smith, 1960; Vera, 1960; Gilroy, 1993; Mercer, 1994; Clifford, 1997; Mocombe and Tomlin, 2010, 2013; Mocombe et al, 2014). Anti-essentialists similar to the US pathological-pathogenic school argue against any ideas of a black innate cultural phenomenon that unites all black people. Proponents of this theory contend that diasporic identities and cultures cannot place African origin at the center of any attempt to understand the nature of black practical consciousnesses in the UK and the diaspora (Mercer, 1994, pg. 3). The anti-anti-essentialist position, in keeping with the logic of the adaptive-vitality school, posits, on the contrary, the idea that African memory retentions exist in diasporic cultures to some degree (Clifford, 1997, pg. 267-268). Contemporarily, all four positions have been criticized for either their structural determinism as in the case of the pathological-pathogenic and anti-essentialist approaches,

or racial/cultural determinism as in the case of the adaptive-vitality and anti-anti-essentialist positions (Karenga, 1993; Mocombe et al, 2014).

In directly or indirectly refuting these four positions for their structural and racial/cultural determinism, contemporary post-sixties and post-segregation era black scholars in the United Kingdom (UK) and United States (US), especially, attempt to understand black consciousnesses and communities by using postcolonial, post-structural, and post-modern theories to either reinterpret W.E.B. Du Bois's (1903) double consciousness construct as an epistemological mode of critical inquiry that characterizes the nature or essence of black consciousness, a la Cornel West (1993) and Paul Gilroy (1993); or, building on the social constructivist work of Frantz Fanon, offer an intersectional approach to the constitution of black consciousnesses and communities, which emphasize the diverse and different levels of alienation, marginalization, and domination, class, race, gender, global location, age, and sexual identity, by which black consciousnesses and communities get constituted, a la bell hooks (1993) and Patricia Hill Collins (1990) (Reed, 1997; Gordon, 2000; Mocombe et al, 2014). In spite of their efforts, these two dominant contemporary critical race theory responses to the pathological-pathogenic, adaptive-vitality, anti-essentialist, and anti-anti-essentialist positions inadequately resolve the structural and racial determinism of the aforementioned approaches by neglecting the fact that their theories and the practical consciousness of the theorists themselves derive from the class division and social relations of production of global capitalism or the contemporary capitalist world-system (Fraser, 1994; Mocombe et al, 2014, 2017, 2018).

The former understanding, Du Boisian double consciousness, put forth by Paul Gilroy and Cornel West is not only problematic because it reiterates Du Bois's racial essentialism in constituting his notion of double consciousness (Reed, 1997; Mocombe, 2008). But the scholars are also mistaken because they assume their Cartesian, transcendental, intellectual activity, the epistemological mode of critical inquiry, in the academy as having ontological and epistemological status among the black masses in general in constituting their identity within and by the dialectical racial-class structure of global capitalist relations of production and its ideological apparatuses. In other words, they do this instead of viewing their interpretation of Du Boisian double consciousness, as an epistemological mode of critical inquiry, as being a by-product of a Cartesian transcendental vantage point afforded to them by their academic training and bourgeois class positions as black professors seeking to define black consciousness along the social class language game of the white bourgeois lifestyles of the upper-class of owners and high-level executives

as it stands against and in relation to black underclass bodies, material conditions, language, and ideology. Gilroy and West assume their interpretation of double consciousness as an epistemological mode of critical inquiry, which is similar to the negative dialectics of the Frankfurt School, to be how ontologically and epistemologically black people, whether in the US or the diaspora (“the black Atlantic”), in general come to constitute their practical consciousnesses within the modern state and the dialectic of the capitalist social structure of class inequality and differentiation of the West. In doing so, however, they neglect the fact that their conception, as was the case in W.E.B. Du Bois’s conceptualization of double consciousness following the American Civil War, derives from the racial-class divisions of the American industrial/postindustrial capitalist social relations of production and its ideological apparatuses, which created two social (racial) class language games, a racial-caste-in-class, a black bourgeois educated and professional class juxtaposed against the material conditions, practices, language, body, and ideology of a black underclass segregated in the ghettos of Northern cities where industrial work was beginning to disappear to developing countries following the end of World War II. West and Gilroy, as Du Bois attempted to do for Southern agricultural black Americans following the Civil War, use double consciousness to highlight the contradictions of the society as encapsulated in, and revealed by, the material conditions of the black underclass of Northern cities in order to seek equality of opportunity, recognition, and distribution for them vis-à-vis whites and black bourgeois material conditions, bodies, language, status, etc. in a declining industrial social relations of production (Fraser, 1994; Reed, 1997; Mocombe, 2008, 2009).

Just the same, the latter predominantly feminist position, conversely, in refutation to the assumed hidden logic of heterosexual and patriarchal domination inherent in the theories of Du Bois, Gilroy, and West, attempts to offer an intersectional approach to the constitution of black consciousnesses, which emphasizes the different levels of domination or serial identities, class, race, gender, global location, age, and sexual identity, by which black communities and consciousnesses get alienated, marginalized, and constituted. This postcolonial, postmodern, post-structural, and black feminist theorizing of bell hooks and Patricia Hill Collins, especially, epistemologically dismisses the dominant ontological status of the capitalist system/social structure by which the masses of blacks attempt to practically live out their lives for the theoretical assumptions of the indeterminacy of meaning and decentered subject of postcolonial, post-structural, and post-modern theorizing. They attempt to

read back into the historical constitution of black identity and community life within and by the dialectic of a global capitalist social structure of racial class inequality the indeterminacy of meaning and decentered subject of postcolonial, post-structural, and post-modern theorizing to highlight the variety of intersecting ways, i.e., standpoints, race, class, age, sexual identity, etc., individual black subjects were and are alienated, marginalized, and dominated. As such, they commit the same bourgeois Cartesian transcendental intellectual fallacy that Gilroy and West do. Both hooks and Collins, from their transcendental vantage points, put the ontological status of the capitalist world-system, or “matrix of domination” to quote Collins, as reflected in the practices of the majority of blacks under erasure for the ontological and epistemological assumptions of postcolonial, post-modern, and post-structural theorizing. As though their bourgeois epistemological assumptions within a contemporary postindustrial capitalist social structure that attempts to decenter the bourgeois subject in order to reify and commodify individual identities around their class positions for finance capital accumulation, is how all blacks, historically, initially encountered the matrix of domination and came to constitute their being-in-the-world within and by the global capitalist social structure of racial class inequality and differentiation. They fail to realize that intersectionality is a socio-political by-product of a postindustrial (finance) capitalist landscape or social structure seeking to decenter the bourgeois subject and allow a diversity of identities to emerge (around their class positions) within the class division and social relations of postindustrial capitalist production so as to accumulate surplus-value (diversified consumerism) by catering to the entertainment, financial, and service needs of these new and once discriminated-against identities and their constructed “fictitious” class-based communities.

Essentially, the theorists overlook their “double hermeneutic” (Anthony Giddens’ term). Whereas Giddens’ term refers to how a social scientist’s “understanding of the social world may have an impact on the understandings of the actors being studied, with the result that social researchers can alter the world they are studying and thus lead to distorted findings and conclusions” (Ritzer, 2007, pg. 169). In this case, in my usage of it, the theorists overlook the impact that the capitalist social relations of production have on their understandings of the social world being studied, with the result that the social relations of production alters the world and the viewpoint of the theorists and thus lead to distorted findings and conclusions regarding the nature and origin of identity constitution, which the theorists assume to be indeterminant.

Hence, both positions because of their class origins and Cartesian ontological and epistemological (transcendental) activities and vantage points inadequately address the issue of how their intellectual assumptions and the practical consciousnesses in black communities within the global capitalist matrix of domination of the West historically and ontologically became constituted within and by the dialectical unfolding of racial-class divisions and social relations of production organized via mode of production, language, ideology, ideological apparatuses, and communicative discourse. They fail to synthesize their transcendental academic rhetoric with structural Marxist dialectics, which captures the racial-class divisions, ideological apparatuses, and the dialectical economic structure within which the practical consciousnesses of the black masses, the academic theories of ambivalence, hybridity, *créolité*, *négritude*, double consciousness, intersectionality, and the identities of the theorists emerged.

In other words, building on both the post-structural notion of the indeterminacy of meaning in ego-centered communicative discourse, i.e., linguistic communication and interaction is between endless signifiers and not signifiers and signified which allows for meaning to be deferred during interaction, as highlighted by Jacques Derrida; and the postmodern notion of the decentered subject, the rejection of the notion of individual subjectivity as autonomous, self-critical, unified, and stable, i.e., the transcendental subject of Kantian discourse, for the understanding of the subject as a locus of multiple, dispersed or decentered discourses, of Michel Foucault, bell hooks and Patricia Hill Collins, paradoxically from a transcendental academic perspective, offer an intersectional approach to the constitution of black consciousnesses and communities, which emphasizes the diverse and different levels of domination, class, race, gender, global location, age, and sexual identity, by which individual black consciousnesses and communities get constituted. Cornel West and Paul Gilroy in keeping with the logic of the transcendental subject of Kantian discourse offer Du Boisian double consciousness as an epistemological mode of critical inquiry into modernity as being the fundamental characteristic of black individual consciousness with a touch of religiosity and jazz improvisation. However, in doing so, like Derrida and Foucault, who neglect the fact that the indeterminacy of meaning and the decentered subject operate relationally within structures of domination, since the seventeenth century within the modern form of the state and racial-class divisions, which derives from the mode of production, language, communicative discourse, ideology, and ideological apparatuses of Protestant capitalist relations of production, West, Gilroy, hooks, and Collins overlook the fact that their theories and the different levels of