Serial Forced Displacements and the Decline of *Ubuntu* in Afrikan American Communities

Huberta Jackson-Lowman
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2933-6192

Abstract

Serial forced displacement, the 'repetitive, coercive upheaval of groups', is examined as a key feature of the ongoing Maafa or Afrikan Holocaust and explored as a primary source of the disruption of Ubuntu in Black communities in the United States. According to Fullilove (2016), disconnecting people from their land, their culture, history, traditions, values, and relationships creates 'root shock' which undermines natural tendencies to exhibit respect, compassion, caring, cooperation, and support of one's fellow human beings, or what South Afrikan people refer to as 'Ubuntu.' African philosophy suggests that Ubuntu is a common moral position passed down over generations by Afrikan people. Its presence has been noted in segregated Black communities, which is illustrative of the retention of Ubuntu amongst Afrikan Americans. American housing policies at the federal, state, and local levels, along with private development initiatives that have led to gentrification of many Black neighbourhoods, are identified as the main culprits in the diminishment of Ubuntu through the uprooting and destruction of numerous thriving Black communities. It is suggested that these housing policies are the most recent examples of serial forced displacement and are at the root of much of the community disorganization, health disparities, violence, and family instability observed in many low-income Black neighbourhoods. The development of cultural standards that prescribe cultural policies which are designed to restore Ubuntu in Black communities is recommended as a palliative for ameliorating the dehumanizing environment created by serial forced displacements.

Amagama asemqoka: serial forced displacement, root shock, Ubuntu, gentrification, U.S. housing policies, cultural policy, Maafa

Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN: 2519-5476; DOI https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2020/v27n1a9

Uchungechunge Lokususwa Ngodli Nokwehla Kobuntu Emiphakathini Yama-Afrika AseMelika

Huberta Jackson-Lowman
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2933-6192

Iqoqa

Uchungechunge lokususwa ngodli, ‘ukususwa kwamaqoqo abantu ngobuphithiphithi nendluzula’, kuhlolwa njengento engqangi yokuqhubeka kwe-Maafa noma ukucekelwa phansi komhlaba okungokwase-Afrika futhi kubhekisiswa njengomthombo ongqangi wokuphazanyiswa kobuntu emiphakathini yabamnyama eMelika. NgokukaFullilove (2016), ukuhlukanisa abantu nezwe labo, amasiko abo, umlando, indlelakuphila, amagugu, nobudlelwano kwenza ‘ukwethuka okuwumnyombo’ okudicilela phansi imikhuba ngokwemvelo yokukhombisa inhlonipho, uzwelo, ukunakelela, ukusebenzisana, nokuxhaswa kwabanye abantu, noma lokhu abantu baseNingizimu Afrika abakubiza ngokuthi, ‘Ubuntu.’ Injulabuchopho yase-Afrika ihlongoza ukuthi Ubuntu buyinto eyindlelakuziphatha ejwayelekile esuselwa ekudluliswenikusizukulwane ukuya kwesinye ngabantu abangama-Afrika. Ukuba khona kwalokho kuye kwanakwa yimiphakathi yabamnyama ebihlukahlukanisiwe, okuvezwa ukulondolozwa kobuntu phakathi kwama-Afrika aseMelika. Izinqubomgomo zaseMelika zezezindlu okungokwen-hlangano yamazwe, umbuso, namazinga ezindawo ezisemakhaya, okuhambisana nemizamo yokuthuthuka kwangasese okuholele ekuqinisweni kwabesilisa okwenziwa ezindaweni eziningi zabaMnyama, lokhu kuhlonzwa njengabenzi bokubi okungqangi ekushabalaleni kobuntu ngokukhuculula nokubhidliza izinto eziningi zemiphakathi yabamnyama abazizamelayo. Kuhlongozwa ukuthi lezi zinqubomgomo zezezindlu ziyizibonelo ezisanda kwenzeka zochungechunge lokususwa ngodli futhi kuwumnyombo omkhulu wokungahleleki kwemiphakathi, ukungalingani ngokwezempilo, udlame, nokungazinzi kwemindeni okunakwa emiphakathini yabamnyama eminingi enemalingeniso encane. Ukuthuthuka kwamazingaqophelo esiko okunquma

izinqubomgomo zesiko ezenzelwe ukuvuselela ubuntu emiphakathini yabamnyama kuyisincomo esiwukudambisa sivuselele isimo esithunabezekile esakhiwe uchungechunge lokususwa ngodli.

Amagama asemqoka: uchungechunge lokususwa ngodli, ukwethuka okuwumnyombo, ubuntu, ukuthuthukisa kabusha, izinqubomgomo zezezindlu zase-U.S., inqubomgomo yesiko, iMaafa

Introduction

The removal of indigenous peoples from their native lands is one of the most insidious, conspicuous, and pernicious expressions of cultural hegemony. It is akin to uprooting trees that have been standing and flourishing for centuries on their native soil and never transplanting them—a certain death. According to Mindy Fullilove (2016), these actions comprise a phenomenon called 'root shock'. Root shock is a catastrophic disruption of the connection people have with their land, nations, neighbourhoods, and homes (Fullilove 2016). The experience of root shock can be likened to a volcanic eruption, which sends shock waves throughout the emotional ecosystem. Because the entire planet and all of its occupants are woven together into one complex net or emotional ecosystem, ultimately the impact of root shock extends far beyond the proximal victims. Its effects reverberate physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, culturally, and generationally at the individual and collective levels for the proximal group, while also affecting those at a distance. It is a cultural trauma that leaves an indelible mark on the dislocated people.

The disconnection of indigenous people from their native lands is a fundamental feature of the Maafa (Ani aka Dona Richards 1989). The Maafa, a term developed by Ani (1989) to describe the Afrikan Holocaust, began with the removal of Afrikan people from the continent of Afrika and their enslavement. Grills (2004) states that the enslavement of Afrikan people by Europeans disrupted the cultural link between continental Afrikans and their brothers and sisters, who were dispersed throughout the world. The Maafa continues through the persistent, unrelenting denial of the humanity of Afrikan people (Grills 2004), which assumes ever more variegated forms, ensuring that Afrikan people remain disenfranchised and oppressed wherever they are located.

This article focuses on the dimension of the Maafa that Fullilove has termed 'root shock', which manifests in the form of serial forced displacements

(Fulllilove & Wallace 2011). It links current gentrification activities in the United States to the long history of serial forced displacement by Europeans and discusses the impact of the housing and related policies that have institutionalised these disruptions for Afrikan Americans at the individual and collective levels. The philosophy of *ubuntu* is utilised as the standard of healthy Black/Afrikan functioning. The development of cultural standards and policies grounded in *ubuntu* philosophy are offered as a strategy for reclaiming our authentic identities and ways of functioning.

Serial Forced Displacement: A Persistent Maafic Reality

For Afrikan people, and indeed for indigenous cultures, connection to the land, to the environment, to the village, to our elders, and to our ancestors is sacred and integral to our identity, our relationships, our history and culture, and our day-to-day functioning. The disruption of these connections is traumatising. As stated in one Afrikan proverb, 'cut your chains and you are free; cut your roots and you die'. The increase in interpersonal and structural violence in many Afrikan American neighbourhoods is one of the consequences of the 'repetitive, coercive upheaval of groups' (Fulilove & Wallace 2011: 381).

Ani (1994:249) discusses the expansionistic mandate inherent in European cultures, which entreats them to conquer everything that they find. She suggests that what are actually aggressive tendencies is represented as 'progressive energy'. This rationale has fuelled gentrification activities across the United States, constituting the latest attack on Afrikan American neighbourhoods and families, disassembling them like pieces of a useless and uninteresting puzzle.

From a historical perspective, serial forced displacements have been a defining characteristic of the Maafa since its inception. Beginning with the removal of Afrikan people from the continent—separating us from our families, our villages, our land, our culture; forbidding us to speak in our native tongue or use our authentic names—this practice has been as consistent as sunrise and sunset. The institution of American enslavement reinforced this practice with the auctioning of enslaved Afrikans, separating us from our families and those that we loved, without compunction. The parade of events that followed the end of chattel slavery did little to provide the stability and security that Afrikan Americans required to establish the roots needed for our long-term survival and thriving. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1968:105) cites

Henrietta Buckmaster, who said 'With Appomattox (one of the last battles of the Civil War), four million black people in the South owned their skins and nothing more'. King Jr. (1968: 105) goes on to say:

> Thrown off the plantations, penniless, homeless, still largely in the territory of their enemies and in the grip of fear, bewilderment and aimlessness, hundreds of thousands became wanderers.

Epigenetic research (Pember 2017) would certainly predict that the magnitude of the trauma evoked by the enslavement of Afrikan people, the lack of a plan or any support following the end of chattel slavery, and the physical and psychic terrorism (Nobles 2018) that Afrikan Americans experienced subsequently would, undoubtedly, create genetic changes that would affect us for generations. Yet, many stable Afrikan American communities emerged and institutions were built that included schools, colleges, hospitals, banks, businesses, recreational facilities, as well as religious institutions (Fullilove 2016). However, the efforts of our former enslavers to maintain the chains of our enslavement could not be throttled. As a result Black codes persisted, which restricted our freedom of movement; sharecropping, often exploitative, replaced outright slavery (Equal Justice Initiative 2015); convict leasing initiated the criminalisation of Black men (Blackmon 2008); terrorism by groups like the Ku Klux Klan destroyed our homes and businesses, and drove Black families out of their communities (Jaspin 2007); lynchings were frequent reminders that we had no rights that whites were bound to respect (Equal Justice Initiative 2015); and of course, discrimination in employment ensured that many Afrikan Americans would be constantly scuttling about in search of safe spaces to raise our children and support our families (Vance 2001) .

Fullilove and Wallace (2011) delineate the destructive effects that serial forced displacements have produced for Afrikan Americans, our families, and communities. Disparities in the area of health, including the exacerbation of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, excess rates of obesity and obesity-related diseases, as well as other stress-related disorders; the loosening of social networks; the fragmentation of families; the loss of legitimate employment; and the crime and violence that have become endemic in our neighbourhoods are some of these debilitating and interrelated conditions. These outcomes have been facilitated by federal, state, and local government

policies that discriminate against the poor, people of Afrikan ancestry, and Latinx populations. The disregard and disrespect for the humanity of Afrikan people is so deeply entrenched that every effort to address the injustices has only resulted in superficial gains, if any, leaving the lives of significant masses of Afrikan Americans rooted in poverty, chaos, and ill health. Ani (1994) argues that European culture exemplifies a quality that she calls the 'rhetorical ethic.' In this context, Ani explains, every act has a concealed political motive typically disguised in altruistic rhetoric. It must be acknowledged that in some cases, no efforts to conceal salacious motives were made, because the idea that Afrikan people are inferior is so deeply embedded in the consciousness of European Americans that any differential treatment toward Afrikan people could be justified on this basis. An examination of the development of housing policies in the United States and related policies in other sectors reveals a pattern of overt discriminatory practices that have deeply affected the viability of Afrikan American neighbourhoods, families, and people.

The Governmental Attack on Black Neighbourhoods and Families

As if synchronised to produce a strategically prioritised outcome, U.S. housing policies accompanied by other governmental policies have systematically contributed to the dismantling of Afrikan American neighbourhoods and communities in places such as Pittsburgh's Hill District, New York's Harlem, Chicago's South Side, San Francisco's Fillmore District, South Central Los Angeles (McGee 2007), and countless other cities. Fullilove and Wallace (2011) highlight some of the housing policies that have contributed to the demise of black neighbourhoods and families. Beginning with segregation, which emerged gradually over a period of 150 years, and eventually was supported by redlining in 1937, this federal government designed policy discouraged investment in areas characterised as risky, and defined as having a large presence of old buildings and non-whites (Fullilove & Wallace 2011). The Federal Housing Act of 1949, entitled Urban Renewal, and referred to as 'Negro Removal' in the black community, authorised the government seizure of land declared 'blighted'. Fullilove (2016) challenges this characterisation of many of the properties that were seized and used for the purposes of constructing universities, cultural centres, and public housing. Approximately 75% of the 2500 urban renewal projects implemented and the one million

people displaced as a result of this policy were Afrikan Americans and other people of colour (Fullilove & Wallace 2011). Black businesses and institutions were undermined—retail stores, pharmacies, hospitals, banks, funeral homes, restaurants, to name a few (Fullilove 2016). Black jazz communities, once an integral part of black communities, were rendered homeless, and the once strong connection, that existed between jazz as an art form and the black community, destroyed. Fullilove (2016: 12) states:

> When the mazeway, the external system of protection, is damaged, the person will go into root shock …. the victim of root shock requires the support and direction of emergency workers who can erect shelter, provide food, and ensure safety until the victim has stabilized [sic] and can begin to take over these functions again.

Of course, none of the solutions that Fullilove offered were implemented. Instead, policies like planned shrinkage were enacted. Through the implementation of this treacherous policy, many Afrikan Americans were relocated into areas targeted for disinvestment. These areas witnessed the withdrawal of crucial public and private resources. One such case occurred in New York City and involved the closing of selected fire departments, which led to the burning of black/ Latinx neighbourhoods (Fullilove & Wallace 2011).

Consciously and unconsciously, the U.S. federal government and local governments as well, have colluded in the destruction of black neighbourhoods and families with ongoing attacks launched through neglectful, predatory, and discriminatory housing policies. Other factors such as deindustrialisation and the loss of the manufacturing sector in the U.S., the crack-cocaine epidemic and the draconian policies that emerged from it, leading to the over-incarceration of Afrikan Americans, and particularly black men, have augmentted the crisis (Fullilove & Wallace 2011). Hope VI, developed in 1992, was supposedly created to renovate public housing by establishing mixed-income housing; however, it, too, has contributed to the uprooting of the poor who are often removed from their neighbourhoods and clustered in distant areas of concentrated poverty. Against this backdrop, the forces of gentry-fication, though not directly driven by public policy, have been stridently operating in cities across the United States.

Gentrification: A Case of Persistent Serial Forced Displacement

The acquisition of civil rights for Afrikan Americans, ironically, ushered in moves by whites to return to the cities that they had abandoned earlier (McGee 2007). This movement has been called 'gentrification,' a euphemistic way of describing the removal of one group of people considered 'less desirable' and their replacement by another group of people considered 'more desirable'. In reality, it is a sanitised form of ethnic cleansing, or as Afrikan Americans refer to it, 'The New Negro Removal' and the latest example of serial forced displacement. The systematic evacuation of Afrikan Americans from the inner city and the reclamation of these spaces, primarily by upper-income whites, is occurring across the nation. While this latest form of serial forced dislocation is typically driven by private developers, they rely on the cooperation of local policy makers who are sympathetic and may, in fact, benefit directly or indirectly from their activities. Cities across the country such as Washington, D.C., Seattle, Washington, Oakland, California and numerous other areas are observing the disappearance of Afrikan Americans from the inner city.

Many complex factors have coalesced to produce these outcomes including pro-gentry policies, the mortgage foreclosure crisis which severely affected home ownership by Afrikan Americans and Latinx populations (Fullilove & Wallace 2011); discrimination in mortgage lending, extreme hikes in the value of properties accompanied by higher property taxes for people on fixed incomes (McGee 2017); and historical discrimination against Afrikan Americans contributing to significant wealth disparities for black families (Vance 2001). It is not the intent of this article to provide an analysis of the social, political, and economic factors that are supporting gentrification, but rather to position this latest example of serial forced displacement in the ongoing trek of the Maafa and to describe its impact on the viability of Afrikan American families and neighbourhoods.

Certainly, 'gentrification' represents a massive assault on Black neighbourhoods that cannot be separated from the history of disinvestment in poor, urban, and often predominantly black communities. Disinvestment is frequently followed by investment and development focused on bringing in upper-income, predominantly white residents and businesses. The devaluation of Black spaces by labelling these places as 'blighted' is a part of the rhetorical ethic that supports the bait and switch that occurs, enabling the land grab. In

reality, there is masked acknowledgment of the value of the land that the poor and Afrikan Americans often occupy in urban areas, typically close to the center of town.

As displayed at the beginning of the Maafa, the removal of people from the places that they call home reflects a deep sense of disregard for the importance of the attachment of all living beings to their group and to the environment. The spiritual and emotional ties that develop between human beings and between human beings and the natural world are deeply rooted, profound, and sacred. Ogbonnaya (1994) discusses the significance of these bonds in his 'community of selves' model of identity. In his model he identifies the 'totem self', one of many selves that make up who we are. The totem self can be described as the interdependent relationship that exists between human beings and with their environment. Many Afrikan ethnic groups recognise this relationship through the establishment of a totem or symbol that identifies them, often a particular animal that embodies qualities that the group aspires to display (Mugovera 2017). A particular totem may reveal the commitment of the group to the preservation of some aspect of its ecosystem that sustains them; thus, taboos may be associated with how the animal or plant is treated. The totem identifies those with whom one is connected or belongs and the responsibilities that the group must perform in their interactions with each other and the natural world (Mugovera 2017). The use of totems as a way of identifying one's lineage, connections, and responsibilities has been watered down in the United States, and typically only suggests one's membership in a particular group, rather than their ancestral ties and commitments to the natural world.

Over time, the cumulative effects of serial forced displacements have been the increased detachment between people of Afrikan ancestry and between Afrikan people and the natural world, and a growing sense of vulnerability to the dictates of individuality and competitiveness imposed on us by Western cultural values. Serial forced displacement is an integral component of the historical trauma suffered by Afrikan people. As our bonds with each other are destroyed and we are moved about like pawns on a chess board, we become strangers to each other with no sense of responsibility or commitment to the well-being of other members of our group or to the group as a whole. The combination of lifespan trauma emerging from recent displacements and historical trauma can be linked to, feelings of detachment and alienation, often accompanied by depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress

disorder and suicidal behaviour (Brave Heart 1998). Recent increases in suicide amongst Afrikan American children between 5-12 years of age, now exceeding the rates of whites (Nutt 2018), may be one of the sequelae of serial forced displacements. To be sure, many of our neighbourhoods have become danger zones, where children are often unprotected and there is a blatant absence of any appreciation of our ancestors and the presence of elders.

Inherent in the term 'gentrification' is the belief in the inferiority of the people who are being replaced. The inferiorisation process that Europeans have regularly imposed on others serves to rationalise their quest for the spaces that Afrikan people occupy and the resources that we possess. It also serves to minimise the potential threat that whites often perceive in their black counterparts by constantly disrupting our efforts to make political and economic progress. Historically, Afrikan Americans' efforts to claim spaces in which we demonstrate agency and self-determination have been disrupted by terrorism (Black Wall Street and Rosewood are but two well-known examples) (One United Bank 2017), and more recently, by public policy violence. Even in the midst of segregation, the emotional connection to the spaces that we occupied, the development of social networks, businesses, organisations, and institutions provided cultural containers that sustained us. Serial forced displacement ensures that Afrikan Americans cannot develop political and economic clout or maintain commitment to the education of their children, and thereby, exercise the steps to gain power and parity in the United States.

The Demise of *Ubuntu* in the Black Community

Over generations, serial forced displacements have significantly deteriorated the display of *ubuntu* in Afrikan American communities. Mangena (2016) describes *hunhu*/ *ubuntu* as a moral-ethical philosophy that emerged in Southern Africa amongst the Bantu-speaking peoples. It is a common moral position (CMP) that is so deeply ingrained in the people that it requires no formal document explicating the rules that should guide one's behaviour and actions. Its essence is reflected in the proverb that translates into English loosely as, 'a person is a person among other persons', and in Mbiti's seminal pronouncement, 'I am because we are, since we are therefore I am' (Mangena 2016). Both of these statements emphasise the importance of our connectedness as the ideal state of human functioning. The philosophy of *hunhu*/*ubuntu* prioritises the group or collective over the individual and the

necessity of a dialogical relationship between the Creator/God, the ancestors, and the living. It promotes caring, sharing, and compassion in relationships with others. The ethics that it espouses derive from a consensual and spiritual relationship that essentialises communication between the spirit world and the world of the living.

Ubuntu as a CMP facilitates the ability to trust each other, depend upon each other, and cooperate with each other. It is the ultimate manifestation of what in Western psychology is referred to as a 'sense of community' (Kloos, Hill, Thomas, Wandersman, Elias & Dalton 2012); however, its significance transcends Western definitions of this phenomenon. It stresses the need for respect for human life and dignity, contributing to the well-being of others, and being benevolent and hospitable, in order to ensure the sustenance of the community and all of its members (Munyaka & Motlhabi 2009). It facilitates the development of viable economic systems (Wilson 1993) and other critical institutions. In the absence of mutual trust, where suspiciousness of each other prevails, we can neither create successful businesses nor engage in other productive enterprises that contribute to our survival and progress (Vance 2001). Because Afrikan Americans were denied access to the benefits of white businesses and institutions or failed to receive the same degree of respect and privilege granted to whites when allowed to do so, it became a necessity that we establish our own businesses and other institutions to address our needs. The success of our businesses and other institutions relied on the presence of *ubuntu*. Black Wall Street, with its booming economy, represents one of the most viable examples of the operation of *ubuntu* in black communities (One United Bank 2017).

Prior to the enactment of Fair Housing Act of 1968, most black people in the United States lived in segregated neighbourhoods. When talking about those neighbourhoods, even though they were cut off from the white community, elders who grew up there exude a sense of pride and nostalgia about the way they were protected, looked out for, and supported by their neighbours. Fullilove (2016) discusses the sense of kindness that existed in these neighbourhoods. There existed among the blacks who lived there an expectation that they should and would take care of each other. They tolerated the less desirable aspects of their neighbourhoods and sought to protect the children from falling victim to these forces, whenever possible, or to buffer them, when they could not be protected. It was as if the philosophy of *ubuntu* was embedded in the unconscious of these Afrikan Americans. The kindness,

which was expected and taken-for-granted in the ghettoes in which Afrikan Americans were forced to live, dissipated with urban renewal (Fullilove 2016). The attention of Afrikan American families now became occupied by their own personal survival needs in the foreign places to which they were dispersed, and the negative behaviours that always existed in their communities were no longer counterbalanced by the presence of organisations and people committed to kindness. Consequently, the forces of crime and violence have prevailed, where once a communal consciousness that provided checks and balances existed.

Munyaka and Motlhabi (2009) describe similar diminishment of the sense of *ubuntu* as a result of colonisation, apartheid, and urbanisation in South Africa. In regard to these conditions, Mofokeng (as cited in Munyaka & Motlhabi 2009) states that the disconnection of Afrikan people from their land undermined their sense of respect and creativity and fostered alienation from their culture along with 'exploitation and political domination', and the enslavement of Afrikan people. As mentioned earlier, these experiences result in root shock and illustrate how *ubuntu* has been systematically disrupted in Afrika through serial forced displacements. The imposition of policies of migratory labour and forced removals seriously damaged the family structure and the traditional educational system through which the principles of *ubuntu* were transmitted.

The deterioration in the commitment to the unstated philosophy of *ubuntu* amongst Afrikan Americans was not only a result of urban renewal, but also of integration (Vance 2001). Afrikan Americans saw the Fair Housing Act as an opportunity to escape from the ghettoes to which they had been historically confined, and many leaped at the opportunity to buy into 'more desirable' white communities leaving their less economically resourced brothers and sisters in the ghettoes. Thus, another division was created amongst Afrikan Americans based upon class. The movement of the more well-off Afrikan Americans into predominantly white neighbourhoods would precipi-tate white flight, and additionally, the unintentional consequence of a loss of cultural continuity exemplified by the unconscious expression of *ubuntu*. Separated from their poorer brothers and sisters, although many Afrikan Americans would strive to extend their support to their less fortunate brothers and sisters, their lack of proximity to them would take a toll on both groups.

The diminishment of cultural continuity was not only the result of the physical separation between poor and 'middle-class' Afrikan Americans, but,

more importantly, a lack of appreciation of the importance of our culture and the internalised sense of inferiority that many Afrikan Americans have about their Afrikan history and identity. More accurately, the lack of knowledge about our history, the promulgation of lies, distortions, and inaccuracies about our history, and our invisibility in history books have contributed to the disconnection between Afrikan Americans and continental Afrikans, who both view each other through the eyes of our oppressors. In his book, *The Falsification of Afrikan Consciousness*, Amos Wilson (1993:39) states, 'History is what creates a shared identity in a people. It is based on that shared identity that they act collectively'. With the passage of Brown v Board of Education in 1954, and the gradual desegregation of the public schools, Afrikan Americans have progressively lost control over the education of our children. Most Afrikan American children are now being taught by white teachers who lack knowledge of the history and culture of Afrikan Americans and many of the schools in the black community have been closed for a variety of reasons. The disintegration of black neighbourhoods and the miseducation of our children in the public schools ensure that future generations will lack a shared identity and the capacity to act collectively and in our best interests.

Restoring *Ubuntu* in Black Communities

The forces that have led to the diminishment of *ubuntu* in black communities are complex. Undeniably, the dismal state of many black neighbourhoods in the United States may be attributed to the very intentional efforts of our federal, state, and local governments to guarantee that our communities remain marginalised, disempowered, disorganised, and chaotic. A conscious, collective, and informed, cooperative effort on the part of black leadership across several generations will be required to restore the sense of *ubuntu* that once existed in our neighbourhoods. As Wilson (1993: 13) has indicated, this effort must begin with the correct study of our history. He states:

> We must be instructed by history and should transform history into concrete reality, into planning and development, into the construction of power and the ability to ensure our survival as a people.

Simply teaching black history and regularly celebrating Black History Month will not achieve the goal of restoring *ubuntu*, if the teaching of black history is

not undertaken purposefully with the aim of 'regaining power' and debunking the myth of black inferiority.

Ubuntu as a way of life was once fully integrated into all aspects of being and living for Southern African cultures. The Maafa, as a persistent reality in the lives of Afrikan people on the continent, as well as throughout the Afrikan diaspora, has disrupted the commitment to *ubuntu* amongst Afrikan people, particularly in the United States, but also in the places of its origin. An intentional process is required to re-establish it as our modal way of operating. I propose the development of cultural standards grounded in the values and principles of *ubuntu*, and accompanied by cultural policies that articulate the behaviours that are expected of every member of our community, as a step toward the reinstitution of *ubuntu* in Afrikan American communities (Jackson-Lowman & Haile 2016; 2014). In his essay on intellectual maroons, Uhuru Hotep (2008: 6) asserts that 'the words/ concepts/ beliefs/ values/ images that we allow into our mental space and then use for self-definition and self-referral will either liberate us or enslave us'. By developing cultural standards, we reassert our sense of agency through the creation of social norms that foster our health, our respect for and responsibility to each other, and promote cooperation, and trust, which are essential for us to achieve liberation. The delineation of cultural standards that reflect the values and principles of *ubuntu*, and cultural policies which describe the roles, responsibilities, and obligations of Afrikan people to each other, is proposed as a liberatory catalyst that can confront the Maafic effects of serial forced displacements and therefore, lead to the ending of cultural oppression. In much the same way that the myth of black inferiority and the values of individualism, materialism, and competitiveness have been promulgated in every institution in the United States, we must begin to use all forms of media, our social, political, and religious organisations/institutions, Historically, black colleges and universities, and the businesses that we continue to own and control to promote the values and principles of *ubuntu* and hold each other accountable for their implementation.

References

Ani, M. 1994. *Yurugu: An African-centered Critique of European Cultural Thought and Behavior*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc.

Blackmon, D.A. 2008. *Slavery by Another Name.* New York: Doubleday.

Brave Heart, M.Y.H., 1998. The Return to the Sacred Path: Healing the Historical Trauma and Historical Unresolved Grief Response among the Lakota through a Psychoeducational Group Intervention. *Smith College Studies in Social Work* 68,3: 287 - 305. https://doi.org/10.1080/00377319809517532

Equal Justice Initiative 2015. *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror*. Montgomery, AL: EJI.

Fullilove, M.T. 2016. *Root Shock: How Tearing up City Neighborhoods Hurts America, and What we Can Do about It.* New York: New Village Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt21pxmmc

Fullilove, M.T. & R. Wallace. 2011. Serial Forced Displacement in American Cities, 1916 - 2010. *Journal of Urban Health* 88,3:381 - 389. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-011-9585-2 PMid:21607786 PMCid:PMC3126925

Grills, C.T. 2004. African Psychology. In Jones, R.L. (ed.): *Black Psychology*. 4th Edition. Hampton, VA: Cobb & Henry Publishers.

Hotep, U. 2008. Intellectual Maroons: Architects of African Sovereignty. *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 2,5: 3 - 19.

Jackson-Lowman, H. & B. Haile 2016. A Call for Collective Black Community Commitment to the Socialization of the Black Child. In *Being Black is Not a Risk Factor: Statistics and Strengths-Based Solutions in Florida*. Silver Spring: The National Black Child Development Institute. Available at: https://www.nbcdi.org/sites/default/files/NBCDI_SOTBC_FLORIDA_Report_%20Final%20(DA%2001-05-2017)_0.pdf Cf. Also: https://www.nbcdi.org/news/being-black-not-risk-factor-read-reports

Jackson-Lowman, H. & B. Haile 2014. Cultural Policy: The Missing Tool in the Development of Black Community Agency and Empowerment. *Black Child Journal* Winter: 64 - 75.

Jaspin, E. 2007. *Buried in the Bitter Waters: The Hidden History of Racial Cleansing in America.* New York: Basic Books.

King, M.L. Jr. 1968. *Where do we Go from Here? Chaos or Community?* Boston, MA: Beacon.

Kloos, B., J. Hill, E. Thomas, A. Wandersman & J.H. Dalton 2012. *Community Psychology: Linking Individuals and Communities.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Mangena, F. 2016. African Ethos through Ubuntu: A Post-modern Exposition. *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies* 9,2: 66 - 79.

McGee, H. 19 August 2007. Gentrification, Integration, or Displacement? The Seattle Story. Available at: https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/gentrification-integration-or-displacement-seattle-story/ (Accessed on 10 May 2019.)

Mugovera, G. 10 April 2017. Totems: Our Cultural Heritage. Available at: https://www.thepatriot.co.zw/old_posts/totems-our-cultural-heritage/ (Accessed on 11 May 2019.)

Munyaka, M. & M. Motlhabi 2009. Ubuntu and its Socio-moral Significance. In Murove, M.F.: *African Ethics: An Anthology of Comparative and Applied Ethics.* Scottsville, South Africa: University of KwaZulu Natal Press.

Nobles, W.W. 2018. *From Mentacide to Sakhu: A Statement in Preparation for the Intergovernmental Working Group Discussion of the Draft Declaration on the Promotion and Full Respect of Human Rights of People of African Descent.* Fort Washington, MD: The Association of Black Psychologists, Inc.

Nutt, A.E. 21 May 2018. Suicide Rates for Black Children Twice that for White Children, New Data Show. Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/to-your-health/wp/2018/05/21/suicide-rates-for-black-children-twice-that-of-white-children-new-data-show/?utm_term=.79c226e8d149 (Accessed on 11 May 2018.)

Ogbonnaya, A.O. 1994. Person as Community: An African Understanding of the Person as an Intrapsychic Community. *Journal of Black Psychology 20*,1: 75 - 87. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/00957984940201007

One United Bank. 24.Feb. 2017. The history of Black Wall Street. https://www.oneunited.com/the-history-of-black-wall-street/ (Accessed on 11 May 2019)

Pember, M.A. 3 October 2017. Trauma may be Woven into the DNA of Native Americans. Available at:

https://newsmaven.io/indiancountrytoday/archive/trauma-may-be-woven-into-dna-of-native-americans-CbiAxpzar0WkMALhjrcGVQ)/ (Accessed on 9 May 2019.)

Richards, D. M. 1989. *Let the Circle be Unbroken: The Implications of African Spirituality in the Diaspora.* Trenton, NJ: The Red Sea Press.

Vance, B.F. 2001. *From Ghetto to Community: The Resurrection of African American Institutions.* Chicago: African American Images, Inc.

Wilson, A.N. 1993. *The Falsification of Afrikan Consciousness: Eurocentric History, Psychiatry, and the Politics of White Supremacy.* New York: Arikan World InfoSystems.

Huberta Jackson-Lowman
Professor
Department of Psychology
College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities
Florida A&M University
Huberta.jlo@gmail.com