

# HAS THE PAST PASSED? ON THE ROLE OF HISTORIC MEMORY IN SHAPING THE RELATIONS BETWEEN AFRICAN AMERICANS AND CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN MIGRANTS IN THE USA

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## ABSTRACT

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African Americans and contemporary African migrants to the USA do not form a single 'Black community'. Their relations are characterized by simultaneous mutual attraction and repulsion. Based on field evidence, the article discusses the role played in it by the reflection in historic memory and place in mass consciousness of African Americans and African migrants of key events in Black American and African history: transatlantic slave trade, slavery, its abolition, and the Civil Rights Movement in the US, colonialism, anticolonial struggle, and the fall of apartheid regime in South Africa. It is shown that they see the key events of the past differently, and different events are seen as key by each group. Collective historic memory works more in the direction of separating the two groups from each other by generating and supporting contradictory or even negative images of mutual perception.  
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Keywords: African Americans, African migrants, USA, historic memory, intercultural interaction, mass consciousness

## *Introduction*<sup>1</sup>

In the 17<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries, in most countries of the New World, the European slave trade resulted in the formation of large communities of Black people whose ancestors had been forcibly removed from Africa. In particular, in the United States African Americans have become an integral part of this country's historical, ethnocultural, and socioeconomic landscape since the time of the formation of American society. According to the 2010 census, they amount to 12.6% of its population (38.9 of 308.7 million people, [Overview 2010]).<sup>2</sup>

The voluntary migration of Africans to the Western Hemisphere, including the USA, began about the same time as the end of slavery—in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> However, its scale became significant only in the 1980s and especially '90s (Dixon 2006; Terrazas 2009; McCabe 2011). By 2013, the number of African migrants had reached 1.5 million, though they still form just 4% of the country's residents who were born abroad (Zong & Batalova 2014). Rather than a single 'African diaspora', Senegalese, Ethiopian, and

other national diasporas have formed, according to most African respondents, which are, however, extremely heterogeneous and internally fragmented—ethnically, religiously, socially, politically. At the same time, they partly overlap, as some migrants from different states share ethnicity, language or religion. There are business, friendly, and sometimes family relations between them; sometimes they demonstrate the presence of a pan-African layer in their members' self-consciousness. Nonetheless, the country of origin is the 'reference point' of identity for most first generation African migrants.

This fact is very important for understanding mutual perceptions and relations between Africans and African Americans. Notwithstanding regional differences, African Americans form a single ethnocultural, including linguistic, community which defines itself on the basis of race. Generalized images of 'Africa', 'Africans', 'African culture' that ignore that continent's diversity have formed in their minds as a reflection of their own ethnocultural integrity. Furthermore, African Americans see themselves not as a 'diaspora' that seeks to find a niche in an American society that preceded their arrival but as one of its most important initial components. Except for a small minority of intellectuals who cultivate an 'African identity' in themselves most actively, African Americans perceive themselves as true Americans, and the only ones whose ancestors became Americans against their will:

for many immigrants who came in good will, America did become a new place full of hope. Not for us, because we, enslaved Black, were born here.<sup>4</sup>

Many African Americans are indifferent to their African roots; some of them do not even want to associate themselves with the natives of her underdeveloped countries.

Africans clearly perceive themselves as migrants that are trying to adapt in a strange country and integrate into society in which African Americans form a fundamental component. They define the boundaries of their communities based first of all not on race but on nation of origin, as well as ethnicity, language, religion. That is why they do not include all Blacks or even all Africans in their communities. They perceive African Americans 'as a distinct ethnic group with an identifiable set of cultural norms and values' (Foster 2005: 35). That race can be a basic dividing line in society, comes as a shock for Africans who come from generally monoracial countries.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, for race-concerned African Americans, this signifies that Africans are ostensibly indifferent to the problems of the Black race, as they allegedly have never suffered from racism.

Thus, African Americans and Africans (and Black Caribbeans) do not form a single 'Black community'. This can seem quite natural, but what is remarkable is that this fact contradicts the postulates of a significant number of powerful intellectual, cultural, and political teachings spread among Black people on both sides of the Atlantic since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Garveism, Panafricanism, Negritude, Afrocentrism and other teachings of this sort proclaim the ideas of a single spiritual basis of all Black people, of a specific and unique mentality of Black people notwithstanding their place of birth, of worldwide 'Black brotherhood' and 'Black race's common cause' that demands the concerted actions of Black people on different continents in the world dominated by the Whites. However, from the founding of Liberia by Black Americans in 1847 and the termination of slavery in the US in 1865 up until most recent times the relations between Black people of the two hemispheres were largely virtual: as it was pointed out above, till the 1980s and

'90s the inflow of Africans to America was inconsiderable while the reverse flow was even weaker. Under such circumstances, coupled with the situation of racial inequality in America and colonialism and neocolonialism in Africa, the ideas of 'Black brotherhood' resonated with many Africans and African Americans, from intellectuals to socially and politically active young representatives of the urban poor.

However, when a true 'meeting' happened, it turned out that many deep differences of all kinds exist between the black natives of two continents formed over the centuries of separate existence. To some they seem insurmountable or as not even requiring attempts to surmount (among those Africans who consider African Americans as 'just black Americans', for example, or to African Americans indifferent to their African roots), while others do whatever they can to bridge the gap, such as activists of some African migrant and African American non-profit organizations, staunch supporters of Afrocentrism, and Black Americans wishing to cultivate the 'African identity'.

Many respondents believe that integration of the groups in the Black population in the US will not happen in the future either, although some admit this possibility, due to the Americanization of the African migrants' children. At the same time, the aforesaid does not mean that the relations between the Black communities are bad. They cannot be characterized unambiguously at all, not least because they are not quite the same in different age, social, and educational groups, in megacities and in the rural areas, in the country's North and South (for what determined the geography and methods of our research—see below). It is not by chance that our informants from both communities defined them in the widest possible range from 'excellent' to 'antagonistic'. Between these extremes, the following assessments fitted: 'good', 'friendly', 'generally positive', 'normal, but not close', 'more or less decent', on the one hand; and 'not brilliant', 'superficial', 'cold', 'cautious', 'strained', 'suspicious', 'watchful', based on 'mixed feelings', 'misunderstandings', 'wrong perceptions', 'prejudice' and 'mistrust', on the other. The African American-African relations resemble the simultaneous attraction and repulsion of two magnets. They understand that among all the ethnoracial communities in the country, they (and also African Caribbeans) are the closest to each other (to the degree that for non-Black Americans they often merge into one), and they recognize common roots and a partial similarity of problems in a society in which racial division is so important. But myriads of social, cultural, and linguistic differences that are immediately detected in any instance of mutual attraction, can cause mutual repulsion. In one respondent's words,

It's still very hard for Africans to accept African Americans. Also for African Americans to accept Africans—a lot of African Americans see Africans as just any other foreigners.<sup>6</sup>

Among the reasons that determine the nature of the relationship between Africans and African Americans, not the least is the peculiarity of their perceptions of each other. Many of their stereotypes are connected with the present day and experience in communication, with social factors—in particular, people's education and class background (e.g., the African migrants' much higher average education level [Okome 2002; Dixon 2006; Logan 2007: 55–56; Terrazas 2009; McCabe 2011; Capps et al. 2012: 1, 12–15; Curry-Stevens 2013: 46–59; Zong & Batalova 2014]). We do not in any way ignore social factors; on the contrary, we consider and emphasize their role. The education and class

background of the informants was approached during the research in a twofold manner: 'objective' and 'subjective'. On the one hand, it is quite easy to apply formal ('objective') criteria. For example, 'highly educated' stands in the text below for those with university degrees, from B.A. to Ph.D. and equal, while 'poorly educated' stands for persons with education below secondary. There are also quite conventional but generally more or less accepted criteria for determining American residents' class affiliation from the underclass to the working class (sometimes called lower, or lower middle class) through the middle and upper-middle classes, to the upper class (see, e.g., Gilbert 1998). Taking into account the respondents' affiliation with respective education and social groups was ultimately highly meaningful, as it showed differences in historic consciousness and attitudes to the other Black communities, and similarities within those groups. However, the 'subjective' self-view of the respondents was also important. Their self-estimations as, for instance, 'rich' or 'poor' sometimes corresponded to the 'objective' situation only partially or approximately, but it is important to acknowledge the effect of self-estimations on people's worldview and behavior. So, it was more than reasonable not to ignore the respondents' own assessments of their social status.

Yet many topoi of African/African American mutual perception are related to refraction in their collective memory of important events of the past. Slave trade, slavery and its abolition, the Civil Rights Movement in the US, colonialism and anticolonial struggle, and apartheid and its downfall in Africa are the most crucial historic phenomena among those that affect the interaction between the two Black communities nowadays.

### *Methods and collected evidence*

In 2013, a team of researchers directed by the present author started, and in 2014 continued, a study of mutual perception and relationships between Black communities in the USA. To date, the research has been conducted in six states (Alabama, Illinois, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, and Pennsylvania), in a number of towns, as well as in cities—Boston, Chicago, Minneapolis, New York, and Philadelphia.

The task for the first field season was to reveal the widest range of features of mutual perception of, and relations between African migrants and African Americans, developing in different social contexts. The methods of interview (structured, semistructured, and non-structured) and observation were used. Extensive structured interviews, usually with a preliminary appointment, were recorded on tape. Every day, the researchers spent much time in predominantly Black neighborhoods of cities and towns of the Northeast and Midwest. We observed daily life, talked with common people in streets, stores, cafes, etc., and these conversations were recorded later from memory. As a result, interviews and conversations were conducted with people representing almost the entire spectrum of social strata and groups of the urban Black population. They included African Americans and natives of 22 out of 49 sub-Saharan states. In addition, the researchers had talks with Black Caribbeans from five countries and with non-Black Americans,<sup>7</sup> connected in one way or another with Africans and/or African Americans.

The main distinction of the fieldwork in 2014 was the shift in focus from the widest possible geographical, social, national coverage of respondents to a case study of two clearly

defined small communities in the southern state of Alabama which were comparable with each other. Thus, the central period of the study was spent examining the situation not in large cities in the historically more cosmopolitan and tolerant Northeast and Midwest but in towns in the rural areas in the south of the country, known for its conservatism and traditionalism. Focusing on towns was also explained by the desire to take into account a recent trend in African migration to the USA: settling not only in megacities but also in small cities and towns. The fieldwork was conducted in the almost completely African American community of the Livingston Chapel of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the Black neighborhood called 'The Hill' of the tiny town of Guntersville, and in an Ethiopian Orthodox community whose members gather from different parts of the neighboring Marshall and Madison Counties for liturgy and other events in the building of the Greek Orthodox Church in Huntsville.

The methods were modified accordingly. The basis was laid by the desire to establish trust with the members of the two communities. Consequently we did not record extensive interviews based on a plan, preferring conversations (often also long) which it would be correct to call semi- and non-structured interviews. Their recording was carried out by hand sometimes during and sometimes by memory after the conversations-interviews. Much more importance than in 2013 was attached to observation, participant whenever possible.

In total, 172 interviews and conversations of different degrees of structuredness and length (from several minutes to two hours) were recorded over two field seasons, and records of 13 observed events were made. The compiled archive included various material evidence concerning the subject of research (flyers and business cards of African restaurants and hairdressing salons, Sunday prayer brochures of Black churches, museum booklets, etc.) and 519 original photos. The study is not completed yet, but we believe that the evidence collected to date already allows revealing discussion on the topic of this article.

### *Discussion*

First of all, it should be pointed out that one can find people with broad knowledge of African and Black American history almost exceptionally among highly educated members of the two communities. It is especially true for the knowledge of the other community's history: many non-highly educated respondents could not recall any events or names related to the other Black community's history and had to confess their complete ignorance of it. This often leads to mutual surprise and even resentment. For example, African Americans do not understand how Africans may be unaware of the history of slavery in the New World, while Africans are upset with Black Americans' ignorance of the history of anticolonial struggle in Africa. Both Africans and African Americans often read this situation as a manifestation of conscious reluctance to know the history of other Black people, as an eloquent testimony to the lack of Black unity. On the other hand, some prefer to assume that history is just insufficiently taught in schools and see signs of improvement, in particular in the growing interest of African Americans in the history of Africa.

It can be argued that the majority of African Americans and Africans do not have a holistic view on history—their own and especially each others. Their historic consciousness, apart, perhaps from that of highly educated humanitarians, is usually discrete: there is no room for history as a process in it, but there are several bright topoi: the most significant phenomena or events that beam like stars in the dark sky of the past. All these ‘stars’ are directly or indirectly related to the sociopolitical or spiritual resistance of Black people to oppression and exploitation by Whites in Africa or beyond. But they may be different or ‘shine’ with different force for African Americans and Africans. It is so because

relevance of an event is determined not by ‘historic past’ but by constantly changing present that holds in memory the most important facts of that event, its meaning. Thus, ‘history of memory’ analyzes the meaning which the present attaches to the events of the past (Arnautova 2003: 189).

### Transatlantic slave trade, slavery and its abolition in the USA

The transatlantic slave trade that began in the 16<sup>th</sup> (in North America—17<sup>th</sup>) century, reached its peak in the mid-17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup>, and lasted until the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, gave birth to the very phenomenon of ‘Black Americans’, as well as to questions about the existence since then of ‘Black history’ as the history of all Black people and of a single ‘African cultural tradition’ in the Old and New Worlds. Among scholars, debates on these issues became ubiquitous after the publication of Melville Herskovits’s works in the middle of the last century (1941; 1962). Since the mid-1990s in the US there has also been an obvious rise in public interest in the history of the slave trade and slavery, including among White Americans. It manifests itself in the opening of many new monuments, memorials, museums, and exhibitions; the creation of a number of radio and television programs, web sites, fiction and popular science books, etc. (Figure 1; Oostindie 2001; Horton & Horton 2006). This is largely due to the enduring inflammation of the historic memory of the slave trade and slavery and its crucial place in the mass consciousness of African Americans. The very birth of the African Americans was directly related to the incredible torments, and ‘birth trauma’ of the slave trade and slavery—centuries of humiliation, suffering, and struggle—and still to a large extent determines the attitudes and social behavior of whatever social group or layer the question is asked (Eyerman 2012). Some of them speak about it themselves:

Nobody can doubt that what we, Blacks in this country, had 200 years ago is less than what we are having now. But are we truly free? I don’t think so. Is our mindset free from the memory of enslavement? No. The ‘slave’ is still affecting our society (...) I think that mentally, not physically, the Blacks here are still ‘enslaved’, still lack a strong voice to be heard.<sup>8</sup>

To be sure, it must be clarified that while the trauma of slavery influences African Americans’ mentality, it by no means gives rise to low self-esteem and negative self-conceptions (Belgrave & Allison 2014: 69–71). Painfulness for African Americans concerning the question of their slave past also manifests itself in the fact that not all of them are willing to talk about it, while the word *slaves* with respect to the ancestors of today’s African Americans is increasingly replaced by *enslaved*, a term that is considered more correct.

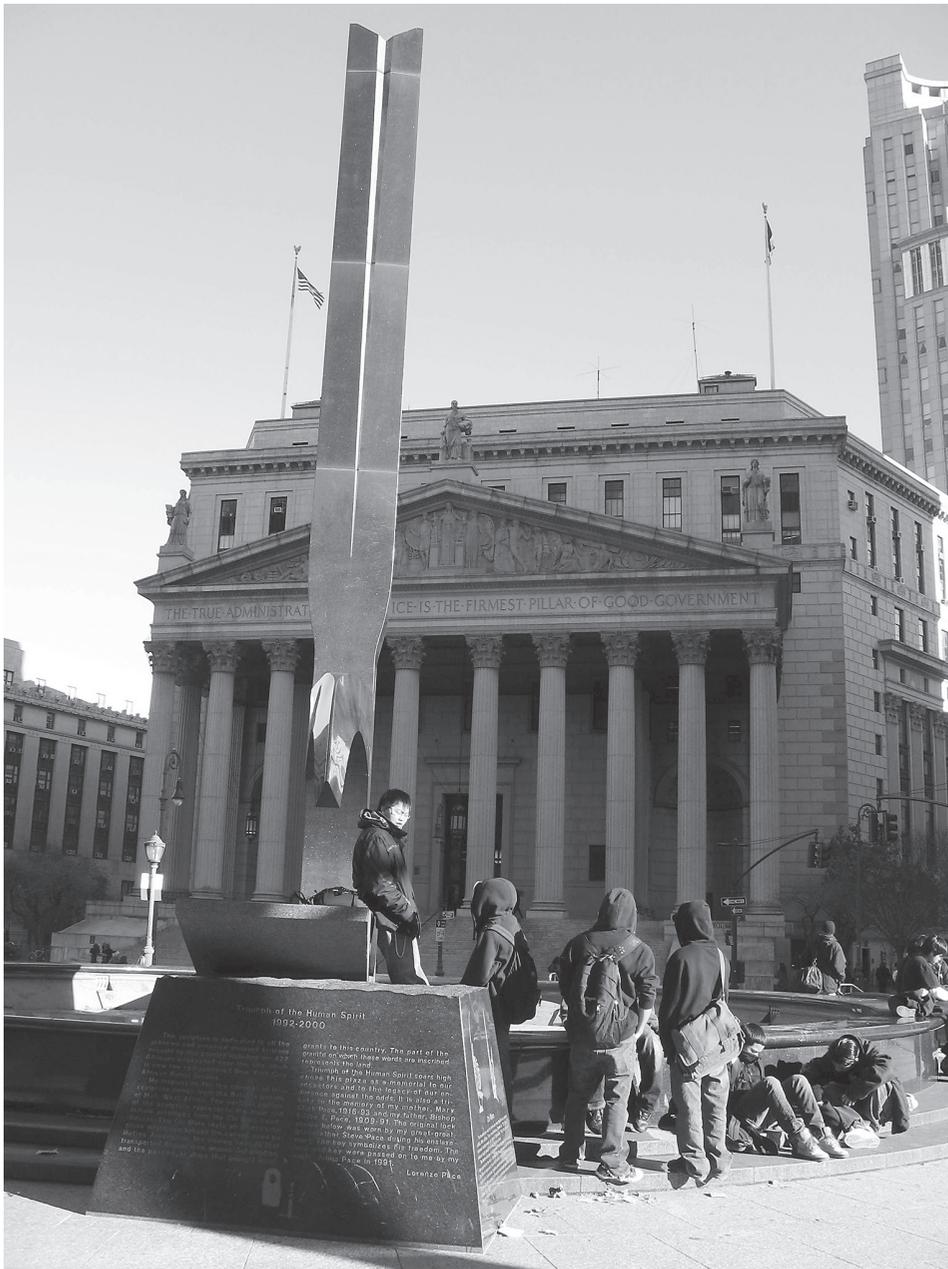


Figure 1. The "Triumph of Human Spirit" monument, dedicated in 2007 as part of the African Burial Ground National Monument created in 2006 on the site of mass burial of slaves discovered in Lower Manhattan, New York City in 1991 and declared a National Historic Landmark in 1993.

The introduction of *African Americans* as the most correct name for Black Americans, contrary to the still recent *Afro-Americans*, is also intended to reduce pain from the trauma of slavery. Today this term is preferred by most people of African ancestry in the US (Belgrave & Allison 2014: 105). *African Americans* implies 'Africans but living in America' and serves as the analog to ethnic rather than 'racial' designations, like *Italian Americans*, *Irish Americans*, etc.<sup>9</sup> Its proponents argue that the name *Afro-Americans* illegitimately subordinates the African part of their identity to the American, making the former secondary to the latter.<sup>10</sup> Significantly, those African American intellectuals and cultural figures who propagate 'African identity' and argue that 'our children are Africans that are born and raised here' (in America), differentiate the cultures of immigrants from Europe but not from Africa: 'Everyone has their own culture, whether it be Italian, Irish or African' (Davis 2013). Wherein,

although most black Americans prefer to call themselves African Americans, they do not all think that recent African immigrants are entitled to use the term. Some American-born blacks believe that only people born in the United States who share the heritage of slavery and oppression should be called 'African Americans'. (Worth 2005: 86)<sup>11</sup>

To Africans, the slave trade, not only European but also Arab, is also a symbol of the former subjugation of Black people, but as an event of African history, not a personal feeling. For them the acuteness of this issue in historic memory and mass consciousness is reduced due not only to the fact that they personally are not descendants of slaves, but also because their peoples now live in sovereign African states. Even more so, sometimes they even look down at African Americans just because they are descendants of slaves, or wonder:

Why should I care about them [African Americans] and the Transatlantic Slave Trade (...) What does this have to do with me? I realize that their ancestors originated from my neck of the woods but so what?<sup>12</sup>

In the meantime, most African Americans are still inclined to see themselves as second class citizens in the country which is the only home for them, and in whose formation and development at all stages of history their ancestors took direct part. An African American from Philadelphia spoke vividly about it:

During the 400 years of enslavement we helped to build this country. And we were not even allowed to use a bath. So that's trauma.<sup>13</sup>

Another Black citizen of the City of Brotherly Love answering the question: 'What historical figures are most prominent for America?' said:

To me, Black people who were brought here as slaves—we built America. However, everything is based on Caucasians. You see all those statues [in the city]: some of them are for Blacks, but mostly they are for Caucasians.<sup>14</sup>

One should pay attention to the characteristic respondents' self-identification with Black slaves of the time when the American nation was forming: historic memory of that period

is so much alive in their consciousness that no gap between the past and the present can be found in it. History and modernity constitute an indissoluble symbiosis, with descendants not merely heirs of heroic ancestors who were deprived of glory but their comrades-in-arms.

It is natural that historic memory of the slave trade era—Black history's 'bifurcation point'—and the way events and phenomena of those centuries are refracted in it, has a tremendous impact on mutual perception of, and hence, relationships between African Americans, descendants of slaves, and recent African migrants who do not bear the stigma of ancestral slavery. The memory of slave trade is the key historical and cultural factor affecting interaction between African Americans and Africans. In the history of Africa, 'nothing is more important than "slavery"'. The reason is because it is the one thing that ties all Black people together the world over'.<sup>15</sup>

In the words of Abdullah,

While the historical past of American slavery joins Africans and Blacks at the hip, their separate imaginings of this event and its horrors result in a new type of divergence between them (2010: 67).

Africans and Black Americans are unanimous in glorifying victims and paying tribute to fighters against the slave trade and slavery. In the words of an African, '[t]he great men and women who have led the movement for emancipation are many and they provide great interest'.<sup>16</sup> Among the most outstanding figures in American history, members of both communities often named those who contributed to this struggle, which ended January 31, 1865 with adoption by the US Congress of the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Constitution, banning slavery and forced labor: Abraham Lincoln, Richard Allen, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman (Figure 2). It is clear that as a common symbol of oppression, slave trade unites Blacks in the face of the Whites. But this, of course, is not enough for them to feel historical and cultural unity, and not only because a union based on joint dissimilarity to some third party rather than perceptions of shared sameness is deliberately fragile and flawed. It is also so because the slave trade is reflected differently in the historic memory of Africans and African Americans and occupies a different place in their consciousness.

The attitude of African Americans to Africans is determined to a large extent by the important part played in their collective memory by the true historic fact that Africans themselves supplied white traders with slaves. Black Americans not infrequently look at Africans as descendants of those who sold their ancestors into slavery. These sentiments are so strong among them that Godfrey Uzoigwe, a US-based Nigerian historian, sees no prospect of rapprochement between the two Black communities if the African Union will not offer African Americans an official apology on behalf of Africa for complicity in the slave trade (Uzoigwe 2008: 286). Once again, the time that separates the slave trade era and today shrinks in Black Americans' consciousness, and contemporary Africans begin to seem to them responsible for atrocities that took place centuries ago. Participation of Africans in the slave trade is seen as sin akin to the original sin: having no statute of limitation, passing from generation to generation, both collective and individual; that is, extending to the 'reference group', Africans, as a whole and to each of its members individually.



Figure 2. The monument to Harriet Tubman in Boston.

Of course, such charges usually offend Africans though some try to treat this situation with understanding. Africans sometimes invoke the trauma of slavery to explain the negative personality traits and features of behavior they tend to attribute to African Americans from the lower social strata, such as aggressiveness, rancor, suspiciousness, etc. According to an African interlocutor,

Africans in America are doing well because they have a different culture than that of African Americans: their ancestors were not slaves, and they are not fixated on the problem of racism, which does not allow African Americans to rise socially and culturally (see also Jackson & Cothran 2003: 596).

Certain African Americans also find the origin and justification of sociopsychological problems experienced by some representatives of their people in past slavery. Furthermore, the wish of some of them to nurture in themselves a 'free' African identity is caused by a conscious desire to get rid of the trauma of slavery, manifested in the feeling of inferiority of their own sociocultural identity in American society.

To a proportion of African Americans, mainly (but not exclusively) poorly educated and with little erudition, a narrow range of intellectual interests and so forth, African immigrants have come to their country to enjoy the benefits which they do not deserve. For the very possibility of using them, they owe to the suffering and the struggle of African Americans, while firstly, past Africans had doomed Black Americans to torment and humiliation, and secondly, en route to the benefits of American life Africans still get

what they want at their expense today: for example, as some African Americans (especially in poor Black urban ghettos) believe, by taking away their jobs. At the same time, as has been mentioned above, there are people that try to cope with the trauma of slavery by cultivating 'a spirit of Africa', positioning themselves first of all as Africans. Some of them start wearing 'African' clothes, adopting 'African' religion of Islam and generally tending to feel, think and behave in 'the African way', as they understand it. Usually they are from the lower middle and middle middle class. To 'real' Africans, they seem comical and even unintelligent.

However, among the much more affluent and educated African Americans from the upper middle class, and also Black celebrity millionaires, the desire to associate themselves with the Africans and Africa have acquired other manifestations. A big role in this development was played by the African American writer Alex Haley's novel *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*, first published in 1976, and the mini-series based on it, already being shown on TV in January 1977.<sup>17</sup> The novel is the story of several generations of the author's ancestors—from enslavement in Africa in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century until emancipation a century later. Inspired by the ideas of restoration of both their personal roots and the whole Black world's unity, of Black culture's continuity in time and space, rather expensive DNA analysis may be employed to find out from which modern African states ancestors were taken to the New World, and to what peoples they belonged (Nelson 2008; Clay 2011).<sup>18</sup> Black Americans who want to explore their ancestry and cannot afford a DNA test refer to the website ancestry.com though often there is little information to be found there, and what there is does not appear as scientifically sound as the results of DNA analysis. However, this method does not require any payment. It is noteworthy that even obtaining information about their origins in a particular ethnic group does not prevent Black Americans from continuing to see themselves primarily as Africans 'in general'—so strong actually just African American, that is racial, cultural logic of thinking is in them.

There is an increasing popularity among wealthy African Americans for so-called 'roots tourism' with non-profits and even special travel agencies organizing such tours. Black tourists from the USA and other countries of the New World go to the sites connected with the slave trade, and there—in the restored architectural monuments, recently created museums, reconstructed ceremonies, the stories of guides—history is ready and waiting for them: presented in accordance with their own ideas about it and, in spite of the possible distortions of concrete facts, retaining its overall terrifying reliability and emotional power. An additional impetus to such tourism was given by President Obama and his wife who, in 2009, solemnly visited Cape Coast castle in Ghana, one of the main sights from the slave trade era (Figure 3).

However, many (but of course, not all) residents of the African countries perceive Black Americans who visit the sites of ancestors' suffering, often experiencing there a genuine catharsis, simply as strange but wealthy Western tourists on whose feelings they can play for financial reward. In Ghana 'non-African Africans' are called *oburuni*, which once meant 'European' or 'white person' and now means any 'foreigner' in the Twi language (Lake 1995: 30; Mwakikagile 2007: 31–32). In East Africa the same semantic transformation happened with *mzungu*, the Swahili word for 'European' or 'white person', which is also now used in relation to Black Americans. An elderly employee of



Figure 3. The plaque commemorating the visit of President Obama and his wife to the Cape Coast slave castle in Ghana in July 2009.

a museum of African American history in Boston regretfully told us that, considering herself an African, she went to Africa and saw that for its residents Black Americans are not 'brothers and sisters' (as they are for her), but just wealthy tourists from a prosperous country.<sup>19</sup> A very emotional story narrated by another elderly African American who calls Africa 'sweet home' reported:

I have convinced them [Africans] I am not wealthy; you know, they think everybody, every African American that comes is wealthy, they think you live in a big house, you have a lot of cars and TVs, you have the like. Actually, I had to save money for years to make this trip. I stayed myself and no one sponsored me. I had to eat tuna fish for months! They mustn't say that [I am wealthy]! They don't have a concept of that! They think this is America, that money just flows [in America]! They didn't know how much I sacrificed! So I think understanding is not that easy, and I had to convince them not to treat me like a tourist, for, you know, they think you are a sack of money!<sup>20</sup>

African states also see Black Americans as a potential source of income and they make considerable efforts in order to attract them as investors and tourists, even providing opportunities for 'homecoming'—for moving to their countries for permanent residence. Benin (Araujo 2007) and especially Ghana (Pierre 2013: 123–216) are most active in this respect. As evidenced by our interviews and conversations, the vast majority of African Americans and Africans (as well as Black Caribbeans) find a mass 'return' of Black natives of the New World to Africa unnecessary or at least unrealistic. Nevertheless, small communities of 'homecomers' do exist, in particular in Ghana. The depth and strength of feelings experienced by these people at 'coming back home' to Africa, to the land of ancestors, is incredible (Imahkus 1999). But the position of the homecomers in local society is ultimately very contradictory, because they often have differences in cultural discourse with the local population and the authorities.<sup>21</sup>

Nonetheless those African Americans who see themselves as first of all Africans, usually do not rule out, at least in principle, resettling in Africa, even if only upon retirement. The Uhuru Movement,<sup>22</sup> an organization which combines in its ideology Marxism with Marcus Garvey's proposed Black repatriation to Africa, is currently occupied with the acquisition of land in Ghana for potential re-settlers. Yet it should be noted that many African Americans from all walks of life feel American to such a degree that reaching back to their African roots (both personal and those of the whole ethnoracial community) does not interest them. They do not feel anything special, either good or bad, about Africans, and treat them as any other immigrants. Outside major urban agglomerations this indifference is enhanced by the fact that still relatively few Africans live there, and therefore the possibility of personal contact with them is limited.

While in Africa people often see in African Americans' roots tourism an opportunity to capitalize on the eccentricities of rich Westerners, different views on the search for Black identity lost as a result of the slave trade by African Americans naturally prevail among Africans residing in the US. They sneer at those African Americans 'who try to be more African than Africans',<sup>23</sup> seeking 'real Africa' without leaving the home country, and thinking that they are achieving this goal, by wearing pseudo-African clothes, buying souvenirs from Africa that have very little to do with folk art, etc. The 'fashion' for DNA analysis is evaluated differently: on the one hand, Africans believe that it will help African Americans realize that Africa is not culturally homogeneous, while on the other, there is an opinion that when rich and renown African Americans take a DNA test it is first and foremost a matter of personal promotion. However, roots tourism is unanimously supported because it contributes to the genuine knowledge about Africa of Black Americans, and to their abandonment of negative stereotypes of its natives, thus promoting better relationships between African Americans and African migrants in the USA (see also Mwakikagile 2007: 119).

As has been stressed above, historic memory of the transatlantic slave trade and slavery is crucial for African American consciousness. For Africans, the topos of the slave trade is also important, but firstly, not to the same degree, and secondly, it is refracted in their minds from a different angle. For them, this is a story not of betrayal of some Black people by others, but of exploitation of Black people by White. Paradoxically, the racial aspect in this case is expressed by Africans more forcefully than by African Americans. In

general, therefore, the historic memory of the slave trade separates the Black communities in the United States more than it integrates them in the face of White America.

As for the topos of slavery, it is perceived as 'our history' only by those Africans who depart from the idea of a single Black history. But Africans have something to remind those Black Americans who claim that their ancestors suffered while those of Africans did not: colonialism.

### Colonialism and anticolonial struggle in Africa

Like slavery in the USA, colonialism in Africa affected directly only one party of the interaction we are considering. The role the topos of colonialism in historic memory plays in the African/African American interaction is not as great as that of the topos of slavery, probably due to the small number of recent African migrants compared to African Americans, and because interaction between them takes place where slavery, and not colonialism, flourished. Yet historic memory and ideas of colonialism, anticolonial struggle, and the rise of independent states in Africa have undoubted importance for mutual perception of, and relationships between Africans and African Americans, and in many ways—in a comparative perspective with slave trade, slavery, and emancipation of slaves.

The question important for both communities is whether it is possible to equate oppression of Africans under colonialism with the suffering of African Americans under the yoke of slavery. Or was the torment of Black Americans so much more terrible that only they can be considered the most disadvantaged people in history and in the modern world, to claim the moral satisfaction and raise the demand of 'reparations'? And should their interaction with Africans be built as a relationship between true companions in misfortune, or as the relationship between those who suffered immensely and, so to say, 'moderately'?

Some African Americans view slavery and colonialism as comparable phenomena. At the same time, many of them believe that colonialism was not as cruel to Black people as slavery, that they cannot be put on a par in the degree of inhumanity. Furthermore, while some Black Americans do not draw conclusions from this about recent African migrants, others tend to blame Africans for a lack of understanding of all the horror of their ancestors' life on the one hand while, on the other, they believe that colonialism, though not as cruel as slavery, nonetheless suppressed a desire to develop and that today Africans do not want to get rid of their 'Third World status' (Jackson & Cothran 2003: 596). In their turn, Africans regret that Black Americans underestimate the inhumanity of colonial regimes and that the African American conviction that Africans misunderstand the nightmare of slavery negatively affects their attitude towards them. Sometimes Africans claim that Black Americans did not support them in their struggle against colonialism (and did not seek to influence US policy towards Africa in the postcolonial period). However, firstly, this is not true—Africans usually simply do not know about the activities of African Americans in support of anticolonial movements in Africa. Secondly, Africans do not take into consideration how difficult it was for African Americans to provide them with effective support in the epoch of racial segregation, and even after its termination (Meriwether 2002; Ogbaa 2003: 115; Williams 2007; Okoro *et al.* 2012). Meanwhile, those African Americans who cultivate in themselves an African identity,

as well as members of the practicing ‘black internationalism’ organizations like the aforementioned Uhuru Movement, try to avoid comparisons of slavery with colonialism and prefer to speak about Black people’s troubles in general, everywhere: the troubles caused by the Whites.

Many African Americans from all walks of life speak about their de-facto unequal position in their own country, although they recognize evident changes for the better in the last decades. However, this does not prevent some of them, mainly (but not exclusively—see Jackson & Cothran 2003: 596) those from the underclass, from feeling themselves citizens of a great advanced power who are not shy to show it to the natives of the ‘backward’ countries such as those of Africa (and probably the Third World in general). At the same time, Africans feel proud of the fact that their home countries got rid of colonial dependence, albeit remaining poor and burdened with many problems. The names of outstanding fighters for independence, the first leaders of sovereign African states—Nnamdi Azikiwe, Jomo Kenyatta, Patrice Lumumba, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Ahmed Sékou Touré, Leopold Senghor and others, including even Robert Mugabe, are pronounced by them with great respect. Some Africans, and also Black Americans who are familiar with African history, even used to say with regret that, excepting Mandela, the later decades did not provide African peoples with leaders of a comparable scale. The presence among Africans of a pan-African layer of identity, though not as primary as ethnic connection, is evidenced by the fact that sometimes they see the origin of disassociation of the African peoples and ethnic conflicts on the continent in colonialism and colonial politics based on the principle of ‘divide and rule’.

In differences between the historical situations of colonialism and slavery, and respectively of the struggle against them, some African respondents see the reason for the dissimilarities between their cultures and the culture of Black Americans:

[Question:] Does the culture of African Americans differ from African considerably?

[Answer:] Yes, it’s another culture. It’s difficult to explain but I think the reason is that those were two different types of struggle. In Africa we had African peoples’ struggle against Europe and people coming there from colonial powers like France, UK. For us our struggle is from that angle. When I came to America I didn’t even try to become an American. Because I don’t have a kind of history that an African American guy has. So I tend to see the African American more like a friend,<sup>24</sup>

—that is, as someone who is close to you but still different. At the same time, many recent migrants from Africa (as well as representatives of other ethnocultural communities that have an experience of communication with both Africans and African Americans) strongly believe that the troubles of contemporary Black Americans are their own fault because, contrary to the Africans, they do not want to study and work hard to use the opportunities for achieving social and financial well-being that the present-day American society provides. Furthermore, strange as it may seem, these views are shared by some African Americans themselves.

It is evident that, like the slave trade and slavery in the USA, colonialism in Africa is estimated by African Americans and African migrants equally negatively, but from different viewpoints. This results in different estimations of its politico-economic and socio-cultural consequences. In their turn, disagreements on these conclusions impose their print on the Black groups’ mutual perception.

## The Civil Rights Movement in the USA

Although at present many African Americans still consider themselves second class citizens in their own country, they recognize the clear fact that today their rights and opportunities in society are incomparably wider than they were before the Civil Rights Movement which culminated in the 1968 victory, one which gave a reason to our respondents, in spite of everything, to declare that they are ‘proud to be Black in America’.<sup>25</sup> In the *longue durée* perspective, the Civil Rights Movement covers the entire period after the abolition of slavery in 1865, having become a continuation of abolitionism. Furthermore, as struggle for not only formal but also real equality, the movement did not finish with the enactment of the Civil Rights Act by Congress on 11 April 1968—it continues to this day. As the then Senator Obama put it,

To say that we are one people is not to suggest that race no longer matters—that the fight for equality has been won (...) As much as I insist that things have gotten better, I am mindful of this truth as well: Better isn't good enough. (Obama 2008: 232–233)

However, our elderly African American respondents remember personally what one cannot imagine today: how they were served in special halls for Blacks in restaurants, how doctors examined them in separate rooms from White patients, or how they went to special schools for Black kids. Some of those people took part in the struggle for civil rights themselves, particularly as ‘Black Power’ activists. But for most of our interlocutors the Civil Rights Movement is already a ‘page of the history’. As an informant said,

In the '60s there was a black community, we had ‘Black Power’. The older people remember that. For the younger people it's probably a thousand years ago.<sup>26</sup>

Educated African Americans and African migrants know the names of those who, in their own way, struggled for the rights of the Black minority in the USA in the last third of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: Alexander Crummell, Booker Washington, Marcus Garvey, Elijah Muhammad, William Du Bois, George Padmore. As for the ‘icons’ of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s—Rosa Parks, Angela Davis and especially Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X, they are hardly unknown to anyone (Figure 4) and are equally respected by representatives of both Black communities to the point that some consider them, particularly Martin Luther King, the most prominent figures in American history.

At the same time, a proportion of African Americans believe that contemporary African migrants do not have the moral right to enjoy the benefits which their sufferings in the eras of slavery and segregation paid for. In the words of a young African American, ‘Fifty to sixty years ago, we were fighting here for equal rights and they [Africans] got their hands off trees’.<sup>27</sup> This delusion, wide-spread among African Americans, makes note once again how ignorance of historical facts influences interaction between African Americans and Africans nowadays: in reality, the young independent states of Africa and the Organization of African Unity (since its founding in 1963) supported the Black Americans’ Civil Rights Movement as far as possible (Mwakikagile, 2007: 126–131).

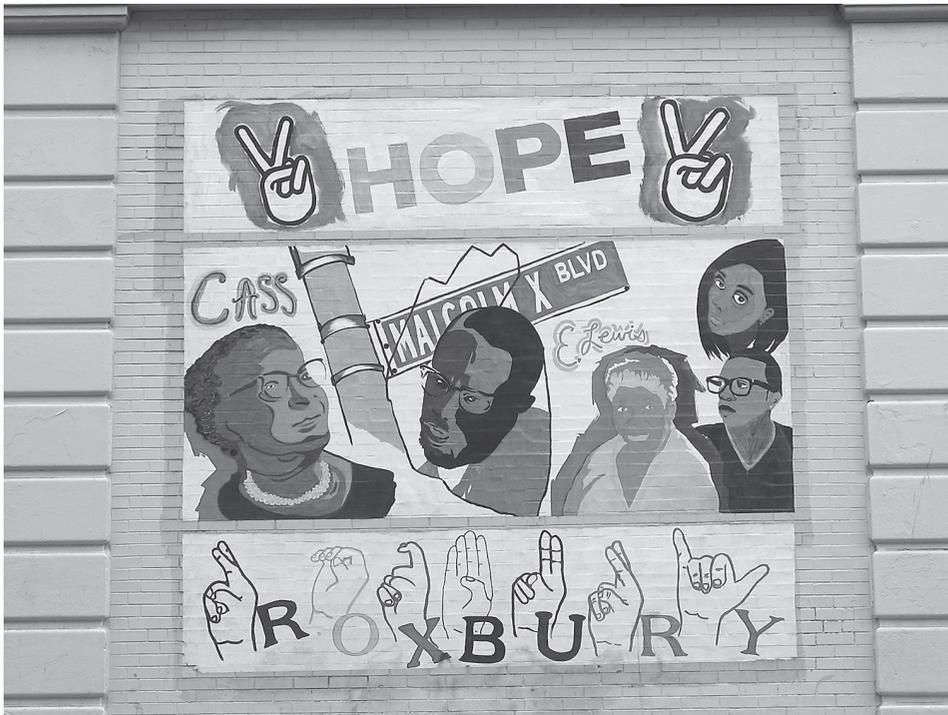


Figure 4. Graffiti in Roxbury, a 'Black' neighborhood in Boston, depicting the famous Civil Rights Movement leaders, including Malcolm X, after whom the neighborhood's main traffic artery is named.

An elderly African American interlocutor summed up the historical basis for the current situation, as she sees it:

When relationships between Blacks and Whites in America were worse and, depending upon the economic status of the African, relationships between Africans and African Americans were worse. I say that because Africans who came here to go to school fifty years ago, forty years ago were basically from well-off families in Africa. They perceived themselves to be superior towards African Americans, because why would you come to a country and identify with the people the country mistreats or looks down at? That situation created animosity within the Black American community. I think a lot has changed because the situation in this country has changed. Still it's not a rosy picture.<sup>28</sup>

That the situation really should not be idealized is evidenced, for example, by the story of events in Washington DC in 2005. The Ethiopian community applied to the city administration, asking that the part of the Shaw neighborhood in which they compactly resided be given the official name of 'Little Ethiopia'. The administration was ready to meet the request but did not dare to because of active rejection of the project by Shaw's African American community which had previously numerically dominated the neighborhood. Its activists treated the Ethiopians' proposal as an attempt to capitalize (on intensification of commercial life in, and influx of tourists to Shaw) in the country in which real possibilities for Black people were due not to recent, voluntary arrivals from

Africa, but to African Americans, who provided this opportunity by their victory in the struggle for civil rights (Kedebe 2011). No matter how hard some of our respondents and journalists (Crary 2007) tried to represent this notable case and others like it as purely economic, the socio-cultural component in it is undeniable. In fact, the organizers of the protest openly confessed to it in the press, speaking negatively of the Ethiopians and their initiative. “They haven’t paid their dues”, said Clyde Howard, 71, a retired postal worker and longtime Shaw activist. “Where were they during the [1968] riots? They’re Johnny-come-lately. What gives them the right? Just because you opened a store?” (Schwartzman 2005). Even during the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections when Barack Obama enjoyed broad support of African Americans, some members of this community, as we were told, still did not vote for him because his father was not a Black American but an African, from Kenya (see also Williams 2008; Sundiata 2015).

However, accusations that African migrants neglected the civil rights struggle of African Americans are not quite fair. Africans, especially the elderly, recall that they also struggled for their rights—with European colonizers, and not only feel piety towards the memory of the fighters for the rights of Black Americans, but also recognize the importance of the Civil Rights Movement for themselves and the whole world:

Recent African immigrants also understand that without the civil right movements of the 1950s and 1960s, their chances of survival in the US would be hard.<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore, they had been ‘fighting for the future of the whole humanity, not only Africa, not for African Americans only’.<sup>30</sup> Thus, contrary to the opinion of a number of African Americans, the history of their struggle for equality is not a matter of indifference to Africans and, in addition to the general humanistic aspect, it is important for them to the extent to which the racial layer is present in their collective identity; that is, to the extent to which they perceive themselves as representatives of a particular race. This layer is definitely present, but it is also evident that its place in the identity and consciousness of Africans is much more modest than in those of African Americans.

### The downfall of apartheid in South Africa

The postcolonial history of Africa is very little known to most of our informants from both communities. Usually they recall some separate, not interconnected fragments of it, almost always tragic: the tyrannical rule of Idi Amin in Uganda in 1971–1979 and the Rwandan genocide of 1994 were mentioned most often. Nevertheless, practically all know about the fall of the apartheid regime in South Africa in April 1994. The vividness of perception and acuity of attitude to apartheid and the victory over it of both African Americans and African migrants can partly be explained by the fact that, apart from the youngest respondents, it is history taking place in their living memories: the mechanism of incorporation of this event into their historical consciousness and the place it occupies differ from events of the more distant past. In particular, there is a natural corruption of historical perspective: contemporary events may seem much more important than those of the deeper past, although they may not be so from the point of view of a historian.



Figure 5. Residential house in a predominantly African American neighborhood in Philadelphia named after Nelson Mandela.

Africans and African Americans agree on the evaluation of the fall of the apartheid regime in South Africa as a world-historical event in its importance. An African American respondent recalled how, being that year in Africa—in Kenya and Tanzania—he experienced the feeling of unity shown to him by locals who, as he recalled, were euphoric, now foreseeing new opportunities for all Black people. Nelson Mandela is a person equally admired by respondents from both Black communities (Figure 5). For example, it is indicative that in the recently published tutorial for Sunday schools of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the vast majority of whose members are African Americans, the name of only one layman is mentioned: ‘In history, such personalities as Nelson Mandela have shown that forgiveness of haters is possible’ (Ingram 2014: 48).

However, the meaning of these events—apartheid and the struggle against it—is not the same in the consciousness of representatives of the two Black communities. For Africans, including those in the diaspora, apartheid was always a common problem, not just South African. An elderly native of Nigeria, answering the question—‘In what situations can Africans from different countries feel precisely African and unite?’—said: ‘The most vivid example I remember is how people from all over Africa united against apartheid’.<sup>31</sup> Today the struggle against apartheid is still perceived by Africans as a page in the history of the whole continent, as a natural and integral part of the anti-colonial struggle of all peoples and countries of Africa. For them, it was the final phase of that struggle, which ended in triumph.

African Americans, being impressed by the victory over apartheid not less than Africans, realize it differently: not from a socio-political but rather from a racial perspective, which is more familiar and seeming more correct for them in the light of their own historical experience of open racial confrontation. For African Americans, the coming to power of the Black majority in South Africa in 1994 means first of all not the end of the struggle of African peoples for political freedom, but a very important, yet by no means final, step on the way to social and spiritual liberation of the whole Black race. The situation of Black-White dualism is so natural for African Americans, so necessary for them to support their collective identity, that sometimes it manifests itself in their minds in even bizarre ways. For example, although many African Americans told us that they would like to visit different or even any African countries, a not young and not very well educated woman in the rural South said she would go straight to South Africa, 'because there are also both Blacks and Whites there, what makes it similar to the US'.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, chronologically the last event of the past that is vividly etched in the historical memory and took a prominent place in the historical consciousness of Africans and African Americans—the fall of the apartheid regime in South Africa two decades ago—is seemingly perceived by both groups in much the same way. And this is true in terms of the unequivocal positivity and emotionality of the assessments they give to this event. But in reality, these same estimates are made from different positions and filled with historical and cultural meanings that are not identical.

### *Conclusion*

There are, therefore, significant differences in perceptions of key historic events by African Americans and recent African migrants in the USA. As a matter of fact, not even the same events of the past are key for them. Nevertheless, this statement does not remove the problem of the existence in the minds of African Americans and Africans of the concept of 'Black history' as history common to all those whose roots lie in Africa. Clarifying this issue is important for understanding the extent to which historic memory promotes or prevents the formation of the attitude of African Americans and Africans to each other as to parts of a single whole—the 'Black community'.

Remarkably, the main divide on the question of a common history is not between African migrants and African Americans but between highly educated and cultured members of both communities and their less educated representatives. Among the former, opinions differ: some respondents consider Black history a reality while others fiction. Furthermore, the views of those who argue that Black history does exist also differ from each other. For some, explicitly or implicitly, it is the antithesis to 'White' history; 'Black' history is seen as bonded only by common suffering inflicted by the Whites. For others its foundation lies in the common origin of all Black people in Africa, dating back to the days preceding the appearance of the Whites on the continent. At the same time, among the average and poorly educated—in particular, residents of rural areas and the poorer neighborhoods of megacities—without the broad cultural outlook of educated respondents from both communities, the belief that the history of Africans and the history of African Americans do not form a single Black history dominates entirely; each

community has its own history. Almost all such African American respondents stressed that the main theme in their own history is slavery and struggle against it, which the Africans did not experience, and it is just this that makes their histories different.

In principle, this leitmotif (with the variation: the main theme in the history of African Americans is slavery, and in the history of Africans—colonialism) is the essence of the position of all opponents of the idea of single Black history, regardless of their origin, education and level of culture. Some respondents among Afrocentrists, activists of left political movements, and Africans concerned with the establishment of strong ties with African Americans explain this view on the part of such a significant sector of Black Americans by reference to the influence of the ‘white propaganda’ whose goal is to divide Black people; in particular, to make them believe that Africans and African Americans are two different peoples, and that the history of the latter begins only with the slave trade.

The impact, not only of events of the past but also of the memory of them, on the mentality and behavior of African Americans and Africans, on their mutual perception and relationships, is realized by many intellectuals from both communities. Meaningful differences in perception, estimation, and evaluation of historic events, as well as lack of feeling of history’s unity for many Africans and African Americans, separates them both spiritually and mentally and contributes to the establishment of an ambiguous and complicated relationship between the Black communities.

In the words of Nigerian scholar and diplomat, US resident, Femi Ojo-Ade (2011: 14): ‘whether we like it or not, there is a divide, a deep one, a dangerous one’ between African migrants and African Americans. Another researcher, Msia Kibona Clark, who is half Tanzanian and half African American, characterizes the relationship between Black communities in the USA as ‘dysfunctional at best and hostile at worst’ (2006). At the same time, one of the central points for ideologists of all the ‘Black nationalism’ teachings is the postulate that all those whose skin is black and roots are in Africa are ‘brothers and sisters’. Among our numerous respondents, there were those who agreed with this statement. Some of them accepted it with specific reservations. According to one of the interlocutors, Africans and African Americans

share the same historical background: we were exploited. So if you go back to that historical experience we share, we should be calling ourselves brothers and sisters. But if you wanna know from political point, the way we treat each other is not like brothers and sisters, though from the historical point, we should.<sup>33</sup>

In another respondent’s words, he basically believes that Africans and Black Americans are brothers and sisters, ‘but Martin Luther King said: “don’t ever call a man your brother unless he acts like one”’.<sup>34</sup>

For most of both African Americans and especially Africans, the postulate about pan-Black brotherhood sounds like nothing more than an ideological slogan: wrong and even absurd.

I have come to believe (...) that for the most part, our shared sense of identification and affinity begins and ends with the awareness of the commonality of skin color (Uwah 2005: 24).

Kalu Ogbaa, a Nigerian scholar and writer residing in America, asks a question that he answers himself:

For example, both groups are victims of racial profiling by the police. Does that then mean that their intergroup relations are good and smooth all the time? Certainly not. (Ogbaa 2003: 111)

As a respondent said,

I do not believe we are brothers and sisters just because society classifies us based on skin color and on the fact that all black people suffer some form of social discrimination. We are not brothers and sisters just because all Blacks get their roots from Africa. Brothers and sisters should care for one another.<sup>35</sup>

It has been suggested that the 'magnetic poles' of the Black communities both attract and repel each other; and even at this less than complete stage of research, it may be concluded that this is a phenomenon in which the differences in historic memory of African Americans and recent African migrants in the USA do play a significant role.

#### NOTES

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<sup>2</sup> The 2010 census recognized six 'races': White, Black or African American (thus merging Black people of all origins into one category), American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and 'Some other race'. The US residents were to choose one of these or to indicate a combination of them in case of mixed origin. Yet the 'habitual' concept of race which influences directly perceptions of the others and self-perception in society, is far from being scientific: it is also based on the idea that race is an 'objective', inborn category with which 'subjective' racial identity must correlate. An important part of this common wisdom, which shows to what a great extent the popular concept of race is actually determined culturally, is the so-called 'one drop rule'. According to it, a person will definitely be considered and treated as Black, and encouraged to align with the Black community even if he or she is Black only to 1%. But one must be 100% White to be recognized as White by society. Even if a person is of mixed origin or with a complex pedigree (e.g., was born in America but to African parents), he or she should clearly identify the community to which he or she belongs: as Americans say, 'You must take a side'.

<sup>3</sup> The first voluntary African migrants to the US were Cape Verdians (Halter 1993; Wibault 2005: 13–19).

<sup>4</sup> African American man, hospital technical staff member, about 40, Springfield, MA, 15.10.2013.

<sup>5</sup> In fiction, this situation has recently been depicted brilliantly by the Nigerian American writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in her autobiographic novel *Americanah* (2013).

<sup>6</sup> Nigerian-Ugandan woman, born in the US, lawyer in an African migrant organization, about 30, Philadelphia, PA, 19.09.2013.

<sup>7</sup> Those African states were Benin, Cape Verde, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Togo, and Uganda. The Caribbean countries were Barbados, Haiti, Guyana, Jamaica,

and Trinidad and Tobago. The origins of non-Black Americans were Arab, Chinese, European, Hispanic, Indian, and Jewish.

<sup>8</sup> See note 3.

<sup>9</sup> Some supporters of the name *African Americans* also suggest giving up the name *Blacks* (Gordon 2007: 71). This way they once again demonstrate their desire to get rid of a racially based name and equate the identification of their community with ethnic principles.

All other ethnic groups of the United States carry names that are based on either their geographical origins or cultural ancestry. (...) The increasing usage of the term African American over the past 20 years rather than Black or Black American counters this point because this term is based on geographical and cultural ancestry (Belgrave & Allison 2014: 105).

<sup>10</sup> The name *African Americans* is regarded as unacceptable by those who see in it a familiar denial of Black citizens' rights to be considered full-fledged Americans, without any reservations and clarifications (<http://neoafricanamericans.wordpress.com/> [accessed 07.12.2014]).

<sup>11</sup> Recent Black migrants think about the possibility of classifying themselves as 'African Americans' very differently, ranging from insisting on it to its categorical rejection, though more often than not they somehow justify their unwillingness to be designated as such (el-Malik 2011).

<sup>12</sup> <https://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20140102135916AA8JnK7> (accessed 07.12.2014).

<sup>13</sup> African American woman, social activist in a 'Black' neighborhood, about 50, Philadelphia, PA, 29.09.2013.

<sup>14</sup> African American man, non-qualified worker, about 60, Philadelphia, PA, 26.09.2013.

<sup>15</sup> Nigerian man, physician and university teacher, 73, East Lansing, MI, 10.09.2013 (done by e-mail).

<sup>16</sup> See note 13.

<sup>17</sup> About *Roots'* impact on the minds of numbers of African Americans and on perceptions of their own history by Africans, see, e.g.: Gerber 1977; Mills & Mills 1981; Wright 1981; 2011; Bellagamba 2009; Ojo-Ade 2011: 14–17; Warren & MacGonagle 2012. The eight-episode mini-series was also a great success with both laity and professionals (Hyatt 2012: 167–169).

<sup>18</sup> For example, one of our respondents turned out to be a descendant of the Cameroonian Bamileke.

<sup>19</sup> African American woman, cashier at a museum of African American history, about 50, Boston, MA, 15.10.2013.

<sup>20</sup> African American woman, head of an African American non-profit, about 70, Philadelphia, PA, 23.09.2013.

<sup>21</sup> As a young African wrote on an Internet forum,

Nobody wants African Americans to return to Africa because they will be foreigners. They are better off where they are and our ancestors stayed behind because they were probably weaker but where we are is where we are supposed to be, i.e. in their home, in Africa (<http://neoafricanamericans.wordpress.com/> [accessed 07.12.2014]).

<sup>22</sup> *Uhuru* means 'freedom' in Kiswahili.

<sup>23</sup> Ghanaian woman, physician, 45–50, Philadelphia, PA, 20.09.2013.

<sup>24</sup> Chadian man, head of an African migrant organization, about 40, Cambridge, MA, 06.10.2013, 11.10.2013.

<sup>25</sup> African American man, about 70, church servant, Guntersville, AL, 20.08.2014.

<sup>26</sup> African American man, engineer, 50–55, Boston, MA, 12.10.2013.

<sup>27</sup> African American man, university entrant, about 17, Cambridge, MA, 03.10.2013.

<sup>28</sup> African American woman, financial consultant, 62, Baltimore, MD, 21.09.2013 (done in Philadelphia).

<sup>29</sup> Nigerian man, school teacher, 50, Detroit, MI, 16.08.2013, 20.09.2013 (done by e-mail); see also: Mwakikagile 2007: 19; Blyden 2012: 168; Agbemabiese 2013.

<sup>30</sup> Cameroonian man, software engineer, 30–35, Boston, MA, 14.10.2013.

<sup>31</sup> Nigerian man, ex-university teacher and employee of the Canadian government, now independent researcher in the field of international relations, 69, Ottawa, Canada, 15.11.2013 (conducted in Moscow).

- <sup>32</sup> African American woman, ex-poultry plant worker, now pensioner, 51, Guntersville, AL, 19.08.2014.  
<sup>33</sup> Liberian man, journalist, employee of the city administration, 48, Philadelphia, PA, 28.09.2013.  
<sup>34</sup> Nigerian man, Professor and a private university President, 67, Fontana, CA, 14.11.2013 (done by e-mail).  
<sup>35</sup> Nigerian man, physiotherapist, 49, Chesterton, IN, 22.09.2013 (done by e-mail).

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