Race, Gender, and Identity

A Social Science Comparative Analysis of Africana Culture

James L. Conyers, Jr., editor

Africana Studies, Volume 5

Transaction Publishers
New Brunswick (U.S.A.) and London (U.K.)

Notes

1. Richard T. Schafer. *Racial and Ethnic Groups* (New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 6th edition, 1996), 3–15.
2. Richard T. Schaefer, *Racial and Ethnic Groups* (New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 6th edition, 1996), 12–14.
3. Allen G. Johnson, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1995), 223.
4. James L. Conyers, Jr., *Black Cultures and Race Relations* (Chicago: Burnham Inc. Publishers, 2002), 276.
5. Oscar H. Gandy, Jr., *Communication and Race: A Structural Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 35.
6. Franz Fanon, "Racism and Culture," in *I Am Because We Are*, edited by Fred L. Hord and Jonathan S. Lee, 172. University of Massachusetts Press, 1995.
7. Richard T. Schaefer, *Racial and Ethnic Groups* (New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 6th edition, 1996), 431.
8. Shirley Moody-Turner and James B. Stewart. "Gendering Africana Studies: Insights from Anna Julia Cooper." *African American Review* 34, no. 1, (Spring 2008): 35.
9. Nikol G. Alexander-Floyd and Evelyn M. Simien. "Revisiting 'What's in a Name?': Exploring the Contours of Africana Womanist Thought." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 27, no. 1 (2006): 67.
10. Lucius Outlaw, "Africana Philosophy." *The Journal of Ethics* 1, no. 3 (1997): 267.
11. Maulana Karenga, "Kawaida and Its Critics: A Sociohistorical Analysis." *Journal of Black Studies* 8, no. 2 (December 1977): 139.
12. Kwame Nkrumah, "Consciencism," *I Am Because We Are*, edited by Fred Lee Hord and Jonathan S. Lee, 56. Cambridge, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995.
13. Ruth Reviere, "Toward an Afrocentric Research Methodology" *Journal of Black Studies* 31, no. 6, (July 2001): 709.

2

Conjurin' Up an Image: African American Healing Women in the Films of Julie Dash and Kasi Lemmons

Kameelah Martin

In the latter half of the twentieth century such African American authors as Toni Morrison, Gloria Naylor, Arthur Flowers, and Alice Walker have rewritten African American healing, or conjure, women in a way that honors and appreciates their existence rather than degrades and trivializes it. Rather than being relegated to Eurocentric stereotypes of witches, devil-worshippers, and cannibals, Morrison and her contemporaries have returned the literary conjure woman to her reverent status. Pilate Dead, Miranda Day, Tante Rosie, and Melvira Dupree all spring from a postmodern tradition of writers who mean to reappropriate and reinstate the conjure woman as a folk hero specific to the history of African people in the New World. The movement toward reclamation of the conjure woman and the alternate spirituality of African American women, however, is not confined to the literary world. As Akasha Gloria Hull points out, "In public media such as television and film, black women are playing a strong role in conveying spiritual themes and material" (2001, 152). Hull encourages critics and scholars to look outside of the literary circuit to get a fuller picture of what is taking place in black women's spirituality, arguing that looking "at these media phenomena extends our exploration of this new spirituality into arenas that are equally as important as lived experience and books" (2001, 152).

Rather than being depicted exclusively in the work of African American authors, the conjure woman's character has spilled over into the realm of

film, most notably in *The Believers* (Schlesinger 1987), *Daughters of the Dust* (Dash 1991), *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* (Eastwood 1997), *Eve's Bayou* (Lemmons 1997), *Caught Up* (Scott 1998), and more recently in *The Skeleton Key* (Softley 2005) and *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* (Verbinski 2006). The portrayal of the conjure woman in these films moves from gross stereotype to reverence and even teeters on ambivalence in some cases. This essay seeks to place the genres of film and literature in conversation with each other to explore the representation of the conjure woman figure in the popular imagination. While the films by Schlesinger, Eastwood, Scott, Softley, and Verbinski provide a pool of resources for examining the conjure woman figure in film, the scope of my inquiry is limited and very specific. Of particular importance to this project are the ways in which African American filmmakers reconstruct the image of "Sistah Conjurer," to borrow Valerie Lee's phrase, engaging issues of body politics, stereotype, and the position of African retentions in visual texts (1996, 1). I take as my subject the films of Julie Dash and Kasi Lemmons, whose work reflects the lives and physicality of conjure women as African American female filmmakers conceive them, to ponder the critical questions: (1) Do visual representations of conjure women help or hinder the project of reclamation and cultural preservation that has taken place in contemporary African American literature? (2) Do the films *Daughters of the Dust* and *Eve's Bayou* offer a safe space for the conjure woman to exist in visual culture? Both films are woman-centered and highlight conjuring communities. As such, they provide a rich landscape in which to thoroughly explore the nuanced, filmic representation of the African American woman healer.

Film plays a critical role in the quest of recovering the conjure woman from the depths of cultural intolerance, degradation, and ignorance. The written word is limited in the ways it can shape one's perception, understanding, and articulation of what and who the conjure woman is. The visual image, however, resonates more strongly, ingraining someone else's concept in the mind of a willing audience. Much like the conjure tradition, visual media engages in both healing and harmful practices.[1] It can restore damaged, inaccurate images to their past glory or perpetuate prejudiced, stigmatized ideals that become more difficult to challenge. The visual images of healing women in Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust* (1991) and Kasi Lemmons's *Eve's Bayou* (1997) must be assessed to determine whether the film portrayals of African American spiritual healers continue to pay homage to and reshape the conjure woman across genres within her own cultural matrix.

Dash and Lemmons—two black, female, independent filmmakers—prove themselves committed to ideals of challenging and reappropriating the image of the conjure woman in an overtly conscious way. Lemmons revitalizes the conjure woman's physical image three times over in the most successful independent film of 1997. *Eve's Bayou* is "an original and historically respectful exploration of diverse African American spiritual traditions, which tackles, in a deft and sophisticated manner, such femininely resonant topics as sexual abuse and the possibilities of personal freedom for women" (Hull 2001, 198). Set in 1962 Louisiana, the storyline has a glaring resemblance to Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day* (1988). The story surrounds the Batiste family, descendants of the slave healer Eve who was bequeathed a sizable amount of land by her master, the southern aristocrat General Jean-Paul Batiste, after she cured him of cholera. Eve populated the land with sixteen of Batiste's children and the land took on her name, appropriately called Eve's Bayou. Much like the descendants of Sapphira Wade, the living Batistes are a family of healers. Louis Batiste (Samuel L. Jackson) is the local physician, who does little more than "push aspirin to the elderly," while his sister Mozelle (Debbi Morgan) is a "psychic counselor," tending to the otherworldly needs of the community (Lemmons 1998, 189, 166). Then there is young Eve (Journee Smollett), the most recent of the Batiste descendants to inherit her slave ancestor's gift of second sight.

In defiance of all stereotypes and preconceived notions as to which images black women should be confined, Lemmons certainly depicts her conjure women against the grain. Mozelle Batiste, to whom the audience is introduced early in the film, is stunningly beautiful. She has long, flowing, unprocessed, red hair, contrary to popular beliefs that black women "barely [have] enough [hair] to wash, let alone press and curl" (Collins 2000, 91). She is glamorous, wearing beaded gowns, jewelry, and high-heeled shoes in many of her scenes—a reflection of her middle-class status. Mozelle is obviously attractive to men as evidenced by her three marriages and pending romance with Julian Gray-Raven, yet she is not overtly sexualized. Her lips are painted red through most of the film, calling attention to their suppleness and marking her as a sexual being, but she is not captured in any lewd, deviant sex acts. In *Black Feminist Thought* Patricia Hill Collins discusses the characteristics of the cult of true womanhood—piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity—which she argues are used to fuel the controlling, oppressive images of black women.[2] Mozelle's sexuality, rather than reflecting the image of the sexually aggressive, promiscuous Jezebel that Collins describes,

strikes a healthy balance between the purity/asexuality of the cult of true womanhood and the indiscriminate nature of so-called "loose" women. Mozelle explains to her niece Eve, with no sense of shame or embarrassment, that her extra-marital lover, Hosea, lit a fire under her that even her husband at the time, Maynard, could not quell. This is a woman who is very comfortable with her sexuality and one who, perhaps, reflects a more tangible idea of black women's sexuality than Jezebel or Mammy ever has. Not only does Mozelle defy the association with long-standing ideas about black women's sexual appetites, but she also removes herself from domestic space.

There are no scenes in which Mozelle is chopping vegetables, boiling water, washing dishes, or otherwise preparing the family meal. She is conspicuously absent from the Sunday brunch attended by all the other Batiste relatives. She admittedly has neither children nor the responsibilities of motherhood. She smokes cigarettes and moves about as she sees fit, ever outside of the domesticity in which her mother and sister-in-law, Roz (Lynn Whitfield), exist. In contrast, the eldest conjurer in the neighborhood, Elzora (Diahann Carroll) is pictured in the kitchen sharing a bowl of gumbo with Eve during the ten-year-old's initial consultation with the hoodoo lady. Elzora's placement in the kitchen, however, does not automatically confer unto her the history and embodiment of the domestic worker or mammy figure. She obviously makes her living through her spiritual prowess by divining the future for those so inclined to know at the local farmer's market, rather than cleaning the homes of wealthy white people. While it is unknown whether Elzora has any children, the film does make it clear that she lives alone and, thus, has no domestic obligations to anyone besides herself.

While Elzora does not fit easily into any of the common black female stereotypes, casting Diahann Carroll as the aged conjurer proved to be a challenge for Lemmons. In the director's commentary on the film, Lemmons admits that the producers were not convinced that Carroll was the right fit for the role because she was "too beautiful." The suggestion here is that conjuring and beauty are antithetical; any woman dealing in African-steeped secrets of the supernatural is automatically assumed unattractive and haggardly. Common associations with women and magic evoke images of the classic, Eurocentric witch—old, gray, wrinkled, and complete with a large nose and missing teeth. Presumably, this is the image that the film producers were conjuring up in relation to Elzora's character. Lemmons's film, however, insists that conjure women do not have to reflect the dominant culture's

supposition that remnants of an African past are grotesque. The film does not depict any romantic interests for Elzora, but there are other telling signs that indicate that her attractiveness and sexuality have not been erased due to her occupation, age, or race.

During Eve's return visit to Elzora's reclusive home to retrieve the voodoo doll she assumes is part of the death spell she has requested, the hoodoo lady answers the door in a long cotton nightgown that suggestively falls off her bare shoulders. Her silvery gray hair is also hanging to its full length. While such signs may appear unsubstantial, I argue that Elzora's loose hair and bare shoulders are cinematic cliché for sexual awareness and desirability. I do not mean to suggest that Elzora is exerting her sexual energy toward Eve, only that she is obviously aware and comfortable with her sexuality and wears her desirability effortlessly—even with age. Lemmons brilliantly challenges her audiences' perception of what a conjure woman should be, demonstrating through Elzora that the conjurer is not a type or a static image but rather a fluid one, ever changing and appearing in places viewers are not prepared to look.

The characters of *Eve's Bayou* confront preconceived notions of conjure women as old, gray, and wrinkled or big, black, and fat. Both Mozelle and Elzora subvert long-standing correlations between conjure and hoodoo—often referred to as black magic—with something vile, ugly, and unsightly. Conversely, the conjure women of Lemmons's imagination have unparalleled beauty even in their weakest and darkest moments. Even young Eve, the conjure novice, is innocently beautiful. Lemmons's portrayal teaches the audience that these women, so-called heathens, devil-worshippers, and the like, are more human than perhaps previously thought. Mozelle, Elzora, and Eve resemble the common folk; they represent familiar and safe images to the black spectator.

Julie Dash also consciously manipulates the visual image of Nana Peazant, the conjuring figure in *Daughters of the Dust*. As the eighty-eight-year-old matriarch of the Peazant clan, Nana represents the oldest living connection to the African past for Ibo Landing. Dash was very much invested in visibly recognizing Nana's reverence of the old ways as well as her role as nurturing ancestor. It becomes clear in her casting choice, however, that she was not interested in perpetuating the robust, jolly, black woman of Southern myth. Rather, Nana (Cora Lee Day) is a slender-framed, dark-complexioned woman with strong ethnic features. Nana has a very sharp and distinct facial bone structure. She has a gap between her teeth, rumored to be a sign of beauty in many African cultures, while her dark skin represents her

ties to Africa, a cherished and honored connection among the Geechee community of Dash's creation.

The celebration of darker skin and Africanness is not only reflected in the aesthetic "revisioning [of] the cinematic iconography of black women" throughout the film, Dash also reiterates the beauty and power of the darker hued in *Daughters of the Dust: A Novel* (1997), which returns to Ibo Landing several years after the Peazants "crossover" to the mainland (Machiorlatti 2005, 98). When Amelia, the light-skinned granddaughter of Haagar Peazant returns to the island to study her Geechee relatives, her skin is a mark of disdain:

> Every now and then, one of her fellow travelers glanced back at Amelia and touched their chest. . . . Elizabeth had also noticed the gesture, the touching of the protective charm that everyone wore under their clothes. She chided herself for not remembering how suspicious people were of "red-bone" people. Cousin Amelia with her brown hair and red-brown coloring would have much to overcome. (Dash 1997, 68–69)

Rather than praising and privileging lighter skin, Dash deliberately situates Amelia as the "exoticized Other," the anomaly in a world where dark skin is the standard of beauty. Dash pushes the envelope even further as Amelia voices her discomfort and self-consciousness at the way her skin color determines others' attitude toward her:

> When Amelia had first recognized the charm-touching gesture for what it was, she had been amused. But now, it irritated her, for she saw it as an ignorant habit that emphasized the difference between her and the others. It hurt her, and for the first time in her life, her color was not an advantage among her own people. (1997, 95)

Amelia is getting a small glimpse of the prejudice that is often experienced over a lifetime for people of African descent with deep, melanin-rich skin tones. Dash's subversion of color preference biases in both the novel and the film reinforces her mission to "break with the tradition" of what Patricia Hill Collins calls the controlling images that continue to oppress black women (Dash 1992, 51).

Skin color, however, is not the only place where Nana Peazant's body politics depart from the stereotypical images associated with black women of spiritual power. Even though she is well into her eighth decade, Nana does not wear a crown of graying hair, which often represents the stress and turmoil of modern living. Viola, her granddaughter, is noticeably gray, though she seems to be only half Nana's age. She, coincidentally, has given her life over to the mainland and assimilated into a Eurocentric understanding of the world. Nana, on the other hand, lives a very simple,

organic life, producing whatever food, remedies, or cosmetics necessary for survival with what can be yielded from the earth. Nana's hair is cropped short and styled in palm-rolled coils to represent her Africanist lifestyle, a representation of great import to Dash. In a conversation with bell hooks she discusses why hair was such a concern in the film:

> The hairstyles we're wearing now are based upon ancient hairstyles, and there is a tradition behind these hairstyles. They mean things. In any West African country, you know, if you were a pre-teen you have a certain hairstyle. If you were in puberty you have another hairstyle. Menopausal, another hairstyle. Married, single, whatever. All of this means something. There is so much meaning to our heritage that just goes overlooked. . . . We researched that. (Dash 1992, 53)

As Sandra M. Grayson notes in *Symbolizing the Past: Reading Sankofa, Daughters of the Dust, & Eve's Bayou as Histories* (2000), "in order to break with cliché, formula, and stereotype in representing the history of enslaved Africans in North America, Dash used numerous symbols in *Daughters of the Dust* including the figurehead of an African warrior floating in the swamp, ancient markings within drawings on the wall, and a graveyard that reflects burial practices of the Kongo" (40). Dash also took this approach in her characterization of Nana Peazant. Nana is a product and survivor of American slavery, but her body does not reveal the pain of that existence in the most recognizable ways. There are neither chains, brandings, or chokecherry tree scars on her back nor do her descendants wear the identifiable marks of a recent white progenitor in their physical appearances. In an attempt to expand the discourse on the visible signs of slavery, Dash allows the indigo-stained hands of Nana and the elder women of the community to voice their oppression. Dash explains that she was using indigo "as a symbol of slavery, [creating] a new kind of icon around slavery rather than the traditional [signs]" (Dash 1992, 31). The indigo stains not only Nana's hands but also her clothing. Rather than wearing the white cotton dresses like the other women on the island, Nana dons an indigo-dyed frock that represents the work she endured in slavery. Her dress sets her apart from the other women on the island, marking her as a character of reverence and wisdom that reaches further back in the memories of slavery and Africa than perhaps any other figure in the film. She wears her indigo dress like the robes of royalty and the symbolic message is not lost on the viewer. For Ibo Landing, Nana is the closest African ancestor still living.

As an antithetical representation of the classic mammy figure, Dash's image of the nurturing family matriarch addresses in an innovative way

the asexual condition that has become synonymous with such figures. As Collins argues, asexuality is prerequisite to authentic mammy-hood. "The mammy image is one of an asexual woman, a surrogate mother in blackface whose historical devotion to her White family is now giving way to expectations" (2000, 74). Rather than depict Nana in suggestive positions or focus on memories of lovemaking with her deceased husband, Dash takes a more subtle approach to departing from the stereotype. Nana's sexuality is implied through the horde of descendants that surround her. While the number of children born to Nana is never revealed in the film or the novel, the presence of four generations of Peazants is proof enough that Mother Peazant was engaged in sexual activity.

The film solidifies that Nana's reproduction was not a result of her being "forced," to use Nana's euphemism. The film alludes to Nana's young life with her husband, Shad, in a flashback scene where a young man with ritually scarred cheeks instructs Nana on what to do with the earth running through her hands. The relationship is a very loving and affectionate one even beyond the grave, as evidenced by Nana herself, who tells her great grandson Eli (Adisa Anderson), "I visit with old Peazant every day since the day he died" (Dash 1992, 96). The marriage of the elder Peazants is an understated reference in the film, though critical in Nana's disrupting inaccurate and damaging images of black women in general and conjure women specifically. Through the subtle hints revealed in the film, Nana's coupling with Shad "was not just about lust, was not just about sex or violence or some kind of platonic, mother/grandfather type situation" as Dash informs (1992, 55). Rather, it is a loving relationship between a black man and woman. Nana and Shad Peazant enjoyed a long life together and apparently brought several children into the world. As mentioned earlier, with the exception of Yellow Mary (Barbara O.), none of the Peazant descendants appearing in the film possess the visible features of a biracial heritage so one can assume that Shad, rather than some random, lecherous, white landowner, is indeed the progenitor of the Peazant clan.

With Nana's sexuality safely intact, other parts of her being are available for analysis. As part of her faith and lifestyle, Nana is invested in the practice of African-centered spirituality. As with many other fictionalized conjure women, she too finds power in her own body.[3] Dash places great emphasis on Nana's "laying on of hands" as part of her ministry. One of the earliest images in the film is of two hands sifting through red dirt; later the viewer discovers that those hands belong to Nana. Nana has laid her hands in the soil of the island, communing with the ancestors who

rest there and claiming the land as home for her descendants. The most amazing trick, however, that Nana turns with her "hand" is the "Root Revival of Love" that sends a piece of her spirit with each of her migrating descendants to protect them once they cross over to the mainland. Nana works on the "hand" throughout the single day in which the film takes place, stitching and stuffing herbs here and intertwining strands of hair there until her hoodoo charm is complete. As metaphorical as it is, the hand that Nana attaches to the Bible certainly holds a most potent power: her own and that of the ancestors whom Nana keeps close through "scraps of memory."

The power of Nana's hands is most noticeable in her interactions with one of her granddaughters. When Yellow Mary returns to the island and seeks a quiet moment with Nana, the two women share a very intimate exchange as Nana lays her healing hands on her granddaughter. "Without censure, without expectations, without judgment, Yellow Mary's grandmother strokes her hair and gazes affectionately into her face, making sure that her excursion to the New World has not destroyed her inner being. When she is satisfied that all is well, Nana Peazant leans in toward Yellow Mary and places their foreheads softly together" (Bobo 1995, 162). Nana's hands wash away any of the shame and hurt that Yellow Mary has endured since being "ruint" during her stay in Cuba. Nana's hands also help Yellow Mary to reach clarity of mind. During the scene in which Yellow Mary, her lesbian companion, Trula (Trula Hoosier), and Eula (Alva Rogers) are casually talking under the parasol they have discovered on the beach, Yellow Mary informs Eula of her future plans. "When I leave here . . . I'll be heading up for Canada. Nova Scotia. I like the sound of that place . . . Nova Scotia. . . .I never had too much trouble making a dollar. Never needed nobody to help me do that" (Dash 1992, 145). Then Yellow Mary's speech assumes a more persuasive tone, "I can't stand still. Got to keep moving. New faces, new places. . . . Nova Scotia will be good to me" (1992, 145).

While Yellow Mary is directing her comments to Eula, she is also trying to convince herself that she must keep moving to evade the emptiness that continues to haunt her. She divulges the truth of her unhappiness as she and Nana embrace a second time. Nana's hands wrap tightly around both Yellow Mary and Eula in an emotional frenzy, nudging the discontent in Yellow Mary's heart into her throat and out of her mouth for all to hear. "You know I'm not like the other women here. But I need to know that I can come home . . . to hold on to what I come from. I need to know the people here know my name. . . . I want to stay. I want to stay and visit

with you here" (1992, 154). Intoxicated with the comforts of home and by Nana's touch, Yellow Mary cannot bear to part with Ibo Landing.

Daughters of the Dust, like *Eve's Bayou*, presents a very human image of Nana Peazant. She is a mother, a grandmother, a wife; she mourns the loss of her husband and cries when her family separates. She laughs a little, too. Nana is neither depicted as an aberrant citizen in her community nor a horrid, old lady who eats children. Such connotations of conjure women are simply inaccurate and used to discredit the cultural and, especially, the spiritual authority with which their communities imbued them. Dash's and Lemmons's films add a tremendous force behind the cultural preservation and retrieval of the African American healing woman from the depths of Eurocentric stigmatization. Mozelle Batiste, Elzora, Nana Peazant, and Eve are but four possible branches that stem from the rich, enduring cultural icon of the conjure woman. Dash and Lemmons bring to life the Aunt Peggys, Sapphira Wades, Indigos, and Melviras of the African American literary imagination. They capture the diversity of physical types of African American women and challenge the normative, witch-like associations forced onto conjure women like Tituba of Salem Witch Trial infamy, for instance.

The images of conjure women presented in these films are critical to the process of reappropriation because they challenge popular belief, but most importantly because these images were created by black women for other black women. Dash and Lemmons reflect conjure women who are not unlike their own mothers, grandmothers, and in Lemmons's case, her aunt.[4] These depictions, like those in the fiction of Jewell Parker Rhodes, Maryse Condé, and others, mirror the histories, legends, and lives of women who in one form or another existed and touched the lives of the directors. This is what makes them real, believable, and so invaluable to the task at hand.

"The Black Feminist narrative style" of both *Eve's Bayou* and *Daughters of the Dust* is, as Machiorlattie suggests, "one of recollection and remembering so that stereotypes can be subverted, inaccurate historical representation corrected, and new aesthetic choices and forms merge that diffuse dominant forms" (2005, 98). Lemmons and Dash's respective films are undeniably engaged in the work of black feminist criticism, challenging the place of black women in history, the imagination, and their roles in creative processes outside of the literary realm. Much like Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day*; Ntozake Shange's *Sassafrass, Cypress & Indigo*; and Paule Marshall's *Praisesong for the Widow* before them, Lemmons and Dash create narratives surrounding black women, history, and magic that

give voice to a very particular cultural experience and aesthetic extending their branch of this well-established theme in African American artistic lineage from the page to the screen.

Notes

1. Because the African cosmology from which conjure evolved does not recognize such concepts as good and evil the same way Christianity does, Theophus Smith argues that rather than thinking about conjure in terms of binary oppositions, it should not be conceptualized in so limiting a view. According to the introduction of *Conjuring Culture*, conjure has the unlimited ability to both heal and harm depending on how the power is invoked and for what purpose.
2. The Cult of True Womanhood, according to Barbara Welter, is a term used to describe nineteenth-century ideals of womanhood. Welter identifies four tenants of the True Woman: (1) a woman should be pious; (2) a woman should exemplify purity of heart, mind, and especially body; (3) a true woman submits to the will and ways of one's husband; and (4) a true woman reigns over domesticity. See Welter for a full discussion of the term and its cultural reverberations. Collins discusses this idea in chapter four.
3. As I argue in my forthcoming monograph, there are other notable healing women such as Octavia Butler's Anywanwu from *Wild Seed* (1980), Lena McPherson in Tina McElroy Ansa's *Baby of the Family* (1989) and *The Hand I Fan With* (1996), and Gayl Jones's Harland Eagleton from *The Healing*. All reflect their spiritual prowess through their physical bodies. Anywanwu is a shape shifter who can use her own body to make healing salves. Lena McPherson can fix a stalled car and turn muddy water clear with the touch of her hand or body excrements. Harland Eagleton also applies her faith healing by laying hands on her subjects. The correlation between African American healers and the physical body can also be explored in the phenomenon of spirit possession, which is innately connected to the physical body. Jewell Parker Rhodes's novel *Voodoo Dreams: A Novel of Marie Laveau* (1992) focuses on healing through possession. See *Conjuring Moments in African American Literature: Women, Spirit Work, & Other Such Hoodoo*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming 2013.
4. The character Mozelle Batiste is based on Lemmons's Aunt Murial who also lost several husbands to mysterious circumstances, practiced divination and voodoo, and was told by another conjure woman that she was cursed as a black widow. Lemmons discusses her aunt and the creative process of creating Mozelle in the Director's Commentary, an extra feature on the DVD.

References

Bobo, Jacqueline. *Black Women as Cultural Readers*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995.

Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Dash, Julie. *Daughters of the Dust: A Novel*. New York: Plume, 1997.

———. *Daughters of the Dust: The Making of an African American Women's Film*. New York: The New Press, 1992.

Daughters of the Dust. DVD. Directed by Julie Dash. Performed by Cora Lee Day, Barbara O., and Adisa Anderson. Kino International, 1991.

Daughters of the Dust: Director's Audio Commentary. DVD. Directed by Julie Dash. Kino International, 1999.
Eve's Bayou. DVD. Directed by Kasi Lemmons. Performed by Samuel L. Jackson, Lynn Whitfield, Diahann Carroll, and Journee Smollett. Lion's Gate, 1997.
Eve's Bayou: Commentary with Cast and Director. DVD. Lion's Gate, 2002.
Grayson, Sandra. *Symbolizing the Past: Reading Sankofa, Daughters of the Dust, and Eve's Bayou as Histories.* Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000.
Hull, Akasha Gloria. *Soul Talk: The New Spirituality of African American Women.* Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2001.
Lee, Valerie. *Granny Midwives and Black Women Writers: Double-Dutched Readings.* New York: Routledge, 1996.
Lemmons, Kasi. "Eve's Bayou: Screenplay." *Scenario: The Magazine of Screenwriting Art* 4.2 (Summer 1998): 153–91.
Machiorlatti, Jennifer. "Revisiting Julie Dash's Daughters of the Dust: Black Feminist Narrative and Diasporic Recollection." *South Atlantic Review* 70, no. 1 (Winter 2005): 97–116.
Smith, Theophus. *Conjuring Culture: Biblical Formations of Black America.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.
Welter, Barbara. "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860." *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 Part i (Summer1966): 151–174.

3

African American Males' Maladaptive Coping Strategies to Racism at Predominately White Postsecondary Institutions

Toya Roberts

Introduction

As the number of African Americans gaining admission and enrolling into postsecondary institutions of higher education continues to increase, it is important to note that the majority of these students will attend institutions in which the campus population is predominately White. Research has found that on these campuses African Americans are experiencing significantly negative side effects associated with social isolation and alienation (Pascarella and Terenzini 1991; Haralson 1995). Research

To My Readers: I need to start this brief article with a disclaimer. I am not a historian. I am a teacher educator with a passion to read and learn more about the Civil Rights Movement. I am a teacher of teachers who uses cultural studies to understand or analyze issues. I am a Black woman who wants to better understand my people's history and especially our fight for equal rights and what we need to do in the present to build on the successes and mistakes of the past. I used a handful of articles—albeit great articles, in my humble opinion—to begin to understand what I see as an exciting time in history and, importantly, to understand how this knowledge can be used in my teacher education classes.