

Anthropology is in trouble, especially since World war ii ~ William Willis

Introduction

From Zora Neal Hurston's innovative methodological approach in conducting field research to Anténor Firmin provides a scientific argument for the equality of human races as early as 1885 during the emergence of anthropology. African diasporic anthropologists have made tremendous contributions to the field of anthropology. They have worked as vindicationists, revealing the racism that has been prevalent in anthropology and fighting for the equality of all African Americans. They have shown how racist views affected anthropologists' scientific studies. Throughout American history, intellectuals and the academic discipline of anthropology did not pay attention to Blacks and Black anthropologists. This essay draws attention to the contributions Black anthropologists have made to the field of anthropology. This fruitful body of scholarship challenges anthropology to address the racism persistent throughout the field's history and calls for anthropologists to continue the vindicationist tradition.

I contend that persistent racism in the field of anthropology contributes to anthropologists and the academy as a whole a lack of awareness of the contributions Black anthropologists have made. This unawareness leads to ignorance about the vindicationist tradition and an inadequate view of anthropology. Therefore, my method is an examination of primary source materials written by Blacks from the 18th century to the 20th century. I choose this time period because these are the formative years of anthropology and the Anglophone commencement of diasporic thinking. The Blacks I focus on are either identified as anthropologists or an argument can be made that they contribute to anthropology. I conclude that a revisionist history of anthropology expands the interlocutors of its development, provides antecedent notions of race and methodologies that are lauded now and illuminates Blacks prolonged struggle to set the record straight about the very identity of who America is and anthropology's place in this America.

Literature review of black's contribution to anthropology

I start this literature review focusing on Michael Blakey's perennial text "Skull Doctors: Intrinsic Social and Political Bias in the History of American Physical Anthropology" (1987) and conclude with Ira and Faye Harrison's African American Pioneers in Anthropology¹ in order to lay out the preceding texts and arguments that elucidate the patterns of racism in anthropology and challenges for anthropologists to take part in the vindicationist tradition. These scholars overwhelmingly agree that "much of the scholarship they have produced has been rendered largely invisible in the texts and discourses that define anthropology as the authoritative yet overwhelmingly Eurocentric and masculinist study of humankind".¹ "Skull Doctors," first published in the Critique of Anthropology, offered insight into the racism, sexism and classism that scholars did not discuss in reference to American physical anthropologists, Aleš Hrdlička. This essay was significant because it was written during a time when anti-racism was considered racism. Several scholars argue that after the freedom struggle during the 1960s, America became a "color-blind" society. Eduardo

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Bonilla-Silva in Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America (2003) argues: Whereas Jim Crow racism explained black's social standing as the result of their biological and moral inferiority, color-blind racism avoids such facile arguments. Instead, whites rationalize minorities contemporary status as the product of market dynamics, naturally occurring phenomena and blacks' imputed cultural limitations" (Bonilla-Silva, 3).

Blakey's illumination of Hrdlička's racism highlighted a racism that had been overlooked and points to the racist roots of physical anthropology that still persists in a "color-blind" society. In the same year of the publication of "Skull Doctors," Black anthropologist St. Clair Drake published volume 1 of Black Folk Here and There. Willie Baber argued that this monumental work was "written in the vindicationist tradition, an often difficult viewpoint to perceive or to accept given the objectivist nature of scholarship and nonaction as an academic standard".² In this expansive two volume work, Drake covered the "Black" experience, starting from ancient Egypt and up to the 16th century with the beginning of the Black diaspora spreading into the Western Hemisphere. Drake argued that prejudice "existed for several centuries before the beginning of European expansion but were not accompanied by any systematic doctrines of racial inferiority or superiority that is 'racism' as we define it for the purposes of this study".² This vindicationist text made a strong argument during a time in which historians question the presence of racism before the Atlantic slave trade. He also engaged with religious discussions on Jews, Christians and Muslims with Africans. As a result, a Black anthropologist provided an interdisciplinary text that intersected with religion, history, African American studies and anthropology.

Blakey and Drake were not the first to write as vindicationists, but they were writing during a peculiar time that has continued into our present moment. The intriguing connection between these two scholars was Blakey's wrote this essay as a graduate student at the same time Drake was an established anthropologist with more than fifty years of scholarly and activist work. This intersection of texts moved the study of "Black" folks from ancient Egypt to World War II. Four years later, in 1991, Faye Harrison published Decolonizing Anthropology: Moving Further toward Anthropology for Liberation. Harrison's text can be considered a primary text in and of itself because of the ways in which anthropologists and Black studies scholars used Decolonizing Anthropology to reconceptualize the entire field. Viewing it here as a secondary text, Harrison explained how "anthropology remains overwhelmingly a Western intellectual and

ideological project that is embedded in relations of power which favor class sections and historical blocs belonging to or with allegiances to the world's White minority".³ Decolonizing Anthropology examined the ethical, methodological, political and epistemological functions of anthropology in order to transform society and bring human liberation. Harrison's thorough investigation in order to completely transform anthropology is still necessary today, she contends: "Although this book is clearly a product of the late 1980s and early 1990s, it is still relevant and needed now as we prepare ourselves and our discipline for the challenges of the 21st century life".³

Blakey, Drake and Harrison illuminated an early instance of unchecked racism, pre-Atlantic slave trade perspectives of "Blackness" and the need for a complete overhaul of anthropology. Provided the extensive two hundred plus year history of anthropology and its role in White Supremacy, the ingrained shortcomings of rendering Blacks invisible have persisted. Following Harrison's groundbreaking text, *Decolonizing Anthropology*, Faye Harrison teamed up with Ira Harrison and co-edited *African American Pioneers in Anthropology*.¹ The Harrisons presented the importance of subaltern scholarship by building on the work of Renato Rosaldo who argued "(anthropology) only stands to lose by ignoring how the oppressed analyze their own situation. Indeed the dominated usually understand the dominant better than the reverse".¹ Therefore, *African American Pioneers in Anthropology* shined the spotlight on the lives and work of thirteen trailblazers that trained after World War 1 and re-historicized anthropology to include Black contributions. The Harrisons provided the most comprehensive examination of Blacks leading the way in shaping of anthropology but their focus was not on African Americans before World War 1. This is where "Anthropology Is in Trouble" enters the conversation and asks the question, how would a scholarly conception of the formation of anthropology be conceived if we account for the Anglophone beginnings of diasporic Africans?

Anthropology as a tool for imperialism

In order to properly understand the context of the earliest experiences of Black anthropologists, it is necessary to analyze the socio-historical context of the New World and formation of anthropology. These particular African diasporic people were responding to the systematization of a chattel slavery that eventually became racialized coterminously with the evolution of anthropology. Following up on Drake's argument that European expansion during the 16th century was a turning point in understanding "Blackness," William Willis in "Skeletons in the Anthropological Closet,"⁴ added that at this juncture, "white rule has created a new generalization of worldwide inequality of colored peoples".⁴ This context shaped the development of anthropology.⁴ Therefore Drake, Willis, Lee Baker & Antenor Firmin,^{5,6} contended that at the inception of anthropology, anthropologists were racists and their work produced and perpetuated racism.

Baker explained that during European colonization, religion was the primary worldview that guided the identity of humankind. Originally, the Puritans believed it was "God's will!" to colonize the indigenous people of America and Africans.⁵ Baker cited John Winthrop's statement that the "smallpox epidemic of 1617 was God's way of 'thinning out' the Indians 'to make room for the Puritans'".⁵ The theological perspective of God ordaining Europeans and eventually Creoles/Euro-Americans to take over and then rule the New World placed them in a position of superiority. It was not until the rise of

"science" that categories were developed that institutionalized and classified positions of ranking.

The prominence of science which led to the movement of race from varieties of beings to classifying humans, positioning Negroes at the bottom of the racial hierarchy and anthropology's central role in this transformation pointed to the direct link between devaluing Africans throughout the diaspora and the inherent implementation of anthropology. The Enlightenment writers were influential in elevating science to a prominent place. As a result of the move towards "science," the epistemology of scientific empiricism was used to justify slavery rather than religion and Africans were known as "savages".⁵ Firmin revealed the ways in which Carolus Linnaeus contributed to scientific racism and the development of anthropology. Firmin stated that "We must return once more to Linnaeus, as we must every time we want to trace or record the successive phases in the evolution of the natural sciences".⁶ Firmin articulated that Linnaeus created the first human classification system that was used by European and Euro-American scientists. Most importantly for this study, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach and Samuel Morton built on Linnaean classification consisting of three species: homo sapiens, homo ferus and homo monstrosus. Firmin explained that Morton, Josiah Nott and Louis Agassiz were part of the "American School" of anthropology. The American school believed in polygenesis which posited that human species have different origins and classified Blacks as a subordinate race. Morton's racial classifications were white-skinned people, yellow-skinned people, red-skinned people and Negroes with Negroes placed at the bottom.⁶

In Firmin's definition of anthropology, he laid out two camps, philosophers and scientists. The scientists perspective of anthropology centered Blumenbach because he moved away from Linnaeus' grouping of humans with animals and placed "Man in the first category, thus isolating him from the other animals by the distance of the whole order".⁶ Firmin concluded and provided "one of the earliest statements of the comprehensive nature and centrality of anthropology among the sciences for the study of humankind" (Fluehr-Lobban, xix). Firmin's description of the formation of racial taxonomy by Euro thinkers and early ideas into identifying anthropology directly linked to viewing African and Africans born in the New World into slavery as a subordinate group. Although Firmin provided a definition of anthropology in 1885, his book was not translated into English until 2000, showing how another African diasporic contribution was rendered invisible.

Baker argued that in the later half of the nineteenth century "members of Congress used early anthropological studies to justify legislation that structured racial inequality".⁵ Furthermore, Drake portrayed how fieldwork in Africa was used to dehumanize Africans: "Ethnographic data from Africa were used to support contentions that sub-Saharan cultures were 'retarded' and/or 'degenerate'".² Willis explicated how British anthropologists were contracted by the government for one essential service, "to provide data that might assist the imperialist".⁴ Anthropology's history has led to this definition by Willis: "To a considerable extent, anthropology has been the social science that studies dominated colored peoples-and their ancestors living outside the boundaries of modern white societies".⁴ In light of the socio-historical context that Firmin, Willis, Drake and Baker provided from the 16th century to the 19th century, we can clearly see how Black anthropologists created and continued the vindicationist tradition.

Abolitionist starting the legacy of vindication

In Willie Baber's essay on St. Clair Drake, he provided an exceptional explanation of vindicationist scholars. He stated: "Vindicationist scholars study racist ideas and behavior. They correct distorted interpretations of the African or African American past or they develop counter ideologies for coping with the present" (Baber, 193). By focusing on Black writings during the 18th and 19th centuries, we can shine a light on how Blacks responded in the middle of the very creation of these stereotypical stigmas. Some of the initial writings by Africans throughout the diaspora were formerly enslaved narratives. These works refuted claims of racial inequality and fought for freedom of Blacks in America and throughout the diaspora. Notable examples in this vein included.⁷⁻¹⁰

The main vindicationist theme in all their work was a firm call for abolition. It was agreed that it was important for America to comprehend the brutal treatment of Blacks. Moreover, they all understood that slavery was detrimental to Whites. Although Christianity contributed to slavery, they were all Christians and revealed the role their faith played in both their survival and persistent work as abolitionists. Further, Truth and Jacobs highlighted "the neglected issues particular to slave mothers and newly freed mothers remained buried beneath the general preoccupation of the race".¹¹

These ex-slave authors started a legacy of anti-colonialism that influenced the work of Black anthropologists to fight back against American imperialism, both men and women. Kersuze Simeon Jones¹¹ illustrates how Maria Stewart (first woman of any race to give a public speech) and Jarena Lee (the first authorized female preacher in the African Methodist Episcopal church) influenced Sojourner Truth. Jacobs stated: "I do it to kindle a flame of compassion in your hearts for my sisters who are still in bondage, suffering as I once suffered".¹⁰ According to Jean Yellin, Jacobs influenced "Frances Ellen Watkins, Harper's pioneering¹² novel *Iola Leroy*; or *Shadows Uplifted* (1892), which in turned helped shaped the writings of Zora Neal Hurston and other foremothers of Black women writing today" (pg xxix). Therefore, it can be argued that Stewart, Lee, Truth and Jacobs played an integral role in the vindicationist tradition and Black's contribution to anthropology.

In a variety of ways, all of the slave narratives discussed the atrocities of slavery. They reveal how slavery affected every aspect of the slave's life: physically, psychologically and socially, familial and spiritually. Douglass detailed how he was barely feed and barely clothed on Colonel Lloyd's plantation. He also didn't have a bed to sleep on, so at night he would sleep in a corn mill bag on the floor with frost bitten feet in the winter. The others had similar experiences pertaining to food and clothes. Douglass also explained how slaves did not experience an "ordinary" life or what Americans would normally take for granted. When discussing his departure from Lloyd's plantation, he stated: "My mother was dead; my grandmother lived far off, so that I seldom saw her. I had two sisters and one brother, that lived in the same house with me; but the early separation of us from our mother had well nigh blotted the fact of our relationship from our memories".⁹ As a slave, Douglass was homeless and destitute. Also, all share about their physical sufferings; slaves were beaten severely and some were killed.

The experience of losing loved ones and enduring physical abuse impacted slaves psychologically. When Equiano shared his experience on a slave ship, he stated: I was not long suffered to indulge my grief

I was soon put down under the decks and there I received such a salutation in my nostrils as I had never experienced in my life so that, with the loathsomeness of the stench and crying together, I became so sick and low that I was not able to eat nor had I the least desire to taste anything. I now wished for the last friend. Death, to relieve me but soon to my grief, two of the white men offered me eatables and on my refusing to eat, one of them held me fast by the hands and laid me across I think the windlass and tied my feet, while the other flogged me severely.

Equiano's powerful account placed death in the position of friendship. Jacobs also displayed the lasting effects of slavery even while she was "free." She shared how she was "oppressed" and constantly dealt with distrust. She stated: "Ah, if he had ever been a slave he would have known how difficult it was to trust a white man"¹⁰

In addition to slavery negatively impacting Blacks, it was an issue for Whites. Firmin provided assistance to this argument in his comparisons of Blacks and Whites. He posited that Whites cannot claim that Negroes were savages when they were the slaveholders. He stated: When it comes to the relations between Europeans and people of other races, Blacks in particular, there is nothing more horrific, more barbaric. The entire history of the slave trade is so bloody, so full of crimes that one is tempted to believe that slave owners were simply prey to some cruel form of madness.⁶ Jacobs revealed that slavery impaired the White family. She provided an account of her master's wife questioning about the relationship between Jacobs and the master. Jacobs was pointing out the distrust that slaveholder's wives had of their husbands because of their practice of raping slaves.

All the slave narratives agreed that slavery negatively reflected the Christianity that Whites were practicing and empowered the enslaved. Douglas explained in the appendix that there are two different types of Christianity, "the Christianity of this land and the Christianity of Christ".⁹ Jea extensively made the argument against the actions of American Christianity. Throughout his piece, he consistently called for the reader to repent of their sins and turn to Christ. He explicitly stated: recollect also that even here you might be a slave to Satan, a slave to hell and, unless you are made free by Christ, through the means of the gospel, you will remain in captivity, tied and bound in the chains of your sin, till at last you will be bound hand and foot and cast into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth forever.⁷ Jea was arguing that even though Whites were not enslaved, they were slaves to their sins. Their "sin" included their maltreatment of Blacks. Moreover, Truth added that God was on the enslaved side. She proclaimed: "O their impious appeal to the God of the oppressed, for his divine benediction while they are making merchandise of his image" (Truth, Preface)! The statement "God of the oppressed" signified that Truth believed God was with the enslaved and not the oppressor.

Following the slave narratives, African Americans continued the vindicationist tradition later into the 19th and the 20th century. The abolition of slavery in the North and eventually in the South allowed for a tremendous increase in education and the growth of archiving Blacks' work. The next section focuses on the work of James Mc Cune Smith, WEB Du Bois, Montague WC, Laurence Foster, Zora Neal Hurston, Katherine Dunham, Irene Diggs, Firmin and Willis. In the Harrisons' introduction to African American Pioneers in Anthropology, they introduce three arguments about rethinking anthropology when focusing on Blacks that I would like to elaborate upon. They contend that scholars should expand their

notion of who should be considered an anthropologists such as Du Bois because he a “defender of the race),¹ that the vindication tradition was interconnected with mainstream anthropology and that Blacks provide groundbreaking research methods.

Reconsidering the canon of anthropologists

Michael Blakey in “Bioarchaeology of the African Diaspora in the Americas: Its Origins and Scope” (2001) posited that the origin of bioarchaeological studies were conducted by formerly enslaved Africans. Therefore, aforementioned diasporic writers can be considered anthropologists. They shared observations of their own lives, the lives of others enslaved and detailed descriptions of plantation life and their travels. As a slave, their accounts were unique because they were experiencing slavery first hand. Also, their critiques of Christianity, the maltreatment of Negroes and claims for equality based on being fully human countered the elements that were evolving into academic anthropology. Their indictment of America’s racism puts them in line with Harrison’s description of Du Bois as defenders of the race.

In addition to the slave narratives, Douglass’ speech given at Western Reserve College “The Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Considered”, Haitian leader and scholar Antenor Firmin’s⁶ and the writings of James Mc Cune Smith¹³ directly confronted scientific racism and therefore they should be included in the directory of pioneering anthropologists. McCune Smith and Douglass were friends and active at the same time. Smith wrote the introduction to Douglass *My Bondage, My Freedom*. Douglass may not have been as close to Firmin as he was to McCune Smith but they did know each other because Douglass was the US ambassador to Haiti. Yet and still, their quest for African diasporic people tied their life and legacies together.

In “Bioarchaeology of the African Diaspora in the Americas” Blakey said this about Douglass’ speech: (A)n African-American genre of critical, dialectical, environmentalist, vindicationist and activist scholarship had begun that would form a fundamental distinction of Diasporan scholarship. And it would emerge in opposition to the new genre of physical anthropology and African (Egyptian) archaeology, which Douglass claimed to be merely an attempt to justify slavery. (Blakey, 389)

In addition to directly responding to the racists claims by physical anthropologists and archeologists, the most convincing evidence that this work can be considered a contribution to anthropology is the title. Douglass addressed these claims “ethnologically” which means he functioned in the same capacity that cultural anthropologists provided one of the first accounts that the scientific perspectives being presented were cultural and not biological. Douglass stated: Common sense itself is scarcely needed to detect the absence of manhood in a monkey, or to recognize its presence in a negro. His speech, his reason, his power to acquire and to retain knowledge, his heaven-erected face, his habitudes, his hopes, his fears, his aspirations, his prophecies, plant between him and the brute creation, a distinction as eternal as it is palpable. Away, therefore, with all the scientific moonshine that would connect men with monkeys; that would have the world believe that humanity, instead of resting on its own characteristic pedestal gloriously independent is a sort of sliding scale, making one extreme brother to the orang-ou-tang and the other to angels and all the rest intermediates!

Blacks were humans, simply put. In order for scientists to consider them as less than human, they have to be biased in their observations.

The inherent and unchecked bias in Europeans and Euro-American scientists’ work materialized their racism. Firmin also made this argument. He stated that “the notion of inequality of the races is so deeply rooted in the minds of the most enlightened men of Europe that they seem incapable of ever discarding it”.⁶ Firmin came to this conclusion after extensively studying European and American scientific anthropological arguments. Firmin charted the history of scientific measurements that contributed to the inequality of race. He analyzed prominent scientists of the day, who they were influenced by, their methods and their results. One example was his examination Samuel Morton’s gauging of skulls with hunting gun pellets and Bernard Davis who filled skulls with dry sand. He concluded that “we immediately notice one salient fact, namely, the irregularity of the results and their uncertain relative value”.⁶ Essentially Morton and Davis interpreted the results in such a way to verify their claims of inequality but when objectively examined, it revealed that their claims were inadequate and did not meet scientific standards.

Another Black pioneer who has received little scholarly attention as anthropologists was James McCune Smith.¹³ In the introduction,¹³ John Stauffer stated: “Given his influence and accomplishments, the most astonishing fact about McCune Smith is that he fell into obscurity soon after his death on November 17, 1865” (Stauffer, xvi). Up to 2006, Stauffer was fairly accurate with the exceptions of Kelly Miller’s essay “Historic Background of the Negro Physician” published in the *Journal of Negro History* (1916) and W Montague Cobb’s “James McCune Smith”¹³ published in the *Journal of the National Medical Association* (1952). Miller highlighted that McCune Smith was the first Black to receive a medical degree and positioned him within the anthropological discussions of his time. Several years after Thomas Patterson¹⁴ described Smith’s anthropological thought in order to draw attention to Black contributions to anthropology before the Civil War. Miller described Smith this way: “Living in a day when the Negro was the subject of much anthropological and physiological discussion, Doctor Smith could not resist participating in this controversy. There were at this time a number of persons who were resorting to science to prove the inferiority of the Negro” (Miller, 104).

Stauffer, Miller and Patterson illustrated that Smith responded to Euro-American depictions of Negro inferiority and provided conceptions of race that were not generally accepted until the end of the 20th century. Patterson aligned with Blakey’s argument and considered Black Nationalist culture as a space to interrogate the strands of anthropological race theory. He detailed the discussions that Miller mentioned and referenced both monogenesis (Samuel Stanhope Smith (1750-1819), Albert Gallatin (1761-1849) and Lewis Henry Morgan (1818-1881) and polygenesis of Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), Charles White (1728-1813) and the members of the American School of Anthropology of the 1840s and 1850s strands of thought.¹⁴ According to Patterson, McCune argued: “that ‘society was not made up of brains but sovereign striving individuals with souls’”¹⁴ McCune is pushing for a holistic evaluation of humans including the social impact of racism that devalued Blacks.

Patterson portrayed McCune as a monogenesis who spoke out against polygenesis by indicating that there were mixed races resulting from “the products of the mixing of peoples from diverse environmental settings who came to the United States as a result of migration, immigration and enslavement”.¹⁴ In response to the 1840 US Census which claimed that enslaved Negroes were healthier than free Negroes, “McCune Smith argued that there were greater physical

and mental differences within a race than between races (only recently has this become an accepted theory)” (Stauffer, xv).

Vindication tradition continued

In addition to expanding the directory of anthropologists, Harrison and Harrison brought up the ways in which vindicationism and the history of anthropology were interwoven. In Lee Baker’s discussion of race at the turn of the century, he stated: “The earliest African American scholars to study anthropology were vindicationists first and anthropologists second”.⁵ From Jea to Drake, African diasporic anthropologists have recognized their purpose was to fight for Black freedom. A proper understanding of the vindicationist tradition for Black anthropologists was not limited to scholarship but also included being active within the community. Baber stated that “it mattered to Drake that vindicationists ‘act in the streets’”.¹

Baker’s description of vindicationists followed a discussion of Boas’ and W.E.B. Du Bois’ contribution to anthropology. Boas personified the anti-racist racism and Du Bois embodied the continuation and growth of the vindicationist tradition from those who came before him. Willis argued that: “Scientific anti-racism does not mean the absence of color prejudice and discrimination”.⁴ Willis’ argument was imperative to understanding the type of racism Black anthropologist experienced in the 20th century. Drake and Baker explained how Franz Boas was significant in training the next generation of anti-racist anthropologists, including Blacks and Whites. Based on this work, Boas specifically, as well as other Whites working closely with Blacks in general could be considered anti-racists.

Moreover, Willis discussed the improper and dehumanizing way in which Boas treated the dead remains of Indian prisoners. He argued that Boas would not have treated the remains of Whites in the same manner that he treated Native Americans. He explicitly stated: “Color prejudice in even Boas (so hard to believe!) becomes a distinct possibility”.⁴ Willis pointed to this hidden prejudice as to the reasons of anthropologist concealing their fieldwork. This color prejudice was also the impetus for Black anthropologist to continue the legacy of ex-slaves in fighting against racial inequality.

Unlike his counterpart, Du Bois genuinely gave his life for the freedom struggle. Baker articulated that Du Bois provided one of the earliest explanations of race being socially constructed in 1897. Du Bois was relentless in his attack of racist dogma. Du Bois’ activism included teaching, writing and editing journals. He was instrumental in the formation of the NAACP and started publishing the *Crisis*. Du Bois influenced many of the African diasporic anthropologists. He laid the framework of being active inside and outside the classroom.

Du Bois indirectly influenced Black anthropologists through his writings and the NAACP. W Montague Cobb served as the president of the NAACP. Irene Diggs worked directly with Du Bois at Atlanta University and published *The Encyclopedia of the Negro* in 1945. Digg’s bibliography contained a number of Du Bois’ writings. Du Bois’ goal was to use education as a tool of racial uplift. Therefore he played a prominent role in continuing the vindication tradition that started with the enslaved and bridged over to the next generation. Harrison explains it this way: “it is important to understand that Du Bois, Davis, Drake and Cox struggled to produce conceptual and theoretical tools for building a free and just world. Unlike most of their counterparts in the (intellectual) center, they are part of an activist tradition”¹

Following Du Bois, the vindication tradition in anthropology took several forms. In addition to Drake’s declaration of being in the street, Black anthropologists were active in academic organizations, leadership in the academy and created artistic schools in the community. In examining Cobb’s activism work, it is clear that Blacks must be involved in these various fields. Cobb served as the president of the NAACP (1976-82), the American Association of Physical Anthropologists (1957-59) and the Anthropological Society of Washington (1949-51). He also served as editor of the *Journal of the National Medical Association* for twenty-eight years (1949-77). Cobb chaired the department of anatomy of Howard University College of Medicine from 1947-1969.

Cobb’s leadership was not confined to “Black organizations,” which would perpetuate the stereotype of Blacks’ leadership inabilities. He was active in the most prominent groups of medicine and anthropology. He was also involved with the NAACP and Howard University. Cobb’s multiple affiliations opened the door for him to interact with key players in those respective fields thereby creating the potential to impact anthropology as a whole. Blakey (date) argues that he was “felt and acknowledged by leaders in government, the military, the world of letters, law, medicine and the general public”.¹

Laurence Foster had a similar model of activism to Cobb. He was the director of the Research Council for the National Protestant Council on Higher Education in 1953; a fellow in the American Folklore Society; a member of the Executive Committee of the International Academy of Physical Anthropology; president of the Stearns Housing Cooperation; chairman of the board for the Model Cities Foundation in Philadelphia and in New York; and executive director of the Pennsylvania State Temporary Commission on Conditions of the Urban Colored Population. (Moses, *Pioneers* pg. 97)

Foster revealed how Black anthropologists were active in organizations that traditionally anthropologists will not be involved with. He was concerned about the societal problems that were impacting African Americans. Another model of activism was presented by Katherine Dunham. Dunham started the Katherine Dunham Dance Company in 1939, the Katherine Dunham School of Arts and Research in 1943 and the Experiment in Higher Education, Southern Illinois University’s program in East St. Louis which became known as the Performing Arts Training Center.¹⁵ The main tool of her activism was dance, she believed “that dance is a social act, not merely a technique to be learned and thus should return to its roots in communal living (Aschenbrenner, *Pioneers* pg. 151).

Dunham’s goal was to empower oppressed Blacks that did not have the opportunity to experience dance due to their financial constraints. Through her fieldwork, she recognized the African continuities of dance. By employing Blacks to dance, they maintained their African identity. Further, evident by her schools, her goal was to address every area of systemic injustice and encouraged marginalized Blacks to fulfill their potential in the areas they were skilled at.

Black’s contribution to anthropological methods

African diasporic anthropologists have made significant contributions to anthropological methods. They all traveled and had influences outside of the US. Ex-slaves provided some of the earliest accounts of cultural anthropology as participant observers. Zora Neale Hurston was one of the first anthropologists to fully assimilate into the

culture she was researching. Laurence Foster, Willis and Drake have addressed the gaps in anthropology's history. Black anthropologists have been successful in interdisciplinary research. Du Bois did some of the earliest ethnographic work in Philadelphia.

The works of Zora Neale Hurston and Katherine Dunham were some of the earliest if not the first to completely immerse into the culture they studied. Hurston's method involved becoming a part of the culture she was researching. Baker detailed her travels and field work discussing how she at one point "lay nude for sixty-nine hours while she was put through a complicated ritual that included drinking wine mixed with blood of all present and being accepted by the spirit".⁵ Gwendolyn Mikell argues that Hurston approached her field work from a Black Feminist perspective more so than her formal anthropology training. Therefore, when Hurston did her fieldwork, she paid special attention to sexism. As a Black woman, she was able to gather information in an exceptional way.

The work of Laurence Foster and William Willis looked at historic deficiencies of anthropology. Yolanda Moses argues that Foster's work was left outside of the mainstream of anthropology because it revealed the impact of institutional racism on scholarly work and Americans. Both Foster and Willis looked at Black-Indian relations. Willis was successful in using an ethno historical methodology in examining Native Americans which "studied the process of cultural change through time" (Sanday, *Pioneers* pg. 249).

Foster, Cobb, Irene Diggs and Dunham contributed to anthropological methods an interdisciplinary approach. Foster and Diggs used sociology and community studies (Moses, *Pioneers*, pg. 94). Cobb went to medical school at Howard and gathered methods from graduate school at Case Western. Cobb was a physical anthropologist who also studied anatomy. Cobb studied human craniofacial union, skeletons and 1,100 mammalian crania. Cobb also had an appreciation for the arts. He "developed in his research and teaching a rich integration of art, literature, philosophy, history, physical anthropology and anatomy..." (pg. 121). As previously mentioned, Dunham was actively involved with the arts.

Equiano, Jacobs, Firmin and Dunham made contributions to cultural anthropology in the form of methods examining music and dance of Africans and Africans in the diaspora. Equiano identifies Africans as "a nation of dancers, musicians and poets".⁸ He goes on to explain how each of these there are involved in significant events in Africa. Jacobs discusses how the slaves would write and sing hymns. The congregating of slaves around hymns encouraged them to go on when they felt hopeless. Dunham's examination of dancing was exceptional because she was also a dancer. Aschenbrenner states that "Dunham's importance for anthropology consists in her detailed ethnographic descriptions and her skill in communicating profound cultural insights through artistic expression" (Aschenbrenner, *Pioneers*, pg. 147).

Successful africans throughout the diaspora as anti-racism

From Firmin to Dunham, African diasporic intellectuals desired to build up successful Blacks. The achievements of Black scholars in many fields of inquiry refute racist claims of Black inferiority and inequality. Throughout African diasporic history, there have been numerous examples of Black intellectuals contributing significant technological advancements, leading nations and making a way out of

no way. Black anthropologists have brought up the Egyptians, African and African American slaves and "The New Negro".

Arguments centered on the inferiority of Blacks are based on the institution of slavery. The argument that Firmin and Douglass made is that when comparing the two races "the highest type of the European and the lowest types of the Negro",⁹ Selected Speeches, are chosen. Instead of focusing on the Negroes that have been completely dehumanize by slavery, they point to the Egyptians.

Firmin and Douglass looked at the Egyptians as a thriving race of Africans. Both point to the survival of the pyramids as evidence of the architectural sophistication of ancient Egyptians. Firmin argues that they made considerable contributions to science and arts. He cites Napoleon Bonaparte going to Egypt to learn science. In addition to the great thriving nation of Egypt, Firmin also provides a detailed list of successful Black Haitians ranging from doctors to writers whose work he published in his book. The elevation of well doing African Americans continued throughout the 20th century. This was evidence by Drake and Baker's discussion of "The New Negro." Alain Locke assembled a volume entitled *The New Negro* which included a vast array of African American intellectuals and artist. Baker explains how the Great Migration brought approximately six million African Americans from the south to the North. This influx in population allowed Blacks to "assert their economic, political and cultural power".⁵

Conclusion

After examining the written text of African diasporic intellectuals from the 18th century to the 20th century, it is clear that Blacks have a long vindicationist tradition that amassed a plethora of work. Diasporic vindicationists have clearly delineated between prejudicial and racial subordination, redefined American Christianity, physically and psychologically emancipated Blacks, illuminated the inherent racism in all the stages of maturation of anthropology, analyzed and articulated scientific arguments for the equality of Blacks, researched across disciplines in the academy and completed various forms of activism in the community. In spite of being rendered invisible, Blacks made technological and cultural advancements that rocked the world. White Supremacy and systemic racism aim to suppress and prevent the achievements of African American pioneers. Unless anthropology and the academy as a whole intentionally push back, these accomplishments will continue to go unnoticed. Black anthropologists deserve attention.

The most pressing take away from this long tradition of vindicationism is the necessity for it to be continued. We are now living in the age of President Donald Trump. This present age is marked by the preponderance of White Supremacy and oppressed communities actually fearing for their life. The daily news cycle displays fake news, alternative facts and cyclical scandals. Trump supporters, in their analysis of Trump's actions, provide the same "objective" lens that the American school of Anthropology provided. As a result, there is no unified effort to hold Trump accountable. Many of the results of this situation are still uncertain but what has been clear are the Ku Klux Klan rallies, the overt racists attacks against Black bodies, the growth of anti-intellectualism and several other occurrences that continues the subjugation of several groups in this country, especially Blacks.¹⁶

In this age, the academy in general and anthropology in particular are required to intentionally question the ways in which they

perpetuate any oppressive systems. Anthropology departments can respond by being active in the communities in which their universities are situated in order to raise up future anthropologists and to hire Black anthropologists. Scholars can respond by reflecting on their pedagogy, examining their syllabi and qualifying exams to see what Black scholars they are engaging with. In their research and writing, anthropologists can respond to this current moment by citing and elevating Black voices. Moreover, the problems that a Trump America raises are multifaceted. Therefore, anthropologist is called to work across disciplines, collaborate with other organizations, obtain leadership positions in various organizations and use their education as a tool to fight back. If anthropologist continue in the tradition in which it was founded upon, who will die next?^{17,18}

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Conflict of interest

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