DISSERTATION

If We Don't Show You, Who Will? Children's Window to Africa: A Counter-Narrative to Popular Distortions about African American Cultural Identity, History, and Heritage

By

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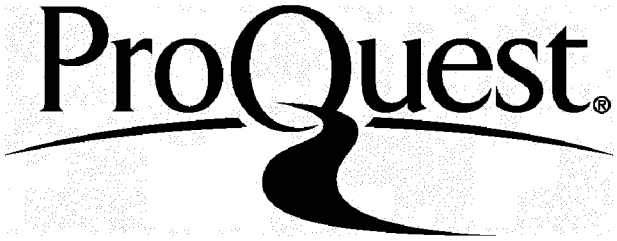

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ABSTRACT

If We Don't Show You, Who Will? CWTA to Africa: A Counter-Narrative to Popular Distortions about African American Cultural Identity, History, and Heritage

This qualitative and interpretive research examines the relationship between early childhood cultural immersion experiences in Children's Window to Africa (CWTA) and the cultural identity of former participants to answer the research question: Did counter-narratives created by CWTA influence the cultural identity of its participants? If so, how do former participants express this influence? This research also identifies and analyzes counter-narratives created by CWTA to answer the research question: What counter-narratives were created by CWTA to mitigate White hegemonic culture's negative portrayals of African American cultural identity? The framework of this research is Critical Race Theory (CRT) as examined through the lenses of the African-centered value system of Nguzo Saba (Seven Principles) and Sankofa. Through the frameworks described, documents and interviews were interrogated using content analysis. Structured interviews with eight former participants and five former teachers were also analyzed and interpreted. Categories of CWTA documents analyzed and interpreted were: (1) rituals, (2) chants and songs, (3) pledges and affirmations, and (4) images & stories.

Former participants expressed that early childhood experiences in CWTA influenced their cultural identity, sense of boldness, confidence, and pride in being African. Participants also expressed that CWTA helped to stimulate an interest in learning more about their cultural history. Gaining a fundamental knowledge of cultural and racial self gave them a sense of power. They expressed an expectation of reciprocity of cultural and racial dignity and humanity from others. Participants believed they deserved respect and recognition of their ancestral, cultural and racial pride. Cultural knowledge displaced doubt and misinformation about their African

humanity and cultural identity. One participant noted, "I know we are not who they say we are." Findings of this research suggest that early childhood cultural learning can impact cultural identity and a continued interest in learning about one's culture through young adulthood. The results of this research also determined that counter-narratives created by CWTA influenced cultural identity and helped shape awareness as experienced through popular culture.

DEDICATION

This accomplishment is dedicated to my parents, Mildred Richard Williams and McKinley Williams, Jr.; my eldest brother, McKinley "Butch" Williams, III; and to my eldest son, Ronald "Ron" Lawrence. *Ibaye! Gbogbo Egun*! Light, Peace, & Progress to your Spirits. I love you and miss you. Your lives, love and the many lessons—joy and pain—you brought me through made this season in my life possible. *Maferefun Egun*! To my sons, Omar and Keith and my adorable grands, Rassan, Kierstan, Christopher, and Ronya, thank you for helping me to become a better me and allowing me in your life. To Ronald, my husband of sweet and sorrowful seasons, tears and laughter, triumphs and let downs, it's still "We." To my Sisters and Brothers, from three rooms to all we can imagine and are willing to give and learn, Linda, Pam, Carl, Gordon, and all of your families, thanks for sharing this life with me. To Beverly Lovelace, who seeded and supported the idea of connecting Black children to their cultural roots while also showing them how to value other cultures. To all the teachers, artists, interns, staff and volunteers of CWTA to Africa (CWTA), *asante sana*! To professors and staff in the Department of Black Studies at the University of Pittsburgh, thank you for everything. To Mother/Father God for never leaving me alone, even in times when my feelings were spent and my body was limp. To the books and stories and songs and music that transported me to safe places that I might grieve, heal, struggle, laugh and learn to walk again without my eldest son, my Mother and Father, I am forever grateful. *Maferefun Baba Aganju*! *Maferefun Yemoja*! *Marferefun* Orisha!!

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To the many that came into my life at the right time though I may not have known it, thank you! To my many professors, students, artists, social activists, film makers, poets, dancers, singers, musicians, imaginators, parents and children that taught me, loved me and learned anything from me, I thank you! The names are numerous and the times often brief, but the gifts you brought were long lasting. Thanks to Dr. Karen Dajani for your encouragement, and willingness to help me across new and challenging thresholds though my soul and spirit were weary. Thanks to Dr. Patricia Washington for living what master teaching, humanity, compassion and care looks like in our community and with our children, thank you. Dr. MaryAnn E. Steger for agreeing to chair my Dissertation Committee and your guidance, integrity and insistence on solid scholarship, good chocolate, sunshine and music, thank you. Dr. Nancy Boxill and Dr. Diane Allerdyce, thank you for bringing your scholarship, wisdom and expertise to my Dissertation Committee. Thank you, Dr. C. Diane Colbert for your years of support. Dr. June Pickett Dowdy, thank you for your limitless encouragement. To all the Master Teachers, vizuri sana! To discovery and learning that captured me early on and made it so sweet, comfortable and exciting that I am compelled to pursue you, even in my maturity. To the fiction and nonfiction writers whose stories and ideas helped me to rewrite and reposition my life through hardships and joys, we're not yet done! Ashe'!

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CHAPTER 1

COUNTERING POPULR MASS CULTURE'S IMPACT ON AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL IDENTITY

> What you think of yourself depends on what you know of yourself and what you know of yourself depends on what you have been told [shown] about yourself. Never allow anyone to tell you that history and culture are not important. Never let anyone say "that happened a long time ago, get over it." Make your history sacred!
>
> —Runoko Rashidi, *Hidden Colors 2,* 2011

African American children and families are more than what is portrayed of them in narratives and images disseminated through Western popular mass culture (Asante, 2014). Such a culture is labeled as a Contemporary West Culture and is defined as,

> the culture that is currently [and historically] the dominant, majority culture in the United states, Canada, Western Europe-largely White and middle class and that sets most of the norms and standards and holds most of the positions of political, economic, intellectual, and media power in these countries (Arnett & Taber, 1994, p. 519).

In this Contemporary West Culture, Whites are the bench-mark by which Blacks are determined to be deficient and insubstantial to the development and maintenance of American society. This dominant culture places Blacks, other people of color, and women on the periphery of society where their voices and perspectives are typically not included (Arnett & Taber, 1994).

Many scholars, including educators, historians, and anthropologists agree that the dominant racialized culture of America continues to subvert the depth and breadth of African American cultural heritage and history (Nobels, 1991; Clark, 1993; Mazuri, 1986; Rogers, 1961; Kunjufu, 2010). Historically, African Americans have been projected in popular mass culture—

including historical narratives populating the sociocultural, political, and economic landscape—as inferior and less than human (Green, 2007; Boyd, 2008). These racial stereotypes, caricatures, and misrepresentations distort this group's significant contributions to the building and advancement of America. Such racialized and demeaning projections influence African Americans' self-perception and group identity and frequently shape interactions and perceptions other groups make about them (Boyd, 2008). These messages continue to be received by the most vulnerable—African American children—during their most formative years (Bogle, 1994; McAdoo, 2002; Pescosolid, Gauerhold & Mikir, 1997; Pieterse, 1992; Roethler, 1998).

Statement of Problem

In childhood and early adolescence, African American children are being told and shown about their cultural and racial identity through lenses of a hegemonic culture that place little or no value on them, their history, or their humanity. African American children and youth are portrayed as being on the margins of society and deficient in nearly every aspect when measured against White children and youth—the accepted benchmark of normality. Popular culture's narratives and images are a primary medium through which these negative portrayals emanate and are disseminated to Black children and youth and others.

Black children have within themselves and within reach a vast cultural inheritance from which to draw knowledge of authentic self-identity, agency, and resistance (Asante, 1992; Bennett, 1984; Bethune, 1958; Clarke, 1993; Mazuri, 1987; Rogers, 1961). Gordon (1995) suggests "to reclaim one's culture [cultural history and knowledge] is an essential aspect of an authentic being" (pp. 67–68). Teacher and educator Mwalimu J. Shujaa (1995) argues that, "If African Americans knew their authentic cultural identity and heritage and framed their lives accordingly; perhaps, they would not be in such crisis nor attempt to live out distortions and

stereotypes disseminated through stories and images of popular culture." Through the lenses of popular culture African American children and youth appear to be living out a model crafted of least expectations. Missing from such an image is the impact of White supremacy racism. By the third grade, Black boys become fodder for the U.S. prison industrial complex through the "school to prison pipeline." Once young boys enter this portal, it takes considerable effort by many to advocate for possibilities other than prison (Marable, 2008; Alexander, 2010).

Made invisible and marginalized by the dominant culture can negate one's purpose or place as "group absence from the screen [social mirror] may suggest that its members are unimportant and powerless. . . Black viewers may come to feel that they are unimportant, thereby eroding their own sense of self-worth" (Tynes & Ward, 2009, p. 146) and place no more value on themselves than does the White hegemonic culture that surrounds them (Graves, 1999; Powell, 1982; Stroman, 1991).

Too many African American children and youth do not develop a positive cultural and racial identity during their formative years (Kunjufu, 2010). Dr. Manning Marable in *Incarceration vs. Education: Reproducing Racism and Poverty in America* notes: "Too many black children are taught at an early age that their only future resides in a prison or jail. African American youth amount to 15 percent of all American juveniles [and] represent 26 percent of all juveniles who are arrested by the police nationwide"(p.60). Reports are that over 70% of those incarcerated are illiterate (www.invisiblechildren.org; www.nces.ed.org). The social conditions of African Americans are similar to that of enslaved Africans in 1850 according to Michelle Alexander (2010) in her book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. She notes, "There are more African Americans under correctional control today—in prison or jail, on probation or parole—than were enslaved in 1850, a decade before the

Civil War began" (p. 174). Incarceration in the 21st Century shackles African Americans from freedom and liberties in greater numbers than during enslavement. This is despite the advances earned through decades of civil rights struggles (Alexander, 2010). African American families and children remain on the margins of society negotiating and battling through injustices and inequities of institutional racism (Alexander, 2010; De Gruy, 2009; Marable, 2008; Kunjufu, 1984).

My research emerges from personal reflections on the capacity of CWTA to Africa to provide counter-narratives that empower African American children through knowledge of their cultural identity, history and heritage. Through counter-narratives CWTA intended to facilitate, encourage and nurture a connection between its young participants and African American culture. Through perspectives of former participants, this research examines what counter-narratives were created by CWTA to filter negative and stereotypical portrayals of African Americans and influence cultural identity of participants. This research is not an evaluation of the Children's Window to Africa Program. An independent evaluation was conducted during the active years of CWTA at the request of the funders and community stakeholders. The evaulator's notes are included as Appendix G. This research is designed to gather data to answer specific research questions through perspectives expressed by former participants and teachers and through particular CWTA curriculum documents.

Research Questions

The research questions which prompt this inquiry are: 1) What counter-narratives were created by CWTA to mitigate popular mass culture's negative portrayals of African American cultural identity, history and heritage?; and, 2) Did counter-narratives created by CWTA

influence cultural identity of its participants? If so, how do former participants express this influence?

Children's Window to Africa (CWTA)

Children's Window to Africa aka *Dirisha la Watoto Kwa Africa* was a cultural immersion program in operation from 1994 through 2002 in Pittsburgh, PA. I was founder and executive director of CWTA throughout its years of operation. It was framed in the cultural values and cultural heritage of African Americans, including, the Akan concept of *Sankofa*, and the Nguzo Saba Swahili word for "Seven Principles"). These Seven Principles emerge from the theory and "Communitarian African Philosophy" of Kawaida (Table 1.1). CWTA created and immersed participants in stories and images that connected them to African culture and simultaneously contested negative and stereotypical stories circulating about African Americans in popular culture. The activities and processes of CWTA provided a counter-narrative of empowerment based on the legacy of African American cultural history and heritage. Yet, CWTA alone could not undue the misrepresentations and stereotypes about African Americans disseminated through popular culture. However, it could start a cultural identity reclamation or "Sankofa" process with the five- to twelve-year-old African American boys and girls living in its programs..

CWTA reflected self-worth and cultural identity upon its participants through a range of cultural immersion activities. After two summers, CWTA became a year-round program. Participantion was voluntary yet strongly encouraged by site personnel. However, word of mouth messages among the children easily persuaded other children to join in. In the beginning participants showed little knowledge of African or African American cultural history. Participants viewed themselves through White hegemonic cultural stories and images without

having established an essential connection to their own social, cultural heritage and racial identity. African American children, like other children in Western society, are enchanted by popular stories and images from television, toys, and movies that include Superman, Cinderella, Snow White, Wizard of Oz, and Sleeping Beauty, as well as ideas of kings and queens, all who appear as White (Giroux, 2011). Early on, African American children are introduced to the Christian myth of Eve and Adam, the White mother and father of humanity (Genesis, 2:4-3:24, NIV). Such introduction is often made without also being introduced to Black African creation myths, which are numersous. They include creation myths from the cultures of the Ashanti, Yoruba, Fulani, and Massai (Leeming, 2010). While cultural creation myths abound,, origin of the Mother of human civilization is acknowledged to be the African skeleton found by Paleonanthropologist Donald Johanson and Tim Gray in Hadar, northern Ethiopia in November, 1974 (Johanson & Wong, 2009; Martin, 2011.) This find was named "Lucy" by Johanson and Gray because it glistened as described in the Beatles' song "Lucy" (www.bbc.co.uk). Further, "Lucy", is

> a 3.2-million-year-old celebrity skeleton. Known as Lucy to some, - australopithecus afarensis, is more familiar to her Ethiopian compatriots by her Amharic name of Dinkenesh (literally, "you are amazing"). www.africanglobe.net/africa/ethiopia-celebrates-return.

The imprint and identity of Whiteness pervasive in American society often suggest Blacks to be inferior to White Americans (Feagin, 2014). African American innovations that provide conveniences, comfort, and safety for the majority of Americans are not common knowledge (Clarke, 1993; Kunjufu 1984; Rashidi, 2011). As a result, African American children do not know and recognize their own cultural stories and images. Historical figure—such as Imhotep,

Mansa Musa, Queen Nzingha, Shabaka, and "Lucy"—elude African American children, as do children's stories derived from African culture, including Anasi, Mufaro's *Beautiful Daughters*, Nathaniel's *Talking*, and *Africa Dream*. Black children seem unaware that, "We have a formidable history, replete with the voice of God, the ancestors, and the prophets" (Asante, 1988, p. 6). A young African American woman told me that she heard the poem, Phenomonal Woman, by Maya Angelou for the first time on the television show, A Different World, which broadcast from 1987-1993. Few sitcoms or television programs in the 21st Century present: (1) formally educated African American families and African American families that are not typically dysfunctional, criminalized, and aggressive to themselves and to each other; (2) African American families who showcase in their homes the value they place on African American music traditions, including jazz, blues, and hiphop and their creators like Betty Carter, B.B.King, Dizzy Gillespie, Joe Williams; (3) African American families with paintings and sculputures in their homes created by various African American artists including Varnett Honeywood, Annie Lee, and Romare Bearden, and (4) African American families who talk about and can recite by memory poetry by African American writers like Maya Angelou (Gray, 2004).

The rich African American culture present in the arts, including literature, theatre, and visual arts is difficult to find in popular culture offerings on televsision and rarely in movies. Though recent movies like *Selma*, *The Help*, and *Twelve-Years A Slave* offered a view into African American cultural history and heritage, they were not intended as historical record or documentaries. The context and landscape that created *Selma*, *The Help* and *Twelve Years A Slave* represent generations of struggle and victory by Blacks and many White allies well over the one to two hours viewing time of the movies. Television like movies may supplement historical records for not only African American cultural history and heritage, but other cultural

groups as well. However, the limited content on corporate television seems dismal in portraying the extensive legacy of African American culture. Blacks appear in comedy shows reminiscent of Negro and Colored comedy shows of the 50's that portrayed Black characters as barely literate, unable to speak mainstream American English, with little command of Ebonics, socially inept,and a "jack of all trades and a master of none." I contend that Blacks are visible in television 'non-reality'reality shows edited to stimulate consumerism and product branding. Access to the vastness of African American culture is of concern generationally and intergenerationally. Though television and movies continue to be challenged with representing African American culture and heritage in its fullness, and even presenting our children in subject roles, outside of the animated series, *Doc McStuffin* and *Dora The Explorer*, other media including Hulu, Netflix, Youtube, Amazon, and Tsehai present subject and central positions for African culture and Black and Brown faces in feature films, short films and animated series (See Table 1.1).

A culture relies on children for its existence as each generation is given the stories and images to take forward to an awaiting generation. If children do not know these stories, a culture will cease to exist. Children remain after elders die. The potential to keep culture vibrant and necessary resides with the children. If not, not only will the culture vanish, but the people defined and taking identity from the culture become extinct when it is no longer repeatedly transmitted as essential to the survival and strength of its most vulnerable (Silko, 1977). With access to one's cultural history and heritage, a social mirror is brought into focus in which African American children can view a depth of humanity and dignity not otherwise available about themselves (Akbar, 1995; Asante, 1988; Browder, 1989; Wilson, 1978; Woodson, 1933).

Counter-narratives of African and African American cultural and racial identity empower children to potentially interrupt and resist racialized and negative narratives and images from popular culture. Such counter-narratives place African and African Americans in central roles of building and maintaining human civilizations, rather than in marginalized and subordinate roles (Asante, 1989; Diop, 1974; Gordon, 1985; Toure', 1969; Woodson, 1933). Significant to the perspective from African Americans as subjects and not marginalized characters is the knowledge that Black cultural history and heritage began with the birth of human civilization in Africa and not in Jamestown, VA, in 1619 or with enslavement (Rogers, 1961; Mazuri, 1986; Browder, 1989; Clark, 1993). Africans arrived in America before Columbus and all children, particularly Black children because this is part of their cultural antecedent, must be aware of this (Asante, 1989; Herskovits, 1958; Kunjufu, 2012; Rogers, 1961; Van Sertima, 1989).

Enslaved Africans did not arrive in the Americas "empty handed" or without an identity. They brought with them languages, rituals, spirituality, art, traditions, ways of knowing, family ideals, and rules of governance and politics practiced and promulgated across African civilizations through knowledge, wisdom, and ethics (Diop, 1974; Herskovits, 1958; Rogers, 1961). According to Dr. Molefi Kete Asante, "the names of history are studded like diamonds in our memories and remind us once more of the heritage of African Americans: Nok, Queen Amina of Zaria, Asantehene Osei Tutu, Ghana, Sundiata, Queen Nzingha, Yaa Asasntewaa, Timbuktu, Sankore, Benin, Dogon, . . . other names of people, places, and ideas interconnected in the western region of Africa" (p. 8). CWTA viewed its participants as being endowed with cultural capital including that described above by Asante. The immersion activities and rituals of CWTA helped participants access African cultural knowledge. Though the idea of CWTA emerged from my efforts following exploration with others, it was given life and refined through

the co-creation of teachers, children, artists, volunteers and visiting cultural ambassadors. African cultural visitors were from Senegal, Uganda, Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya and Congo. These visitors exposed CWTA participants to many aspects of life in their African country of origin including food, songs, dances, and stories. . These visitors like all involved with CWTA agreed to help establish a safe, fun, and thriving community of cultural immersion experiences for participants. .

CWTA also intended to foster reading, writing, and self-expressions through various art forms including painting, arts and crafts, jewelry making, sewing, quilting, drumming, and games. Through assorted routes, including stories, songs and chants, arts and crafts, dancing and drumming and African style clothing participants made connections to African culture.

Fundamental to CWTA's community of cultural immersion was the Nguzo Saba (Seven Principles), an African-centered value system which guided interactions and activities. The languages of the Nguzo Saba are both Kiswahili and English. Essential to the African-centered values and genuine care demonstrated was a community that reflected an unwavering faith and genuine care for all participants. All activities and materials of CWTA were linked to one or more of the cultural values acknowledged through the Nguzo Saba.

Essential to shoring up CWTA's purpose, direction, and identity was the continual demonstration and application in all situations of unwavering love for every child. Participants often arrived at CWTA morning activities without having had breakfast and sometimes arriving in the same clothes in which they slept. There were also times in which participants were too sleepy or tired to participate, and it was incumbent upon staff to lovingly assess the needs of the child and respond as needed, i.e., find them a quiet place to sleep for a few hours, give them breakfast, listen to them about things that may have disturbed their rest, or include younger

siblings brought along to babysit. Activities of CWTA had to allow enough flexibility to respond to the needs and conditions of its participants. This often meant more time where staff read to participants or more listening time to hear what was on the minds of the participants. This demonstration of genuine love also helped staff to see each child and community through asset-based holistic lenses instead of deficit, problematic, or pathological perspective

Table 1.1: Seven Principles (Nguzo Saba) Cultural Values (Karenga, 1997)

Nguzo Saba Seven Principles	Descriptions	CWTA Activity
Umoja Unity	To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation, and race.	Daily Unity Circle, libations, pledge, group activities, preparing food, games.
Kujichagulia Self-Determination	To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves, and speak for ourselves instead of being defined, named, created for, and spoken for by others.	Create group names, days to honor ancestors; decide languages to incorporate into daily activities—sometimes English, African American colloquial, Kiswahili, and Yoruba; define dress and indicators of beauty in natural un-permed hair.
Ujima Collective Work and Responsibility	To build and maintain our community together and make our brothers' and sisters' problems our problems and to solve them	Teachers and artist work together; engage and model helping each other; post African proverbs to promote community values.

	together.	
Ujamaa Cooperative Economics	To build and maintain our own stores, shops, and other businesses and to profit from them.	Purchase program supplies and materials, including African fabrics, Djembe drums, and books from African businesses.
Nia Purpose	To make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.	Reclaim, recover, and restore African cultural history and heritage and to introduce participants to African ancestral models of humanity, achievement, leadership, and courage through storytelling, performance arts, reading, and more.
Kuumba Creativity	To do always as much as we can, in the way we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.	Create community reflective of Nguzo Saba Principles; decorating with African images and creations from program participants; keep spaces free of clutter and debris and make creativity essential to all activities; and provide books about African children, families, culture and history to create "My First Library" in the homes of our children.
Imani Faith	To believe with all our heart in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders, and the righteousness and victory	Steadfast and unshakeable confidence in the goodness, greatness, and genius of our children. Our Pledge to Our Children (see Appendix B).

	of our struggle.	

In The Tradition: Children's Window To Africa

Children's Window to Africa followed the tradition of many programs that aimed to inculcate cultural knowledge and cultural identity into the lives of African American children. This tradition has operated in Black communities since the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Leaders in this work included Ida B. Wells Barnett, J. A. Rogers, Carter G. Woodson (founder of Black History Month), Marcus Garvey, Mary McLeod Bethune, Booker T. Washington (founder of Tuskegee Institute) and W. E. B. DuBois (Christian, 1995). The 1960s experienced a proliferation of African American cultural history and heritage programs throughout Black communities ignited in part by the "Black is Beautiful," the "Black Arts Movement," and the "Black Power" movements. One of the earliest programs in the 1960s was the Simba (Kiswahili for "Young Lions") Rites of Passage Program, founded on the principles of the Nguzo Saba (Warfield-Coppock, 1992).

With an ever growing interest in the use of African culture to empower youth and rites of passage programs, Warfield-Coppock (1992) evaluated the results of eighty-seven rites of passage programs operated by twenty experts where 1,616 African American youth had completed steps of transformation or initiation. These programs described themselves as being "African-centered," "Afrocentric," "Nationalistic," or "Culturally Specific." Eighty percent of the respondents offered that cultural history and heritage knowledge and self-awareness were essential components to help African American youth confront a myriad of daily problems. Additionally, these programs established a community/family connection, used an African value system, e.g., Nguzo Saba and Ma'at, and also made a Pan-African link for its participants.

Scholarship by educator Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu (2012) reveals that African centered education helps Africa American children increase self-esteem, cultural pride, knowledge, and academic achievement. The Ijoba Shule, Philadelphia, PA, and Nation House Shule, Washington DC, which operated for forty years, are just two of the African-centered models cited by Kunjufu in his book, *There's Nothing wrong with the Black Child.* There are many African-centered programs representative of CWTA designed for various outcomes, including protections against racism, academics, reduction of involvement with criminal justice system, reduction of substance abuse, and rites of passage. Some of the programs use indices similar to CWTA. However, each program has found that culturally specific African-centered efforts positively impact African American participation levels, self-esteem, academic achievement, and cultural identity (Belgrave, et.al., 2004; Harvey & Hill, 2004; MacMaster, et.al., 2007; Okwumabua, et.al, 1999; Thomas, Davidson, & McAdoo, 2008).

The use of spirituality, a vital component of African American culture, proved helpful for 163 at-risk HIV substance abuse users in a faith- based intervention program in Nashville, TN. Program efficacy was determined through five- and twelve-month follow-ups using baseline levels and a centralized management information system to monitor and evaluate all of the contacts made throughout a three year period. The project demonstrated that a continuum of intensive faith, spirituality, with non-coercive outreach, case management and treatment for substance abuse can be implemented effectively for African Americans (MacMaster, et.al, 2007).

While purposed for various outcomes, these programs also seek to empower African American children and youth through the transmission of cultural identity and pride and increased self-awareness. Thomas, Davidson, & McAdoo (2008) conducted an impact evaluation of Young Empowered Sisters! (YES!) to examine the efficacy of YES! to instill cultural assets in

the targeted population of African American adolescent girls. This in-school program focused ten interventions to achieve its goals of implanting cultural knowledge and protective strategies for social, personal and academic success of seventy-four adolescent girls. The interventions were introduction, identity and cultural awareness, African enslavement in America I & II, racism awareness, strategies to confront racism I & II, community involvement and social change, academic exploration and achievement I & II. — Psychometric measures used to assess participants by ethnic identity, racism awareness; collectivism and liberatory youth activism were the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM), the Racism Awareness Scale (RAS), Children's Africentric Value Scale (CAVS), and Liberatory Youth Activism Scale (LYAS). The seventy-eight participants were divided into an intervention group of thirty-six and a control group of thirty-eight. The study suggests that YES! positively impacted ethnic identity, racism awareness, collectivism, and liberatory youth activism. Yet, this study sample was not representative of African American girls.

Cultural interventions through the Sisters of Nia (Purpose) Program to increase ethnic identity of fifty-nine early adolescent African American girls was evaluated to determine its outcome (Belgrave, et.al., 2004). The evaluation found that cultural interventions of this program helped girls hold on to their cultural identity and sense of self. For young African American girls, early adolescence can be a turbulent time for developing a sense of self and cultural identity. This is particularly the case when they are bombarded with images of popular culture that do not mirror African American cultural identity with positive self-concepts.

Intellectual Contextualization

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is the overarching framework through which the scholarship of popular culture, counter-narratives (storytelling), visual culture, history, and socialization will be examined within this research inquiry. Through CRT lenses, I explore how popular mass culture historically and contemporarily constructs and disseminates narratives and images of African Americans. With increased exposure and access to the developing minds of Black children, popular culture inserts itself as an agent of socialization. Consider that Black children watch more television, and play more video games than any other demographic group. My exploration through socialization and popular culture considers media impact on self-perception, psychosocial development, and behaviors of African American children. Socialization by Black families and communities inoculated their children with racial and cultural pride to foster survival and resiliency in a racialized society. Overt racism and discrimination touched the lives of most African Americans (Boykins & Toms, 1985; Hughes & Chen, 1997).

Long-term exposure to television images and narratives are considered to have cumulative impact on a child's perception of self and others (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1986). These perceptions are often inaccurate and depict misrepresentations and stereotypes found in television programming (Van Evra, 2004). Popular mass culture as experienced through images and narratives of television challenge the capacity of children to discern between the creative reality of TV and the actual reality of daily living. Children viewers begin to perceive others in the characterizations constructed in images and narratives seen on television (Van Evra, 2004). Consider that African American girls recognize, internalize and apply beauty standards normalized through popular media, though they reject the often anorexic and androgynous body types that accompany such standards (Van Evra, 2004).

Even brief exposure to powerful images impact self-concepts and group identity in both positive and negative ways (Greenberg, 1988). The least help toward increased self-esteem and self-awareness was found in viewing images and narratives of dominant programming as opposed to Black programming. But that presumes a difference in programming outcomes beyond that of skin color. Blacks can also program negative and demeaning stories about Blacks as well as stereotypes, caricatures, and asexual roles (McKoy, 2012).

History constructed by White hegemonic culture presumes its voice and perspective as universal truth (Bermejo, 2009). In so doing it defines and positions history worthy of telling while omitting other perspectives from groups who had prominent roles in the building and maintenance of America, including African Americans, Native Americans, Latino, and Asian Americans (Zinn, 1999). Stories are a primary tool used to transmit cultural values, history, and power relations from aWhite dominant perspectives as well as from lesser known and heard voices. Counter-narratives are offered to provide a platform to those silenced and denied subject participation in the history and culture that owes much of its existence to their lives, labor, inventiveness, and humanity (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004).

Popular Culture's Impact on African American Cultural Identity

Bell Hooks (1997) states in *Cultural Criticism & Transformation* that "Whether we're talking about race or gender or class, popular culture is where the pedagogy is, it's where the learning is" (p.2). Popular culture is a tool of power. The inherent power of popular culture is evident in its narratives and images, and its connotations are clear. Berger (1995) suggests that "Connotations are the cultural meaning attached to a term and by extension, an image, a figure in text or even a text" (p. 84). Through popular culture messages of group dominance, subjugation and unworthiness are repeatedly transmitted (Berger, 1995; Giroux, 1995). Yet, its impact on

children often goes unnoticed as entertainment. Such entertainment shows and tells children in not too subtle ways who is favored and who is not. Children intuit and recognize who is favored and who is not (Goldstein, 2013). It is usually the lead character and their perspective that is favored and rarely is that character Black or a person of color in popular culture stories. Sometimes there is an implication of a person of color in popular culture stories through what is described as an 'ambiguous ethnicity" or by keeping the character in the shadows their ethnicity is distorted with the help of lighting (Schuette, 2012). When the actor portraying the character, Rue, in *The Hunger Games* was known to be Black, social media registered prolific disgust (Berlatsky, 2014; Adewunmi, 2012). Ironically, Rue was described as dark-skinned and the principal character was described as having 'olive skin,' yet was cast as White (Brown, 2015). In what is popularly described as a post-racial era in American society, principally because of the election of President Barak Obama, the Nation's first Black President, racism persists (Brown, 2015).

For decades, popular children's fables presented the perspectives of the principal character as the lenses through which the fable was to be seen. Jack and his perspective were favored in the fable, *Jack and The Bean Stalk*; *Snow White*'s perspective presented her story, *Snow White* and also attached good and bad to lesser characters; *Goldilocks* and the *Three Bears* was presented through the lenses of *Goldilocks*, and the *Three Pigs* cast the wolf as the villain from their perspectives in *The Three Pigs* (Tatar, 2002). However, the "fractured fairytales" gave voice and perspectives to characters often silenced (www.library.illionois.edu). Fractured fairytales are defined as "A re-working of a traditional fairy tale that retains familiar elements such as characters and plot, but alters the story in unexpected ways, often with a contemporary "spin" or ironic twist" (p.1). Through fractured fairy tales children have the opportunity to

explore different points of views and to kow that such differences exists and are valid. Additionally, the questions of 'what, if?' and 'says, who?' can help push critical thinking skills and inquiry early on in a child's development.

Through its visual lens and accompanying story lines, popular culture constructs realities that comment on politics, economics, gender identity, racial and cultural identity, historical significance, and prospects for the future. Popular culture remains a primary source of group identity and perceptions of self and others (Ford, 1997; Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Rada, 2000). More than 5,000 images are viewed daily by the average American via TV, billboards, and advertising, not including those accessed through social media—72 hours of video uploaded every minute (Gitlin, 2002; Martin, 2006; www.youtube.com/t/press_statistics). "We live in a digital electronic world, based on images designed to capture eyeballs and build brand names, create mindshare and design successful products and services" (Schroeder, 2005, p.3). Yet, these narratives and images rarely include positive and empowering African American history and culture.

With access to one's cultural history and heritage, a social mirror is brought into focus in which marginalized groups, including African Americans, can view evidence of humanity and dignity not otherwise available about themselves. Such a social mirror is brought into being for the benefit of its specific group. It reflects cultural identity and power upon its members. To know oneself, Gordon (1994) suggests, is "to reclaim one's culture [cultural history, heritage and knowledge] [and] is an essential aspect of an authentic being" (pp. 67–68). Counter-narratives can act as a social mirror to deflect from the obscure negative representations of African Americans appearing in popular culture and, instead cast a more accurate representation of the perspectives and significance of African Americans to American culture and history.

Visual Culture, History and Socialization

At every angle are images—the language of visual culture that bounds across age, class, gender, and race and appear as harmless entertainment or advertisements. Children view over 40,000 advertisements in a year. Visual culture "depends on the modern propensity to picture or visualize experience . . . the ability of images to fool the eye and falsely persuade" (Schroeder, 2002). There are constant reminders of the pervasiveness and import of images throughout society. While more images are viewed daily than ever before, the subjects and objects have changed very little. Those in power remain in power, and those on the margins of society remain so. Through lenses of CRT, both visual and narrative languages must be critically examined for constructs of racism and social injustice as they both emerge in the best interest of the status quo. Images offer specific perspectives onto the world. Messaris (1994) proposes that images afford: sensory anchoring and interpretation, instant access, personal engagement, wide-spectrum cognition, and are rooted in culture.

Just like aspects of popular culture, history envelops the ways in which life is experienced. The many ways and voices giving account of these experiences can be called history. It is typically expressed from the vantage point of those wielding the influence that lifts their accounts above those of others. Such authority tends to silence and distance other experiences from any relevance (Zinn, 1999). The majority of heroes and heroines lauded in American history overwhelmingly represent Euro/Anglo perspectives. One such hero, Abraham Lincoln is described as a savior of African Americans because he signed the Emancipation Proclamation (Johnson & Johnson, 1979). Layers of historical records are gradually being revealed that show it was not a moral repulsion to enslavement, but instead, a political and economic strategy that resulted in his signing of the Emancipation Proclamation (Berwanger,

1983). Woodrow Wilson, the 28th President of the United States of America may also be considered a hero of the dominant perspective. Ida B. Wells, an anti-lynching advocate, courageously published and disseminated accounts of lynching in her book, *The Red Record* to gather support to put an end to this barbaric act. President Wilson, like two of his predecessors was petitioned to help eradicate, mitigate, and/or lessen through legislation the abhorrent social conditions and violence, including lynching perpetrated against Blacks (Zinn, 1999). President Wilson's personal friend and political supporter, Thomas Dixon, wrote the book, *The Clan,* which was the blueprint for the infamous film, *Birth of a Nation* (Keylor, 2013). Loewen (2007) asserts that "no black person would ever consider Woodrow Wilson a hero. Textbooks that present him as a hero are written from a White perspective" (p. 21). Undoubtedly, some facts are buried within the myths of Lincoln and Wilson, but attempts to white-wash their faults into perfections do a disservice to the depth of lessons that are available to society from their challenges and choices that confronted these historical, yet very human figures.

History. Though enslaved Africans and their descendants continue to make great contributions to American society, they are practically invisible in the public discourse beyond negative and criminal behaviors, and entertainment. American history's perspective reflects omission and disregard for people of color, including African Americans and Native Americans. These groups as did others were essential in the establishment and maintenance of this country. Consider that it is nearly impossible to live a day in America without using conveniences invented by African Americans. or to stand on a plot of land that was not initially a parcel belonging to a Native American tribal group. A brief listing of Black innovations illustrate how daily American life is linked to African American ingenuity and problem solving: (1) The Super Soaker, Lonnie Johnson; (2) Traffic Light, Telephone Transmitter, Roller Coaster, Fire escape

Ladder, Electric Railway System, Electro Mechanical Brake-Granville T. Woods; (3) Helicopter, Paul E. Williams; (4) Ironing Board, Sarah Boone; (5) Elevator, Alexander Miles; (6) Gas Mask, Garrett Morgan; (7) Lawn Sprinkler, Elijah McCoy, and, (8) Heating Furnace, Alice H. Parker. Many of these inventions are advanced generations beyond their initial design (Holmes, 2012; Towle, 1993).

After more than 65 years since his life saving development, Dr. Charles Drew who developed blood plasma, which is still saving lives, is scarcely known by most Americans (Trice, 1999). The story of Matthew Henson, the Arctic explorer who accompanied Robert Peary to the North Pole is not being told to young Black children who might think mountain climbing a possibility (Litwin, 2001). The perseverance and daring of Bessie Coleman, the aviatrix and stunt pilot is still unknown to most, especially young Black girls (Plantz, 2001). The tissue cells of Henrietta Lacks made possible many life saving medical procedures and treatments across the world, yet she remains a shadow in the history of American medical advancements, womanhood, and more (Skloot, 2010). Within this country, history is not inclusive of all the Americans who helped bring this Country into being and maintain it. (Loewen, 2007)

The article, *"Images and Words that Wound: Critical Race Theory, Racial Stereotyping and Teacher Education,"* (Solorzano, 1997) notes that the "color line" or race is a socially constructed category, created to differentiate racial groups, and to show the superiority or dominance of one race over another." The dominant race continues to be White and Blacks remain the inferior and subordinate race. U.S. History as delivered through hegemonic discourse shows a peripheral and subservient role for African Americans, Native Americans, Latino Americans, and Asian Americans. Such a historical record offers one voice, one lens through which history is interpreted. Problematic to the single focus disseminated and implanted into

minds of generations is the *fait accompli,* which suggests that White hegemonic voices are the authority and arbiter on all matters of civilization including history, medicine, arts, and more. Generations continue to be educated through the perspective that eliminates other voices and denies their essential presence and validates through continual use the dominant perspective (Lawrence III, 1987).

Children continue to adapt and define themselves through stories and image, historical and contemporary, which dominate society. Toys and products from the Disney movie, *The Princess and the Frog* sold quickly as Black parents rushed to buy the first image of Black princess that Disney had created (Lester, 2010). Disney showed that princess could in fact be Black/Brown girls. Though this princess, unlike the other White princesses created by Disney was born into royalty, this Black princess married into it. Also, unlike the other princesses, when she kissed the frog prince, rather than turning back into a human prince, he remained a frog and the princess turned into a frog (Lester, 2010). What many saw as important was the existence of a Black princess. Though Disney produced a Black princess, she remains the only princess whose kiss did not transform the prince back into a human. Instead, her kiss left the prince and frog and transformed her into a frog. Black children are not merely White children colored Black (Wilson, 1987). If they were, perhaps the princess and her frog prince would have experienced the same happy ending given to her predecessors.

Black and White children, particularly girls, respond differently to images in popular culture (Schooler, Ward & Merriwether, 2004). When viewing images of White girls and women, white girls internalize the experience and compare themselves to the images. Often they find themselves deficient and unable to measure up to the beauty standards presented. Regiments to loose weight and make changes to their bodies to achieve the desired image often follow.

However, when viewing images of Black girls and women, or ethnic girls and women, White girls do not absorb the beauty standards shown or note an interest to achieve such looks. Black girls respond to images of Black girls and women. In the article, *Who's That Girl: Television's role in the Body Image Development of young White and Black Women*, (2004), the authors propose that beauty for Black girls is related more to similarities in style, movement, and character. They do not take on the White beauty standards presented, but tend to look to Black women close to them, and also those in popular culture. They do not see themselves in illustrations of White girls and women (Schooler, Ward & Merriwether, 2004). However, the wearing of straightened hair, weaves, wigs, extensions and other techniques and processes that give the appearance of long, straight hair usually attributed to White women, could suggest that Black girls and women do take on that particular aspect of the dominant beauty standard.

The history of Black hair is complex and not explainable simply by the six-hundred-eighty four million dollars black hair business that includes relaxers, weaves, and wigs (Opian, 2014). The history of Black hair, like nearly everything else about being Black in America is rooted in an African beginning (Byrd & Tharps, 2014). Hair had a language, a context, culture and traditions that were integral to its style, arrangement, dressing and more (Bryd & Tharps, 2014). The Yoruba of West Africa considered the hair to be divine as noted in this quote, "the hair is the most elevated point of your body, which means it is the closest to the divine" (p. 4). Through enslavement, Africans were disconnected and alienated from the cultural significance and context of their hair. They were no longer in a community or culture that valued the traditions and purpose of the hair and the ways in which it communicated ancient messages passed down through generations. Africans that survived the *MAAFA* arrived with tangled, matted and filthy hair, and diseased scalps which required heads be shaved. Many African

cultures attributed spiritual values to their hair and were discerning of who could touch it (Byrd & Tharps, 2014). Perhaps Black young women today, with a multitude of stylistic hair expressions, are trying to reconnect to a cultural memory that still resides with in their spirits. As with their African ancestors, they are making hair a language within a cultural context that speaks to the lived experiences of being Black and living in a racialized society and recognizing that Black and Brown standards of beauty reside within the creation and hands of those who carry it (Byrd & Tharps, 2014). Also, in the realities of living in a society where privilege and access are granted based principally on race and its attributes-light skin, straightened hair-may be keys to opportunities (Bryd & Tharps, 2014).

Socialization. It is the lens that connects one to a past, places them in the present, and provides them tools with which to craft a vision and future. The content of socialization as well as those responsible for its success is particular to each culture, though common to most cultures, is the family as the primary source of socialization or a child's first teacher (Nunnally, 2010; Arnett, 1995). The primary source of socialization for African American children from birth to twelve years of age was once the family and "fictive kin" located within a community of shared values and culture (Stack, 1974; Belgrave, 2006). This kinship included family members related through blood as well as those represented through social kinship. Through socialization one is indoctrinated into the ways in which their group locates itself within society. Transmitted through socialization are also role definitions, identity, values, beliefs, and cultural traditions (Bentley, Adams, & Stevenson, 2009). The ongoing process of socialization of Black children was supported by community institutions, including schools, churches, entertainment and businesses (Walker, 2001; Radford-Hill, 2001; Lacy, 2007). Black families and communities sought to provide spaces in which African American children and youth could actualize and pass

through developmental phases without undue restraint and constraints imposed through institutional racism (Lee, 2008; Lesane-Brown, 2006; Miller-Cribbs, 2008; Stewart2007).

The seven sources of socialization posited by Arnett (1995) are family, peers, school/work, community, the media, the legal system, and the cultural belief system (p. 617). These sources of socialization have been contextualized in the five systems described in Bromfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory of child development. The environment closest to the child and having the initial and often greatest impact on socialization, learning and psychosocial development is the family, school, neighbors, playground and peers is the *micro* system. Connecting and interacting with the micro system is the *meso* system in which family, school, little leagues, afterschool programs, and others exert influences on the child. The *exosystem* holds those forces, including societal stressors on the parents, which impact the quality of life and experiences parents can make available to the child's development. Such forces include employment, local school and government policies. Within the *macro* systems, socialization of cultural values, including role expectations, traditions, spiritual belief systems and cultural rituals extends its influence to the child's development. The chronosystem, or time and life span, have an ongoing impact. Births, death, changes in family structures, relocations, and more of life's changes will influence the developing child. Each system is cupped within the previous one. Bronfenbrenner (1979) explains this interaction and relationship of the systems as being *nested structures* similar to that of Russian nesting dolls, each residing within the previous structure, yet reciprocating influence on the developing child (Harris, 2007; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). However, particular to African Americans is the need to be socialized within the racial and cultural context of American society. Such socialization may be "adaptive," which combines "protective" and "proactive" messages. "Protective" messages offer shields and prescriptions to

lessen the impact and response to racism, while "proactive" messages provide cultural models and lessons of character, fortitude, and resiliency in the face of racism. "Racial socialization influences self-esteem, coping behaviors, and externalizing and internalizing behaviors . . . [which] helps strengthen African American youth's level of resiliency and coping; it is an essential value-added component of the identity-development experience" (Bentley & Stevenson., 2009, p. 261). African Americans learned how to live within the confines of a racist society and still thrive.

In the twenty-first century there appears to be an alarming exposure to socialization through stories, images, and histories filtered through the dominant lenses of popular culture, including television, movies, and video games (Arnett, 2007). Such popular lenses continue to distort and erase the presence and importance of Africans to development and advancements of human civilizations (Caughy, 2006). Black children are subject to see themselves and other African Americans portrayed more as criminals than healers and as absent fathers, misogynist gangster rappers, and generally negative personas (Pecora, Murray, Wartella, 2009; Vangelisti, 2013).

African American culture, history and heritage are replete with stories of humanity to strengthen the development and growth of its children (Asante & Mattson, 1992; Christian, 1995). As offered in *To Be Afrikan* (Baruti & Baruti, 2003), for African American children we must "connect the past with the present . . . so that the wisdom and nowledge of our elders and ancestors becomes a living part of our children's consciousness and mission" (p.86). Yet, without exposure to such stories, the wealth of this cultural knowledge loses value for the many children, Black and White who are unaware of its existence and power as it is not a part of what is considered "official knowledge" (Apple, 1993). "The decision to define some groups'

knowledge as the most legitimate, as official knowledge, while other groups' knowledge hardly sees the light of day," is how Apple describes "official knowledge," where the power resides to attribute importance to some voices and perspectives and not to others. Without the knowledge and wisdoms of the past that resides in cultural histories and heritage, subsequent generations may be defeated by challenges and struggles surmounted long ago

Do No Harm

My research was conducted in compliance with requirements mandated by the Internal Review Board of Union Institute and University. This research seeks to minimize any risk of harm to research participants. In conducting this research, I obtained signed informed consent forms from all research participants. These forms explicitly stated that confidentiality and anonymity of all participants would be carried out through aggregating data and codifying. Participation was voluntary and at anytime during the research process participants were free to withdraw without impediments or discord from this researcher. Data was gathered in the aggregate and coded to avoid personal identifiers. Pseudonyms were used to conceal the identity of research participants.

Contribution

This research is significant because it creates new material which adds primary data to the scholarly conversations about cultural knowledge and heritage, and racial and cultural socialization of African American children. Also, this research helps validate needs and methods of working with African American children from strengths based perspectives and genuine care and belief in each child. During their experiences in CWTA, participants ranged in ages from five- to twelve-years-old. As such, their responses are perceptions from how they as young children experienced CWTA. This hindsight experience validates and gives visibility and voice

to childhood memories as credible sources of knowledge. Further, as suggested in *Racial Socialization: Roots, Processes, and Outcomes*, "research and studies integrating racial socialization and identity are prime opportunities for contributing to the literature" (p. 261). This research gives voice to the perspectives of former CWTA participants on how early cultural immersion experiences influenced their formation of cultural identity and racial pride. This research suggests cultural immersion as a building block to cultural identity and increased self-esteem and self-determination. This research also reaffirms the value of a strong sense of cultural identity, history and heritage when such knowledge is part of primary learning experiences. Early exposure to cultural identity can be as useful to development and achievement as early childhood education in reading, writing, and science.

Dissertation Overview

Chapter One describes and contextualizes the research problem that informs the two questions directing this study. The qualitative methodology and the interpretive approach to data analysis using content analysis are also described. The triangulation of data sources emerged from open-ended interviews with former participants, CWTA curriculum and document review, previous independent evaluation and my reflections. This chapter also framed the multiple ways in which African American children, in a racialized society experience White supremacist, hegemonic dominant culture through popular portrayals of African American cultural history and heritage.

Descriptions of culture and cultural identity were presented in this chapter. Explored also were culture and cultural identity as espoused during the Black Arts and Black Cultural Nationalist Movements of the 1960s and 1970s and their connection to efforts of CWTA. The terms Black, African and African American are used interchangeably throughout this

dissertation. The terms described people of color born in America who are descendants of enslaved Africans and share an African ancestry, history and heritage.

Chapter 2 provides a fundamental definition of counter-narrative and establishes criteria for examining the curriculum and activities of CWTA through a Critical Race Theory framework. This chapter also defines race and explains its impact on self-esteem and cultural identity of African American children and makes a connection between dominant narratives and distortions from popular culture.

Chapter 3 presents the qualitative approach, theoretical framework and interpretive methodology for the dissertation.

Chapter 4 uses Critical Race Theory and the African-centered cultural value system of the Nguzo Saba (Seven Principals Sankofa and content analysis to examine both the documents used by CWTA and the interview responses provided by former participants and staff. Chapter 5 summarizes the findings of the analysis and discusses the meanings of the answers to the research questions, implications and limitations of this research

CHAPTER 2

COUNTER-NARRATIVES, VOICE, AND VISIBILITY

This chapter connects counter-narratives, storytelling, socialization, and popular culture through a framework of Critical Race Theory (CRT) within the African-centered cultural immersion program, CWTA to Africa (CWTA). Counter-narratives as created and used by CWTA are presented through a CRT lens and an African-centered paradigm as articulated in the definition of Afrocentricity by Dr. Molefi Asante. As quoted in *Kawaida: A Communitarian African Philosophy* (1997), Afrocentricity is a process "which seeks to uncover and use codes and paradigms, symbols, motif, myths and circles of discussion that reinforce the centrality of African ideals and values as a valid frame of reference . . . to put African ideals and values at the center of inquiry" (pp.44–45). The African-centered philosophy of Kawaida and the concept of Sankofa, as derived from the Adinkra culture (Willis, 1998), provides a value system and criteria for the analysis of this research data. Descriptions and definitions of counter-narrative, popular culture, socialization, and CWTA records provide grounding for Sankofa and the value system, Nguzo Saba (a Kiswahili phrase for Seven Principles).

Critical Race Theory

Critical theory is defined as "a framework or set of basic perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural and cultural aspects of society that maintain the subordination and marginalization of people of color" (Solorzano, 1997, p.69) Such is the basis of Critical Race Theory (CRT), the framework of this research which provides a method to interrogate racial representations throughout all societal systems.

Harvard law professor Derrick Bell (the first tenured Black Harvard law professor) is considered the Father of Critical Race Theory. Writing in both the *Yale Law Review* and *Harvard Law Review*, Bell's articles "Serving Two Masters" and "The Interest Convergence Dilemma"

along with his book *Race, Racism, and American Law* aggressively pushed discourse about the intersections of race, racism, and power in American society. While civil rights advances occurred for Blacks, Bell suggested that such advances only happened when most beneficial to elite whites, including the findings of the "crown jewel" of U.S. Supreme Court jurisprudence, *Brown v. Board* (1954). Bell's suggestion regarding *Brown v. Board* was perceived by many as an affront to liberal White allies who worked alongside Blacks to reach this landmark outcome (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). However, a decade later, Bell's suggestion was supported through the findings of extensive research carried out by legal historian Mary Dudziak (1988). Other founding legal scholars and activists helping Bell to ground CRT included: Richard Delgado, Kimberle`Crenshaw, Jean Stefanic, and Alan Freeman, representing a community of scholars and activists focused on "how to attach a legal system that disempowers people of color; their shared goal is one of political reform . . . striving for a just society" (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). Though CRT posits the permanency of racism, it continues to work towards exposing and disrupting its detriment. Social justice and equity for all citizens without regard to race and other labels continue to challenge CRT activists and others of like-mind.

CRT posits racism and race as permanent constructs through which marginalized groups, including Blacks, and Latinas experience life in this racialized society of America. While CRT posits race as a permanent structure, this does not preclude critical actions and vigilance to interrogate and interrupt racism where possible. Nor does the suggested permancy of racism preclude the hope and work towards its elimination. CRT scholarship also proposes racism to be complex and multidimensional. In American society racism exist in patterns so ingrained in routine interactions that it is often experienced as unintentional acts of subjugation and marginalization. Such unintentional acts of racism can be as damaging to one's self-perception

and emotional wellness as the abuse and inequities resulting from systemic racist practices. The cumulative impact of racism on members of the oppressed group often manifest in health problems, social adjustment and identity issues which extend to subsequent generations (Harrell, 2000; Franklin, Boyd-Franklin, Kelly, 2006; DeGruy, 2009).

The definition of racism that informs my research asserts institutional and systemic power of dominance. Further, it proposes that racism influences interactions and perceptions of oppressed groups and power relations. Harrell (2000) defines racism as

> A system of dominance, power, and privilege based on racial group designations...where members of the dominant group create or accept their societal privilege by maintaining structures, ideology, values, and behavior that have the intent or effect of leaving non dominant-group members relatively excluded from power, esteem, status, and/or equal access to societal resources (p.43).

Such practices also help influence the ways in which others interact with and perceive black and brown people throughout society. Through the lens of Critical Race Theory, all productions of popular culture, including its stories and images can be critically examine to determine if racism is exhibited and promoted through any elements including the cultural voices and perspectives from which the stories and images are presented (Bell, 1992; Delgado & Stefanic 2001).

Storytelling and Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Storytelling is a way of knowing validated in basis perspectives of Critical Race Theory, which asserts that the "the experiential knowledge of people of color is legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination." Furthermore, "such methods as storytelling, family histories, biographies, scenarios, parables, cuetos, chronicles, and narratives" form an epistemological cache often ignored. These stories from lived

experiences, historical and contemporary, can help interrupt negative and stereotypical depictions disseminated through hegemonic cultural narratives (Bell, 1987; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Fundamentally, storytelling transmits knowledge and information as validated in a basic tenet of Critical Race Theory (CRT), which asserts "the experiential knowledge of people of color is legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination" (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26). Stories of lived experiences, historical and contemporary, can help to disrupt negative and stereotypical depictions disseminated through hegemonic cultural narratives (Bell, 1987; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Stories can also help to determine, direct, and promulgate identity, history, and heritage, figuring prominently into the socialization of children. Storytelling is an ancient and common pedagogy employed throughout civilizations for various epistemological purposes. Regarding storytelling, Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison (1993), states in her Laureate speech that "storytelling as "word work . . . because it is generative; it makes meaning that secures our difference-the way in which we are like no other . . . language tells us what only language can; how to see without pictures." Storytelling serves to create an environment, to engage our minds in active listening, to encode information, and to provide tools for thinking (Gargiulo, 2006). Though Toni Morrison, J.California Cooper, Ernest Gaines, Gloria Naylor, Ntozake Shange, Alice Walker, Paule Marshall, John Oliver Killens, Zora Neale Hurston, Ben Okri, Ngugo Wa'Thiong, and so many other Black literary storytellers have been telling our stories for decades, they are not typically experienced before college. Black high school students have little knowledge if any of these writers as do college freshman. Recently I talked with an educated, professional 34 year old Black woman. She told me how much she liked reading especially mysteries and love stories. But above all she liked reading about Black culture and history. "Fiction or nonfiction was my

question," I asked. I know many Black women who have not read and do not know of Toni Morrison. I am not unique in this vein. Toni Morrison has been placed by some invisible hand in the hard to read category, implying that it takes some special skill with words or many years of college to grasp what she writes and the ways in which she tells story. The humanity, tenderness, compassion, struggle and love that envelopes her stories allow entry to all who are willing to take on the joy of entering the world she creates.

Common to most stories are relationships, conflict, landscape, voice, dialogue, view point, rhythm and direction. *Essays on Pivotal Issues in Contemporary Storytelling* (1996) propose that "a story needs echoing and whispering in the background—the reverberations of time, place, history, ethnicity, culture—the pulse of a person's life and a people's identity" (p.108). Thus, stories help create meaning and provide an understanding of life. Counter stories conveyed in *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Minh-Ha, 1996), asserts that stories are "composed on life but does not lie, for composing is not imaging, fancying, or inventing . . . the telling of stories refresh the mind as a bath refreshes the body; it gives exercise to the intellect and its power; it tests the judgment and feelings" (p. 6). Accounts and memories of lived and shared experiences are often revealed through stories. Stories hold transformative and empowering knowledge and may be considered encyclopedias of life lived, its context, culture and characters. According to Steslow and Gardner (2011), the power of storytelling cannot be underestimated, particularly when its impact on the human brain is considered:

> listening to a story simultaneously involves activity of both the left and right sides of our brains. The left side focuses upon the story's detail and sequence and the right, 'creative' side, stimulates our sense and the 'big picture.' The *corpus callosum,* the 'bridge' between the right and left hemispheres, relays data between the two regions. Stories assist

in creating connections between what is new and what is already known, which produces stronger memories" (p. 253).

Stories are powerful tools. Although the word story often conjures up child's play, innocence and fantasy, theorists acknowledge that storytelling is fundamental to identity, persuasion, influence and learning. Stories are mature devices employed across civilizations as strategies to conquer and subvert. Marshall (2011) argues that "stories act as social glue, binding people together in a common identity that is forged as they share the ideas of emotions prompted by the narrative" (p. 47) . While cohesiveness may be reinforced through stories, disruption and divisiveness may also be an outcome. Fallacies about African American cultural history, heritage and identity populate American society. These stories too often emanate from popular culture and are retold so frequently that it is difficult to determine where fact and fiction collide.

Paradoxically, counter stories are crafted not of imagination but from lived experiences (Solorzano & Yasso, 2002). Such stories animate three-dimensional characters informed by actual experiences. Further, these stories and their "composite characters" as noted by Solorzano & Yosso (2002), "are contextualized in social situations that are also grounded in real life, not fiction" (p. 15). CRT provides a process and technique to interrogate and challenge racist assumptions inherent in systemic narratives. It can also validate a social justice imperative to counter prevailing racist discourse that situates cultural identity, history, and heritage of African Americans on the margins of society. However, the import of Africans to American cultural history and to contemporary society is well documented by many, including historians, writers, poets, and anthropologists. African-American culture is replete with stories that define the historical and contemporary importance to humanity. CRT allows marginalized groups to

interrogate systems of racism and suggests counter stories as a method of opposition to hegemonic narratives.

I contend that storytelling reflect identity, purpose, connection, and worth to individuals and groups. The loss of cultural identity, history, and heritage may leave one vulnerable to the sway of popular culture's stories of misinformation and misrepresentations as if a "cultural orphan" plagued by "spiritual malaise, a loss of creativity, and a variety of psychic disorders"(Paquet, 1990, p. 499). Within narratives reside the lifelines of a culture. Nash (2004) suggests in his concept of the "constructivist circle" that those who a make story are also made by a story in that we become what we create. "No objective, impartial truth ever exists outside of a constructivist narrative . . . it's always the story that frames, explains, and justifies your claim to an exclusive truth" (p. 38). Life exists within a cultural context. Within this context reside the story, its circumstance, relationships and significance.

Socialization. The primary source of socialization for African American children from birth to twelve years of age was once the family and "fictive kin" located within a community of shared values and culture (Stack, 1974; Belgrave, 2006). This kinship included family members related through blood as well as those represented through social kinship. Socialization was supported by community institutions, including schools, churches, entertainment and businesses. These families and communities provided spaces in which African American children and youth could actualize and pass from their developmental phase without undue restraint and constraints imposed through institutional racism (Lee, 2008; Lesane-Brown, 2006; Miller-Cribbs, 2008; Stewart2007).

Through socialization from family and community, African American children and youth were transmitted messages, images, and observations that defined the culturally shared and

agreed upon character and location of their contributions to human civilization. This "narrow socialization" process provided a "social network" of "social capital" and "institutional support" throughout the psychosocial and physical development of African American children and youth (Arnett, 1995; Stanton-Salazar, 1997). The seven sources of socialization posited by Arnett (1995) are family, peers, school/work, community, the media, the legal system, and the cultural belief system (p. 617). These sources of socialization have been contextualized in the five systems described in Bromfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory of child development. The environment closest to the child and having the initial and often greatest impact on socialization, learning and psychosocial development is the family, school, neighbors, playground and peers is the *micro* system. Connecting and interacting with the micro system is the *meso* system in which family, school, little leagues, afterschool programs, and others exert influences on the child. The *exosystem* holds those forces, including societal stressors on the parents, which impact the quality of life and experiences parents can make available to the child's development. Such forces include employment, local school and government policies. Within the *macro* systems, socialization of cultural values, including role expectations, traditions, spiritual belief systems and cultural rituals extends its influence to the child's development. The chronosystem, or time and life span, have an ongoing impact. Births, death, changes in family structures, relocations, and more of life's changes will influence the developing child. Each system is cupped within the previous one. Bronfenbrenner (1979) explains this interaction and relationship of the systems as being *nested structures* similar to that of Russian nesting dolls, each residing within the previous structure, yet reciprocating influence on the developing child (Harris, 2007; Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Through socialization one is indoctrinated into the ways in which their group locates itself within society. Transmitted through socialization are also role definitions, identity, values, beliefs, and cultural traditions. Further, socialization is the lens that connects one to a past, places them in the present, and provides them tools with which to craft a vision and future. The content of socialization as well as those responsible for its success is particular to each culture, though common to most cultures, is the family (Nunnally, 2010; Arnett, 1995).

However, particular to African Americans is the need to be socialized within the racial and cultural context of American society. Such socialization may be "adaptive," which combines "protective" and "proactive" messages. "Protective" messages offer shields and prescriptions to lessen the impact and response to racism, while "proactive" messages provide cultural models and lessons of character, fortitude, and resiliency in the face of racism. "Racial socialization influences self-esteem, coping behaviors, and externalizing and internalizing behaviors . . . [which] helps strengthen African American youth's level of resiliency and coping; it is an essential value-added component of the identity-development experience" (Bentley & Stevenson., 2009, p. 261). African Americans learned how to live within the confines of a racist society and still thrive as well as safeguard ourselves and each other. Shared processes of socialization within Black communities helped mitigate the impact of racism. Participating in these socialization processes were social networks including families, schools and religious organizations (Boykins & Toms, 1985; McAdoo, 2002; Nunnally, 2010; Stanton-Salazar, 1997). However, the twenty-first century suggests a lessening impact of socialization from the African American family and community. Instead, there appears to be an alarming increase in the socialization of African American children and youth through stories, images, and histories filtered through a White supremacist, hegemonic popular culture. Such lenses continue to distort

and erase the presence and importance of Africans to development and advancements of human civilizations (Caughy, 2006).

Society's racial inequities and inhumanity appear in stories that traverse generations. Delivered through images and texts such stories undergird constructs of White privilege, racial subordination, and hierarchies of power endemic to life in this White hegemonic society (Brown, et.al., 2005). Media within popular culture convey messages that persuade negative self-images and group identity among African Americans. Often these messages eliminate and distort voices and contributions from Americans of African descent. Simultaneously, the same media negatively shape opinions and interactions other groups learn to have and make about African Americans (Gerber, Gross, Morgan & Signorielli, 1986). With the onslaught of images and accompanying stories bombarding senses on nearly every level in this ever expanding digital society, it is imperative to interrupt and counter perspectives that seek only to thwart the lifeline African American cultural history and heritage can provide for its children and their future (Kunjufu, 2012).

African American children view more TV and film than other groups and are therefore subject to see themselves and other African Americans portrayed more as criminals than healers and as absent fathers, misogynist gangster rappers, and generally negative personas (Pecora, Murray, Wartella, 2009; Vangelisti, 2013). The socialization of African American children cannot be left to the viewpoints of those who would write them out of a history and culture to which they have given so much. Instead, we must look to stories, images, history, and creations from their cultural history and heritage. African American cultural history and heritage is replete with models of humanity to empower the development and growth of its children. Yet, without exposure to such stories, the wealth of this cultural knowledge loses value for its children who

are unaware of its existence and power. As offered in *To Be Afrikan* (Baruti & Baruti, 2003), for African American children we must "connect the past with the present . . . so that the wisdom and knowledge of our Elders and Ancestors becomes a living part of our children's consciousness and mission" (p.86). Without the knowledge and wisdoms of the past, subsequent generations may be defeated by challenges and struggles surmounted long ago.

Defining Counter-Narratives

Many definitions of counter-narratives exist, including those of oppositional narratives and counter story. All definitions suggest the power of counter-narrative as a tool of resistance to question, expose, shatter, and shake up hegemonic narratives. Counter-narratives become devices to allow voice and visibility to those often shut out of the public discourse and marginalized and whose perspectives are typically invisible. Within sociology, psychology, cultural studies, mass media studies, gender studies, education, and legal studies, counter stories are targeted at the official narratives of youth, pedagogy, cultural normality or propriety, media "truth," and social injustices and inequities (Bell, 1992; Delgado, 1995; Giroux, et al., 1996; Hills-Collins,1990; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002).

The tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT) as proposed by Delgado & Stefanic (2001) assert a centrality of race in all dynamics in American society. Racism is everywhere. It is insidious to American society. It has not been eradicated but instead has changed character (Alexander, 2010). Though invisible through fixed placards denying access because of race and color, negative outcomes of racism are difficult to miss. African Americans represent almost 1.1 million of the total 2.3 jailed population. Blacks are jailed at nearly six times that of Whites (www.naacp.3cdn.net). While stopped for traffic violations at numbers equal to Whites and Hispanics, Blacks are three times more likely to be ticketed, handcuffed, and arrested

(www.demographics.com). Learning while Black continues to be a dangerous undertaking for Black children and youth including the lowered-expectations from teachers and under resourced schools (Hale, 2001). Forty-percent of Black students, approximately 3.2 million, attend high poverty schools typically located in concentrated poverty communities. An alarming 47.5% of Black children under age 18 live in single headed-households in poverty (www.demographics.com). While race is a social construct it is a lived reality for brown and black people in America. A plethora of social and economic disparities and social injustices frequently compound existing challenges resulting from vestiges of White supremacy racism. As proposed by CRT scholars in education and other disciplines, essential to knowing racism and oppression as experienced by marginalized groups are their voices through various means including stories, poetry, music, and film (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001).

These expressions through stories, poetry, music and film may be referred to as counter-narratives that empower and give agency to cultural voices silenced. Also, counter-narratives make visible groups of people denied humanity, social and cultural autonomy, and access their continuum of knowledge and experience. Such counter-narratives framed through a critical race theory perspective is described as a "device for "exposing, analyzing, and challenging majoritarian stories of racial privilege" (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 11). Stories are an integral link to knowledge transfer. Delgado (2001) offers that "oppressed groups have known instinctively that stories are an essential tool to their own survival and liberation" (p.2436). Thus, these groups have known that if their stories from their perspectives were to be known, they must be the storytellers, lyricists and creators (Hughes, 1974).

Counter-narratives and its cast of characters are crafted not of imagination but from lived experiences as noted by Solorzano & Yosso (2002): the "composite characters" in counter-

storytelling are grounded in real life experiences and actual empirical data and are contextualized in social situations that are also grounded in real life, not fiction" (p.15). Through "majoritarian" cultural narratives, the status quo of power relations, who's on top and who's on the bottom is reinforced and maintained. Such narratives are repeated through each generation as the accepted perspective and "whether told by people of color or Whites . . . or referred to as monovocals, master narratives, standard stories or majoritarian stories . . . they are not often questioned because people do not see them as stories but as "natural" parts of everyday life" (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002).

In "majoritarian" cultural narratives, the status quo of power relationships are reinforced and maintained. Such narratives are repeated through each generation as the accepted perspective and, "whether told by people of color or referred to as monovocals, master narratives, standard stories or majoritarian stories . . . they are not often questioned because people do not see them as stories but as 'natural' parts of everyday life" (Lawrence III, 1987). Many hegemonic cultural narratives remain intact across generations although marginalized groups and proponents of social justice raise opposition to them. A popular narrative that meets annual resistance claims that Christopher Columbus discovered America despite evidence from diverse scholars and Native American cultures that indigenous groups occupied America centuries before Columbus happened upon it (Van Sertima, 1976). Academic scrutiny and rigor have been applied to this popular narrative of America being discovered by Christopher Columbus. It was found to be inaccurate while also noting that it disavows voices from the civilizations, explorers, and cultures that arrived in America centuries before Columbus (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002; Van Sertima, 1976; Zerubavel, 2003).

Counter stories aim to oppose dominant discourse that devalues humanity and the significance of perspectives, voices, and lived reality of marginalized cultures and groups. A compelling counter-narrative that I experienced was the Black National Anthem—"Lift Every Voice and Sing." I find pride and assuredness in its mighty words. Scholar and poet, Amiri Baraka, asserts that "Lift Every Voice" is truly the highest form of a people's poetry and poet Maya Angelou offers that "Lift Every Voice" has kept African Americans connected to our yesterday, mindful of our today, and hopeful for our tomorrow (Bond & Wilson, 2000). Along with what I would describe as communal living and formal learning from Black teachers with lofty expectations for me and other students, "our" Black national anthem helped to confirm our perseverance, goodness, and cultural survival. From the time this poem, "Lift Every Voice," by James Weldon Johnson was set to music by his brother, Rosamond Johnson, in the late twentieth century, it was a song of victory over what seemed insurmountable obstacles. This song, a musical and lyrical counter-narrative, was also a reminder to me of Black Americans' resiliency, spirituality, and connection to each other (Bennett, 1984; Bond & Wilson, 2000; Asante, 1992). Counter-narratives in postmodern theory commonly provide a critique of modernity's "master," "grand," and/or "meta" narrative declarations of Truth, Beauty, Justice, and Man (Giroux, et.al., 1996). Emanating from the eighteenth century, these declarations from European-Anglo men of status, wealth, and property persisted over centuries, becoming embedded and accepted as normative philosophy and theory disseminated through American and European universities. Counter-narratives created in postmodernity served to interrupt and oppose grand stories which gained legitimacy from foundational myths about the origins and development of an unbroken western history (Giroux, et. al., 1996).

Popular narratives become a "social mirror" to reflect identity, purpose, connection, and worth to individuals and groups. Nash (2004) suggests in his concept of "constructivist circle" that those who make a story are also made by a story in that we become what we create. Within narratives reside the lifelines of a culture. According to Nash, "No objective, impartial truth ever exists outside of a constructivist narrative . . . it's always the story that frames, explains, and justifies your claim to an exclusive truth" (p. 38). Life is lived within a story. It is nearly impossible to live outside of one story or another. Stories may be created by the individual, family, community and society. Through various means including socialization and education stories are transmitted generationally. Within the stories exists the roles, expectations, and wisdoms that impact daily routines. We extend and edit these stories by the way we live and transmit our versions to subsequent generations.

American society extends its ideology and power relations through something as innocuous and entertaining as popular mass culture. Dates and Barlow (1993) assert that "... mass media help to legitimate inequalities in class, race, gender, and generational relations for commercial purposes-communication matters only insofar as it encourages consumer consumption" (p. 4). Beyond consumption of products displayed and introduced through persuasive advertising, it is also ideals, values, group identity and societal expectations that are unknowingly consumed. Unwittingly, the public consumes ideology and power relations as played out in TV programs. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between reality and false reality created for entertainment. The descriptive, "certifying agent" as offered by Watson (2008, p. 265) on the role of television in society has grounding in the seminal work of media critics and scholars Gerbner & Gross (1976) who suggested an unsuspecting public that would long feel the weight of TV's power on how we are socialized to view ourselves and others. We view ourselves

and others through popular culture and learn expected behaviors, roles, and relationships. Popular culture is a prominent tool of socialization for children and adults with visual culture being the most powerful of popular culture tools. Images have an immediate, in the moment, in your face impact unlike that of verbal communications (Blair, 2004). Images continue to help make meaning and shape what we believe and think about ourselves and other groups. Images can be designed to provoke certain meanings and messages, including demeaning and stereotypical descriptions. They can also help maintain power relations within society.

Counter-narratives and Socialization. Counter-narratives can help disrupt the influence of storied images that disseminate racial inequities and inhumanity (Solorzano & Yasso, 2002). Through socialization coping lessons and wisdom learned are passed to subsequent generations in hope that their lives may be less horrific than previous generations.

It may also provide cultural models and lessons of character, fortitude, and resiliency in the face of racism (Bentley, Adams, & Stevenson, 2009). The need for racial socialization is underscored in this quote, "Racial socialization influences self-esteem, coping behaviors, and externalizing and internalizing behaviors . . . helps strengthen African-American youth's level of resiliency and coping; it is an essential value-added component of the identity-development experience" (Bentley, Adams, & Stevenson, 2009, p. 261). Racism has been a recognized threat to African American lives throughout generations.

Counter-narratives and Popular Culture. Through its visual lens and accompanying story lines, popular culture constructs realities that comment on issues of daily living, including politics, economics, gender identity, racial and cultural identity, historical significance, and prospects for the future (Hermes, 2005). Further, Hermes asserts that popular culture is "connected to who we think we are, to how we understand our responsibilities and rights, how

we hold out hope for the future, or how we are critical of the state of things in the environments in which we move and of which we feel we are part (p. viii)." Popular culture remains a primary source of group identity and perceptions of self and others (Hermes, 2005). Since many communities, like the twenty-five most segregated cities in the United States are culturally, economically and racially segregated, a false sense of interaction and knowledge of other groups and cultures are often based on the stories and images offered through popular mass culture (www.businessinsider.com; www.cbslocal.com). Unfortunately, the imbalance of power and social inequities lived out in the realities of those on the margins of society often go unchanged in these stories and images. Buried within these images are meanings that are perceived through a cultural context and personal history (Messaris, 1994). I suggest that popular culture's power of persuasion and its capacity to consume mass populations through its veil of entertainment distracts from its power to shape and define values, identities, and power relations. Be it stories in film, print or electronic media, popular culture impacts socialization (Ford, 1997; Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Hermes, 2005; Rada, 2000).

When stories and images are constructed through an African-centered foundation with African cultural identity, history, and heritage as the subject, they reflect its creators and those for whom the creation exists. The social mirror, says Andrews (2003), reflects cultural identity and power upon its members and increases cultural self-knowledge. However, Andrews points out that it does the opposite for the marginalized and racialized "Other." For African Americans, the social mirror often reflects back on them negative and distorted images of public perception. Too often images reflected in the social mirror are internalized and scripted into one's self-concept, worth, and identity (p. 64).

Cultural Immersion as A Counter narrative

Counter-narratives were foundational to help CWTA stem the impact of racism on its young participants. At an early age, African American children know race through color and characteristics, and they can discern cultural stereotypes within social learning experiences (Clark & Clark, 1939, 1947; Spencer, 1983). As participants were, five to twelve years of age, CWTA had an opportunity to affect the foundation of an evolving cultural identity. By age twelve, internal scripts or models are developed that can inform future knowledge acquisition and interpretation (Kotulak, 1997). Within these scripts or schemata reside stories, images, and social vocabulary, as well as experiences that impact future learning (Piaget, 1983). Schema is dynamic. Through experiences—active, observant, ancillary—new schema is added as existing schema is modified and or deleted, all contributing to shaping identity and self-image of the developing child (Piaget, 1983). Stories and images contribute greatly to the experiences and exposure of young children and early adolescents.

From birth through twelve years of age, children develop social and cultural values, cultural and social identity, self-image, and a relationship to the world around them and to patterns of success and achievement. In these impressionable years, children are most vulnerable to stories and images with their brains responding to each in much the same way (Marshall, 2011). During these early development years, the brains of children are often referred to as an open "window," ready to receive the plethora of oncoming data. As posited by Kotulak (1997), information flows easily into the brain through "windows" that are open for only a short duration. "These windows of development occur in phases from birth to age twelve when the brain is most actively learning from its environment...the brain is very dynamic" (p. 7). Images formed early in a child's development influence "looking" and "normalizing" what is seen about themselves and others (Saarnio,1993). According to Saarnio (1993), the young child's brain

intake of the narrative story extends beyond merely listening. Understanding the neurobiology of a story, both fiction and nonfiction, could expand the use of stories in socialization and building cultural identity and self-awareness in children. Young children can discern which children in a TV program are favored and those who are not. Furthermore, children do not want to see themselves as the least favored character, too often depicted as being black, dark-haired or in dark clothing. Children demonstrate knowledge of which color is favored (Clark & Clark, 1947; Spencer, 1989; Marshall, 2011). Research has shown that a confident and positive ethnic identity contributes to success in "academic performance and motivation, self-efficacy, as well as decreased levels of delinquency, violence, and drug use" (Wakefield & Hudley, 2007). Of popular culture images and stories directed at children, Giroux (1995) asserts, "children's culture is a sphere where entertainment, advocacy, and pleasure meet to construct conceptions of what it means to be a child occupying a combination of gender, racial, and class positions in society through which one defines oneself in relation to a myriad of others" (p. 1). Animated, colorful and playful images and narratives are not sufficient to minimize the damaging impressions popular culture can have on a child's sense of self and how and where she fits into the stories told.

Narratives and images populating this Western hegemonic white supremacist society typically distort and negate African American cultural identity, history, and heritage as nonessential to history and contemporary society. Like previous and current generations, African American children exist on the margins of society and as extras in a "Contemporary West" culture described (Arnett & Taber, 1995) as, "the culture that is currently the dominant, majority culture in the United States, Canada, Western Europe—largely White and middle class—and that sets most of the norms and standards and holds most of the positions of political, economic,

intellectual, and media power in these countries" (p. 519). Power to make meaning in all aspects of society largely resides in the domain of White males. The voice of American society, though society is composed of a symphony of voices and cultures, resounds through perspectives of White dominant culture.

Cognizant of the distortions and omissions of contemporary culture, CWTA sought to place its children at the center of narratives of African-American cultural identity, history, and heritage through the ongoing use of Sankofa, an African-centered paradigm. Sankofa, as defined in *The Adinkra Dictionary* (1998), means "go back to the past in order to build for the future," or, "Go back and fetch what we need and move forward into the future" (p. 186). A commonly recognizable symbol of the concept is the Sankofa bird pictured in the Adinkra symbols of the Akan people of Ghana, West Africa. The body of the bird faces forward while the head and neck looks back over the body. This image symbolizes reclamation of knowledge and models of the past in order to inform the present and prepare for the future. It also suggests that the power to name one's own cultural reality resides within each culture and is independent of the imposition of the dominant cultural narrative as representative of all cultures and groups. I suggest that Black Americans appear as "cultural edgedwellers" in dominant stories of a racist society that deny their humanity and rich and ancient cultural legacy. A remedy for these racialized fabrications, stereotypes, caricatures and loathing of everything black resides within lived experiences, historical and contemporarily, of African-American counter narratives (Gallman, Ani, & Williams, 2003).

Culture for CWTA was that proposed by Dr. Maulana Karenga (1997), "Culture is the ground of human identity, purpose and direction. It tells you who you are what you must do and how you can do it . . . without culture we find ourselves without adequate self-understanding . . .

culture is the basis of all ideas, images and actions. To move is to move culturally, i.e., by a set of values given to you by your culture." It is the lenses through which we make sense of the society and our role. The definition of culture arises from the African-centered philosophy of Kawaida. Etymologically, Kawaida is a Swahili word for tradition, but it has come to mean philosophically a synthesis of tradition and reason informed by ongoing practice. In the *Standard Swahili-English Dictionary*, Kawaida is defined as a "regulative principle, fundamental rule, usage, custom, system." Kawaida assumes the crisis confronting Blacks is a crisis of culture. Cultural knowledge provides a center from which one can view self and society. The context for everything is culture as espoused in the seven basic areas of culture from Kawaida, (1) history, (2) religion, (3) social organization, (4) economic organization, (5) political organization, (6) creative production, and (7) ethos. Culture by default, which is typically the dominant voice, is the framework of organization. However, with knowledge of one's cultural center and self, culture becomes a seat of power that drives and informs possibilities (Karenga, 1997).

CWTA delivered culture as a counter force of stories and images. This cultural counter-force of existing and original African and African American stories and images was created to contest distortions and stereotypical stories and images disseminated through popular culture. CWTA became a counter-narrative to represent the rich, resilient, and empowering legacy of African American cultural history and heritage for our children. Though some of the most heinous images, symbols, and signs of African Americans are removed from popular culture, vestiges of them remain. In the book, *White on Black, Images of African and Blacks in Western Popular Culture,* Peters (1992) states,

> Stereotypes of Blacks may not have been eliminated but changed in character, taking subtler and more indirect forms. A kind of societal typecasting is set up from which it is

difficult to escape...at stake in these representations is not just the images themselves, but also their social ramifications. (p. 11)

African Americans are too often depicted in popular mass culture as caricatures, stereotypes and one dimensional subordinate character. CWTA created counter-narratives to interrupt popular culture assertions of demeaning and stereotypical images of African Americans. Critical Race Theory (CRT) scholarship asserts, "Society constructs the social world through a series of tacit agreements mediated by images, pictures, tales, and scripts" (Delgado & Stefanic, 2012, p.48). Such exposure reveals an intrinsic and inevitable understanding of hegemonic systems and the construction and distribution of narrative and visual images to safeguard the status quo of power relations. CRT, Sankofa and the African-centered value system of the Seven Principles informed CWTA curriculum design and implementation. The assumptions of CWTA emerged from my lived experiences in the segregated South during Jim Crow years and subsequent eras of legally imposed desegregation and devastation of black communities, businesses, schools, hospitals, and other support systems. Additionally, my assumptions are informed by knowledge I gleaned from interdisciplinary scholars as well as musicians and literary voices as varied as Pulitzer Prize Winning Author Toni Morrison, Sterling Brown, Magaret Walker, Gloria Naylor, Zora Neale Hurston, Nina Simone, John Henri Clark, Marvin Gaye, Curtis Mayfield, Ivan Van Sertima, W.E. B. DuBois, Gil Scott Heron, Maulana Karenga, Mary Francis Berry, J.A. Rodgers, Carter G. Woodson, Jawanza Kunjufu, Molefi Asante, Marimba Ani, Amos Wilson, Langston Hughes, Ida B. Wells, Magaret T. G. Burrows, and Margaret A. Washington.

Major assumptions that I made in creating CWTA to Africa (CWTA) resulted from my critical reading of popular culture's depiction of African Americans and my response to raising

my children in a society in which their presence and value are rarely acknowledged. Our children came to us believing that a queen, king or princess was that as defined and pictured through Disney films. A warrior to them, a hero even, looked like some Marvel creation or *Superman, Batman.* They did not know about *Shango,* the King and Warrior, nor did they know of *Ogun* or *Obatala.* They did not know nor had they been shown *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* or the adorable and cherished voice of *Honey, I Love.* They did not know of the ultimate ideal of femininity, beauty, creativity and intelligence represented by the dazzling, *Oshun.* While I knew of African folktales and stories that contained characters of integrity, talent, wisdom, and beauty that looked like our children, that was not the experience of our children.

Black youth and children appear devoid of cultural grounding or collective cultural historical foundation rooted in African ancestry. These children and their families are rarely pictured in any historical and cultural context beyond captives held in enslavement. Black children need to know that those enslaved were not defeated by their captivity. They organized and carried out successful slave rebellions and risked their lives to escape to places of freedom: Denmark Vesey; Amistad Mutiny; Nat Turner; Toussaint L'Ouvertrure, (Asante & Mattson, 1992; Bennett, 1984). West African warriors and nobles including Mansa Musa and Yaa Asantewa , and heroines and scholars like Anna Julia Cooper and Callie House and other cultural models are absent to the developing mind and identity of Black children. Too often stories put forth through popular culture tend to conflate problem solving, parenting skills and critical thinking to being White. This is noticeable in the White Savior Films (WSF), (Brummet, 2008; Fitzgerald, 2014). These WSF films or rescue films show White people saving, often from their own bad habits, a downtrodden, hopeless member of a marginalized racial group, i.e., Black, Brown, First Americans. Such films reiterate the impossibility of such characters being able to

help themselves let along considering that help might come from one of their own-members of their racial and cultural group. This category of film was around as far back as the Imitation of Life (1959). Perhaps if the Black character had fully accepted the rescue offered by the upstanding White woman in the film, the lead character, maybe she would not have died. In the 21st Century, these films continue to portray Blacks as needing to be saved by Whites. Examples include: *Blind Side* (2009); *Twelve Years a Slave* (2013); *The Soloist* (2009); *The Help* (2011); and, *Freedom Writers* (2007). These films dismiss the reality of being Black in America, historically and contemporarily. Blacks have always had to help each other. The mutual aid societies and women's clubs came into existence for Blacks to help the less fortunate among them (Johnson, 2000) . Yet these films present a helplessness and inability from Blacks to help themselves or each other. There is a component to these films of sister-helping-sister that could be linked to a religious and moral imperative from a White Christian perspective: Matthew 25:40, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me'. Stories and images of WSF reiterate the inability of Blacks to protect and safeguard the lives, socialization and education of themselves and their children. The implication is that African Americans do not have the capacity or mental fortitude. However, it is the cumulative impact of White supremacy racism that remains the leading culprit, not the children and families marginalized and expendable. Multiple generations are unable to free themselves from poverty. Their children are located in under resourced communities with failing schools, increased violence, rising unemployment and oppressive policing. Yet, these children like most are mesmerized by the fantastical worlds of grandeur where children grow into princesses and kings; inherit magical beans which transform them from poverty to richness;

where evil is always depicted as blackness or darkness as a person, place, or being and all stories end in "happily ever after."

On the other end of the WSF spectrum is the Magical Negro films (Hughey, 2009). These films allow Blacks to sacrifice themselves to save and rescue Whites from whatever is threatening their lives or prospects. It is reminiscent of the Jim Crow era racist cartoons which suggest that one gets luck from 'rubbing the head' of a Negro (Bogle, 1994). This category of films includes: *The Green Mile* (1999); *Bringing Down the House* (2003); and, *Nurse Betty* (2000).

The basic values and purposes of CWTA to Africa (CWTA) embody its core ideology. Its intrinsic values emerge from its grounding ideology and its nature or identifier. The ideology helped to ensure that the nature of CWTA remained fixed and intact over its lifetime (Collins & Porras, 1996). CWTA was identified as the "African" people program because of the bold and colorful West African fabrics worn by staff and the use of African languages for greetings, names, numbers and words. Although participants often found the sounds of African languages, including Kiswahili, funny and foreign, staff laughed with them to help ease them into the use of the language as well to assure them that their discomfort with the new language was expected and acceptable. This step alone helped to disabuse participants of the notion of African languages as no more than nonsensical phrases. Importantly, CWTA curricula countered ridicule of Africa as having no authentic language, emphasizing that Africa is a continent—the second largest in the world—with fifty-four countries and hundreds of indigenous languages (Asante, 1992; Lewin, 1996; Mazuri, 1986; The Peoples Publishing Group, Inc., 2000).

The framework of Critical Race Theory and the philosophical and cultural grounding of an African-centered perspective as articulated in the Seven Principles (Nguzo Saba) and Sankofa

provide the criteria to examine CWTA documents and interviews. The methodology and processes for analysis are explicated in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the conceptual framework, qualitative methodology and interpretive approach used in conducting this study. I begin by explaining my motivation for the research. This is followed by explanation of the theoretical frameworks: Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Afrocentricity as grounded in the cultural values of the Seven Principles, Nguzo Saba developed through the philosophy of Kawaida. The description of the qualitative methodology is presented as is the interpretive approach for analysis and making meaning of research data. The construction of CWTA documents and the criteria of analysis is explained. The interviewing of former participants and teachers, purposes of questions asked, and the use of content analysis to examine interview data is described. The process of sample selections is detailed. This chapter concludes with explanation of the methodological limitations of this study.

Through the perspectives of former CWTA participants and teachers and analysis of CWTA documents, my study seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) What counter-narratives were created by CWTA to Africa (CWTA) to mitigate White hegemonic culture's negative portrayals of African American cultural identity? (2) Did counter-narratives created by CWTA influence cultural identity of its participants? If so, how do former participants express this influence?

Theoretical Framework

This research was conceptualized through a framework of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Afrocentricity. In countering racism, CRT suggests methods to expose and disassemble racist structures and voice and visibility to perspectives of silenced and marginalized groups. Since its inception, CRT has been mobilized in various areas including gender studies, Latin studies, womanist/feminist studies, and education (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001; Ladson-Billings &

Tate, 1997; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Racism is conceptualized in CRT as commonplace to life within American society. Racism institutionalizes and preserves White majority dominance and Black minority subjugation (Delgado & Stefanic, 2002).

Eradication of legal segregation, following the civil rights movements retained a racially divided and unequal society (Hacker, 1995). While Colored Only and White Only signs were removed from most public accommodations and schools, Black typically experienced racism and discrimination in much the same way as before desegregation (Hacker, 1995). Yet, Whites suggests that racism ended with segregation, and with doors of education, housing and employment opportunities made accessible to Blacks (Brown,et.al, 2003). The problems that Blacks encounter are not a result of racism, but due to their failure to take advantage of the opportunities available to them. In *White-Washing Race: They Myth of a Color Blind Society (2003),* the writers propose that the following three tenets undergird the beliefs Whites have about race. These tenets suggest Blacks to be their own obstacle.

> Civil rights laws ended racial inequality by striking down legal segregation and outlawing discrimination against workers and voters...if vestiges of racial inequality persist, they believe that it is because blacks have failed to take advantage of opportunities created by the civil rights revolution...most white Americans think the United States is becoming a color-blind society, and they see little need or justification for affirmative action or other color-conscious policies (p. 1-2).

According to the perspectives expressed through the three tenets above, Blacks are their own obstacle. It appears that the proverbial call to Blacks 'pull yourself up by your bootstraps' is being sounded. This call seems to be issued to redirect and refocus blame from vestiges of racism or other sociocultural, political, and economic barriers and back onto Blacks (Alexander, 2010).

Absence of African American voices and perspectives seemed evidence that race continued to matter. America had not become the society that no longer assessed privileges and

protections based upon race. It was not the color-blind society that Whites claimed existed after some of the victories following the civil rights movement, including Brown v Board of Education, the 1964 Voting Rights Act, school desegregation and public accommodations prohibitions mandates, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. assassination, and the growth of a Black middle class (www.uscourts.gov/educational ; www.civilrights.org; West, 1993; Brown, et.al, 2003).

The frameworks of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the African-centered theory of the Nguzo Saba (Seven Principles) ground the intellectual contextualization of this research. The Nguzo Saba emerges from the philosophy of Kawaida, a "regulative principle, fundamental rule, usage, custom, system," explained as an ongoing synthesis of the best of African thought and practice in constant exchange with the world (Karenga, 1997). Kawaida is also a process of critical thinking that requires African culture and people to be the subject and context for critical analysis. Such analysis engages with African culture from an ethical and exploratory perspective in discovery of knowledge that informs the best of what it means to be human (Karenga, 1997).

The fundamental core values and principles of the Nguzo Saba establishes the criteria for discerning the African-centered qualities of CWTA documents and informs my analysis and interpretation of participant interviews. These values and principles are applied in African-centered educational programs, cultural and rites of passage programs and during Kwanzaa, an African cultural holiday celebrated December 26-January 1 (Herrington, 2013; Otto, 2010; Warfield-Coppock, 1994; Wright, 1996). At its core, CWTA presented itself as an African-centered cultural immersion program of cultural reclamation through Sankofa. Through this process of Sankofa, CWTA retrieved and reclaimed cultural knowledge to inform minds and empower hands and actions of participants. These core elements were intended in the

construction of documents, and the design development and implementation of all CWTA activities. The criteria of analysis presented in Table 3.1 were derived from the core elements of CWTA curriculum.

Table 3.1 Criteria for Analysis

1. Recognition of an African-centered cultural value system and voice
2. Push-back to popular culture representations of African cultural Identity, history and heritage
3. Retention of cultural and racial pride and identity

Criterion 1. To determine evidence of an African-centered cultural value system and voice, I looked for words and sentences that explicitly labeled activities or intentions with one or more of the *Nguzo Saba*, Seven Principles in English or Swahili: Unity, Self-Determination, Collective Work and Responsibility, Cooperative Economics, Purpose, Creativity, Faith. I also identified the reclamation of historical knowledge, models, stories, as retrieved through the concept of *Sankofa*, and noted the name of the person(s) transmitting the knowledge as credible and recognized sources and practitioners of African-centered philosophy. The cultural take-away transmitted to participants was also evidence of an African-centered cultural value system. Examples: Locating and discussing Olduvai Gorge and the Mountain of the Moon; Engaging participants with a more accurate representation of Africa as seen through Peters Projection Map of the World presents a perspective of Africa not commonly heard, thus suggesting questions may exists about other matters related to Africa and African people.

Criterion 2. Expressing Africa not as a shadow of humanity and civilization but instead as the birthplace of human civilization is a basic rejection and push-back to distortions circulated through popular culture (Asante, 1992). I was looking for evidence that placed value on the cultural immersion experiences of CWTA. I also wanted to determine their perceptions of cultural identity, history and heritage. Examples: Freely talks about the richness and vitality of cultural knowledge to racial and cultural pride.

Criterion 3. Valuing the lessons learned through CWTA as a source to inform and help shape connections to cultural history and heritage. Examples: Makes use of Swahili greetings and principles of the Nguzo Saba, especially Faith (Imani) and Creativity (Kuumba). Collects and reads cultural history and heritage, in both fiction and nonfiction. Teach young children about cultural history and heritage.

Qualitative Methodology

A qualitative methodology using tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and culture as defined and experienced through the African-centered theory of Seven Principles (Nguzo Saba), and the philosophy of Kawaida are used to conduct an interpretive inquiry into the perspectives of former CWTA participants, former teachers, and CWTA documents to answer the questions of this research and study (Cresswell, 2007; Asante, 1998; Karenga, 1997). As stated by Cresswell (2007) interpretive inquiry is "a form of inquiry in which researchers make an interpretation of what they see, hear, and understand. The researcher's interpretations cannot be separated from their own background, history, context, and prior understandings" (p.39). Interpretive inquiry as a method to arrive at understanding through this research is informed by Smith's (1992) *Interpretive Inquiry: A Practical and Moral Activity* (1992), which proposes two

objectives for interpretive inquiry as human action and social action and describes them as follows,

> Human actions are those expressions people make based on reasons, intentions, and motivations. The concept of social must be added because the meanings ascribed to human actions, both by the actors and the interpreters, are determined by, and can only be understood within, a social context or within a web of social meanings. (p.100)
>
> Further, Smith (1992) asserts, interpretations are not a product of taste or emotive response, they be be supported by reasons, presentation of examples, and careful judgments. (p.102)

This study required a methodology to examine the interprepetations that research participants made of their lived experiences,in Children's Window to Africa (CWTA), as expressed through language obtained through interviews, and program documents. Through a method of interpretive inquiry, I immersed myself into rigorous examination of the data to arrive at meanings through which I could assert and support answers to the research questions of this study (Smith, 1992). Qualitative methods, as asserted by Polkinghorne (2005) are "specifically constructed to take account of the particular characteristics of human experiences and facilitate the investigation of experience" (pp. 138–39). Languaged data, as proposed by Polkinghorne (2005), are not individual words but the conversations created from the interrelations of words composing sentenced expressions (p.138). In this study, research participants tell their stories in their own words. Descriptions of lived experiences from participants' perspectives through their memories and sensibilities provide languaged data that can be examined through qualitative research.

The use of a qualitative methodology allows often marginalized voices and perspectives center-stage access and validates these voices as credible sources of knowledge and perspectives to inform scholarly inquiry. These voices alone can express a depth of knowledge and meaning

to their experiences unavailable elsewhere. Maxwell & Loomis (2002) contend that "the strength of qualitative research primarily derives from its inductive approach, its focus on specific situations or people, and its emphasis on words rather than numbers." I want to understand the meaning that participants give to their experiences in CWTA on how they construct and live cultural identity as adults and how they express such perceived impact. It is through their voices and word choices that I want to know hear their perspectives. As noted by Ruona in *Foundations and Methods of Inquiry* (2005):

> Qualitative data deal with meanings. Meanings are mediated through language and action. Qualitative data are thus date in the form of words. These words are derived from observations, interviews, or documents . . . . We must always remember that participants' words represent their social realities. Their words offer rich, vivid, concrete descriptions of the meaning that they ascribe to their worlds. (p. 234)

This qualitative approach utilizes an inductive and a priori epistemology, which allows flexibility to respond to and recognize relationships and diverse influences emerging from data collection. Further, Patton (2002) and Maxwell (2005) posit the utility of qualitative research strategies and its "intellectual and practical goals" as gaining an understanding of the context and perspectives expressed by participants. Within this research, content analysis is a method of analaysis used to derive meanings and perspectives from CWTA documents and interviews to answer the research questions of this study (Patton,2002). Content analysis allows a systematic interrogation of languaged data including visual, text, interviews, and documents to infer meanings and to provide empirical knowledge towards understanding a given phenomena (Forman & Damschroder, 2008). Though rooted in communication research, qualitatively and quantitatively, content analysis has also been widely used in the social sciences, psychology,

business, and health fields (Neundorff, 2002; Krippendorff, 1980; Cole, 1988). While Neuendorf (2002) describes content analysis as "the primary message-centered methodology," definitions abound on what it is. Yet common in all definitions are the centrality of language, text, symbols, and words as data sources (Neuman, 1997; Weber, 1990). Language is the primary medium to human experiences. It reveals, explains, defines, and expresses within the specific framework and perspectives lived by each of us. In the article, *Content Analysis and Narrative Analysis*, Smith (2002) states, "language both facilitates and reveals the development of persons and cultures. Language permit inferences regarding subjective experiences, intentions, and internal structures that influence overt behavior" (p. 313). Language directs guides and suggests actions and thoughts.

A rigorous mining of data—multiple readings, sorting, and listening—to extract empirical evidence from layers of textual expressions is mandated in content analysis (Forman & Damschroder, 2008; Krippendorff, 2013; Neuenndorf, 2002; Patton, 2002; Smith, 2000). Such rigor compels actions in the stages of "immersion, reduction, and interpretation," suggests Forman and Damschroder (2008). Actions in each stage help to delineate and identify meanings and insights addressed in the data. During the immersion stage, the researcher interacts with the data to establish a connection and awareness of what resides within the data. These actions may include note taking, preparing comment sheets on observations and interactions with data, and listening to audio recordings. In the reduction stage, the researcher sifts through, separates, and situates data into thematic clusters and categories most meaningful to address the research question under study. In the reduction stage, the researcher seeks to interact with the data to determine the most salient patterns and themes. Finally, at the interpretation stage, the researcher discerns the evidence in the data that answers the research questions. Texts rely on context and

meaning assigned by those interacting with it (Krippendorff, 1999). Outside of this, a text is without salience as it has no voice until it is interpreted through context and meanings. This process of content analysis explicated above, allowed me to discern from each interview response, the perceptions and meanings inferred and explicit in response to the questions asked.

Construction and Criteria of CWTA Documents

The categories of documents I constructed as executive director of CWTA in collaboration with the teachers were: (1) rituals, chants, and songs; (2) pledges and affirmations; (3) images; and, (4) stories. The categories were intended to ensure that the teachers had readily accessible support and guidance to help them optimize the cultural immersion experience for participants. The documents detailed the agreed upon language, expressions, and scripts to help teachers engage and interact with our children and the cultural knowledge. Yet, the teachers also had latitude to incorporate personal creativity in the delivery of materials. Teachers were also asked to share their personal creative approaches with each other to expand the techniques and tools at the disposal of all teachers.

Categories of documents aided particular functions of CWTA curriculum. Ritual documents informed libations, opening ceremonies and introductions to African languages, dances, music, and traditional West African attire for all participants and teachers. Ritual documents also addressed ceremonial practices designed to transmit cultural experiences and knowledge to participants. Song and chant documents conveyed cultural knowledge through lyrics, rhythms and music. Songs and chants documents presented the call and response action between participants and the actual lyrics, synchronized movements, historical records, rhythms and stepping (Fine, 2007).

Interactive and engaging stepping routines were created to help participants learn about various cultural figures including Harriet Tubman, Queen Hatshepsut, and Imhotep (Asante & Mattson, 1992). The chant, Say What, Africa! is one example of a call and response action between participants and the actual lyrics, synchronized movements and rhythms of African culture. Within the chant, Say What, Africa!, Djembe drums provided the music. Participants and teachers added hand claps and foot stomps to elevate the rhythms and beats. The call was issued to participants with the phrase, Say What, Africa! The response to the call was a fact about Africa: (1) It is a Continent, not a country, (2) It is the second largest Continent, (3) Birthplace of human civilization, (4) First to smelt iron, (5) Fifty-four countries, (6) Father of Medicine, Imhotep (Lewin, 1996). Pledge and affirmation documents explicitly presented language of cultural affirmation, identity, shared community and values. Through pledge and affirmation documents participants experienced affirming language about the value of African cultural identity, history and heritage. Image and story documents packaged a multitude of cultural characters resembling our participants, teachers, our families, contexts, models and wisdoms that upheld pride, courage, dignity and the good and greatness commonplace to the cultural history and heritage of African Americans. The image and story document category used ritual, songs and chants, and affirmations and pledges to animate African languages and optimize the visual and sensory impact of cultural knowledge transmissions

Through examination of document categories, I wanted to know what counter-narratives were created by CWTA to mitigate the distortions and misrepresentations of African cultural identity, history and heritage disseminated through popular culture. As expressed through criteria presented in Table 3.1, I examined documents to discover (1) recognition of an African-centered

cultural value system and voice, (2) push-back to popular culture representations of African cultural identity, history and heritage, and (3) retention of cultural and racial pride and identity.

Documents were constructed and created for the following purposes:

- As maps for implementing program ideas. Each document suggested approaches that would help teachers move participants from being introduced to information and into activities that helped participants engage the information through activities that helped them grasp and demonstrate their hold on the new information.
- To ensure that all teachers used the same words in teaching various concepts to participants-repetition reiterated the importance of selected words; word choice was intentional and purposed for reasons and modeled continuity of language and expressions used with participants to foster cultural values, transit specific cultural knowledge, and engage participants.
- Establish a record to validate the importance of historical moments created and lived through CWTA while also serving as a calendar/log of activities, knowledge and lessons planned and delivered.
- Convey values of African culture, of disseminating ideas about cultural identity, transmitting history and heritage, and demonstrating that we, as Black people, are valid sources of knowledge creation, history, and its dissemination.

The construction and criterion of document analysis are conceptually and practically linked. Ritual documents were designed to introduce and immerse participants in an African-centered cultural value system and voice. Chants and song documents repeated and reiterated the cultural value system and voice introduced through rituals. All categories of documents

presented cultural immersion experiences to push-back the types of representations found in popular culture.

Interviewing Former Participants and Teachers

This section focuses on open-ended and structured one-on-one interviews that were conducted with former CWTA participants and teachers. A principle method of obtaining data in qualitative research is through interviews. Interviews allow dialogue between interviewee and researcher in which the researcher directs open-ended questions to the interviewee that probe and mine remembered experiences, as expressed through the particular perspectives of the interviewee (Patton, 2002; Polkinghorne, 2005). Through interviews, the researcher seeks to gather details and descriptions of the interviewee's full experiences and perspectives of the experience being examined. Yet essential to qualitative interviewing, as Patton asserts is, "to provide a framework within which respondents can express their own understandings in *their own* terms" (p. 348). It is the research participants' words, language, and the ways in which their words are expressed that constructs the perspectives given to the researcher. While the researcher may ask for clarity on any response given by the respondent, integrity, respect for the research participant, and ethics mandate use of words spoken by the participant and not substitutes favored by the researcher. All interviewees were given an opportunity to review written transcript and audio tapes of their interview to ensure clarity and accuracy.

Procedures Followed in the Interviews. The scheduling of interviews was at the convenience of interviewees. The interviewing process consumed nearly three months. I conducted individual structured interviews in various settings, including a private meeting room at the local public library, via speaker phone to audio tape, in the home of a former participant because inclement weather prevented access to public transportation to our scheduled location.

Only the interviewee and I were in the room where interviews were conducted. The Informed Consent Forms were reviewed and completed as required by Union Institute & University Internal Review Board (IRB) prior to the start of each interview. Audio recordings were made of each interview with permission from each interviewee. Interview questions (Appendixes A & B) were posed to the interviewees with rephrasing, explanations and follow-up questions as needed for clarity. Pseudonyms are used to ensure confidentiality of all research participants

Sample Selection. Eligible for this study were adults who had participated as children in CWTA after school and summer programs and former staff and teachers that taught at least a full summer or after school semester with CWTA. All adult former participants and teachers were African American, male and female who willingly consented to participate in this research project, as evidenced by their signed Informed Consent Form required by the Internal Review Board (IRB) of Union Institute and University.

Locating former CWTA participants was challenging. With the approved Union Institute & University Internal Review Board (IRB) Recruiting Script and Informed Consent Form in hand,I prepared to search for CWTA research participants.I began my search for participants by contacting locations where CWTA programs had been conducted. Phone numbers listed for five previous sites were disconnected. Three previous sites maintained the same telephone numbers but had new staff, none of which had any knowledge of CWTA programs.

Phone calls to eight of the thirteen remaining sites revealed that program directors and staff had no knowledge of CWTA. Though staff had no knowledge of past CWTA programs, after hearing my description of CWTA programs, they were interested in having CWTA return to their communities and provide programming for their children and youth. They suggested that their children could benefit from learning their cultural history and heritage, and perhaps such

knowledge might positively influence them. Since CWTA was inactive, I recmmended local rites of passage programs and African American cultural history and heritage programs including African dance and drumming that might be available.

Program staff at the five remaining sites had limited to full recall about CWTA. Following my introduction and reading of the recruiting script, I described CWTA as an after school and summer cultural history and heritage program. Only two sites had staff that worked there during the years in CWTA operated. One staff person had two grandchildren that had participated in CWTA and knew many other children who did as well. The daughter of another staff participated. At another site, the staff person named a woman who had lived in the neighborhood the longest who would probably remember CWTA. Staff at two sites remembered African drumming and dancing and offered to search site files and documents for evidence of CWTA having been there. I requested permission to visit the five community sites and bring pictures and videos that might help in identifying former participants. I brought videos and photographs from the CWTA. With varying degrees, the response to the photographs and videos was the same. Many recognized the majority of children and staff in the pictures and videos.

Staff at one community was able to identify nearly every child in the photo though the pictures were over ten years old. Responses to one photo of fifteen children, seven- to twelve-years-old, revealed that several children had graduated from high school and moved away; others went off to college and did not return; two were deceased; several were parents and lived nearby; and in nearly every instance the child in the photo had family that remained near the sites. At one site, a mother needed help recognizing the childhood face of her daughter. This mother and daughter lived near the site where CWTA programs had operated.. Many of the children, now

adults, from CWTA and their children live in the same communities where they participated in program activities of CWTA.

Twenty-five former participants identified in CWTA photographs and video were contacted for this research and eight agreed to interviews. Four agreed to participate with just one phone call while others needed more time to consider my request. One person made positive comments about her CWTA experiences but declined to participate in this research.. Others did not want to be interviewed or did not respond to my phone calls.

Contacting former CWTA teachers was not as challenging as contacting former participants. I had maintained a list of former teachers and staff. Also,I stayed in touch with many of them through shared cultural and social activities over the years following the closing of CWTA. Those I chose to approach were, I felt, most accessible with professional and personal lives that would accommodate participation in my research. Additionally, nearly all former teachers had mentioned an interest in restarting CWTA and recognized that a need still existed for its program and activities. Frequently, former teachers shared with me the numerous times since the end of CWTA they had been approached by former CWTA participants who remembered them from experiences with CWTA.

Eight adult former participants and five former teachers of CWTA to Africa (CWTA) agreed to participate and were interviewed for this research. The eight former participants were young adults, twenty-one to thirty years old. Of the eight, only one participant was male though three other males agreed to an interview but withdrew. Two men telephoned me to withdraw, and the other texted me his withdrawal. I did not try to persuade either to stay in the research, but I did thank them for their consideration. The male participant was the only one who still lived near the site where he participated in CWTA as a ten- to eleven-year-old child. Though other

participants no longer lived near the site where CWTA had operated,they continued to have family and friends in those communities, and they typically lived within walking distance to those former sites.

Five former teachers—adults thirty-eight to fifty-two years old, three females and two males—are also in the sample. All former teachers contacted were willing to be interviewed for this research. With the exception of the Djembe drum instructor, all teachers shared in teaching CWTA curriculum including reading to the children, creating stories & storytelling, arts and crafts, African history, creative arts, dance, games, sports, and African language introductions. Many CWTA teachers were college students that worked with CWTA for as short as a semester and as long as three years. CWTA teachers were graduate and undergraduate students, university professors, community artists, and activists. Paid summer interns were high school students who were as immersed in the instructions and activities of CWTA as were the children. All teachers working with CWTA were required to obtain ACT 33/34 Clearance prior to beginning work.

Questions Used in the Interviews. Questions were formulated to elicit reflections and descriptions of experiences in CWTA from former child participants and former teachers. A primary set of questions and alternate questions, if needed for clarity, asked each participant to discern their perspectives on cultural identity and popular culture's representations about African American cultural identity, history and heritage. Participant experiences and knowledge of cultural identity and African American cultural history and heritage before and after CWTA were also examined through interview questions and criteria listed in Table 3.1. I asked different questions of former teachers and former participants because I wanted different information from them.

Participants' Questions. From participants, I wanted to know how they expressed and perceived cultural identity and its link to their experiences in CWTA. The questions asked of former participants were in four categories: (1) cultural identity; (2) racial and cultural pride; (3) cultural knowledge; and, (4) popular culture images and stories.

Cultural identity was a core element of CWTA. Participants were immersed in cultural experiences intended to help shape and inform a reclamation and connection to an African cultural identity. To not ask former participants about cultural identity is to dismiss the value CWTA placed on it and any significance participants may have attached to it. The basis of cultural identity includes history, culture, and biology (Mazama, 2002). Culture was both the subject and the device through which African American cultural identity history and heritage were intended for CWTA participants. To understand how former participants expressed any influence CWTA may have had on them is to fundamentally know how the engagement and interaction with African culture contributed to how they self-identity culturally. The questions on cultural identity are designed to elicit candid detail and perceptions from former participants about their experiences. (See Appendix A & B.)

Racial and cultural pride is fundamental to the positive transmission of cultural identity, history and heritage undertaken by teachers through the curriculum of CWTA. Not only did I expect and require teachers to have a strong and informed sense of racial and cultural pride, I expected it to show in the ways in which they interacted with the participants and with the cultural knowledge. On an uninterrupted basis, we exhibited and shared with participants the values we placed on African culture. It was those values; appreciation and dignity that we intended to pass on to our participants. The racial and cultural pride we all exhibited was informed by our shared cultural heritage and our commitment to pass on this affiliation of pride

and dignity to participants. CWTA teachers used affirming and uplifting words and attitudes to demonstrate racial and cultural pride through an African-centered value system to our participants. As founder of CWTA and as teachers, we lived what we taught and shared with participants about racial and culture pride and we taught what we lived. At the same time, CWTA was aware of the abounding discourse on race as a social construct and thus a suggestion that as it was human made, it could as easily be discarded as it was constructed (Brown, et.al., 2003; West, 1993; Lott,1999).

The intended take-away of CWTA experiences was basic cultural knowledge about participants' cultural identity and connection to their ancestral cultural roots. As expressed by Marcus Garvey, "A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots." CWTA sought to provide links to cultural knowledge that was not readily accessible to our participants. Though CWTA recognized that participants may have shared other cultural roots, the most obvious cultural connection and the least taught and discussed on any positive context was the one targeted by CWTA, which was an African, Black culture.

Through images and stories, CWTA crafted counter-narratives to push-back against the negative depictions rampant in popular mass culture about African culture, history and heritage. An African proverb asserts, *the eyes believe themselves, the ears believe others.* CWTA helped to provide a source to inform and question, as needed, what was seen and heard.

From former teachers, I wanted reflections on choices made in creating and using counter-narratives and perceptions of how participants experienced the counter-narratives.. The categories of questions directed to former teachers were: (1) counter-narrative creation; (2) cultural identity; and, (3) CWTA legacy. From counter-narrative creation, I wanted to know the response to creation as both a proactive and reactive posture in sharing cultural knowledge and

racial and cultural pride. Also, in measuring the impact of counter-narratives created, I wanted to know from the teachers who delivered this material, the evidence of influence on the participants and their thoughts on any legacy of CWTA experience..

Analyzing the Interview Data from Former Participants and Teachers. My method of analysis of this data was content analysis. This method was useful as I looked towards language and text to discover the words and expressions participants and teachers used to answer the questions. Through a process of immersion, reduction and interpretation, I conducted a content analysis of interview data (Krippendorff,1980).

Immersion

- I listened to recordings of each interview multiple times. As I listened I recalled the now adult voices as children in CWTA. I recalled those who were quiet, reticent, and needing to be pulled into the activities. I envisioned their faces curious, laughing, and learning through group dances, drumming, and playing. I remembered their calling us 'the Africans' because we brought African culture, knowledge and play each time we visited, and we said, "we are African."
- Then, I listened to what was being said. I listened for voice tone, i.e. energy, passion, enthusiasm, disinterest, authority, confidence. I interpreted tone to be attitude. Whether CWTA was the source of the attitude was unknown, however, I did surmise that CWTA was beneficiary of the attitude.
- I listened for the context and connotation in which these words and expressions were used.
- I transcribed each recorded interview.
- I made written notes about what was being said for my clarity.

- I listened to discover words, phrases and expressions that encompassed meanings that I would interpret to answer the questions.
- I circled phrases and words that leaped out at me as direct relationship to the research questions.

Reduction

- I generated a list of words heard throughout the recordings: (1) culture, (2) identity, (3) history, (4) racism, (5) knowledge, (6) Africa, (7) past, (8) teaching, (9) pride, and (10) stories.
- I colored coded the location of the words in the transcripts.
- I read the color coded text to understand the inference that I took from the context, tone, and knowledge I had of each interviewee.
- **Interpretation**
- I collected all responses under the corresponding word list that I compiled from the interviews.
- I reviewed the research questions and arrived at an understanding of the meanings inferred and stated. I interpreted the perceptions rendered through words, tones and attitudes of interviewees. Through my references, including cultural lenses, I assigned meanings to the perspectives expressed by former participants to answer this research question*: Did counter-narratives created by CWTA influence cultural identity of its participants? If so, how do former participants express this influence?* I interpreted, gave meaning to perspectives from former teachers to answer this research: *What counter-narratives were created by CWTA to mitigate*

White hegemonic culture's negative portrayals of African American cultural identity?

Methodological Limitations of the Research

The nature of this research sample may introduce bias into the findings of this study. The sample consisted of former CWTA participants and former teachers who could be located and who would willingly participate in the research. The sample was limited to former participants and former teachers for they alone could provide perspectives to answer the research questions that guided this study. Those that did participate, participants and teachers, were positive about their experiences in CWTA. Locating former teachers was not a problem, but a willingness to participate in the research was a concern. Many former teachers were immersed in their education, careers, families, and arts and did not choose to participate in this research. Others offered nearly opened access to their schedules to help in this research. I choose those most accommodating. Former participants expressed pride in the knowledge and experiences they had with CWTA. Many of them had continued to study African culture after CWTA. Additionally, they expressed continued use for the cultural knowledge they were introduced to in CWTA. As over a decade had passed since CWTA ceased operations in Spring, 2002, there was a high probability that locating research participants would be challenging.

Former participants were now young adults who may have relocated for continuing education or other life changes. One former participant contacted for the research did not want to relive, if only through discussion and answering my questions, that time in her life. Another remembered being a part of CWTA, especially the drumming, dancing and Capoiera but was unable or unwilling to talk about cultural knowledge or cultural identity.

CHAPTER 4

CRITICAL RACE THEORY, AFROCENTRIC THEORY, AND ANALYSIS OF CWTA DOCUMENTS AND INTERVIEWS

The meanings and significance of text, language, and image rely on context and culture. Text and language as well as images have variable meanings outside of the context and culture in which they are interpreted (Lakoff, 2000). Within this section, CWTA documents are examined to answer the research question: (1) What counter-narratives were created by CWTA to Africa (CWTA) to mitigate White hegemonic culture's negative portrayals of African American cultural identity? Documents are examined through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT), three defined criterion, and an Afrocentric theory as framed in the Seven Principles (Nguzo Saba) and Sankofa. Categories of CWTA documents examined for cultural meaning and counter-narrative impact included rituals, chants and songs, pledges and affirmations, and stories and images. Analysis of interviews conducted with former participants and teachers are also presented and examined within this chapter. The process and method of examination using content analysis is explained.

Power to Make Meaning

> The terrain of language is a terrain of power.
>
> —Gordon, 1995

Making meaning demonstrates dominance and power. Knowledge is power. An accepted consensus is that knowledge is always a form of power. Those that define and have the knowledge take the power and dominate. Those able to define and disseminate knowledge also establish representation. Stuart Hall (1997) asserts that "representation is the production of meaning through language" (p.16). Meanings and representations constructed and disseminated throughout society impact the ways in which we view each other's humanity and identity. It

influences the ways in which systems of dominancy and injustice are maintained. It is also an influence over the ways in which self-identity and group membership is established (Lakoff, 2000). Representation and meaning resides in the language systems and the codes. Language represents the signs used to convey concepts to others. These signs include everything from facial expressions, visual images to words and sounds. Codes are the cultural glossary and reference map of shared meaning through which interpretations are made.

The absence of knowledge of cultural and self-identity predisposes one to be defined through the power, control and subjugation of others. Adherence to such definitions sanctions them and helps to establish those definitions as knowledge. Allowing others to shape knowledge that defines you gives the power to them. With knowledge one has power. With knowledge of self and culture, one has power over self and the culture that informs and gives meaning to life. (Hall, 1997).

Meaning and representation can be constructed to suggest more socially just and equitable ways of interacting with each other in society. Inversely, meaning and representation can be a hegemonic construct to provoke continuing social oppression (Sedanius, et. al, 2004). CWTA approached meaning and representation through a constructivist approach, with social justice as its focus. A constructivist approach proposes that meanings in language are not static but instead are formed within a cultural context by 'social actors'. Hall (1997) asserts, "It is the social actors who use the conceptual systems of their culture and the linguistic and other representational systems to construct meaning, to make the world meaningful and to communicate about that world meaningfully to others" (p. 25). CWTA was the social actor that commandeered language and made meaning in a cultural and African-centered context for its participants. CWTA intended to give power to its participants by giving them knowledge of their

cultural identity, history and heritage. With this knowledge, participants could give meaning to their lives through an African-centered cultural perspective. Meaning does not exist outside of culture and context (Hall, 1997).

CWTA to Africa (CWTA) Curriculum

The CWTA curriculum was crafted and designed to extend and compliment the Afrocentric cultural context of the Nguzo Saba and Sankofa to implement and accomplish its visions and goals. Exemplars of Afrocentric values in the Nguzo Saba and Sankofa were essential to curriculum development. Central to each were Black cultural subject beliefs, knowledge, and wisdom.

CWTA designed images, signs, and symbols as a constant visual reminder of the cultural values and identity that CWTA wanted to promote. Symbols used throughout CWTA, which helped to engender Black cultural identity, history, and heritage to our children included the Ankh, Circle, Cowry Shells, Djembe Drum, Kinara, and Africa Silhouette. Stories and knowledge accompanying each symbol helped to connect our children to a cultural place in their history and heritage. For example, the Ankh is represented as the oldest sign known to humanity, which means its use is older than the alphabet and certainly the United States. Further, this symbol originated in Africa. Through hands-on creation of their personal Ankhs and contributions to a collective Ankh, our children claimed this knowledge as part of their cultural identity, history, and heritage. The language and philosophy of the Seven Principles of the Nguzo Saba guided curriculum development and implementation. Within these principles resided the cultural values that CWTA sought to transmit to our children.

CWTA used the word *harambee*, a Swahili word for together to bring our children into a mindset of unity. Unity *(Umoja)* is the first principle of the Nguzo Saba. To create a unity

mindset at each session, we sang and animated our original chant, *Harambee Ache*. Additionally, to reinforce the cultural value of Unity, our children learned to step, chant, and clap to the beats of counting in Swahili. *Moja* means one in Swahili while Umoja means Unity, coming together as one. Our children danced, sang, and chanted, all the time consuming the cultural values of the Nguzo Saba, beginning with Unity (Umoja) and ending with Faith *(Imani)* (Karenga, 1997).

Content analysis of the CWTA curriculum document reveals extensive use and repetition of the words "our" and "we" which equate to community and family. This is a concept fundamental to Afrocentric thought as exemplified in many ancient African traditions including *Odu Ifa* and *Maat* (Karenga, 1991). Additionally, CWTA interpreted the words "our" and "we" as essential elements expressed in three principles of the Nguzo Saba. Kujichagulia, the second principle of the Nguzo Saba means Self-determination. With knowledge one has the power to make meaning and define and name their reality through their cultural lenses. Nia, the fifth principle means purpose. Assuming the responsibility to continually seek, acquire and share cultural knowledge with others. This knowledge generates and informs purpose. The purpose is to build and develop our communities in the traditions of greatness exemplified by our ancestors. Imani, faith, is the seventh principle. It is "to believe with all our heart in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders and the righteousness and victory of our struggle" (Halisi, 1967, p.1). Hope is fueled by faith. It is faith in self and each other. It is an assurance that together our communities and our children will benefit from knowledge of our shared past to inform the present and build our best future.

CWTA's use of the word "we" also suggested our capacity as a created community to make and take actions to animate our curriculum. We used the word "our" to suggest a connectedness to each other and sharing a role in creating and maintaining the CWTA

community. Many CWTA staff had beginnings similar to what our participants endured yet found ways to learn and value Black culture, history, and heritage and to maintain compassion and empathy with participants. Most important, I contend that all CWTA staff and teachers knew firsthand that conditions in which our children lived were not indicative of the great humanity and civic contributions that awaited them.

CWTA participants were referred to as *Watoto,* a Swahili word which means children. Nearly every activity done with our Watoto started with counting to three in Swahili. In fact, counting from one to ten in Swahili became a favorite activity among our participants. Learning to count in Swahili was done with the accompaniment of feet movement, hand claps, thigh slaps, and drums. The movements were regimented and precise yet each allowed for individual flair. Other numbers were taught using games like Swahili Bingo. Numbers frequently used were numbers one through twenty. Table 4.2 shows the Swahili to English translation of numbers one through ten. Through songs and basic greetings, our participants were introduced to Lingala, a Congo language and Yoruba, a Nigerian, West African language (Akowuah, 1996). The common African language of CWTA, however, was Swahili. Using Swahili, CWTA referred to boy participants as *Ndugu* and girls as *Ndada* . We normalized the use of these words through repetition and opened to our children a glimpse and new way to communicate using an African language. Again, using Swahili, teachers were referred to as *Mwalimu* (Perrott, 1992). We greeted each other in Swahili words as well as showed appreciation and gratitude in the same language. The ease of accepting these words helped to promote acceptance of a connection to Africa. Frequently used Swahili words, phrases, and numbers with English translation and Swahili appear below in Table 4.1 and Table 4.2.

Table 4.1 CWTA Swahili Words and Phrases with English Translations

Swahili Words & Phrases	English Translation	Purpose
Jambo	Hello	Greeting
Sijambo	I am doing fine	Reply to Jambo
Njema, Nzuri	Good, Fine	Reply to Jambo
Watoto	Children	Used in place of children
Ndada	Sister	Used in place of girls
Ndugu	Brother	Used in place of boys
Asante sana	Thank you	
Vizuri sana	Thank you very much	
Tafadhali	Please	
Vema	OK	
Kwaheri	Good-bye	
Hamjambo	Hello to the group	Greeting
Hatujambo	Reply to 'Hamjambo'	Part of a Greeting
Jina lako ni nani?	What's your name?	Greeting
Jina langu ni	My name is . . .	Greeting
Unakaa wapi?	Where do you live?	Greeting
Ninakaa	I live . . .	Response
Mwalimu	Teacher	Used in place of teacher

Table 4.2 Swahili Numbers One through Ten

Swahili	English

Moja	One
Mbili	Two
Tatu	Three
Nne	Four
Tano	Five
Sita	Six
Saba	Seven
Nane	Eight
Tisa	Nine
Kumi	Ten

Note: *Jalitu* is a short way of counting Moja, Mbili, Tatu.

CWTA Rituals

Rituals created and used by CWTA were intended to guide participants toward a willingness and pride in connecting to Black cultural identity, history, and heritage. The rituals were also used to reinforce cultural knowledge.. Rituals engaged the senses. The sounds emitted by drumming, *shakere*, and voices were seen, heard, and experienced through movements by participants. Participants experienced the rituals through sounds, movements and tactile means including playing and tapping the drums; striking the palm sized bells; shaking the *shakeres* and handling other percussions CWTA rituals built on and extended the cultural know-how and values imparted through the curriculum. To participate in ritual is to emit spiritual power and draws upon a Divine source that is intrinsic to all humanity. It is suggested that "ritual helps give meaning to our world in part by linking the past to the present and the present to the future . . . builds confidence in our sense of self providing us with a sense of continuity . . . rituals connect past, present and future, abrogating history and time" (Kertzer, 1988, p. 9). Libation rituals acknowledged an ancestral cultural heritage through songs, chants and stories that were a fundamental element of our created community of CWTA.

Guiding the CWTA rituals were principles from the African cultural values of the Nguzo Saba. CWTA sought to show and help participants to realize that these principles were more than mere words printed on a page. Instead, they were guides for daily living. Rituals created by CWTA illustrated the cultural values suggested in the principles of Nguzo Saba. Basic to the creation of this cultural immersion program, rituals, and other elements of CWTA include Principle 2: Self-Determination *(Kujichagulia)* – to talk for ourselves and demonstrate that we may create for ourselves and name, define and explain our creations. Principle 1: Unity (Umoja)—to bring together our created community. Principle 5: Nia (Purpose)—the rituals we created helped reinforce cultural knowledge and empower participants. Principle 6: Creativity

(Kuumba)—to recognize and enhance the beauty in our created community. Principle 3: Collective Work & Responsibility *(Ujima)*—to work together in maintaining and improving our created community and to benefit all participants; Principle 7: Imani (Faith)—to generate and nurture belief in each other, our culture, our people, our teachers and the value of learning about one's cultural identity, history and heritage. Rituals created by CWTA examined in this research are the Unity (Umoja) Circle, Pouring Libation, and Harambee Ache.

Unity (Umoja) Circle. The Unity (Umoja) Circle was formed to carry out essential rituals of CWTA and to connect participants to African cultural identity, history, and heritage. The drums began the call to form the Unity Circle. The Djembe drummers played various rhythms in the place where all were to gather. As the drums sound, teachers called to children scattered about, *"Agoo,"* which means "give us your attention" in the Twi language of the Akan people of Ghana, West Africa, and the children replied *"Amee,"* also a Twi word (Kotey, 2007). This word was the second sound after the drums that signaled to the children to stop what they were doing and move towards the teachers calling "Agoo." Upon hearing "Agoo," children would reply "Amee" as they moved towards the teachers. "Agoo" would be called as needed to gain the children's attention. When the children responded "Amee" and were standing by the teachers, the teachers no longer called "Agoo" as the required action of getting the children's attention and directing them to a specific location had been achieved. The children awaited instructions from the teachers. The teachers would then lead the children to where the drums were calling.

As drumming continued, teachers led children into a circle, the Unity (Umoja) Circle. The children could rhythmically step in unison to the beat of the drums or just walk. Teachers were encouraged to be creative (Kuumba, Principal 6) whenever needed, even in something as

ordinary as moving to form a circle. After the circle was formed, the teacher again called "Agoo" to reach quiet again after the children had experienced more movement. The children responded "Amee" as they were ready for the Circle. This ritual of forming the Umoja Circle was repeated at the start of each day, setting the tone for the day's activities. All in the circle would join hands to carry out rituals to benefit our created community, past, present, and future. Once the Unity Circle was formed, Djembe drums and shakers were played. An elder teacher would stand in the center of the circle.

The teacher said, "Agoo."

The circle responded, "Amee." The sounds of the Djembe drumming softened.

The teacher then asked, "Who has the water?" The designated participant walked to the center of the circle and handed the gourd of cool water to the elder teacher.

The teacher responded, "Asante sana, Ndada (child's name)." The child returned to their place in the circle. The drum and shakers continued softly as the elder teacher began the libation. Only the drum, shaker, and the voice of the elder teacher were heard. All else was quiet.

The teacher said the first word, "May," and the circle joined in. As the circle and the elder teacher recited the libation, the teacher slowly poured the water on to the earth or plant.

In unison, the group responded, "May our eyes be the eagle, our strength be the elephant, and the boldness of our life be like the lion."

Pouring Libation Rituals. Each day began with *Tambiko*, a Swahili word for libation. *Tambiko* was CWTA's time to give thanks and remember our Creator, our ancestors, and ourselves. CWTA considered libation as an element of cultural identity to transmit values of cultural pride, commemoration of elders and ancestors, and connectedness to Mother/Father God (or by which ever name familiar to participants). The importance that CWTA placed on libation

and its cultural connection was made clear to participants in prompts included in the curriculum. Participants were introduced to the libation ritual in the Unity Circle. To lead participants in the libation ritual required teachers to say a line of the libation ceremony and then have the participants repeat it. Children learned the responses quickly. One libation was a statement and the other was a rhythmical chant accompanied by drumming, hand clapping, and stepping.

The practice of libation was used to help to build cultural identity within CWTA participants. It was a "call and response" ritual performed in the Unity circle. Unity is the first principle of the Afrocentric values, the Nguzo Saba. The circle was conceived as an enactment of Unity. The libation ended with a Yoruba word for the more familiar word amen. Participants learned to pronounce *ache'* (ah-SHAY), the Yoruba word for amen in a call and response process (Schleicher, 1993). The closing of the libation was followed by a Harambee Pull, an interactive mantra in the spirit of Unity (Umoja). Harambee is a Kiswahili word meaning together. Everyone linked hands in the circle and recited the libation. Participants were encouraged to offer ancestral names as called for in the libation. CWTA considered libation and African language as elements of cultural identity to transmit values of cultural pride, commemoration of elders and ancestors, and connectedness to a Supreme Being, the Divine and/or Mother/Father God- which ever name familiar to participants. Participants were not asked to call out a name for the Divine but instead were encouraged to silently, in their spirits, call the name used by their families. Libations are ancient rituals in African cultures as proposed in the Husia (Karenga, 1984),

> Pour libation for your father and mother who rest in the valley of the dead. God will witness your action and accept it. Do not forget to do this even when you are away from home. For as you do for your parents, your children will do for you also. (p. 53)

Libations were creative, robust and energetic yet reverent and sacred. The libation frequently used by CWTA was attributed to Dr. Karenga, the founder of the cultural holiday, Kwanzaa,

> May our eyes be the eagle, our strength be the elephant,
> and the boldness of our life be like the lion. May we give
> praise and thanks to our Creator. May we honor and respect
> our ancestors and the legacy they left, for as long as the sun
> shines and the water flows. Ache'.

This libation was favored because of the strong image suggested by the lion. It was easy for the children to visualize the lion. The lion was a leader with a mighty roar. We wanted our children to know that they, too, were strong leaders with mighty voices to be heard and listened to. Libation rituals for CWTA was the gentle and slow pouring of cool water to the earth or into a plant in recognition and commemoration of our ancestors (personal and communal), an acknowledgment of the blessings of the Divine, and a celebration of our present and faith in our future. Water was used to represent life. Water is essential to life. Pouring cool water in some cultural creation stories, such as that of *Ifa/Lukumi*, indicate that humans were formed from clay. In this story, *Obatala*, an *Orisha* (deity) close to *Oludumare* molded humans from clay (Mason, 1998). Participants in CWTA heard the Divine called as God, a familiar name for Christians, as well as indigenous names including that of Oludumare (O-loo-Du-Mah-ray) for the Ifa (E-fah)/Lukumi (Loo-Koo-Me) spiritual cultural system originating from the Yoruba of Nigeria, West Africa and as *Nyame/Onyame/Onyankopon* in the Akan system of the Ashante people (Kabon, 2012). It was important to CWTA that participants were made aware that African peoples from whom they may have descended knew the name of their Supreme Being or Divine

One. These African cultures knew the name of God and called God by name. Participants learned that the Divine name called by indigenous African peoples, like those of the cultural spiritual system of Ifa/Lukumi of the Yoruba of Nigeria, West Africa, more than likely looked like those who called upon this Divine, Oludumare. Our children resembled people from Nigeria. Many of the Africans enslaved in the Americas came from West Africa. It is thus plausible that our children resembled the Divine, Oludumare and the Orishas (deities) similar to saints in the Catholic Church, who work on behalf of the Divine. The participants of CWTA look like God.

During inclement weather, libations were held indoors and a plant was used to symbolize the earth. The plant was carried into the circle by one of the young participants, a position that rotated giving each participant a chance to carry the plant. During outdoor libations, the young participants helped by carrying the gourd filled with cool water. This gourd was a small wooden bowl that could easily be carried by a young child. The elder routinely defined a vital role for the children in the libation so that they recognized their importance to the ritual and came to know it as their own. CWTA considered libation a sacred and communal practice. It was sacred because it was intended to touch the spirit and soul. It was also sacred because it happened in a sacred space. An elder teacher of CWTA consecrated a space in which libation was to happen. The consecration was an act of self-determination (Kujichagulia), the second principle of the African value system, Nguzo Saba. The teacher defined a place as sacred, consecrated it by doing the libation, and going forward it was known as the place for libation. Again, an elder teacher would lead libation from the center of the Unity Circle.

This libation, Pour the Water, is unlike the previous one as it is a rhythmical and musical chant and song. A version of this libation appears below. When the "the spirit" touches the circle participants, they may feel moved to step more, to create another verse or add more words to the

libation, or as a name is called a participant may feel the need to share a story about an ancestor or something related to what is going on in the circle. This libation, like all those created and used by CWTA, helped to reinforce what libation is, why it is done, and the value attributed to it. The opening lines gave instruction and purpose for the libation. "Pour the water for you. Pour the water for me for all we are and all we'll be. Pour the water for the children that are not yet born." Libations speak to the past, present and future. With spoken words and lyrics chanted to rhythms provided by percussions, the purpose, intent, and obligation of this tradition is honored. The refrain highlights this. "Pour the water, remember, give honor, call names. We must remember what they went through what they did for me and did for you. We must remember what we've become what we've come to be and where we're from. Pour the water." This act of libation involves identifying cultural ancestors and their stories and importance to our lives today. An act of cultural immersion happens when this libation is enacted.

The rhythms and musicality of the libations enhanced the appeal to our participants and also aided in its recall. Many of the communal ancestral names called in libation were unfamiliar to our children, but most of them were familiar with names typically heard during Black History Month, e.g., Harriet Tubman, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Sojourner Truth. Though familiar with these names, they were unfamiliar with the importance of these ancestors to them and to Black culture, history, and heritage. Over time, CWTA guided participants in activities intended to connect them to stories of courage, integrity, and faith of these ancestors as well as increasing their knowledge of other communal ancestors including Imhotep, Yaa Asantewaa, Mansa Musa, Queen Hatshepsut, and others.

The libation ended when the elder teacher nodded to the drummers to change rhythms. The ebb and flow of participant energy after having been involved in calling names, stepping,

and demonstrated creativity, fun and consideration of time signals the nod to change drum rhythms. The drummer(s) changed to the closing rhythms in preparation for Harambee Pull, which is done without drums. After the Harambee Pull, drummers sounded as participants offered a ritual of thanks to them.. We thank the drummers to show gratitude for the voice that brings life and uplift to the circle through their sounds, hands and sprit. It is from our source of knowledge (our head), our place of life and symbol of beauty (our heart) and the One who sustains us and receives us (Earth) that thanks is offered to the drummers.

Harambee Pull Ritual. To carry out the Harambee Pull, everyone in the circle extended their right arm to the sky seven times, each time saying "harambee" as we grabbed and pulled down symbolically goodness; health; prosperity; education; safety; good food; and homes that we, our families, and our communities needed, wanted, and deserved. On the seventh repetition of "harambee," the second syllable, "ram" was held in the longest breath we could sustain, and finally it was released in booming voices saying the final syllable, "bee" (bay). In doing this final move, CWTA was suggesting that the power of many voices and people working for the same purpose could bring about changes that would make a positive difference in the lives of many.

The practice of libation was used to help to build the cultural identity of CWTA participants. It was a call and response ritual performed in a unity circle. Unity is the first principle of the Afrocentric values, the Nguzo Saba. The circle was conceived as an enactment of unity. The libation ended with the word ache' (ah-SHAY), a Yoruba word loosely translated as "and so it shall be" and also as the more familiar word "amen." Through a call and response process, participants learned to pronounce ache'. The teacher would say the word and the children would repeat it. Next, with aid of drumming the teacher called "ache" to the rhythms of the drum and participants responded in rhythm, "ache." This back and forth rhythmic calling of

"ache'" reinforced its meaning, energy and pronunciation. The closing of the libation was followed by a Harambee Pull, an interactive mantra in the spirit of Unity (Umoja).

Participants were encouraged to offer ancestral names as called for after the libation and before the closing. Participants named family and neighbors who had passed and the group responded with "ache'." Names of communal ancestors, such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Marcus Garvey, Harriet Tubman, Ida B. Wells, Langston Hughes, Carter G. Woodson, Imhotep, and others were also called out and the group responded with "ache'" following each name.

Chants and Songs

Rhythms, melodies, and music generated through chants and song gave participants opportunities to move, be energized, and have fun. The chants, songs, and music used and created by CWTA were intended to transmit knowledge about African and African American history, identity, and heritage. CWTA used existing songs and created original songs and chants to help connect our participants to Black cultural identity, history and heritage. Music seemed to welcome all without bias, therefore, CWTA used music to enhance participation and willingness to grasp this cultural knowledge.

Sankofa Chant. To carry out *Sankofa* as suggested in the Sankofa Chant can help to recover and retrieve historical wisdom, lessons, and knowledge from one's cultural past. The symbol of Sankofa is a bird looking back. It is from the back, past, where lessons, wisdom and knowledge resides that can inform the present and prepare for a future. Chanting Sankofa with rhythmic hand claps accompanied by the Djembe was a fun and interactive way to remember its significance. "We gotta reach back to know. We gotta reach back to claim. Know the past live the present design the future. Sankofa." The willingness to reclaim cultural gems, such as stories, ethical instructions, language, music, and dance was opportunity knocking. It was an opportunity

to learn of movie makers, storytellers, poets, healers, warriors, scholars, games, and crafts of our ancestors. The opportunity exists to learn what their ancestors accomplished at what perils and in what circumstances. Also, to see why their ancestors valued education and even risked their lives to learn to read. Familiar foods like "gumbo" okra and peanuts were brought here by their ancestors. The cultural lineage of our participants extended beyond the shores of America into ancient civilizations in Africa. In carrying out Sankofa, our children learned that hair braiding was an ancient African tradition. And, a cultural inheritance awaited them because ancestors made investments for them. The poet Lawrence (1997) asserts, "Somebody lives on interest earned during the Middle Passage Maafa...from investments made by Ida B. Wells, Fannie Lou Hamer, Nzingha, Yaa Asantewaa...folk who call you by your rightful name. There was an expected reciprocity to do for the next generation what ancestors had done for you." Take your share, roll it over, reinvest, call it pay back, investing in the future."

Everyday has Hope. This original song was created by CWTA to inspire, teach, and embolden our children. The first line suggests that each sunrise witnessed is filled with a resolute belief in our children. No matter the struggles, mistakes, or trials our children experience, we intend these lyrics to let them know that we are standing with them. This song also asserts that our children can do great things as evidenced by those who came before them. Many of our ancestors lived in social and economic conditions more extreme than what we or our children currently undergo. Yet, through tears and even fear perhaps, they did not let the dreams die or be 'deferred.' Everyday proposes great expectations from our children and faith that they can meet and exceed our expectations. This song suggests creativity to accomplish dreams. It also put forward purpose driven actions fueled by one's dreams as demonstrated by many in our cultural history and heritage and named in this song. CWTA proposes through this song that reading is

essential to broadening the knowledge base and perspectives of our children and is valued by our community and culture. The belief in our children is expressed repeatedly in the chorus of this song. "Everyday has hope and dreams for you, my child. Everyday we love and trust in you, my child! Keep believing in yourself in your people, too, there is nothing no thing you cannot do."

Harambee Ase' Chant. Harambee means come together in Swahili, an East African language. *Ase'* also spelled *Ashe'* and *axe'* are words from Yoruba people of Nigeria, West Africa. *Kamawamoja* means we are as one in Swahili. This chant was designed to help our children gain comfort in pronouncing Swahili, Yoruba, and other African languages introduced by CWTA. Our children seemed more willing to try these new words in a circle with each other and accompanied by Djembe. Perhaps learning new languages can be enhanced through music and movement. This chant was also intended to reinforce the cultural value of Unity (Umoja) as it suggests protecting and including all members of our community. Conceivably community could be accomplished by working together (Ujima) with a purpose (Nia) of building a community connected to our cultural identity, history and heritage. This original chant was created (Kuumba) to help children of CWTA experience new languages and working together in a fun and lively manner. These values emerged from the cultural value system, the Nguzo Saba and were essential to fostering CWTA community. Participants chanted about making community by coming together in the Harambee Chant. "Harambee Ase'. We grow, *kamawamoja*! We live *kamawamoja*! We learn *kamawamoja*! Harambee Ase'.

Kamawamoja means we are as one in Swahili. This chant was designed to help our children gain comfort in pronouncing Swahili, Yoruba, and other African languages introduced by CWTA. Our children seemed more willing to try these new words in a circle with each other and accompanied by Djembe. Perhaps learning new languages can be enhanced through music

and movement. This chant was also intended to reinforce the cultural value of Unity (Umoja) as it suggests protecting and including all members of our community. Conceivably community could be accomplished by working together (Ujima) with a purpose (Nia) of building a community connected to a shared culture. This original chant was created (Kuumba) to help children of CWTA experience new languages and working together in a fun and lively manner. These values emerged from the cultural value system, the Nguzo Saba and were essential to fostering CWTA community.

Lift Every Voice and Sing. This iconic song was included in the CWTA curriculum because of its significance to Black cultural history and heritage (Bennett, 1984; Asante, 1992). It was significant because it provided hope and faith in turbulent and violent times when our ancestors were regularly terrorized and victimized in an overtly racialized and vicious society. The lyrics also suggested triumph and resiliency and a community of shared voices calling for elimination of the brutality maliciously inflicted upon Blacks in America. This song demonstrated cultural values consistent with those embraced by CWTA as expressed in the Seven Principles (Nguzo Saba). This song calls for working together in the first line, Lift every voice and sing till earth and heaven ring. Together, we had the faith (Imani) to believe that we could bring forth a more humane and just society. Important to CWTA was helping our children value and respect their cultural identity, history and heritage and to take pride in being a part of this cultural and racial group. Through the use of Sankofa, we retrieve the cultural and racial pride proposed in its lyrics to help our children become stronger in their valuing of their cultural history and heritage. Upon hearing the opening chords of this song, Black audiences of all ages immediately stood in respect and honor of a shared cultural past and heritage. This song is known as The Negro National anthem and was typically sung to begin the day in many Black

southern schools before school desegregation in 1967. The lyrics and music were written by James Weldon Johnson and his brother, Rosamond Johnson for a February 12,1900 celebration in honor of President Abraham Lincoln. Though remembering the painful and arduous past encountered during enslavement, the Jim Crow era in a White supremacy racialized society, Lift Every Voice and Sing asserts that Blacks in America retained the audacity to hope and believe that life would be better (Bond & Wilson, 2000). Further, it is the undying, resilient faith that sustained our ancestors and will sustain us, as noted in the opening lyrics of verse three of Lift Every Voice. "God of our weary years, God of our silent tears, Thou who has brought us thus far on the way; Thou who has by Thy might, led us in the light, Keep us forever in the path, we pray" (www.poets.org).

Pledges and Affirmations

We Pledge To Our Children. CWTA teachers and staff in what we termed as our "cultural obligation" spoke aloud our faith (Imani), vision, and trust in our children and our shared cultural wealth as African people descended from enslaved Africans in America through this pledge. In claiming a "cultural obligation," CWTA asserted an innate bond to help support subsequent generations. Through collective work and responsibility (Ujima), the Third Principle of the cultural value system, the Nguzo Saba, CWTA intended this pledge to demonstrate our eagerness and preparation for our children to connect to their cultural knowledge. In the traditions of our ancestors, we expected a return in future generations.

Our pledge was a unified effort of those willing to work together to bring the commitments in our pledge into being for our children. Such effort represented the First Principle of the cultural value system, the Nguzo Saba, Unity (Umoja). This pledge also spoke to CWTA's transparency in putting forth the perspectives of teachers and staff to our children

within the context of a shared cultural identity, history, and heritage. Within this pledge resided values about family, community, nation, Spirituality and ancestors as espoused in the Principles of the cultural value system, Nguzo Saba. Our cultural knowledge and heritage informed and inspired an unrelenting belief in our children to learn and recognize their noble cultural identity and their capacity to help bring into being a more socially just and equitable world. CWTA teachers and staff suggested in the pledge a commitment to embolden our children with cultural knowledge and tools to affirm their self-confidence and belief in their potential, capacity, and creativity. Additionally through this pledge we wanted to attest to our children that we, too, experienced obstacles and struggles and are aware that our society remains racialized and frequently antagonistic towards Black and Brown people, regardless of age, gender, and education.

Through the words of this pledge our children were made aware of our obligation to give them access to our experiential and academic cultural history and heritage knowledge. Further, we were obligated to validate our voices and those of others in our communities as viable sources of knowledge and by extension to give validation to our children's voices. Our pledge brought forth a counter-perspective of Black children—one of being the face and model for of w good, beauty, genius, smart, and love. Repeated use of this pledge was intended as a constant reminder to our children of CWTA's commitment to them. "On the strength, glory and victories of our collective past as people of African descent; as descendants of those whose labors and lives laid foundations for America's wealth; and, in the spirit of those whose sacrifice, courage, and righteousness cleared the way for each of us, We pledge loyalty, respect, and honor to you-our future, our vision, our hope-our children." (See Appendix F).

Children's Affirmations. These were created to show our children how teachers and staff saw each of them. We chose to put these words in the mouths of our children in hope that they would start to see themselves as we saw them. These affirmations were also used as prompts to start discussions with participants about building blocks of love, respect, and honor as well as definitions of beauty and respect for their bodies, minds, and spirits. Through these discussions, we expected to have opportunities to listen carefully to what our children were saying and offer helpful input as needed. CWTA's faith (Imani) in our children was represented by the identity and character traits of respect and honor we suggested in this affirmation. "I am an African child born in America," suggests a cultural connection between African and American cultural history and heritage. Such a connection was a principal aim of CWTA. (See Appendix F).

Images and Stories

CWTA images and stories were created for multiple reasons that included: (1) drawing the attention of participants; (2) a visual identity of CWTA; (3) using images and stories to reinforce cultural identity, history, and heritage; and (4) providing a cultural immersion experiences in a variety of ways. For example, historical profile stories such as those about Imhotep, Fred Hampton, Nzingha, and Harriet Tubman were delivered through precise rhythmic step routines. The images and stories examined were (1) the Visual Representation of CWTA (figure 4.3), (2) Map of the World: Peters Projection (figure 4.4), (3) CWTA T-Shirt (figure 4.5), (4) Say Ankh: The Symbol of Life (figure 4.6), and (5) CWTA Book Lists.

Visual Representation of CWTA. This cultural immersion program opened a window to fun, adventure, thrilling sounds, colorful and historical landscapes, welcoming people, active groups of children, and play spaces waiting for our children. The intent of the visual

representation was to show CWTA participants eager to reach and climb through this symbolic window to Africa, which translated as children eager to learn. This window was opened wide with a ledge to help children enter and discover their cultural identity, history, and heritage.

Children in colors of the Bendera (African Heritage Flag), Black/Red/Green, and in bold African inspired fabrics are at the opened window. One child starts to climbs through the window as another child lifts a younger child up to see what is beyond the window. Other children gaze through the opened window. Through this window, CWTA suggested that participants would experience the familiar with animals associated with Africa, e.g., lions *(simba)*, elephants (*tembo*), spiders (*buibui*) and giraffes (*nyati*) (Perrott, 1992). Though these animals are wild and in their habitat, through the window they appear docile as they wait for the children to arrive. Waiting to greet the children through the window is a family that resembles participant families. which means they also look like our children. Perhaps the family would say in Swahili, *"karibuni"* (come in all) and the children would reply, "asante sana" (thank you) (Perrott, 1992). The welcoming voices in the window would say, 'karibu sana' (you're very welcomed) found in figure 4.3.

Map of the World: Peters Projection. This map suggests a more accurate representation of the size and location of the continents (figure 4.4). We wanted participants to see Africa as a continent and not a country. This map showed Africa in relationship to North America and other continents. Additionally, CWTA proposed this map as a tool for broadening participants' ideas about Africa and world.

CWTA T-Shirt. The T-shirt (figure 4.5) was designed to reinforce the cultural immersion experiences of CWTA. This font is playful and suggests a connection between play and learning, as does music notes, books, and the giant crayon. The window hints discovery and

curiosity about what lies beyond it. With a T-shirt, the participants could be reminded of their experiences long after it ended. , It could also spark a renewed interest in their culture.

Say Ankh: Symbol of Life. This graphic representation (figure 4.6) was intended to animate the Ankh, its time in history, and the people around it. The traveler in the story resembles participants in CWTA. It is through his words and lens that the history comes to life. Experiencing the story through one of their peers and its comic book appearance was intended to be appealing to participants. This is an original graphic story created by an artist commissioned by CWTA.

Book List. Participants of CWTA were exposed to many cultural stories including historical narratives and fables. Some stories, such as Say Ankh: Symbol of Life and others were original creations to help reinforce a cultural history and heritage connection for participants. The more popular stories are shared in CWTA appear in table 4.7. Each participant received books to start a "My First Library" or to add to their book collection. Books received included titles fom the list below.

Table 4.3 CWTA Book List

Book Title	Book Author
Honey I Love	Eloise Greenfield
Nathaniel's Talking	Eloise Greenfield
Africa is not a Country	Dr. Arthur Lewin
Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters	John Steptoe
Tommy Travels	Tom Feelings
Moja Means One: Swahili Counting Book	Muriel Feelings
A is for Africa	Ifeoma Onyefulu

Afro Bets: Book of Black Heroes	Wade Hudson & Valerie Wilson Hudson
The Origin of Life on Earth	Sankofa and David A. Anderson
Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry	Mildred d. Taylor
I Love My Hair	Natasha Anastasia Tarpley and E.B. Lewis
The People Could Fly	Virginia Hamilton and Leon Dillon

Figure 4.4 Map of the World: Peters Projection

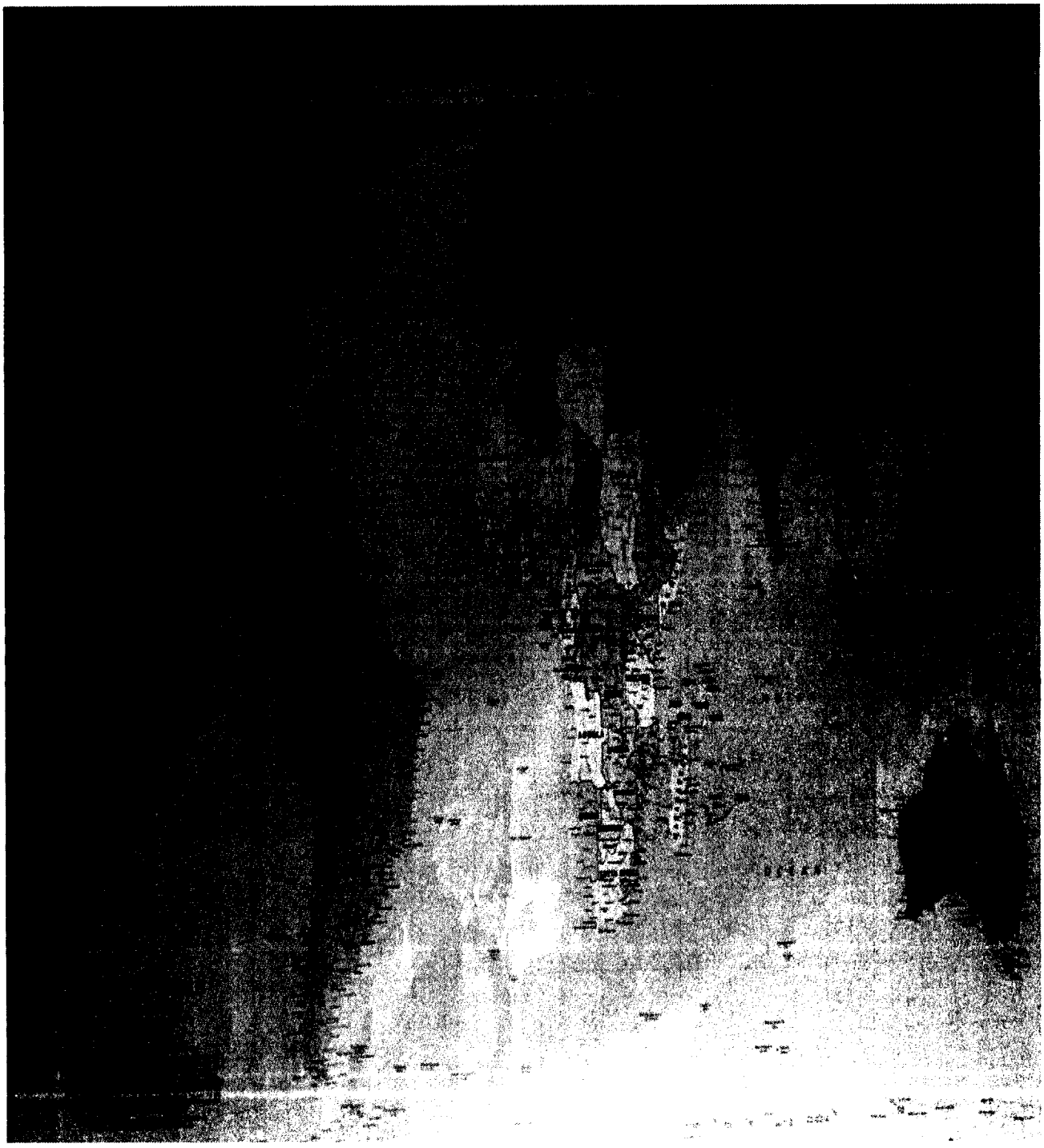
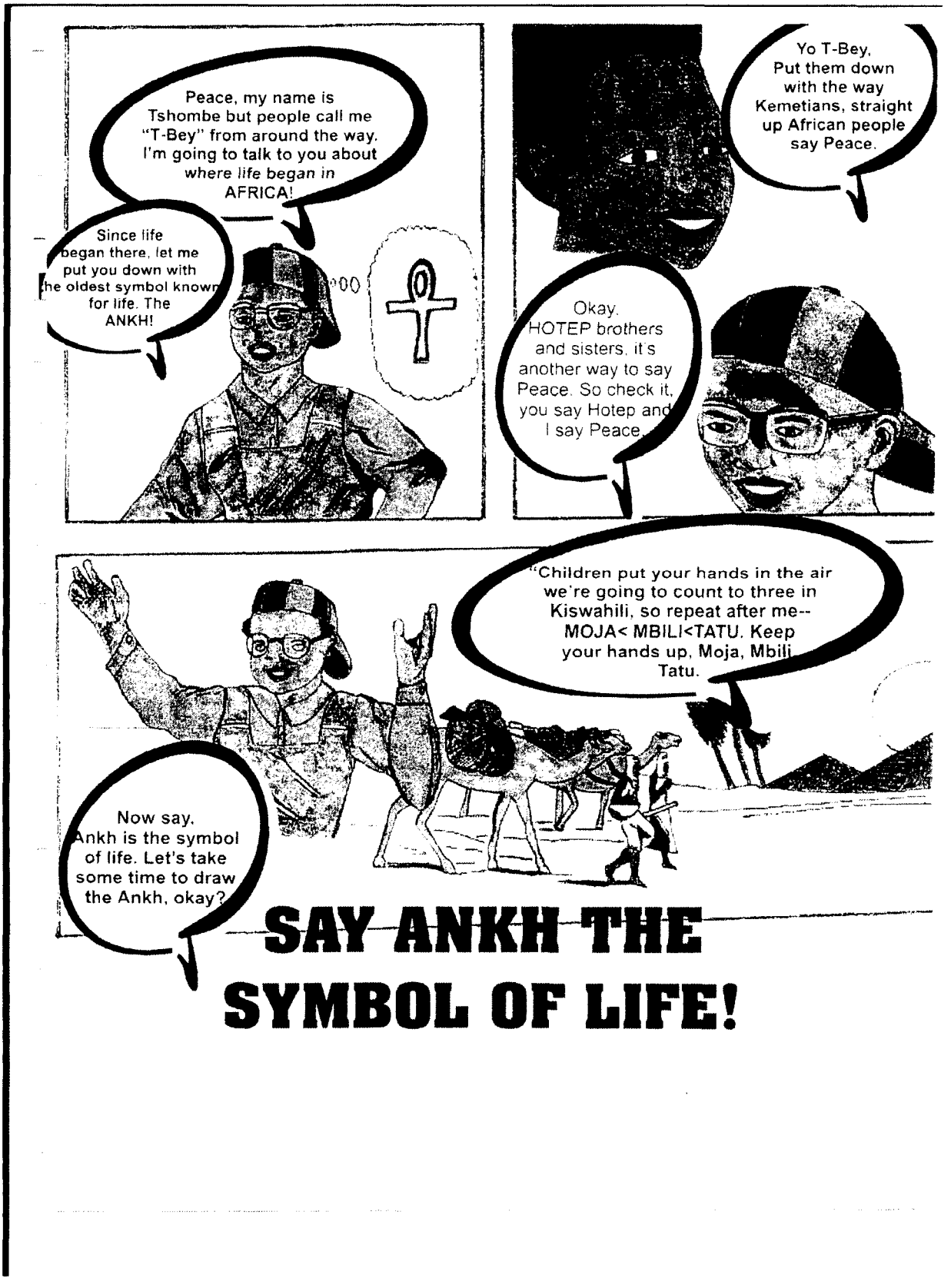


Figure 4.5 CWTA T-Shirt

Figure 4.6 Say Ankh: The Symbol of Life



Analysis of Interviews

This section describes the analysis of interviews conducted with former participants and teachers of CWTA. The interviews were examined through the criteria listed in Table 3.1, and through content analysis in a framework rooted in Sankofa, Critical Race Theory, and African-centered values as articulated in the Seven Principles (Nguzo Saba). These interviews provided data to answer the research question of this study. As CWTA programs were no longer operational it was prudent to seek those with primary experiences in this cultural immersion program to provide data. Eight former participants and five former teachers were interviewed. The names of interviewees are fictitious for purposes of confidentiality. Those interviewed are former child participants of CWTA who are now young adults twenty-four to thirty years old. Two of the adults interviewed were introduced to CWTA at age five. Teachers interviewed were undergraduate and graduate students during their tenure at CWTA. Today, they are professionals employed in cultural activism and social justice efforts throughout their communities. The open-ended questions were designed to elicit individual perspectives about cultural identity, popular culture and counter-narrative creations. On the subject of cultural identity, the aim was to determine if former participants expressed any influence from CWTA on their cultural identity; if any value or importance was assigned to the experiences; perspectives on cultural connection to Africa, including contributions of cultural ancestors to America; and if their experience in CWTA informed the ways in which participants fit into American society. The questions about popular culture were intended to reveal any CWTA influence on former participants' perceptions of popular culture portrayals of Africans. Questions about creating counter-narratives were formulated to gather data on how teachers helped to create and disseminate these counter-narratives to participants and following the close of CWTA.

The method and process of content analysis provided the means to examine the language, text, and context of interviews. Content analysis was also helpful interpreting inferred and explicit meanings from participants. Neuendorf (2002) defines content analysis as an empirically grounded method, exploratory in process, and predictive or inferential. The focus of content analysis is mining data for meaning. Repeated sifting through and interacting with the data helped to understand the language and interpret its significance (Krippendorf, 2013). This analysis was made through African-centered lenses informed by the Sankofa concept of cultural reclamation, the cultural values articulated in the Seven Principles (Nguzo Saba), and tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT). Primary experiences in CWTA provide the context through which analysis of three categories determined from the interviews were conducted. The three categories of analysis and interpretation are cultural identity, popular culture and counter-narratives.

Cultural Identity. CWTA sought to immerse participants in a cultural community that would help to shape and inform the participants' cultural identity. Inherent to identity formation is knowledge about one's cultural history and heritage. The definition of cultural identity that guided this study was that proposed by Mazama (2002) in the article, "The Afrocentric Paradigm: Contours and Definitions":

> Cultural identity is fundamentally based on the belief that one's history, culture and biology determines one identity, that identity, in turn, determines our place in life, both material and spiritual. To practice one's culture and to apprehend oneself in a manner that is consistent with one's history, culture and biology is to be centered or to proceed from one's center. (p. 397)

Culture can be the centerpiece or starting point that supplies lenses to view both the cultural-self and racial group membership. This centerpiece is accessible through the knowledge

of cultural identity, history, and heritage augmented by society and community. When such support is missing or insubstantial, members may try to center themselves in a culture that places them in peripheral or negligible roles. A disconnect and inaccurate knowledge of one's cultural heritage may threaten the respect and value extended to self and cultural origins. Also, disconnect from cultural origin may result in the under utilization and dismissal of cultural importance. CWTA aligned its cultural immersion curriculum to an African-centered value system that fostered belief in an inherited cultural wealth filled with stories and knowledge useful to its children and their survival. This created African-centered community was guided by an enduring faith and the innate potential of good character and integrity from its children, their families, and communities. Interactions within this community were intended to help racial and cultural socialization of its children, which is often primary to families and particular to cultural values. Socialization indoctrinates its children with the cultural roles and expectation particular to the well-being and success of its members (Taylor, 1994).

CWTA did not know with certainty how participants defined their cultural identity. The level of cultural knowledge familiar to participants was also unknown in the beginning. Thus, the efforts of CWTA were to link participants to a cultural identity derived from their cultural history and heritage. This identity is imprinted with stories ancient and vital to African American cultural and racial identity. These stories access characters, places, and events that can help affirm cultural identity. Though the stories, languages and rituals of CWTA were unfamiliar in the beginning, participants quickly begin to capture and grasp their inherited cultural legacy. Kiera was five years old when introduced to CWTA in the public housing community where here family lived. When asked to describe CWTA experience and cultural identity, Kiera, a former participant echoed the expressions from other former participants.

Kiera, a former participant: What our people did for us so we could be here today in our own songs and just everything kind of gives you identity and identity correlates to a sense of pride when you know who you are you can be proud of that . . . I still have in my head that we are not who they [White America] say we are . . . gives you a sense of pride about who you are.

I interpreted Kiera's tone and expressions as one of confidence. She knew with certainty about what her ancestors had endured and sacrificed so that subsequent generations cold have a better life. Not only was she confident in the knowledge, strength and tenacity of African Americans that preceded her, she was equally sure of her connection to them. It is a connection that she asserts with pride.

Kierstan, a former participant who was 10 years old when she participated in CWTA, offered this response: It put a boldness in me to become bolder than I am. I am proud to be African American . . . not let anything talk down to me will stand up for others. The boldness, skiddishness, the shyness, and when CWTA came they [other children] would come out of their shells, no longer shy, speak the language [Kiswahili]. It helped me to come out even more. Group participating helped me to come out of my shell. Helped me to stand before people and be myself.

Through Kierstan's perspective, her experiences in CWTA added to her staunchness, assuredness, and commitment to strut an audacious pride reminiscent of that which guided her ancestors through the horrors of enslavement, segregation, and the continuing battle for full rights and protection due all citizens of America. Further, from her enthusiasm I sensed that CWTA aligned her with like-minded Africans who studied and value their cultural history and

heritage, and believed and lived in the boldness and pride befitting those with the knowledge, which in essence is the one who holds the power.

By the time that CWTA ceased operations in Spring, 2002 cultural immersion programs had occurred in eighteen public housing communities for more than 1,500 children. This number was derived from reports filed with a local foundation representing the consortium funding CWTA. Kiera's perspective on cultural identity is not unlike that of others interviewed. It was not that she and others disregarded or took no pride in their cultural identity, history, and heritage; instead it was something that had not been taught to them. However, they remembered learning cultural identity in many ways at CWTA including songs, dances, and stories. Prior to CWTA, little knowledge about their cultural identity, history, and heritage had been shared with the participants. But, they opened their hands and held tightly to the knowledge that was shared with them in CWTA. Kiera's perspective echoes the cultural knowledge gap suggested by nearly all interviewees:

> Kiera, a former participant: I didn't have any knowledge as of history sort to speak . . . in school we had Dr. King but we don't really hear or learn anything about our ancestry before people came and took our identity and stripped everything away from us . . . definitely don't have anything pertaining to African culture or traditions.

Significant in the response from Kiera, was the candor in which she talked about what she knew about African culture, history and heritage before and after CWTA. She seemed comfortable and free of any concern of judgment from me. After all the intervening years, Kiera still maintained a sense of trust and confidence in me as a representative of CWTA. Her candor confirms that the young children in her community and in many others were hungry for knowledge about

themselves. They just needed somebody to value them enough to help them find ways to get the knowledge.

> Another former participant, Crystal, now twenty-two years old, gave a similar expression to Kiera's regarding cultural identity and cultural knowledge before CWTA.
>
> Crystal: It means a lot because it tells me where my ancestors come from . . . it's always good to know where you come from . . . ancestors are a part of you, they are you . . . know your ancestors because it helps you identify yourself in this day understanding where you come from, find your roots, identity yourself because they don't teach you in school except during Black History Month.

Through Crystal's comment, I sensed that she, too, had gained knowledge that fortified her self-confidence, racial and cultural group identity. This knowledge also gave her the power to exalt herself in the presence of a racialized society that would distort African American culture, history and heritage.

CWTA was a new experience for its participants, and for many of the adults working with them. We were more than a summer fun program. We were a summer fun program with a vivid African cultural history and knowledge focus. Our participants like many of the adults working with them were reluctant to join in our activities. They did not know for certain if they wanted to be a part of us and more importantly, if they wanted to lay claim to a cultural connection to Africa. The music, colors, drums, movements and our energy easily attracted the children to join. They adults watched from a distance as we began through fun, games, stories, maps, and more to explode myths about Africa: (1) Africans were spear throwers, a negative description because spears were primitive as civilized people had guns and knives for the hunt and/or wars; (2) African languages were made-up gibberish; (3) Africans were primitive, lived in

trees, did not wear clothes-generally naked; and, (4) Africans were backwards and ignorant. and make connections to African cultural identity, history and heritage This much focus on African cultural history was unusual outside of Black History Month, February.

> Kiera, a former participant: They [enslavers] took our identity and stripped everything away from us.

Though said without tears, I heard and interpreted her tone, the thrust of her words as a gut-wrenching commentary. It recognized that something precious was stolen. The theft was public knowledge. This theft was an assault committed against the humanity and life line of tens of millions of West African peoples, captured and put in bondage. The generational impact on the descendants of those tens of millions of West Africans placed on auction blocks and commodified as chattel is still being experienced in the spirit of Kiera and others like her who are coming into knowledge of their cultural connection to those silent ancestors (Asante & Mattson, 1992).

Ancestral traditions, including the names and languages of enslaved Africans, were absent in the cultural knowledge conveyed during February. There simply was not enough information to recover their ancestral roots, beginning with their families, yet alone to reach back to enslavement and pre-enslavement.Yet, such information was theirs by birth right and cultural inheritance. Many had not been reminded of the significance of this information before CWTA.

> Charlayne, a former participant: Absolutely nothing. I was extremely young and could care less about African culture. If I didn't experience it when I was young I wouldn't want to know now.

Early learning experiences can help shape future perspectives on learning as suggested by Charlayne.

CWTA teachers wanted to make this cultural inheritance accessible to inform and help strengthen the cultural identity of participants while also connecting them to their cultural ancestry. While everything was about the children, teachers interviewed suggested a correlation between their cultural identity and the work they brought to the children. Perhaps such a correlation may be linked to the belief and bond between teacher and children:

> Jocelyn, a former teacher: It was a dual knowledge. Made me more aware, not all slavery and badness. . . . The intricacies—dance and drumming, doing it, being immersed in it . . .[helped to] define myself as a strong African American woman with more to learn about myself and culture.

While the teachers were the leaders and responsible for ensuring that experiences provided optimal cultural immersion for participants, teachers, too, were learners. Teachers learned through the questions and interactions of participants. Participants inspired the teachers to be better teachers and likewise, teachers inspired participants to be curious and open to experience learning in a multitude of ways. Teachers were as excited as participants to engage in the cultural immersions. Their self-confidence, racial and cultural pride were also elevated through CWTA.

> Keyetta, a former teacher: CWTA made me want to commit my life to doing this because you have a process to know to have a Sankofa experience [and] you have to be brought into it gently. It strengthen my ideas as a creator because not only did I create but I did some training with teachers and my identity as someone who could create spaces that others could participate in and then give me feedback in terms of my identity as

somebody who could lead among African centered people. CWTA also said there is no excuse not to make something special. CWTA was an extension of that idea. We were being trained in a practical application of the Black Studies program with a clear link to the communities to see how they worked, not just conversations about them.

The meanings I took from Keyetta's comments are that the divide between classroom theory and application nonexistent. Also, CWTA helped affirm cultural identity and direction for young adults involved in teaching and leading participants. Little did I know, as executive director, that these experiences during young adulthood would help influence life paths of these college students. Many of our teachers often said, "I would do the work of CWTA, working with our children, for free."

As early as five years of age, CWTA participants were introduced to African culture and their connection to it. Learning cultural knowledge at an early age resonated with the interviewees.

Aya, a former participant: When you learn at an early age it makes a difference it helps it stick with you more rather than learning something fresh and new at this age [24]. It makes it easier to build upon that. Time did nothing. I still know what I was taught, the songs, language, dressing up, putting on the *geles*, the gowns, wraps, scarfs can still picture that in my head and I remember being so happy to do that. That's a really, really good childhood memory for me. Every time I picture that in my head I remember feeling happy, happy on the inside when I was in that program. One of my best childhood memories. I still remember everything. I want to say I remember it because it is a part of who I am and easier to remember when it's who you are.

Aya's words illustrated how impactful the CWTA experience was and her retention of the breath of the experience.

Charlayne reported a similar experience:

> Learning that stuff when I was younger made me want to keep on learning to this day. Early on learning gives you power to push against the lies coming from others about you about us. Those are the most impressionable years when kids learn who they are. I remember from when I was two to seven. Education is something they cannot take away from you.

The phrase "education is something they cannot take away from you" is an aphorism familiar in most Black communities. I was surprised to hear it spoken by someone in their early twenties. Typically that phrase represents the wisdom of grandparents who are often the ones who utter this reminder of being Black and living in a racialized and unjust society that may take away things from you but knowledge once gained is yours forever (Daniels, 1979).

In considering cultural identity imparted by CWTA, Michael, a twenty-six-year-old male remembered little from his experience and did not feel any influence from it nor did he retain any knowledge of a connection to African cultural history or heritage. He remembers learning to play a drum, dancing, and putting on African fabrics, but he did not recall why. Capoiera, an Afro-Brazilian rhythmic martial art and dance style stands out in his memory without any cultural connection or knowledge (www.princeton.edu). Though Michael remembered little of his experience, he was visibly happy looking at himself and others in CWTA photographs. He recalled activities happening in some of the pictures and recognized some of the places in the photographs Perhaps more time could have been allotted to explore cultural identity as expressed,

Karla, a former participant: [Cultural identity] creates a pride and doesn't allow you to let someone just put you on a lower level because you can demand what you deserve. Who made a way for us to say-I would say identity, learning about who you are has a lot to do with fighting against racism. If you know about your culture or history it creates a compass and you can place yourself on a pedestal or be someone equal. Have to learn about who you are so you can defend yourself or demand the same respect that other people are getting but if you don't know you can't say anything. You have to know in order for someone not to tell you different. Self-knowledge is defending yourself and demanding respect and dignity.

Karla's words demonstrate that cultural knowledge has the power to influence cultural and racial pride. It also provides a counter-narrative to misrepresentation and disrespect from others about African culture. Through all of Karla's words, I get the meaning that her self-confidence, cultural authority, and guile remain enhanced because of her CWTA experience.

Cultural immersion and learning in CWTA was intended to be as much fun as it was learning. Principal to CWTA was making learning fun and enjoyable while also promoting education and discovery as essential and possible for every child. Teachers took on many roles including that of guide and role model to illustrate the joy of learning and grasping hold to one's cultural identity. Dawn's and Ayo's responses echoed the thoughts of most teachers regarding the joy of learning.

Dawn, a former teacher: It made people happy, there was joy where I had not seen it before, they knew what we came to do and they fell into place. Love brought by artists, teachers.

Ayo, a former teacher: Recall one year, we did a film with the Daughters of Oshun and Ndada Sisterhood. It was awesome and everybody was so involved and the biggest thing that made me know the work was important was almost every site we went to everybody was excited—the children and adults, too.

To value one's culture may also lead to no longer allowing or participating in dismissal and marginalization of African cultural identity, history, and heritage throughout society. Futher, I read Ayo's comment to suggest that her valuing of this culture also increased during CWTA as did her belief in the work she was doing. This was due in large part to the affirmation received from participants and their communities.

Kiera, a former participant: If you don't have a program like CWTA where are you going to learn? You may have a friend willing to show you or teach you, but that's rare. It's a common denominator to be able to connect with people originally from Africa.

The value of CWTA to the communities was clear in Kiera's comments. CWTA was the willing friend prepared to help others access a part of their self-identity that was dormant. This also gave CWTA the opportunity to continue to mine for more knowledge with others who placed similar importance on the teaching and sharing and learning and growing a community of like minded learners.

Ayo, a former participant: Start CWTA again. Spread the information you gave us when we were younger. Now there's nothing really teaching African people about their African roots. After you left we were left with nothing else to do. Could have kept the group going with us because there was so much we could have learned.

Reading Ayo's comments make me recall the difficult decision I made to pull back from working with CWTA to help care for my terminally ill son. I missed the children and the inspiration they

gave. I missed the work we did. I, too, would have done this work for free. Often, I felt that I was involved in some divine nexus where I could do what was natural and completely joyful to me, working with our children, and also have gas and food money. It was unfortunate that I did not have the energy nor resolve to get with the outstanding teachers of CWTA to help them hold on to our culturally affirming work.

> Kierstan, a former participant: Nothing they say can make me look bad because I know learning early on I would have just thought everything they said was truth and I would be messed up individual because every hero we look at is white . . . they don't tell about what Black people did—kings and queens. They don't teach us that—just about White people. Can't tell me we didn't have knowledge.

Kierstan's comments mean that CWTA did help shape and inform the cultural identity and knowledge of its participants and also gave them access and made then aware of knowledge as power to interrupt and counter miseducation and misrepresentation of African American culture, history and heritage.

CWTA immersed participants in the cultural knowledge known to us. Many of our teachers were college students from the Department of Black Studies or Africana Studies from local universities. Others were cultural activists and artist who placed great value on African culture and children. Yet, we could only teach what we knew to our participants and to each other. We further enhanced our knowledge through "cultural ambassadors," such as African students attending local universities from countries including Congo, Uganda, Rwanda, South Africa, and Kenya. Through these visitors, the CWTA collective was introduced to various African languages, songs, dances, and foods specific to the group represented by our visitors.

CWTA embraced cultural knowledge and was enthusiastic about passing it on to each other and our children. We recognized that our expanding cultural knowledge like that of our children was ongoing. Our cultural history and heritage was massive and ancient and far beyond the capacity of any one of us to know it all. But in unity (Umoja), the first principle of the cultural value system, Nguzo Saba, we enlarged our capacity to obtain a larger segment of our cultural history and heritage. We were also encouraged by our children's eagerness to grasp the information presented to them .Perhaps experiences in CWTA could help our children ward off distortions and stereotypes of African people and culture that is disseminated through popular culture. Caralyn was a seventeen year old intern actively involved in CWTA. Several years ago, I received a letter from her about the impact that CWTA had on her cultural identity and that of her family. Now a college graduate and an employed thirty-two year- old mother of four beautiful daughters, she wrote:

> Caralyn, former Summer intern: You [CWTA] were a positive influence on my life and a wonderful role model. I have four beautiful daughters now and I have been trying to teach them all the wonderful things I learned through your program. It is because of you that I have dedicated myself to eating healthier. You introduced me and my mother to the holistic way of eating. I know the program made a difference in the lives of young people we worked with. The first pay check you gave me, I actually took all the funds to a book store. I purchased several books on African History and political issues, which I still have to this day. You helped me to build self-confidence and pride and gave me an opportunity that helped me later in college.

Caralyn confirms the value and power of early learning experiences and positive role models to inform choices available to developing minds. CWTA participants were 5 to 12 years old. Our

interns were high school students. Our teachers were principally college students, 18-22 years old. I was the elder along with professors from the Department of Black Studies at the University of Pittsburgh. . The perspectives of former participants, teachers, this intern and an external evaluator (Appendix G) suggest that a community of African cultural influence was constructed and given life through CWTA. The impressions and experiences of that community were retained as cultural values and important knowledge that operates today in the lives of these research participants who experienced early childhood, young adolescence and young adulthood in the CWTA to Africa.

Popular Culture. It was CWTA's contention that popular culture contributed greatly to the negation and devaluing of African cultural identity, history and heritage. Further, popular culture was a domain of meaning making and as such greatly influenced self and group perceptions and power dynamics of society. According to Hermes' (2005) definition,

> Popular culture is connected to who we think we are, to how we understand our responsibilities and rights, how we hold out hope for the future, or how we are critical of the state of things in the environments in which we move and of which we feel we are part (viii).

Popular culture included television, movies, music and advertisement. Though situated as benign entertainments, popular culture influences how we see ourselves, our cultural and racial group, each other, and how we interact and relate to each other. The images and stories created and reflected back upon the masses are rarely more than the echo of White supremacist racist culture, perspectives, and power relations. Stories created and disseminated by popular culture too often cast Africans as expendable background extras and villains and the un-good in a subservient capacity to White dominant characters and their values and aspirations. CWTA

wanted to help its children to achieve another perspective about themselves, their cultural origins, and the worth of their culture, and most urgently to help our children know themselves in ways not suggested or available through mouthpieces of popular culture. Hermes (2005) asserts that popular culture has "a mind boggling power to influence us all" (vii). The tentacles of popular culture extend into nearly all aspects of this society exerting a mighty influence in many areas including the education of our children.

> Charlayne, a former participant: Don't have any good things everyday on TV . . . portray us as clowns, animals. I know that I'm capable of doing stuff, stereotypes I can put out there that you're wrong, only show negative on the news . . . shows like Springer upset me because they make the rest of us look so bad. Need to learn early on to push aside the lies, blow the lies off. If you know, try to free you lives, misrepresentations and stereotypes . . . don't bite because you know learning early on gives you power to push against the lies coming from others about you—about us.

Charlayne's comments speak to the paucity of leading and positive images of Blacks on television. CWTA helped Charlayne learn that Black culture and history has many examples of careers, adventures, and contributions available to teach and lead children. Through CWTA Charlyane knows be circumspect with representations of Blacks presented through television and popular culture. Affirming images of Black children appearing on television include Dr. McStuffin and Word Girl, though Word Girl can pass for Black or Brown racial membership. Both are positive role models and present different career options for Black and Brown girls beyond the ever visible entertainment field.

> Ayo, a former participant: Media feeding nonsense and generations are so lazy because media celebrity is telling them. Important for Blacks, need programs like CWTA now.

They [Black youth] know absolutely nothing about Africa. They just know slavery. Regardless of what you see or hear, you need to go and research for yourself. What[our] history is, is what I was taught. Encouragement to study. Never accept what [media] tell you or show you. You should know where you come from because America could sell you anything and you could fall for it.

Ayo words are interpreted to mean that popular culture is targeted to consumption of ideas and products. It is only trying to sell and motivate the viewer to buy. Media, including television,

movies, advertising is not a site to go for learning cultural knowledge or accurate information or images about any racial or cultural group. It is unfortunate that much of what is seen in popular culture are inaccurate representations and stereotypes of African Americans. CWTA had some role in helping her develop a critical eye when viewing stories and images about African culture, history and heritage no matter the source.

Olu, a former teacher: children know something through the dominant narrative, but African cultural identity is something our children can bring up when their history is being erased. The cultural knowledge from CWTA was presented from many perspectives including that of fun, self-knowledge, and as a cultural mirror to reflect African cultural heritage and history onto the identity of participants.

Olu's words transforms knowledge into a concrete object for the benefit of the participant. It is an object of authority that can be imposed and included in conversations, discussions and interactions on behalf of the self-confidence, racial and cultural pride that it infers on its owner, the former CWTA participant. As the knowledge expands , so does the size and

import of the object and its potential authority or voice for the participant.

Counter-Narratives. CWTA created counter-narratives for several reasons: (1) to stand in opposition to dominant culture's negative representations; (2) to ensure that our children knew they were much more than they were portrayed to be through popular culture; (3) to conceptualize self-knowledge as empowering; (4) to give our children a "leg up" by revealing to them parts of their cultural inheritance; 5) to give voice and visibility to perspectives often silenced; and (6) to validate our experiences and our perspectives as sources of historical and contemporary knowledge (Lawrence III, 1987). Olu, a former teacher, perceived counter-narrative creation to include the naming of foods and the teacher and children relationships, particularly the way in which children were addressed and talked about at CWTA. These efforts were a response to the too often negative and disempowering relationship our children had in many educational and after -school settings.

> Olu, a former teacher: Naming of foods, and the ah, bringing up of different heroes so we had things like QueenNzingha Stew, and Fred Hampton Black Panther Greens, UNIA Salad, Marcus Garvey Stew . . . we did something similar with things like stepping and saying here's a step on Imhotep . . . one of the counter-narratives that is critical is that I know something since the dominant narrative is that I don't know nothing.

Learning can be integrated into every aspect of daily living. It does not have to take place solely between the pages of a book, behind a desk, at a computer screen or more traditional ways of transmitting knowledge as represented by most public schools in the United States. Instead, cultural knowledge is deliciously learned and experienced through something as humbling as employing self-determination, Kujichagulia (Second Principle of the Nguzo Saba) to name the dishes that comprise our breakfast, snack and lunch menus. Similarly, using rhythms and

exaggerated step routines, which appear as fun and play, cultural counter-narratives were introduced to CWTA participants. While the movements looked like they were just dancing, a closer look revealed not only were they executing choreographed movements but they were simultaneously chanting stanzas of ancient cultural knowledge.

> Olu, a former teacher: Counter-narratives in terms of do people care about me. CWTA emphasized more than the information. We need to come here with a sense of exuberance happiness for this time here- nothing but love. So I think that those relationships carried on. They took meanings from those relationships with the teachers. There was such enjoyment with the teachers. It would be fair to say that there was an impact on participants. Counter-narratives of care of compassion, I think were fundamental to CWTA. What was emphasized was it didn't matter if it wasn't delivered with love.

Important to all of CWTA was its children. There were no exceptions. I listened carefully and was vigilant in hearing what words were used to address our children and to interact with them. As executive director of CWTA, my spirit and faith in the Divine assured me that we were all chosen to do this honorable and divine work, connecting our children to their greatness-cultural identity, history and heritage. Though it was tremendous fun, it was also a serious undertaking as we were helping to form ideas, connections, and patterns that might inform much of our participants' lives.

> Olu, a former teacher: With children at the center you would always say children not kids. You spoke about the children in sacred terms. It was the core value-that children are sacred and African culture is sacred, important and worthy of being shared. Children are to be treasured and spoken to carefully. Those would be CWTA values . . . a model of sharing power rather than empowering.

The explicit meaning of Olu's words describes CWTA as a living counter-narrative. It lived to push back against stories and images that did not make our children primary and did not connect them to the cultural life line that is their inheritance. CWTA was the rituals, songs and chants, images and stories, and pledges and affirmations used to convey cultural and historical knowledge and identity to our participants. It was all about our children, their potential, possibility, learning and self- discovery. It was about passing on the culture that helped define our ancestors, explain our present situations, and modeled prospects for the future.

Other teachers viewed CWTA values, methods, and processes of teaching and interacting with the children as counter-narratives. Teachers were given time to research and time to practice before joining the children. This time was not an orientation. More than logistics and reporting were emphasized. It was demonstrating and practicing how to step, play, and dance with the children with energy, enthusiasm, and care.

Ayo, a former teacher: fundamental to CWTA was the value of assuming brilliance of the children.

Teachers entered each environment with a belief in the brilliance and genius of each child. Further, teachers were open to learn and respond to each child's level of readiness and to create ways on the spot as needed to allow every child this cultural immersion experience. Teachers had learned to believe and trust their creativity.

Dawn describes framework as a counter-narrative to dispel the absence of care and love shown towards Black children through popular culture and the dominant social mirror. Instead, CWTA required practice and talk-back among teachers and staff to define and practice unconditional love with and for all the children.

Dawn, a former teacher: Unconditional love comes with full acceptance and appreciation for the children regardless of their circumstances. Unconditional appreciation and inclusion are to be practiced no matter where you come from or how you look or who your people are. We used different ethnic tribal groups from the Diaspora to help children have a sense of belonging. Making this window gave them claim to their Africa. Show children they belong though you are an African born in America or wherever. Families may not identify with being African, but be strategic and rely on the best of what Africa has given us. Once we were convinced of the good and rightness of what we were doing, everything else fell into place.

Dawn clearly expresses fundamental values of CWTA. These values were not complicated to understand or put to practice. It was our identity, how we carried out our work, and our purpose.

In the interviews, former participants required an explanation of counter-narratives while teachers interpreted the words without explanation from me. Words helping former participants gain more clarity to counter-narratives were push-back as in resisting different sources of knowledge of stories and images told and shown about the cultural identity, history, and heritage of African Americans. Although, participants did not use the term "counter-narrative," their responses suggest an understanding of CWTA as a counter-narrative or counter-force for cultural knowledge and identity—one far different from what is typically seen or heard.

Former participants, Kiera and Kierstan offer perspectives that sum up CWTA as a counter-narrative to interrupt misrepresentations about African culture, history and heritage and the importance of learning about and connecting to one's culture, and its influence on self-confidence, and racial and cultural pride.

Kiera, a former participant: Learning about who you are has a lot to do with fighting against racism. If someone calls you little slave boy or something if they have called you that from childhood that may be what you think since that's what it's always been. But if you able to learn how you were brought into slavery then you can say I'm not that, that's not who I am; that's not where I came from if you know that about your history or culture.

Kierstan, a former participant: The past marks you, like it or not. You know we were something before slavery. We don't have to be stuck here. Wish our children coming up could see and learn more about their culture . . . need to learn early on to push aside the lies, blow the lies off—can tell teachers they are wrong; push them back because they know the truth.

Kierstan, like other participants placed value on the cultural knowledge and immersion that she experienced during CWTA. The knowledge that she gained early on about herself helped her challenge misconceptions and miseducation about African Americans. To know unequivocally that she is part of a group with a proud cultural connection and birth right that began long before enslavement fortifies and strengthens one's resolve not to get trapped by fabrication experienced in educational and social settings.

My expectations for the research were that the data would be sufficient to help me understand meanings research participants gave to their experiences in CWTA. From the meanings research participants expressed through answers to interview questions, and my interpretation of CWTA documents, I wanted to gather data to answer the research questions of this study and support my interpretation of the data. My interpretations of the findings from this data are reported in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents my research findings and its discussion. Interpretations of findings from examination of CWTA documents and analysis of participant interviews provided data to answer the research questions which directed this study. The limitations of the findings, conclusions and recommendations for future investigation are presented. I interpreted the findings through lenses of an African cultural value system, the Nguzo Saba and the use of Sankofa, and Critical Race Theory, particularly the authority suggested for storytelling in the Voice of Color thesis (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Voices of color thesis asserts a presumption of authority to minority group members to speak about oppression from their lived experiences, a position likely unfamiliar to majority members (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Those who live through marginalization and oppression, including racism, sexism and gender biases offer perspectives that can provide a depth of understanding to these experiences not otherwise available.

Research question 1: What counter-narratives were created by CWTA to Africa (CWTA) to mitigate White hegemonic culture's negative portrayals of African American cultural identity?

CWTA was a counter-narrative. The creation of CWTA was fundamentally bringing into being a counter narrative, a visible and experiential device, in this case a cultural immersion program, which would give participants access to knowledge through encounters with African culture, history and heritage, and mirror unwavering belief in the character and talents of each participant. Further, it would position participants as inheritors of an ancient and rich cultural heritage. Through the curriculum, participants would be shown how to *Sankofa* (retrieve and reclaim) this heritage. CWTA as a counter-narrative device: (1) exercised its *Kujichagulia* (self-

determination) to create itself as a source of knowledge production and dissemination; (2) declared by its existence *Imani* (faith) and belief in centering itself in an African value system; (3) Defined its *Nia* (purpose) in the best interest of its participants cultural and social development; (4) encouraged on-going *Kuumba* (creativity) to demonstrate the many ways in which culture, history and heritage were valued and participants were respected and cherished.

The rituals, chants and songs, pledges and affirmations and images and stories were created and delivered in opposition to the dearth of accurate and positive representations and perspectives of African American cultural heritage. Each counter-narrative device, from rituals to images was aimed to displace negative representations and connect participants to a variety of empowering examples of their cultural inheritance including African languages and instruments, leaders and creators, healers and poets, dancers and musicians, thinkers and builders, scientist and inventors and warriors and royalty..

Common to all counter-narratives created by CWTA and experienced by participants was knowledge of self-connections to an African cultural heritage and history. Additionally, participants expressed a rejection of popular culture's distortions about the cultural identity, history and heritage of African Americans. These perceptions are echoed in expressions from former participants, Kiera and Deandra.

> Kiera*: Even the things I don't remember, I got in my head that we are not who they say we are. I brought the culture back from the program [CWTA] into my life. I still remember [CWTA lessons] and am able to build upon them. I am not who they say I am.*

Deandra: When I meet someone from Africa I can tell them about Africa. I can even tell them about food, dances, and if they bring up something I learned in CWTA, it comes back to my memory.

Self-knowledge is both empowering and represents a sharing of power. With self-knowledge, one owns and is elevated by knowledge of who they know themselves to be, not only as an individual but as part of a group, community, and culture. Knowledge of self also helped nurture cultural pride, self-esteem and had a positive impact on identity formation and perceptions of cultural and social group membership. This same knowledge becomes leverage to help invalidate and expose marginalization and historical and contemporary inaccuracies about African American cultural history and heritage.

As a counter-narrative, CWTA was an opportunity for our children to interact with and build relationships with African American teachers and positioned them as important and respectful sources of knowledge production and dissemination. In turn, CWTA mirrored to participants that their lives and stories, like those presented and created by CWTA teachers, were important sources of knowledge production and transmission.

Research question 2: Did counter-narratives created by CWTA influence cultural identity of its participants? If so, how do former participants express this influence? My analysis and interpretation of interview data suggests that counter-narratives created by CWTA did influence the cultural identity of its participants. While the term counter-narrative was rarely used by participants, they did give perspectives that may be interpreted as having had experiences with African cultural counter-narratives. I interpreted Kierstan's response to the question on cultural identity as confirmation of CWTA influence without her ever using the term counter-narrative:

> Nothing they say can make me look bad because I know…learning early on
> I would have just thought everything they said was truth and I would be messed up

> individual because every hero we look at is white...they don't tell about what Black people did-kings and queens. They don't teach us that –just about White people. Can't tell me we didn't have knowledge.

Kierstan shares the perspective of Kiera regarding cultural identity in her comments:

> It's always good to know were you come from. Find your roots. Identity yourself because they do not each you in school except during Black History month.

Kiera, perceived her exposure to the African language of Swahili as creating a common bond between her and indigenous Swahili African speakers that she encounters. If not for CWTA she feels that this connection to African culture may not have happened. Further, this identity with Swhaili gives her a sense of pride and shows that, in her words, she's "not just a dumb American, she does read and she does know a little bit" [about her connection to Africa].

We did help shape and inform the cultural identity and knowledge of our participants and also gave them access to authority that resembled and respected them. At the same time, CWTA implied through its interactions and relationships with our children that they possessed authority to learn and pass on cultural knowledge that could interrupt and counter miseducation and misrepresentation. Further, our actions also inferred to our children that they could also act and live as a counter-narrative through questioning, resisting, exposing, and making a platform to disrupt social injustices, including racism. Through various activities, including rituals, songs and chants, dances, stories and African language our children were actively engaged in experiencing counter-narrative creations of CWTA. Participants asserted in interview responses the significance of CWTA's influence on their self-perceptions and the ways in which they viewed culture and race.

> Kiera, a former participant: Learning about who you are has a lot to do with fighting against racism. If someone calls you little slave boy or something if they have called you that from childhood, that may be what you think since that's what it's always been. But, if you able to learn how you were brought into slavery then you say I'm not that, That's not who I am; that's not where I came from, if you know that about your history or culture.

The influence of CWTA was welcomed. A participant who was five years old during her initial experience with CWTA recalled, "feeling happy, happy on the inside when I was in that program[CWTA]. One of my best childhood memorires. I still remember everything. I want to say I remember it because it is a part of who I am and it's easier to remember when it's who you are."

Research limitations: The generalizeability of this research and its findings are limited to the specific experiences of participants in the CWTA to Africa (CWTA) cultural immersion program. This research is not intended to suggest that all cultural immersion programs designed for African American children five to twelve years old will express their experiences in the same ways in which CWTA participants did and result in similar findings. Another limitation may be that all of the research participants knew me through their experiences in CWTA, yet because they knew me they may have been more willing to participate in this study. Also, this study is specific to the locations where CWTA presented programs from 1994 to 2002. It is unclear how this research would be influenced by another place or region. Also, participant perspectives and expressions could differ if the research had been conducted in five years or less than a decade after the CWTA experiences. A fundamental limitation of this research is that CWTA ceased operations before another group of children five to twelve years old could experience the cultural immersion offered by CWTA and share this cultural knowledge with friends and family.

Research Reflections

Black children are often entrapped by systemic racism, poverty, lack of self-knowledge, and options that often dead-end. Their families are frequently the working poor. Frequently, they live in areas of high unemployment, poor and failing schools, increasing violence, and single parent households without extended family or community support. These children see each other

in the fabrications of popular culture in which they are thugs—gangsters with guns demanding respect from cohorts who like them also demand respect and end up dying at an early age. Not seeing oneself in society's mirrors though one is fully aware that they live in and are a part of society can be distressing to identity formation, personal worth, and self-confidence.

We withhold power and authority when we withhold cultural knowledge from our children. Knowledge of self, fundamental to all humans, can help build confidence. Such knowledge is informed and shaped in part by one's culture, family, community, and society. To deny access to such knowledge is to withhold an essential element of one's social and cultural development and connection to sources of proven achievement, wisdom, and resiliency. Without the needed cultural self-identity to navigate and strengthen resistance to White hegemonic culture, African American children are increasingly more vulnerable to stereotypical, negative, and dehumanizing images and stories circulated through popular culture such as those suggested in reality shows like Love and HipHop, Basketball Wives, the Real Housewives of Atlanta. In all these performances, adult Black women and men seldom if ever read a book, electronic or otherwise; settle disputes without aggressive and often violent actions, even physical fights. These popular show performances are presented as representation of success with ostentatious lifestyles that glitters in the perceptions of children and youth. Reality shows have been described as having a "tawdry image and generally attracting low income audiences"(Murray & Ouellette, 2009, p.137). The shows and performances given are probably contractually as agreed- dramatic, intense, superficial, caricatures and provocative enough to engage attention and interest, however, it is not the affluent 18-35 years old demographics that is attracted to these shows but youth and teens (Murray & Ouellette, 2009).

We who do not affirm the worth and humanity of Black children and do not share with them the power, protection, and wisdom available through knowledge of their cultural inheritance may be complicit in their decline. An African proverb states, "when the roots of a tree begin to decay it spreads death to the branches." Black children are the branches. The roots are their African cultural inheritance through the stories, images and wisdom that nurture it. When cultural knowledge is not circulated to the branches, time withers the roots, branches grow hollow and the life of the tree is threaten by extinction. African American children enter a hostile society at an early age, typically at three years old in preschool. Knowledge of the hostility and dangers awaiting our children are empirically grounded in the lived realties of successive generations of African Americans. This reality started with (1) captivityt; (2) the *MAAFA*,a "Kiswhaili term meaning more or less a prolonged period of great disaster" (Kambon,2012, p.546; Ani,1997); (3) enslavement; and,(4) continues through the present. Our lives and those of our ancestors are credible enough to be referred to as peer reviewed data. Our lives and those of our ancestors confirm the veracity of the evidence-our lived and recorded experiences. Yet, we continue to send our children out to engage systems that we know continues to assault their humanity, dignity, life, health and future. Just as CWTA to Africa (CWTA) did, we can show our children the power inherent in culture and self-knowledge. If we fail to show by how we live, the value we place in our culture and teach it to our children, no one else will.

There was interest to restart Children's Window to Africa by former teachers, but it never materialized. However, those with interest continued to do work similar to that of CWTA, but as teaching artists and independent consultants. While CWTA did not restart, former teachers assert that their approach to working with our children was nurtured and developed through their work with CWTA. The intentions of those charged with teaching and leading our children are

important to the perceptions a child makes about her experiences. The goals of CWTA would suggest that the intentions of a teacher should be to demonstrate support, encouragement and belief in the success, potential, talents and goodness of every child, without reservation. Also, recognizing and making use of the multiple ways in which learning can take place and a teacher's role in exciting new learners to be curious, critical and creative thinkers, The messages transmitted to a child come not only through the words but tones and intentions. Though CWTA was closed, various educational programs, after-school and in-school, including Miller African-centered Classical Academy continued to give our children access to more knowledge about their history and heritage. The social and cultural conditions of African American children are more critical now, just over a decade later, than they were during the years that CWTA operated. Many individuals and groups from faith-based to community grassroots to well-funded foundations are invested in finding ways to address the problems that confront African American children. Problematic with CWTA and other founder led organizations is not having in place a succession plan that can maintain and help the program flourish after the founder is no longer there. Additionally, competition for nonprofit dollars grows more competive as the social needs mount and available dollars appear to shrink. Many programs were created and ended, yet made a positive impact on the lives of a few. As long as social need exist, individuals and groups in tiny and large communities will rise to help. In some cases the help will last a short period and in others, the help will remain for longer periods. Organizations have life cycles just as people do. Support is needed through each cycle and sometimes challenges of each cycle are greater than the resources available and choices must be made about the prospects and future.

Future Research.

Future research might include a longitudinal study with African American children from the grade equivalents of 5 to 12 years old. Using pretests, limitations of popular culture exposure and other tools such a study may provide more evidence of African American children succeeding and the importance of cultural knowledge and its impact on the success of the developing child. Equally important research is that regarding the intentions of those teaching and working with our children. Determination of the teacher's conscious and unconsciously held beliefs about African American childen needs exploration. Children, like adults know, even in a classroom, if the messages and interactions are genuine. To explore the correlation to a teacher's intention and their beliefs when working with African American children can provide data to apply to real world problems and enhance our knowledge on how best to address the confidence, authority and success of our children.

Researcher's Position

As the founder and executive director of CWTA, my interpretations throughout this research are informed by personal experiences, steadfast belief and trust in the mission, vision statements, and the philosophy of CWTA beginning with its inception to its final day of operation. Additionally, my perspectives include an unconditional valuing, love, and unwavering belief in the genius, talent, and Divine goodness of every child that passed through CWTA.

Like former CWTA participants, I am African American. I was raised and socialized in an all Black community of my mother, grandmothers, maternal great-grandmother, and within minutes from that of my great-great grandmother. Through the Western hegemonic, White supremacist cultural depictions of African Americans throughout the society were profilif and

vehement during my childhood and early adolsence. My family, blood and fictive, same as 'play' family, helped to mitigate the negativity and provide instruction on how to defend and protect myself. Those providing instructions had lived similar and often worse racialized experiences. This instruction, solicited and unsoliticed, helped convince me and my cohort of our self-worth, cultural and racial pride. My education was overwhelmingly launched in Black institutions and communities. My initial undergraduate experience was my first exposure to a White instructor. I am a Black woman born and raised in America whose descendants are principally African and share in the collective cultural and historical legacy of African ancestry before and after captivity of Africans enslaved and brought to the Americas in bondage. I accept an obligation that derives from my up bring to share what I have, both intellectually and materially.

Appendix

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APPENDICE A: PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did your experiences in CWTA shape your ideas about African American cultural history and heritage?
2. What behaviors related to your cultural identity did you learn in CWTA that remain with you?
3. In what ways, if any, has the prevalence of racism shaped your knowledge and pride in African American cultural history and heritage?
4. Can you think of ways in which racism helped mold your feelings about being an African American and what you think and feel about other African Americans, and African American history and heritage?
5. What do you recall about how CWTA influenced your thinking about (a) your connection to Africa? (b) Identifying as having African ancestry, (c) Contributions of Africans to world civilization?
6. Can you identify ways in which your participation in CWTA continues to influence you today?
7. Do you think you make choices about participating in African American cultural traditions and celebrations because of your participation in CWTA?
8. What value, if any, do you place on African American history and culture as a result of your experiences in CWTA?
9. Can you recall how activities of CWTA helped you formulate your cultural identity?
10. In what ways, if any, are the images and stories you are willing to accept about African American cultural history and heritage shaped by your experiences in CWTA?
11. In what ways did your experiences in CWTA help you critical examine and counter portrayals of African Americans in TV, movies, and other media?
12. How did CWTA help you as an African American of African ancestry understand where you fit in society?
13. What else do you want us to know about the influences of CWTA in your life?

APPENDICE B: PARTICIPANT QUESTIONS FOR CLARITY

1. How would you describe your experiences in CWTA?
2. What do you remember most about activities you were involved in at CWTA?
3. What did you know about Africa and your connection to it before CWTA?
4. What did you know about African American culture before CWTA?
5. How would you describe your knowledge of Africa and your connection to it following your time in CWTA?
6. Would you consider your time in CWTA as a good use of time? If so, why? If not, why?
7. What stories and images do you remember from CWTA?
8. Have you seen any of those stories and images on TV, movies and in school? Why do you think that is?
9. What do you think about the images and stories you see on TV, in movies and advertisements about African Americans?

APPENDICE C: FORMER TEACHERS INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did you help create counter-narratives and counter-images for CWTA participants?
2. What creations used and constructed by CWTA were most influential on its participants, in your opinion?
3. How did you build on and extend the work of creating counter-narratives and images?
4. How did the work you did in CWTA impact your cultural identity?
5. What role did racism have in the types of counter-narratives you helped create in CWTA?
6. What are you most proud of about CWTA?

APPENDICE D: CWTA RITUALS

(1). Libation-Pour the Water

Pour t the water for you, Pour the water for me

For all we and all we'll be.

Pour the water for the children that are not yet born (5 claps)

Pour the water for the mothers and the fathers, too.

Ache'!

(2). Libation-Pour the Water

Pour the water, remember, give honor, call names.

We must remember all they went through, what they did for me and

They did for you.

We must remember what we've become

What we've come to be and where we're from.

(3) Harambee Ache'

Harambee Ache, Harambee Ache, Ache! (2X)

We grow Kamawamoja! We Live Kamawamoja!

We learn Kmawamoja!

Harambee Ache,Harambee Ache, Ache,Harambee Ache!

Keep Sisters, Kamawamoja! Keep Brothers, Kamawamoja!

Keep Family, Kamawamoja! Keep Community, Kamawamoja!

Harambee Ache, Harambee Ache, Ache! (2X)

(3). Harambee Pull

(As you call out Harambee, stretch your arm up and pull down what you want. Close your hand and pull down to your heart what you hold in your hand. Call out Harambee with each pull. 7X).

Harambee (Ha-Rahm-BAY) 7X

Hold the sound of the 7th Harambee. In unison release the last syllable

APPENDICE E: CWTA PLEDGES AND AFFIRMATIONS

(1). Children's Affirmation

I am an African child born in America. I am a Divine child.

I am smart. I am creative. I am gifted.

I am beautiful. I am handsome.

I am loved. I give love. I deserve love.

(2). I have honor and respect to myself, my family, community and my people

I give kindness and understanding to myself and others.

I give knowledge and power to myself.

I give healthy living to myself.

I give my best to what I do

(3). Pledge to Our Children

LEADER

On the strength, glory and victories of our collective past as people of African descent; as descendants of those whose labors and lives laid foundations for America's wealth; and, in the spirit of those whose sacrifice, courage, and righteousness cleared the way for each of us,

COMMUNITY

We pledge loyalty, respect, and honor to you- our future, our vision, our hope- our children.

LEADER

On wisdom, understanding, and patience learned from life's lessons and struggles on all sides of the Atlantic and throughout time,

COMMUNITY

We pledge to cushion your falls and help you rise again. We pledge to nurture your healing and growth. We pledge knowledge and truth to renew your spirit. We pledge hope to rekindle your dreams. We pledge to teach you, listen, and acknowledge your voice, talents, and innate goodness.

LEADER

On our ancestral legacy of family, community, God, and nation,

COMMUNITY

We pledge to protect and defend you from abuse. We pledge our shoulders as ladders for you to see tomorrow. We pledge to defend you; to stand and raise our voices, swords and shields against all that threaten your innocence, and seek to discredit, demoralize, and destroy you.

LEADER

On creative and spiritual forces that motivate our poets, teachers, scholars, prophets, philosophers, builders, painters, artists, healers-all mothers and fathers,

COMMUNITY

We pledge to celebrate, praise, and lift you up to the world as symbols of goodness, beauty, genius, creativity, and love,

ALL

In the name of our God, life and love; in the strengths, courage, and wisdom of who we are and all we can be; we pledge to you, our children - knowledge, hope, pride and belief in you, your progress, safety, and success, for as long as the sun shines and the water flows. Hotep. Heri. Amen. Ase'.

APPENDICE F: CWTA CHANTS AND SONGS

(1). Sankofa Chant

Sankofa, yeah, yeah, Sankofa! (2X)

We gotta reach back to know (clap 2X) We gotta reach back to claim (2X).

Know the past. Live the present. Design the future.

Sankofa, yeah, yeah, Sankofa! (2X)

(2). Song: Everyday Has Hope

Chorus: (2X)

Everyday has hopes and dreams for you, my child

Every day we love and trust in you, my child

Keep believing in yourself in your people, too,

There's nothing no thing you cannot do!

Rap 1:

Always try through the tears

You're a wonderful child

With nothing to fear, don't

Give up hold fast to your dreams

Keep reaching for a book and

The truth it brings to those who study

To those who learn it's your people's

Respect and love you'll earn, today you

Have a second chance open your eyes

Learn and advance, give us your hand

We'll show you the from yesterday to

Today!

Repeat Chorus.

Rap 2:

Call out our names call

Them loud call them clear

Call them proud call them strong

So everybody can hear, call out

Malcolm, Robeson, Fannie Lou,

Ida Wells, Nkrumah, too, Angela,

Nzingha, DuBois and King, scholars,

Poets, philosophers, kings, scientist,

Healers, teachers, queens, builders of

Pyramids, makers of dreams, always try

Through the tears you're a wonderful child,

Very wonderful my dear!

Repeat Chorus.

(3) Song: The Ancestors have paved the Way

When our story is truly told

It's thousands of years old.

From scholars, warriors, and gold

Our legacy unfolds.

So great a people are we

Culture! Tradition! Legacy!

Chorus:

The ancestors have paved the way

For us to make our way!

A new life is here today!

A new life is here today!

A history is ours Ase!

A family is ours Ase!

A legacy is ours Ase!

A destiny is ours Ase!

Repeat Chorus.

(4) Lift Every Voice and Sing, by James Weldon Johnson and Rosamond Johnson

Lift every voice and sing

Till earth and heaven ring

Ring with the harmonies of liberty;

Let our rejoicing rise high as the list'ning skies

Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.

Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,

Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us;

Facing the rising sun of a new day begun, let us march on till victory is won.

Stony the road we trod bitter the chast'ning rod, felt in the days when hope

Unborn had died; yet with a steady beat, have not our weary feet come to the place

For which our fathers sighed?

We have come over a way that with tears has been watered.

We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered,

Our from the gloomy past,

Till now we stand at last

Where the white gleam of our bright start is cast.

God of our weary years,

God of our silent tears,

Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;

Thou who has by thy might,

Led us into the light,

Keep us forever in the path, we pray.

Lets our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee,

Lest our heats, drunk with the wine of the world, we forget

Thee;

Shadowed beneath Thy hand,

May we forever stand,

True to our God,

True to our native land.

Appendix G: Evaluator's Notes

♦P♥♥└♦@♦♦P♥♥└♦@♦

COMMENTS...

I would like to make a few final comments about the program as a whole. I reviewed my observations and found four words that I seemed to use rather consistently. Those words are: comfortable, interaction, genuine, and encourage. They sum up the relationships I observed at each site. It was both a pleasure and a learning experience to observe the Children's Window to Africa program.

It was a pleasure because as a teacher I know what it takes to work with children. I also know that working with children during the summer can be doubly exhausting. It was a pleasure to see energetic, positive, spirited young people guiding our children. It's nice to see them serving as proud role-models. I hope the program continues to employ high school and college students (under grad and grad). I believe my greatest pleasure was the Libation Ceremony. Hearing the children sing "Lift Every Voice and Sing" sent chills up my spine. In a society filled with negative images, I feel hopeful.

After reviewing my observations, I smile to see how much I have learned. I learned words in Swahili. I learned to refer to the language as Swahili, rather than African. I learned "Ago" and "Aime". I am taking with me things to incorporate in my classroom. Observing has also helped me to set goals for this coming school year. My students will benefit from the lessons I have learned.

In closing, I would like to say that this is a worthwhile program. I would recommend it to any parent of a school age child. It reinforces skills taught in the classroom while providing an environment that fosters all learning styles. Many of the lessons that I observed provided for individuality. Students met with success and for a child who may not encounter that during the school year, this can make the difference. The difference meaning self - confidence... "I can" instead of "I can't" - or at least, "I will try". These students will take their lessons, along with the positive images they have seen and go far. There is no knowledge, like the knowledge of one's self.

APPENDIX H: Cultural Heritage Images (sources: www.babyandblog.com; www.sembenefilmfestival.org; www.huffingtonpost.com)

Animated:

Tinga Tinga Tales

Filmore

Jungle Beat

Static Shock

Bino and Fino

Tutenstein

Proud Family

Tsehai Loves Learning

Doc McStuffin

Short Film:

The Legend of Ngong Hills

Sule and the Case of the Tiny Sparks

A Boo Crew Christmas Special

Bouba & Zaza Protect the Earth

Koi and the Kola Nuts

Feature Film:

Kirikou and the Sorceress

Kirikou and the Wild Beast

The Princess and the Frog

The Golden Blaze

Azur & Asmar (www.sembenefilmfestival.org)