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Racing to Refuge:
Ethnicity, Gendered Violence, and Somali Youth in San Diego

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

Ethnic Studies

by

Jesse Mills

Committee in charge:

Professor Yen Le Espiritu, Chair
Professor Robert Alvarez
Professor Denise Ferreira da Silva
Professor Nayan Shah
Professor Daniel Widener

2008

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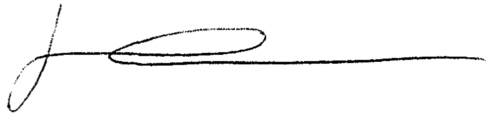

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2008

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the Somalis who befriended, nurtured, and guided me throughout this research,

and

To my wife grace who helped bring this whole thing home. 이 모든 노력이 우리 모두에게 평화와 사랑을 가져다 주는 일에 도움이 되기를 소원합니다.

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Nayan Shah and Daniel Widener of UCSD's Department of History provided crucial and timely interventions to help me see the bigger picture of the research and

Nayan Shah and Daniel Widener of UCSD's Department of History provided crucial and timely interventions to help me see the bigger picture of the research and to more effectively frame community dynamics and the positionality of Somalis in the dissertation narrative. Their generous guidance and support were preconditions for my completing the work.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Racing to Refuge:
Ethnicity, Gendered Violence, and Somali Youth in San Diego

by

Jesse Mills

Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnic Studies

University of California, San Diego, 2008

Professor Yen Le Espiritu, Chair

This dissertation is a study of youth programs as structures of refuge for Somalis in San Diego, CA. Somali youth stand at the nexus of the notions of, on the one hand, "refugees" as traumatized and deserving of humanitarian aid, and on the other hand as "Somalis" feared to be violent or threats in the war on terror. What appear to be contradictory constructions are complementary aspects of violent racial subject-making that position in every significant capacity "first" world (coded as white heteropatriarchal) above "third" world and other (coded as "of color" and "foreign"). Media and popular culture reinforce these constructs while programs in the nonprofit sector market themselves and orient their programming toward discourses on rescue that reproduce the status quo. Meanwhile, resettled Somalis in urban areas like City

Heights, San Diego face everyday environments shaped by legacies of race and class discrimination. Beyond the simplistic construct of benevolent helpers and their incapacitated wards lies a more complex field of struggle where neighborhood residents, resettlement officials, and newcomers contest the meanings of race, ethnicity, class, and gender. Striving for a social justice-informed ecological view of refugees, this study explores the complexities of youth program structures of refuge in the areas of law enforcement, sexual health and masculinity, and public education. This study contributes to public policy and education literature on a sizeable and significant minority group concentrated in an urban US inner city.

INTRODUCTION: Refugees, Race, and Space

In high school during the late 1980s I befriended East Africans who had then arrived in the Northern California town where I grew up. In geometry class I would turn around and help my friend Yonas, not doing my own work out of rebellion, yet playing teacher because I longed for human knowledge exchange beyond the public school. Over "free lunch" burritos, corn dogs, or pizza and chocolate milk we exchanged interpretations of the latest NWA or Ice Cube songs as frames for our teen everydayness. In related ways we were marginal, part of a 2% black minority whose 22% poverty rate well exceeded the citywide average of 8%.[1] But, Yonas was among the .2% African immigrants whose newness, small numbers and erasure from the cityscape would give palpable contrast to our shared experience of being black in suburban USA.[2] Fifteen years later I would return to this space in my consciousness as a graduate student investigating how a country with such a horrific historical record of caring for Africans could suddenly honor humanitarian tenets and create safe spaces for those who fled the 1990s decade of disasters in the cradle of civilization.

This dissertation argues that attachments to race impact US structures of refuge and affect the ability of the US to providing meaningful refuge for Africans. Contrary to the idea that refugees are helpless and race from all over the world to get their crack at the American dream, this study shows how refugee resettlement pits black newcomers between the overt violence of US disciplinary forces and the covertly

[1]The 1990 census lists Black/African American as 2,031 of 101,270 Santa Rosa, CA residents or 2.0%. 697 Black/African American residents were under the poverty line, or 22% while 12,391 total city residents were under the poverty line.

[2]188 Santa Rosa residents reported Sub-Saharan ancestry, or .19%, in 1990.

violent segregation and erasure of "acculturation." For many Africans, becoming "American" entails great enough disruption, displacement, and discrimination that they long to return home. Racing refuge, or using race as a frame of analysis for the processes through which the US extends its humanitarian arm and helps provide a safe space of recovery, sheds important light on the means through which the nation-state secures hegemony in the era of modern urban warfare. Race attachments entail an overarching paternalistic view that Western powers bear the burden of civilizing and disciplining Africans, which as we will see occurs through structures of refuge, or the mostly nonprofit programs that serve newly arrived refugees. Ultimately I argue that humanitarian ideals cannot be approximated without honest engagement with default and overt US institutional practices of what Aihwa Ong (2003) calls "refugee love" for and violent disciplining of black people.

Refugees who arrive from societies that are already individualist and capitalist (historically white European characteristics) fare better in the process of adjustment.[3] As is usually the case, adult newcomers enter the workforce immediately and often have difficulty managing the cumulative burden of providing for family and picking up sufficient education for upward job mobility. These adults often experience downgraded credentials (for example, university degrees from abroad not counted in the US) and work in niche economies like taxi service and private security. The elderly have little meaningful contact with broader society, experiencing cultural and linguistic barriers in addition to the general put-old-people-away social ethos.

---

[3]Refugee resettlement official, personal interview with author July 2005.

Interestingly, with black migrants, this dynamic occurs simultaneously with efforts to "play up their foreignness" through speech accent and clothing, so as "to not be mistaken for American blacks," a performance that provides some measure of counterpoint to inevitable racialization (Waters 1999). The youth are key. The acculturation framework pitches the youth as strung "between two worlds," two figuratively segregated and essentialized ethnic spaces. This framework naturalizes "difference" and masks acts of power in the struggle between hegemonic and subaltern structures of authority.

Interested in the process whereby East Africans become American, I undertook open-ended fieldwork in San Diego. Learning that the Somali community was the most numerous of East African groups in San Diego and that Somalis had one language, culture, and religion, I began with no background knowledge and came to recognize the unique yet unfortunately common subaltern struggle of Somalis in US refuge. My strongest connections came with Somali youth, adults who also mentored youth, and nonprofit organizations largely because of my negligible ability to communicate in Somali (which I studied for a brief few months, just long enough to pick up minimal conversational skills), my education level, and role as tutor and educator. From these connections emerged the focus of this study. With I, myself, as a marginal figure moving away from the ignorance and disconnectedness typical of so many Americans toward Somalis, and working at the edge of Somali consciousness, I would come to see youth as a primary site of struggle over cultural ideology. Adults and elders are marginalized and minimized as authorities within the community,

locked out of power in the US, and replaced by US institutions that inculcate proper *non-Somali* views and behaviors in Somali youth.

This dissertation is a study of youth programs as structures of refuge for Somalis in San Diego, a gateway to the US for many newcomers. Somali youth stand at the nexus of the notions of, on the one hand, "refugees" as traumatized and deserving of humanitarian aid, and on the other hand as a "black menace" feared to be violent or threats in the war on terror. Media and popular culture reinforce these contradictory constructions while programs in the nonprofit sector resolve the paradox by attempting to discipline and assimilate Somali youth with mainstream middle class norms and way of life. Meanwhile, resettled Somalis in urban areas like City Heights face everyday environments shaped by legacies of race and class discrimination. Beyond the simplistic construct of benevolent helpers and their incapacitated wards lies a more complex field of struggle where neighborhood residents, resettlement officials, and newcomers contest the meanings of race, ethnicity, class, and gender and the power of these categories to materialize in policies and institutions. Striving for a social justice-informed ecological view of refugees, this study explores the complexities of youth program structures of refuge in the areas of law enforcement, sexual health and masculinity, and public education. This introduction provides a historical and scholarly context for this investigation of the racialization of space and reproduction of US race.

SOMALIS IN SAN DIEGO

The presence of and experiences of Somalis in San Diego indicate a broader transnational struggle for power, place, and cultural legitimacy. In San Diego, the world's refugee problem—15 million displaced persons—meets the US's *refuge* problem, an unresolved legacy of segregation and marginalization exploiting poor and minority communities. Consider this global and local tension in the following case:

A 7-Eleven convenience store owner took exception to the newest additions to San Diego's most densely populated, most diverse mixed-use (residential, light commercial and light industrial) urban neighborhood. By April 2002 the middle class, middle-aged white woman frequently asked police officers to enforce the prominently posted "no loitering" laws to remove the dozen or so adult and elderly Somali men who would congregate and spend much of the day milling around the storefront and stoop-like corner lot. The Somali men found their customs impractical and not welcome in their host society: a collective, informative, word-of-mouth "New York Times" men's public culture read as a *black mob*; "foreign" credentials and non-English knowledge invalidated, rendered unemployable and then read as *shiftlessness*; and, conversely, *structural constraints* read as charity—two-bedroom low-income apartments housing a family of ten in buildings where white staff "yell and boss them around and so forth"[4] colliding with privatization of public space for consumers and vendors in the racially exclusive land where to-be is to-buy. One Somali man explained the problem:

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[4]Quote from refugee advocate Lucinda Bonner, personal interview with author June 2005.

> (Somali men) found that they have to work from morning until night. Or they cannot work because they don't have the language, they don't have the skills. They are in the welfare system. So morning, what he do morning? Morning he get up and look someone friend or I say, "Hey, lets go the 7-Eleven and get coffee." And when they get coffee, they don't have place to stay. So they have to stand outside and exchange. They not exchanging something bad, maybe robbering the store or killing someone. Just they updating each other. "What happened? Did you hear the news yesterday in Somalia? What they said about Somalia? What he did, that guy? What he did?" When someone always telling, "You not good guy. You are lazy. Why you sitting in my property?" Maybe one day you are depressed or you are in bad mood or, maybe you do something, you fight back. There you explode, the situation now exploded. And there is the fight, and there is bad words exchanging, and there is cussing.

Police officers find themselves in a bind, being asked to apply laws designed to racially profile young men of color for gang prevention[5] in order to more generally racially cleanse the main intersection of the Somali-concentrated blocks called "Little Mogadishu." At the same time officers try to project a positive image of law and order to business owners and newcomers alike in San Diego's refugee, immigrant, and working class depot.

I want to call attention to two key racial dynamics illustrated in this story. First, Somali cultural and political history, which as evidenced at the 7-Eleven entails

[5]The often-vague language of loitering laws has in some cases promoted racial profiling and discriminatory law enforcement practices. In 1999, for instance, the American Civil Liberties Union successfully got the US Supreme Court to overturn a Chicago anti-loitering law that had led to nearly 45,000 arrests over a three year period (1992-1995), often of black and Latino males simply standing on the sidewalk. Justice John Paul Stevens citing the 6-3 majority opinion suggested that under the law, "it matters not whether the reason that a gang member and his father, for example, might loiter near Wrigley Field is to rob an unsuspecting fan or just get a glimpse of Sammy Sosa leaving the ball park." The questions about the right to be black and male in public continue to occupy contemporary debates about fair application of law, especially continuing the 1866 14th Amendment, which extended legal protection in principle to newly freed slaves.

sustained resistance to subordinating "foreign" control (especially white European and American) are reduced to a stereotype of a black male threat, a criminal mob that is to be erased from the landscape by forces of discipline and punishment. Second, for racialized refugees (or "refugees of color") refugee resettlement policy shuttles vulnerable people between spaces of racial containment under the banner of "care": destinations like City Heights, San Diego bear troubled legacies of racial discrimination leading to a concentration of disenfranchisement in urban racialized poverty. These dynamics impact the ability of the US to provide safe space. Let us consider each one in turn.

Reduction of Somali political and cultural history

Like me before I started this research project, few San Diegans are aware that a Somalian community exists in the city and most would not easily locate Somalia on a world map. One of my mentors even kept asking me about the "Samoan" (sic) community I worked in. Those who *are* aware have often had their ideas shaped by CNN coverage of the civil war in 1993, or by the post 9/11 "modern war" film *Black Hawk Down*. These cultural connotations reduce Somalis to peripheral stereotypes—famine and war victims *and* homicidal anarchic militias, or now simply "terrorists." These flattened images justify any treatment, including neglect and violence, on the part of US institutions. A more nuanced engagement with Somali modernity, however, illuminates a rich culture with deep issues pitted against the unfinished business of

Western imperialism. Intersections of race, gender, religion, and nation help highlight complexities of Somali modernity.

Most Somalis who arrived in San Diego were the lucky few who escaped state collapse and civil war in the early 1990s, then either whose number had come up in a refugee camp or whose US-resettled family had sent for them. These women, men, and children brought with them a gun-blued history of resistance where two remaining of five colonizers and the wreckage of imperial nation-state centralization and urbanization, Cold War arms dumping, and Third World resource exploitation promised the geo-strategic Horn of Africa would suffer up to and through the US "War on Terror." The Somali clans found their traditional methods of conflict resolution and normative nomadic pastoral political economy under perpetual attack by the mass destruction capabilities and divisive interests of First and Second World "powers." Twenty-year President Siad Barre (1969-89) failed to liberate Somalis in eastern Ethiopia in the 1977-78 Ogaden war, and spent ten years persecuting Majeerteen, then Isaaq, and Hawiye-clan civilians to preserve his rule, events most adult Somalis remember painfully and vividly. Barely enduring tensions exacerbated by on-and-off alliances with fickle US and Soviet diplomats, the Scientific Socialist Somali state was awash in enough munitions to blast generations of Somalis into history. In 1991 Hawiye General Mohamed Aidid's militia ousted Barre and the two armies spent a year chasing each other back and forth through the river valley west of the capital where unprotected, agriculturally-based racial and ethnic minority clans were raped, murdered, and dispossessed into a famine that claimed more than 300,000

lives in the "Triangle of Death" (See Figure 1, page 36). The US dropped rice from airplanes, which was taken by militias and used to "pay" fighters once Marines went away. After Aidid's soldiers attacked UN Peacekeepers, the US and UN shifted from a humanitarian to a headhunting mission: Task Force Ranger and Delta Force went after Aidid. All intervention was called off after the botched Ranger raid on October 3, 1993. Soon after precipitous US and UN exit, tens of thousands of the millions of displaced Somalis would find themselves called "refugees" and on airplanes headed to the United States or elsewhere in the Middle East, Europe, and North America.

Studies of Somali political and cultural history are readily available, but rarely circulate beyond particularly interested parties. A number of ethnographies and political analyses present Somalia and Somali people as a traditional African society torn apart by vicissitudes of colonialism and global development (Cassanelli 1982; Drysdale 1964; Ahmed 1995; Issa-Salwe 2000; Issa-Salwe 1996; Lewis 1994; Lewis 1969). Many works try to figure out what went wrong in Somalia, focusing on the civil war and subsequent "tragic failures" to establish a Somali nation-state (Makinda 1993; Lyons and Samatar 1995; Adam and Ford 1997; Peterson 2000). Somali modernity and postcoloniality, the ideological and practical conditions of negotiating the historical transition from European colony to Third World nation, are at stake in these studies. Few non-specialists outside of Somalia know much about the political history, though. Some works examine norms of gender, sexuality, and family in the interplay between cultural and religious traditions (Barnes and Boddy 1994; Lewis 1998; Besteman 1999). These works provide evidence of Somali worldviews and clan

life including internal struggle with problematic power dynamics and social hierarchies.

Somali clan identity signifies Arab and African bloodlines, religious and cultural roots. The six major Somali clan families—Darod, Hawiye, Isaaq, Dir, Digil, and Rahanweyn—come, according to the origin myth, from *Soomaali*, son of *Hiil*, an Arab thought to have migrated from the Arabian Peninsula in the 10th century to commingle with indigenous inhabitants and settle on the African Horn (Ahmed 1995, Cassaneli 1982). Somalis link their paternal descent to this original family tree, and recite the names back twenty generations. Blood relatives are one's social fabric and security with elder men as power holders who traditionally remained vigorously active nomadic herders throughout their longevity. Basic sub-clan family unit independence led to no fewer than 500 candidates on the first presidential ballot upon independence in 1960. The conditions of the civil war forced many to mask their clan identity, which was sometimes a matter of life or death.

Recent scholarship challenges the oral history suggesting the Somali origin myth functioned to help northern Somalis improve their genealogy (Kusow 1995). Somalis struggle for legitimacy among Middle Eastern Muslims along race and language lines; Somalis are black, not fully Arabic, and do not use Arabic for their written language like the Qur'an (Lewis 1998; Besteman 1999). Additionally, while Osama bin Laden claimed credit for training the Somalis to defeat the US in 1993, both Somali and American military representatives de-emphasize the actual connections between *al Qaeda* and Somalia. These facts did not, in early 2002, inhibit

US President Bush from extending anti-Muslim hysteria and surveillance to Somalis around the world.

The Somali flag, a white five-pointed star centered on a sky blue banner, was adopted shortly before independence and symbolized the unity of five colonial regions: Southern Somalia (Italian), Northern Somalia (British), Djibouti (French), the Ogaden (Ethiopian), and the Northern Frontier District (Kenyan). The unity has not been realized and two regions (the Ogaden and NFD) are still disputed borders and active conflict zones. The North wants to secede from the South, and Djibouti remains content as a separate nation. These disputed borders are still connected to clan tensions and effect the formation of diasporic Somali communities in resettlement.

In US resettlement, Somalis are expected to retain their own cultural practices while becoming culturally functional according to US norms. This process of acculturation becomes complicated when that entails race, gender, religious, and inter-clan issues. Rather than engaging these issues and facilitating Somalis' process, US institutions criminalize and summarily demonize these characteristics. Refugees learn quickly the unilateral and impersonal expectations of de-ethnicization in the process of US acculturation. Again, these more subtle levels of cultural negotiation get obscured in the simplistic and reductive binary construction of "good refugee" and "bad outlaw" Somalis and their paternalistic (white or multicultural) saviors.

Segregation and containment of racialized refugees

The Somali men outside the "Little Mogadishu" 7-Eleven experience translocal de facto racial segregation. Underdevelopment and plunder of the African continent meets US urban ghettoization, general reduction to second-class status, and assault on ethnic and cultural identity of Somali newcomers. In the absence of segregation laws, which were finally made illegal in 1972,[6] de facto segregation preserves privileges for middle class Americans through an interlinking of foreign and domestic policies refracting taken-for-granted privileges of whiteness (Lipsitz 2006). Here we will briefly consider only the immediate and specific context of Somali refugee passage to San Diego.

Of the 15 million refugees and internally displaced persons world wide, one third are in the continent of Africa, which currently has 12% of the world population (Dawson 1993; "Refugee Numbers..." 2002). Refugee policy scholars suggest of Africa that, "In no other continent is there such vast suffering ... are the needs so vast and the capacity to assist so meager" (Adelman and Sorenson 1994:ix). While more than twice as many refugees come from the Near East and South Asia, the African continent is perceived as having problems that shoot through its entirety, or a crisis of ontology. Studies identify devastating cultural, political, and economic effects of colonial and post-colonial periods, yet tend to rely on frameworks of developing nations through which to reach policy recommendations (Ricca 1989; Papademetrieu and Martin 1991).

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[6]Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972.

Displacement was acute in civil war Somalia where nearly half of the 7.5 million Somalis were refugees inside or outside of the country.[7] In 1990, for instance, there were roughly one million refugees in refugee camps within four of the sixteen Somali states.[8] Nearly a half million Somalis were in camps in neighboring Kenya, and over 600,000 in Ethiopia.[9] The vast majority of refugees in camps ended up waiting, sometimes for more than a decade, before being able to go home or to a host country.

Resettlement is an opportunity available to few refugees overall, and to disproportionately few blacks. A disproportionate number of admitted refugees come from Europe and the Middle East. While only approximately .4% of all refugees are resettled by the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR), refugees from Africa have consistently been underrepresented because of a "difficulty ... finding countries willing to provide resettlement for refugees from this region" ("Refugees Worldwide... 1997). The United States admits up to 70,000 refugees, or approximately 0.5% of the world's refugees per year, a quota subdivided between sending nations in Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia (IRC Annual Report 2002:18).[10] Following the lead of US policy, the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees resettles a comparatively small number of Africans, who make up 14% of

---

[7]United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees. 2006. "Country Operation Plans: Overview: Somalia"

[8]http://countrystudies.us/somalia/54.htm

[9] "Somali Refugees Ponder Future as Neighbours Go Home" UNHCR News. 25 Feb 2006.

[10]In 2002, however, with more strict immigration policy and prevailing xenophobia following September 11th, only 27,000 of 70,000 were actually admitted to the United States ("Bishop 'Deeply Disappointed'..." 2002).

those resettled while comprising one-third of all refugees ("Refugees Worldwide..." 1997).[11] US-bound refugees "win" lottery drawings in refugee camps and are flown to prearranged destinations and given coveted permanent resident status (green card). The federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) distributes the entire caseload to various international, national, and local resettlement organizations operating in the US.

Destination cities are assigned cases based upon several factors, with the most important considerations being presence of the same or closely related ethnic communities, the strength of the nonprofit service sector for refugees, and the availability of affordable housing and gainful employment.[12] The main emphasis of US federal refugee policy is to not create an economic burden locally or nationally. Service organizations are rewarded for "efforts to reduce welfare dependency among refugees" and to collect back the airfare loans for the refugee's first flight (Refugee Assistance Extension Act of 1986). A San Diego service provider explained:

> There's no stigma for refugees, at least initially, with public assistance like there might be for an American who grew up in a community who

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[11]In 1993, Africans made up 36% of refugees, yet only 15% of those resettled. Refugees from other regions were: Asia 16% of refugees, 30% resettled; Middle East 30%:55%; and Europe 16%:0.3%. In 1994 the numbers were: Africa 36%:10%; Asia 14%:19%; Middle East 33%:30%; and Europe 15%:40%. In 1995: Africa 34%:17%; Asia 12%:1%; Middle East 36%:43%; and Europe 16%:39% (% of refugees comes from United States Commission for Refugees; % resettled comes from UNHCR).

[12]Public Law 99-605 amends Section 402(a)(2) (8 USC. 1522(a)(2)) by taking into account "(I) the proportion of refuges and comparable entrants in the population in the area, (II) the availability of employment opportunities, affordable housing, and public and private resources (including educational, health care, and mental health services) for refugees in the area, (III) the likelihood of refugees placed in the area becoming self sufficient and free from long-term dependence on public assistance, and (IV) the secondary migration of refugees to and from the area that is likely to occur."

> had to hear every day that welfare's bad and, you know, they're second-class citizens and all that. It's good and bad. I mean obviously we don't want anybody to have a stigma that has to take advantage of public assistance. But sometimes a stigma's not bad if opportunity's there, and people because of the stigma take the opportunity to work rather than to access public assistance.

Armed with 8 months of welfare-level support and crash courses in language and socialization, black newcomers (like all refugees) are cut loose from formal care structures and released into a patchwork safety net of philanthropic and volunteer organizations. In San Diego, many refugees are cut loose into an urban locale that, like many places in the US, is already fraught with tumultuous social history and struggles for social justice (Lipsitz 1995; Lipsitz 1998; Omi and Winant 1994; Kim 2000).

Some studies have looked at the experiences of Somalis in the urban diaspora, theorizing narratives of flight and religious tensions Muslims face in Western nations (Farah 2000; Berns McGown 1999). But no serious scholarly treatments of Somalis in the US have emerged. The census shows that 91.1% of Somalis in the US arrived between 1990 and 2000, a direct result of the civil war. In San Diego, resettlement officials locate areas where refugees have the best opportunities for affordable housing, employment and education. East African refuges have been directed over the years to City Heights. City Heights has gone through several major social transformations over the past thirty years. Incorporated and annexed early on by the fast growing city (1912 and 1923 respectively), City Heights provided new suburban housing and commercial opportunities for white middle class residents while laws, leaders, and lenders segregated other groups to the south and east. Initially, San Diego's communities of color were relatively contained along the downtown

waterfront and extending southeast, or were disbursed in various suburban and rural peripheries (Harris 1974). When after World War II Caltrans slated the I-15 corridor to run directly through the neighborhood, City Heights began a 50-year process of white flight and disinvestment, followed by densification by landlords desperate to preserve profitability. From the 1970s to the 1980s the rise of the methamphetamine industry, arrival of lower income people of color looking for affordable housing, and official neglect locked City Heights into a cycle of increasing density and urban poverty that gave the neighborhood its unique identity as diverse and dilapidated.[13] In the 1980s began a heated development battle between the Centre City Development Corporation and Mission Valley developers in a contest to attract chain department stores and the flow of capital and centralizing of consumer activity that followed them (Trimble 1984). Subsequently, City Heights property values stayed lower than other county communities, and lower socio economic families and communities of color found living opportunities in an emerging affordable housing crisis. The continual flight of businesses from City Heights combined with the steady influx of lower and working class immigrants began a downward cycle, eventually trapping poor communities of color within a small geographical area with few jobs available and limited public transportation as City Heights continually languished economically (Martinez-Cosio 2006). City Heights was eventually identified as a primary target for urban revitalization and gentrification, including a public-private partnership to invest $550 million beginning in the mid 1990s.

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[13]www.pricecharities.com short history.

In the 1970s and 1980s, San Diego refugee resettlement organizations grew because of the proximity of Camp Pendleton, the first destination for many refugees from Southeast Asia following the American war in Vietnam. The late 1970s saw the first Ethiopian refugees from the war with Somalia.[14] Some of these "Ethiopians," were actually Somalian people from the Ogaden region (Eastern Ethiopia), and the first Somalis were resettled in San Diego unbeknownst to officials. The Southeast Asian refugees were largely sent to City Heights, where the Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Thai communities continue to be very visible, with expansion of the Vietnamese American community to neighborhoods northwest of City Heights. In the mid 1990s, following the Somali civil war, City Heights was the destination selected by resettlement officials because of the presence of social organizations that had been serving previous refugee groups and because of the "affordability" of housing. The Somali community thus grew in the center of City Heights waiting for their opportunity to follow previous refugee groups out of the ghetto. While many Somalis have since moved to other areas of the city like Southeast San Diego, Linda Vista, La Mesa, and further in South and North County, the majority continue to live in and around "Little Mogadishu" in City Heights.

Refugee experiences illuminate the multi-sited workings of race in US refuge,[15] with refugees from Somalia, in particular, exposing deep fractures in US

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[14]Resettlement official, personal interview with author. July 13, 2005.

[15]Refugees from Southeast Asia link to histories of Asian immigrant labor control and exclusion (Espiritu 1992). Refugees from Central and South America highlight US regulation of "the Americas" most dramatized by the current militarization of the US-Mexico border (Marshall 1988; Marmora 1988). More recent

humanitarianism. Somalis in San Diego are marginal at the prevailing boundaries of the border town. For example, Somalis are not-exactly-immigrants in an American border metropolis characterized by its military control of "foreignness" (Dunn 1996); they are not-quite-African American in a city with a buried history of black exclusion (Harris 1974; Gaslamp Black Historical Society 2001); they are not-stereotypically-uneducated and culturally deprived in a ghettoized environment of urban poverty and disenfranchisement; and are not-unproblematically Muslim in the anti-Islamic wake of September 11th, 2001. San Diego is a "global city," not because of its economic importance (Sassen 2001), but because its social geography bears the marks of more than one hundred years of strategic importance in US militarism and a gate keeping role between North America and everything south and west.[16] Far from being welcomed and nurtured through recovery from trauma, famine, and civil war, many Somalis experience racial resentment and antagonism at the interpersonal level, and face under-education, under-employment, and isolation at the neighborhood level. The towns and countryside in Somalia are connected to the urban ghetto of City Heights in this way, that the preservation of white civilization and white privilege come at the preservation of de facto segregation of undesirable social subjects into remote and invisible lands.

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refugee streams from Middle Eastern nations open up US "global" political, economic, and military activities (Butler 2002).

[16]After the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo San Diego stood as an important marker on the new northern border of Mexico. San Diego received its first Navy base in 1916 and has grown to "house" half a dozen military bases.

REFUGEE ETHNIC STUDIES

Understanding how Somali men end up marginalized in US society, hanging out at a street corner on the stoop, avoiding oil poured on the low wall to prevent them from sitting there beneath "no loitering" signs designed to criminalize youth, and yelling back at a hostile white store owner who wants customers not community, requires an interweaving of intersectional race, class, gender, nation, and religious formations. This project requires an ethnic studies approach that is transnational and intersectional to situate the study of domestic local youth programs in the representations, ideologies, organizations and policies that cross national boundaries and take as their task the fashioning of good refugees with proper norms and values. The forms of violence and exclusion Somalis face in US refuge are not simply matters of economic and political marginalization, the prevailing frames of analysis in refugee studies. Understanding the imposition of a generation gap, attenuation of Somalis' historical, cultural, and political life and sense of being, and maligning newcomers via fearsome stereotypes does require attention to policies and social dynamics that enable US violence and exclusion, but are illuminated by integrated, contextual analysis of the ideological and representational cultural elements that not only justify violence and neglect but present these as humanitarian charity. This thesis is influenced by broad readings in sociology, anthropology, history, cultural studies, sexuality studies, gender studies, postcolonial studies, African American studies, and immigration studies to contextualize how young Somali women and men are transformed through the

experiences of flight from Somalia and settlement in the United States, and how they in turn remake the social world around them.

Historical and sociological studies of immigrants and refugees have been grounded in, and limited by, the language of assimilation, adaptation, and acculturation (Park 1950). In the last three decades, revisionist scholars have argued that assimilation is not inevitable and that immigrants continue to retain important cultural norms and practices as well as important ties to their country of origin even after living for years in the United States (Basch *et al* 1994). Positioning themselves in opposition to assimilation, ethnic studies scholars have emphasized the importance of cultural persistence, considering it a conscious act of resistance (Espiritu 1999). Though important, this scholarship has often foregrounded race and racism and subordinated issues of gender and sexuality in the process.

A number of studies have centered the experiences of black migrants to the US (Bryce-Laporte 1983; Bryce-Laporte 1972; Basch et al. 1994; Kasinitz 1992; and Waters 1999). While this literature makes up a small amount of immigration literature, the works have raised several important issues that test the limits of current approaches to immigration studies. Research on black immigrants in the US has focused almost entirely on West Indians and has addressed questions of how migrants remain connected to political and familial interests "at home." Bryce-Laporte (1983) opened up transnational and intra-racial issues in Haitian and Jamaican immigration. Kasinitz (1992) looked at political enfranchisement of Caribbean immigrants in New York who publicize their unique issues and enter candidates in local elections. Waters

(1999) studied perceptions of ethnicity between West Indians, native-born blacks, and whites in New York. Basch et al.'s (1994) benchmark study of transnationalism considered new definitions of Haitian national culture in the case of Haitians in New York.

These works point at the effects of racial discrimination on migrants, who overwhelmingly dis-identify with American blacks yet encounter black racialization nonetheless. But they do little more than point, being unable to demonstrate the effects because primarily economic or poll data fail to easily disclose systems of repression. Further, interviews with migrants, even when juxtaposed with those of native-born blacks, are set up to present perceptions rather than document and demonstrate the workings of systemic discrimination (Waters 1999). This dissertation centers race as ideological and institutional, offering an ethnic studies perspective on immigration and refugee studies.

Refugee studies proper are more restricted than immigration research, even more strongly emphasizing the separateness of home and host nations, which become connected only through a shared burden of the displaced. Refugee research has been primarily concerned with assessing the burden of refugees and figuring out how to stem refugee outflow or encourage repatriation (Ricca 1989; Gorman 1993). This shifts attention from the quality of refuge to questions about whether nations like the US can "afford" to take care of the world's destitute and whether being in the US is "good" for the refugees. The questions elide deeper engagement with the experience of refuge and the more hidden histories of US global interests. The literature, which is

often generated by policy institutions informing the federal government, focuses on political and economic stress management strategies, with scholars contributing analyses of practical and moral dimensions of refugee policy (Gibney 1988; Pessar 1988; Ricca 1989; Adelman and Sorenson 1994).

Conceptualizing the arrival of refugees primarily as a *problem* to be solved, most refugee studies have fixated on refugee adjustment, with successful adjustment defined as the achievement of economic self-sufficiency (Yu and Liu 1986). Scholars have also zealously documented the refugees' damaged psyche, portraying them as passive and pathetic, "incapacitated by grief and therefore in need of care" (DuBois 1993:4-5). This hyper-focus on the refugees' needs and neediness has eclipsed other equally important questions about their wants and desires, especially their changing social and cultural expectations about family, gender, and sexuality as they confront different institutional structures of refuge in the United States. Some works have addressed refugee social structures and the protection of women's human rights in camps, minimizing violence against women and children (Kibria 1993; Human Rights Watch 2000).

In resettlement, refugees must negotiate powerful ideological and institutional forces, dynamics illuminated by a small number of scholars. DuBois (1993), for instance, uses the four lenses of refugee, migrant, immigrant, and ethnic and racial minorities to examine Vietnamese experiences in the US, conceptualizing "refugee" as a way of seeing rather than a fixed metaphysical condition. "Refugee" is a political, and sometimes economic, construct that "rests on questions of individuals' attitudes

and motivations: on whether they are *afraid* to remain in the homeland, and whether as a result, they feel compelled to flee" (DuBois 1993:3). This logic foregrounds reasons for flight, cultural maintenance, and repatriation, yet backgrounds questions about acculturation and assimilation. Refugees become "emblematic victims" and policy renders them "*passive* (and calls) for the professional to assume an *active* role in caring, counseling, or intervening" (4). "Migrant," "immigrant," and "ethnic group" constructions, DuBois suggests, overemphasize volition and premeditation in movement, and commonality in individual experience. "Racial minority" conceptions link refugee's experience to historic US hierarchies. And all these ways of seeing Vietnamese refugees in the US are important "since their aggregate constitutes a shifting and ill-defined (but nonetheless recognizable) construction of *the* Southeast Asian, steeped in American social and political ideology and certainly serving particular socio-political ends" (DuBois 1993:1).

The work of helping refugees to become American is an act of what Aihwa Ong (2003:146) calls "refugee love," a benevolent assimilation that "may be considered a variation of humanitarian domination, as enacted by refugee workers, social workers, the police, and some health providers, who in their various capacities provide pastoral care in the broadest sense of the term to refugees." Refugee youth workers and teachers, according to Ong often "love" the children, steering them toward "autonomy and self-reliance" to "seek eventually productive lives." Refugee love is based on the presumed trauma the refugees have experienced that makes them worthy recipients of concern. Intervening in families and communities that due to

trauma are believed to not possess capabilities to nurture and guide children themselves, youth workers supplant the cultural, generational, and gender power in the refugees' world. This act itself is conceived as the safe space people in the United States activate through structures of refuge. In a complex cultural struggle the refugee youth and often the families themselves "(compel) and even (invite) the intervention of social workers into their lives," seeking "not only to gain access to material benefits, but also to effect the changes in (status) and power at home and in society, perhaps in ways not always clear to the social workers cheering them on" (Ong 2003:147).

As subjects who have been forced to leave their homeland, intersectionality of nation plays a particularly important role in the case of refugees. Nationalism is a site of both aversion and nostalgia. In the Somali case, historic colonialism and the civil war built and dismantled the Somali nation state. Yet, nationalist discourses circulate in direct tension with the clan discourses that carry the day. Malkki (1995) examines contrasting geographies of displacement tracing the historical memory, identity, and culture of Hutu refugees in Tanzania in town and refugee camp contexts. Settlement and maintenance of transnational ties in these refugee communities indicates more problematic limits of nation state formations and allows us to see past the fantasy of "temporary displacement."

Following Foucault (1979), I center specific technologies of knowledge and power associated with institutional structures of refuge, especially the discursive practices that enforce social and self-regulation through the establishment of cultural

norms regarding family, gender, and sexuality. Somali refugees respond to these "technologies" of knowledge and power through their daily struggles to critique, incorporate, modify, or push back these varied norms regarding sexual values and practices.

Intersectionality of sexuality plays a role of singular significance in excavating the presumed and imposed binaries of public and private, of individual and collective, and of 'natural truth' and social construction. The study of human sexuality, though, has not always been attentive to the intimate connections between race and sexuality (Stoler 1995; McClintock 1995; Alexander 1991). Some studies, however, have dealt directly with the question of sex and race. For example, Gilman (1985) and Stoler (1991) have pointed out that sexuality is a salient marker of otherness and has figured prominently in racist and colonialist ideologies. Historically, the dominant group has systematically and subversively portrayed the sexuality of blacks in the United States. Writing on the objectification of black women, Collins (1991) argues that popular representations of black females—the mammy, the welfare queen, and the Jezebel—all pivot around their sexuality, either desexualizing or hypersexualizing them. Similarly, Dorothy Roberts (1997) shows that the degradation of black motherhood ideologically perpetuates the racist belief that blacks themselves reproduce racial inequality. Indeed, Ferguson (2000) contends that race and sexuality have always intersected in African American racial formation, and that African American culture has perpetually been deemed as outside the norms of heterosexuality and patriarchy.

While sexuality is commonly thought of as a private matter that should remain behind closed doors, it is in fact a constitutive element of social structure in modern nation-states. Foucault (1990) points to ostensibly restrictive Victorian values that, in reality "advanced" Western civilization through an obsessive discourse on sex. Roderick Ferguson (2004:84) adds that, "Modern regulatory apparatuses seized sexuality as the object of rationalization and control because—in the eyes of hegemonic rationality—sexuality is a fundamentally irrational force." Developing this "science of sexuality," according to Foucault, triggered the regulatory apparatuses of medical psychological authority to define sexual identities (specifically pathologies) and to discipline sexualized subjects. As sexual characters under the jurisdiction of institutional sexual authorities, "modern" citizens should regulate themselves and their communities via heteronormative formations.

As a constitutive element of social structure sexuality is always intersectional with other key axes of normativity and marginalization. Roderick Ferguson (2004) recognizes the legitimizing move from biological to cultural differentiation, a scientific shift from "natural" physical science to equally naturalized social scientific authority, and carefully traces the inseparable co-construction of racial and sexual others by reading dialectically canonical sociology against African American cultural producers. According to Ferguson, canonical sociologists, following Gunnar Myrdal and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, for instance, link black and sexual "deviance" and offer as a solution to black social failure (poverty and unrest) the "heteronormalization of African Americans" (20). Reading works of James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, and Toni

Morrison, Ferguson formulates a "queer of color critique" that explores more openly the spectrum of black (and human) structures of desire and experience that, for example, facilitate rigorous critique of civil-rights-earned black middle class formations that resurrect liberalist patriarchy and homophobia and diffuse the most radical potential of grassroots struggle. Ferguson thus finds that the social heterogeneity of African Americans—their experiences, options and concerns—is necessarily beyond heteronormativity, and the task of understanding the structural and ideological aspects of sexuality demands a genuine embrace of racial/sexual otherness.

Refugee perspectives tell a much different story than the US-centered literature. No serious study of refugees from East Africa in the US exists. This dissertation is critically engaged with transnational and intersectional refugee ethnic studies and locates US race, gender, and sexuality history along with anti-immigrant history as broader contexts for refugee policy. The focus on East African refugees with an emphasis on youth socialization complements literatures in the fields of refugee studies, ethnic studies, and sexuality studies, in particular adding qualitative analysis to immigration and refugee literatures that rely on political and economic frameworks.

ETHNIC STUDIES ETHNOGRAPHY AS EDUCATION

Cathy Small (1997:203) argues, "It is at the mundane levels of daily events and interpersonal relationships that the mechanisms for larger social trajectories exist." Gender, sexuality, family, and ethnicity are not simply personal matters, but are sites

of power struggle manifested in individual and shared experience, social structures and institutions, and discourse. Gender, sex, family, and ethnic formations are both macro- *and* micro-social phenomena, are both matters of social structure *and* social thinking, and show both collective *and* individual ownership over identity constructions within contextual conditions. An exploration of transnational and intersectional refugee policy that is not intimately involved with "the mundane levels of daily events" risks producing an analysis shackled to the limits and blind spots of available literature. In particular, when the group one studies is as over determined by reductive stereotypes and as marginal through physical, intellectual, and conceptual erasure as Somalis, insightful analysis (however relatively so) can only be approached through direct contact. My primary methods are ethnographic, with my entrée into the community as an ethnographer coming through an education role as a Ph.D. student and as teacher.

The writing of culture coming from anthropology involves immersion, observations in the field, interviews, and some process of analyzing and formulating a "thick description" of the subject groups' worldview and daily practices. My goal was to identify US race and power dynamics and to test theories of social justice through active involvement. Rooted in ethnographic participant observation, my primary methodology can be characterized as *activist*-observation. By this I mean participant observation with participation in the capacity as a community advocate, organic intellectual, and teacher who engages the shared theoretical and practical work of social activism. The method resembles "passionate ethnography" more than an attempt

to elaborate a "foreign" cultural system with any comprehensiveness or pretense of objectivity. On the contrary, mine is an attempt to rigorously formulate critical senses of "American" and "black" refusing to dissociate either from Somali Diaspora. In some senses this is more a methodology of a concerned neighbor, aware of my society's racial hostility, lending a hand.

I did not start out with intention to focus on youth programs. On my first day volunteering at an ESL program for newcomer women and at Warner High School I initiated what would be a haphazard, circuitous exploration of family, gender, and community dynamics with Somalis in City Heights. The contours of the circuits were largely shaped by my problematic positionality. I was a young adult male working around Somali women, a transgression of religious and customary gender segregation except among blood relatives. I was an African American with shoulder-length dreadlocks, somewhat of a challenge to often-held stereotypes where Somalis associated the locks with drugs and the race with moral decay a-la MTV hip hop and the "gangsters" of City Heights. I did not speak Somali and I was not a Muslim. I was asking questions about family, gender, and sexuality in "institutional" conversation settings that typically did not generate discourse beyond history, politics, and the US daily grind.

Thus, I got involved in stages, beginning with the local high school and community based organizations, attending meetings, volunteering in the classroom, and meeting as many people as I could. Eventually I made friends. Considering my atypical interests and presence most community members treated me with kindness

and generosity and I was able to establish enough time-tested trust to participate in important conversations about the meaning and future of some Somali lives in the US. In one case early on in the fieldwork an elder woman would ask for an ESL teacher to go to her apartment building to teach the people who were not as mobile. After hearing her a third time I approached her and through an interpreter committed to do it myself. Untrained and unofficial I taught for half a year, a beginning and an intermediate class with the elderly women being the most dedicated students. It was a difficult and draining experience in which I quickly burned out. Despite concerted hours and seasons of "activist observation," it took more than two years before I had a conversation with an elder Somali man, the principle power holders in Somali social dynamics.

I passed through and engaged many different social networks and experienced many overlapping power dynamics within the community. I sat in community meetings where police officers threatened to arrest Somali residents for spreading rumors about a taco stand, and threatened to enforce loitering laws to keep young hoodlums away from the businesses. Youth protests that elders heading to and from the mosque were the primary group affected by these laws fell on deaf ears, as well as accusations that a local business would line the cement stoop around its lot with oil in futile attempts to stop Somali men from hanging out and building community outside of their often overcrowded homes.

I sought to reverse the power dynamics of knowledge production. Instead of entering the community to tell refugees how to think and behave, I entered to be

taught by, guided by, and to engage meaningfully with Somali residents. Instead of entering the community to penetrate, observe, and tell Americans about "True" Somali culture, I entered to view US institutions and society deeply, ecologically, and humanely from Somali perspectives (which I do not claim to have accomplished). Instead of entering the community to do good deeds that make me look morally righteous, I entered the community to offer my skills and talents and to serve my neighbors.

These efforts were the best version of making my graduate study a viable, now-time resource for the benefit of the community I studied. These efforts were my activist-participation attempt to have ethnic studies ethnography serve as education for me *and* for others in as direct and concrete a manner as the many community members who generously befriended me and shared their insights, experiences, hopes and dreams throughout my five years of fieldwork.

A number of different stories could have been told from the fieldwork: some about political mobilization, some about the longitudinal experiences of specific Somali families, or some about the resourceful ways Somalis negotiated public assistance and economic niches (men as cab drivers and security guards) to make family and community life in refuge work. The research pointed in promising transnational directions looking at remittances and active involvement in local politics and liberation struggle back home. There were intersectional directions like intergenerational community formation, parenting, changes in gender and sexuality norms and practices, and the role of deviance categories like domestic violence.

There, on the street, I witnessed the frustration of the youth as their community, culture, and religion faced the hostility and marginalization so evident in the US legacy. I sat in the classrooms and even taught in the youth programs, reconnecting with my own frustrations as a high school youth, learning about and attempting to practice anti-racist refugee mentorship. It was there in the field that I struggled with learning and writing from the place the US makes for Somalis. I, myself, raced to refuge when it came time to learn research mastery regarding the study of ethnicity on the outlaying border. I raced into the heart of refuge to shine a light on today's effects of yesterday's discrimination if only in the hope to discover how to make US refuge make good on a promise to the world.

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Setting up the image of Somali youth that is operationalized by nonprofit organizations, the first chapter explores the US cultural representation of Somalis as both refugees deserving of aid and militia who need to be eliminated. US humanitarian intervention in the early 1990s Somali civil war closely blended a help-and-kill disciplinary approach to strife in the Horn of Africa. Nearly ten years later, Hollywood would rewrite as military heroism a most shameful episode that led Western audiences to play bystander as 1 million Africans died in Rwanda. The US cultural construction of difference, both geographic and social, between Somalia and America draws from a deep history of European views of African's inferiority and troubles the provision of refuge.

Chapter 2 examines the construction of neighborhood violence and youth risk. In the mid-to-late 1990s sensational and regular news reports of Somali middle and high school fights painted an image of City Heights as overrun by warlike Africans. San Diego Police Department community relations officers took the initiative to prevent Somali youth from following the pattern of newcomer gang violence established by Southeast Asian refugees in the 1980s. A nonprofit youth activities program for East Africans sprang from exaggerated reports of Somali gangs and provided a means for police officers to keep a closer eye on African youth who were viewed as needing to learn respect for "law and order." Somali youth themselves, however, reported regular incidents of peer intimidation, harassment, and attack targeting them as newcomers that failed to register on the police agenda. Rather than providing safety for refugees, this program constructed Somali youth risk as criminal and as a pretext to monitor them.

The same anecdotes about youth risk, specifically gang violence, teen pregnancy, and teen prostitution, provided the rhetorical basis for an abstinence only program for East African youth. Chapter 3 looks at the funding, design, and implementation of Young Men for Responsibility and Community (YMRC). Based on a didactic middle-America white teenager sex education model, and delivered to largely abstinent Muslim Somalis, the program served to gather data about the newcomers and to "teach" them lessons in responsible manhood. Failing to address the concerns of young Somalis regarding Muslim gender and sexuality formations in a non-Muslim host country, the youth program operated in an assimilation framework

and undermined the potential of providing safe recovery and reorienting space for 1.5 generation Somalis who sharply criticize US immodesty and materialism and who imagine future family life in Muslim lands.

The final chapter lays out the multi-layered complexities of youth educational risk where limited prior schooling combines with struggling inner city schools to erect formidable obstacles for newcomers. Somalis defend the quality and character of their education back home in opposition to the structural and interpersonal discrimination they face daily. An after school program for refugee youth supplements grossly inadequate inner city public education, yet inculcates "acculturation" survival skills and, like the public school itself, finds itself constrained by conditions of academic "success" via No Child Left Behind standardization.

In the conclusion, we revisit the race-inflected policies and practices that materialize US refuge, specifically through the social construction of Somali youth and surrounding complications of US war on terror foreign policy. The officials who undertake the "necessary mundane work of true acculturation" and the institutions within which they work operationalize the mainstream cultural framework of black inferiority and the need to paternalistically help or punish wayward Africans. What sort of youth program could avoid the de-ethnicizing process of making *good* "Americans," and instead make good *Somalis*? Such a program would have to effectively combat the foundational logic of US society, to support newcomers engaging each other across generational lines, in their own language, while fostering diasporic knowledge and activism to address and heal issues back home.

Unfortunately for everyone in US refuge, such work would not likely emerge from the nonprofit industrial complex, and any who took up such work themselves would likely be considered enemies of the state.

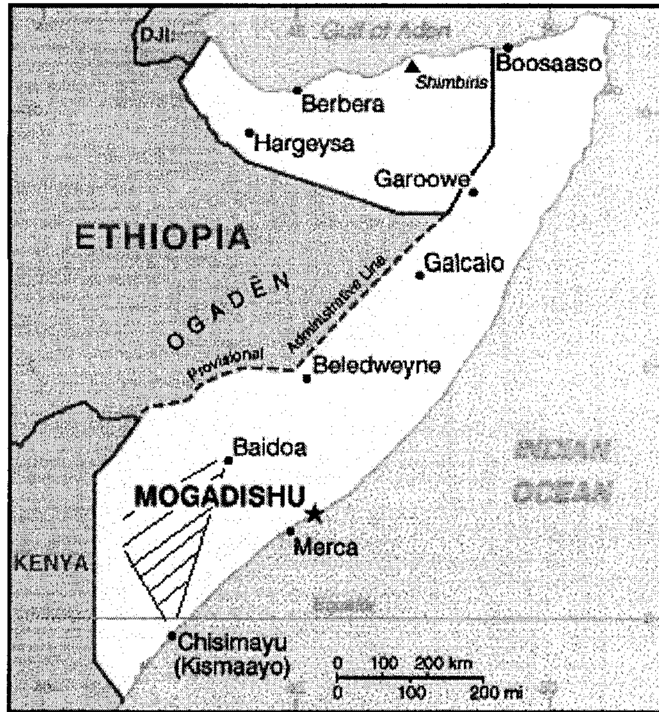

Figure 1. Approximate area of the "Triangle of Death," the river valley west of Mogadishu where 300,000 Somalis died from war and starvation 1991-1993.

CHAPTER 1

"TO RESCUE STARVING CHILDREN"
Refugees, Race Threats, and Representation

Our sons and daughters went halfway around the world, in harms way, to rescue starving children. That's what this is about today and that's what it will be about tomorrow whether in Somalia or Rwanda. To rescue starving children. –Dan Rather (1995:29)

One of the most frightening things in the world is a ten-year old with an automatic rifle. You see a lot of that in Mogadishu. –Mark Bowden[17]

What is called Africa is first and foremost a geographical accident. It is this accident that we subsequently invest with a multitude of significations, diverse imaginary contents, or even fantasies, which, by force of repetition, end up becoming authoritative narratives. –Achille Mbembe[18]

On December 14, 1992, *Time Magazine* ran a cover story on the plight of Somali famine victims titled "Somalia: The US to the Rescue." The cover magnified a Somali boy, a tight face-shot with hardened and piercing black eyes sunken deeply into his emaciated sockets. His shapely nose and mouth and glowing caramel skin in troubling juxtaposition to the skull-like cheekbones and swollen globe of his bald head. He appears both human and alien, and in the same moment looks five years old, fifteen years old, and fifty years old. He appears strangely timeless, ageless, but wasting away and awaiting death. "TIME" in bold black print erodes into the shadows on the side of his head—his time darkening, running out and fading away. "SOMALIA" in blood red, the color of emergency and danger, stamps his forehead between his eyes. "THE US TO THE RESCUE," like a singular light, bold white,

[17]From *The True Story of Black Hawk Down* (credits on the documentary). Mark Bowden is author of *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War* (1999).

[18]Achille Mbembe interviewed by Christian Hoeller. http://www.utexas.edu/conferences/africa/ads/1528.html.

distinguished, jumps out from all of the bleak imagery. The cover, it seems, tells of great suffering and the great heroism of the United States.

Nearly one year later, horrified and baffled Americans watched the corpse of a US soldier defiled in Mogadishu on CNN. Tallying the "Battle of Mogadishu" as an embarrassment and loss, President Clinton promptly removed all US fighting forces from Somalia. The October 3, 1992 raid, the largest firefight for the US since Vietnam, subsequently re-imagined in Ridley Scott's 2001 film *Black Hawk Down*, was actually a massacre in which US Task Force Ranger and Delta Force scored a 50:1 kill ratio, with Somali women and children counting for many of the estimated 1,000 dead. The US public pondered how Somalis could have gone from being grateful recipients of humanitarian aid to a hostile mob killing Americans.[19] An equally important and equally puzzling, yet less frequently asked question was how Somalis could have *so easily* gone from being treated like deserving recipients of humanitarian aid, to being piled up in a mountain of US-generated corpses overnight.

This chapter is about the US social construction of Somalis, which I argue entails a bi-valent *help-and-kill* signification rooted in race history. Going from "humanitarian intervention" in the 1990s to a war on terror in the new millennium, the help and kill racial construct underwent significant shifts around the focal point of Somalia. In both help and kill cases, US heroics are projected against global racial deviance. The 'Somali Affair', as Sherene Razack (2004) calls it, produced representations of transgressive black Africans and violated white saviors. During the

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[19]Mark Bowden in *The True Story of Black Hawk Down* (2003), The History Channel.

height of the conflict, Somalis were reduced to refugees (women, children, and elderly) *or* murderous militia (men, and some children). Images of Somalis as exclusively "refugee" or "racial threat" reinforced both a cultural and physical segregation between Third World Africa and First World US: chaotic Somalia versus orderly America, 'evil' or 'pathetic' Somalis versus heroic Americans, and the United States as the last strong hold in white-coded civilizing duties to mankind. The deeper costs of this racialized territorialization would more fully manifest shortly afterward in Rwanda, and in 2003 Sudan.

Hurriedly released just months after September 11th, 2001, Ridley Scott's *Black Hawk Down* would recast the US Rangers as the true victims in the Battle of Mogadishu, a performance that despite its pretense toward realism offered what some reviewers considered a gritty, blood-and-guts spin on jingoistic propaganda.[20] Three moments in US cultural representation—1992 pathos for famine victims, 1993 disengagement with irrecoverably pathological Africa, and 2001 "self-defense" bloodlust in the war on terror—mark three different incarnations of US racial formation. News anchor Dan Rather's characterization of the US intervening "to rescue starving children" best captures the *help* side of US paternalistic empire building: black children must be rescued from their own violent fathers and ineffective mothers and, impossibly, must be rescued from their own potential future black adulthood by US forces whose beneficence justifies any means, any amount of

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[20]Brian Denny, "Film Review-Black Hawk Down" *The Morning Star*. Ann Talbot (2002) "*Black Hawk Down*: Naked Propaganda Masquerading as Entertainment," Feb 19. World Socialist Web Site. www.wsws.org.

violence. American power, American values, and American provisions, even when producing a mountain of Somali corpses, are considered better for them than anything they have going for themselves. Importantly, 300,000 Somali famine deaths would be attributed exclusively to pathological warlords in a backward society, with a total elision of disingenuous rice-dropping aid strategies, decades of Cold War arms dumping and political game boarding, more than a century of colonial manipulation, and US strategic interests in the Middle East that would more fully play out ten years later.

US intervention in Somalia gave rise to "the CNN effect," or presumptions about the influence of the media over public opinion, and the influence of the media driven public opinion over US foreign policy. It appeared that seeing ungrateful Somalis defile a white man, an image masterfully conflated in the public media with the "humanitarian" efforts in the preceding two years, caused the people of the US to demand a full exit from Somalia. Beneath flip-flopping public sentiments, however, the US intervention in and representation of Somalia masked a broader mosaic construct of global race, class and gender hierarchy. Here we will explore this mosaic and consider its effects on how Americans view Somalis, and their efforts to "rescue" Somalia's "starving children."

REFUGEES AND RACIAL THREATS

The August 1993 issue of *National Geographic*, like the *Time* cover, displayed a nameless Somali. The cover shows a woman near death, suffering from starvation

and lurking as if she is paused in the middle of her daily tasks, making tea; snatched out of time and held motionless while her body wastes away. As a cover girl she entered the viewing public with the headline "Tragedy Stalks the Horn of Africa." She appeared to be wandering along the dirt path, looking for something she lost on the ground, or perhaps sizing up where she would fall were she to die with her next step. She herself appeared to be stalking, making the doubling of the message clear: the "tragedy" was simultaneously the regional famine and war affecting millions, *and* her desiccated body itself. She was to be seen in all senses as tragedy.

These powerful images introduced many Westerners to the concept of refugees, people who "owing to religious persecution or political troubles, seeks refuge in a foreign country."[21] Somalia still had not fully recovered from the influx of nearly 2 million refugees from the 1977-8 Ogaden War (an unsuccessful invasion of Ethiopia), and the 1990s civil war produced a million refugees fleeing from leaders contesting centralized power. Somali President Siad Barre (in office from 1969 to 1991) with near-limitless military aid from the Soviet Union and the US had led genocidal repression of Northern Somalia's Isaaq tribe in the late 1980s, and had been deposed from the capital Mogadishu in 1991 by General Mohamed Farah Aidid's Habr Gedr (Hawiye clan) militia. Barre's national army and Aidid's militia chased each other back and forth inland west from the capital city, pillaging and raping river valley inhabitants, "minority" groups like the Somali Bantu and Digil-Rahanweyn (Dualeh 2002:122). With their food and farms gone, in some places this "Triangle of

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[21]Oxford English Dictionary.

Death" saw ten thousand "minority" Somalis die of starvation *every day*, totaling 300,000. Individuals like the *National Geographic* cover girl were fully disenfranchised, and every Somali who could get out would qualify as a refugee: clan membership necessarily located one among the dozens of fractured battle lines as dozens of militia leaders struggled for control of Mogadishu. Enter the US and UN experiment in humanitarian intervention, or help-and-kill efforts to restore US-friendly order in the oil-rich, geo-strategic Horn of Africa.

Refugees are, ideologically speaking, considered damaged and are portrayed as passive and pathetic, "incapacitated by grief and therefore in need of care" (DuBois 1993:4-5). Refugees trigger paternalist provision and maternal nurturing, recasting "international politics as family drama," and projecting US individualism on military and state affairs abroad (Briggs 2003:186). As far as the US was concerned, there only two kinds of Somalis—refugees and militia—to balance only one kind of American, the soldier hero. Key points in the constellation of ideological constructs included "the famine victim," "the food" (aid), "the brigands," and "the heroes." A Somali was either a famine victim or a militia brigand. Helping meant Marines giving food to famine victims. The "heroes" were soldiers who would deliver the food or go after the brigands. The heroes needed both the "victims" and "brigands" to play out their heroism. And the African was acceptable only as incapacitated skeleton-near-death (women, children, and the elderly) or as drug-crazed murderer and outlaw (men). Implicit was also the heroic, if hamstrung, general viewer whose proper sympathy for suffering Africans and hope for a better future was punctuated by her or his lack of

ability to do anything but support the troops abroad. In the global village and the 'family of man', neither type of Somali belongs. The warlords and militia are seen as irrecoverably steeped in primitive tribalism, inhumane corruption, and anachronistic retributive morality. The refugees were seen as recoverable only through transformation, or upgrade, through learning and servitude (Razack 2004). Neither was seen as capable of self-determination. This oversimplification admittedly glosses over diplomatic efforts for instance between southern and northern Somalis, among reconciling clans, and among US policy proponents for nation building. But a complete analysis of policy variants in Somalia is beyond the scope of this chapter, and was muted in the ideological construct of the "white man's burden." Further, it is this oversimplification that would persist in the aftermath in the US imaginary, including in the driving logic of the film *Black Hawk Down.*

Images of the "refugees" and "militiamen" were recited and repeated in news reports and newsmagazines until they were commonplace and "common sense." The refugee became a quintessential imperial signifier of Africa, a background setting upon which European people ride triumphantly into a racially exclusive modernity (da Silva 2001). With the land, people, and socio-cultural fabrics of Africa continually reduced to footnotes to history, Africa "as an idea, a concept, (historically) served, and continues to serve, as a polemical argument for the West's desperate desire to assert its difference from the rest of the world" (Mbembe 2001:2). Like Africa itself, the refugee embodies simultaneously a space of "lack" or "nothingness" and a fertile ground for the staging of white subjectivity. For Africa, obscured and erased from

“modern” space and time, “the future (which is absent) is closed and the past has apparently receded” (Mbembe 2001:16). Lacking both time and place, the US’s Somalia is full of black people imagined through two interrelated death threats to the normative white subject: primal, brutish violence and the draining contagion of poverty and incapacity. The irreconcilable metaphysical threats could only be resolved by killing the black body.

Children can at least potentially be saved and cleansed of the sordid racial mark, needing to be removed from evil, incompetent, or absent black parents, and placed in the rightful care of US humanitarian and military institutions. Having a state of dependence that is at least in part justifiable (childhood), the refugee child stands as the only redeemable refugee body vis-à-vis capitalism. At least the refugee child stands some chance of Americanizing and living a productive, “successful” life (read as labor for the US). The incompetence of refugee parents and refugee children’s need to be saved from their own culture is reinforced at every juncture, nowhere more clear than in the focus on Somali famine, child soldiers, and female circumcision. Famine had been a recurring nightmare in East Africa since the 1980s, children went to the front lines in Mogadishu and elsewhere on the continent, and an estimated 90% of Somali girls were circumcised before they reached puberty, 70% of whom received the most invasive and drastic form of circumcision called infibulation, Pharonic circumcision, or female genital mutilation (Kouba and Muasher 1985). Adult-driven, such practices reinforce cultural and geographical boundaries that legitimize the West against an abject other in Africa. Denise Ferreira da Silva (2004:215) argues the

sensational response of First World feminists to female circumcision speaks less to global justice for Africans than to eliding the complexities of "Western exploitation of Africa" and the re-racializing projects "similar to the intellectually/morally inferior Africa created in nineteenth century racial theorizing." In such a racially inflected and highly charged environment, Laura Briggs (2003:197) argues, the visual reinforcement of the "Madonna-and-child" and "waif" images were thus, "tremendously flexible cultural resources for liberal interventionism."

Refugee and racial threat images sit deep in the past and present cultural history of the West. Early European explorers projected a two-natured racial threat into a dualistic picture of newfound lands. Anne McClintock (1995) points out that colonizers render others as feminine and monstrous to codify both megalomania and paranoia. Galle's 1600 engraving of Amerigo Vespucci is "suspended between a fantasy of conquest and a dread of engulfment, between rape and emasculation, the scene, so neatly gendered, represents a splitting and displacement of a crisis that is, properly speaking, male. The gendering of (pre-conquest) America is simultaneously naked and passive *and* riotously violent and cannibalistic represents a doubling within the conqueror, disavowed and displaced onto a feminized scene" (27). Imagining Africa and African refugees has in every sense been an act of power, constructing the space and race difference and norms of white heteropatriarchy that establish the "White Man's Burden" (Razack 2004). This self-righteousness and will to dominate, for instance, informed President Bill Clinton's foreign policy to spread democracy as well as "the free market and the need that exists to have free-market institutions in

operation at the same time as building towards democracy takes place. Indeed, …(democracy) and the free market are integral parts of a single institutional entity" (Hallenberg 2004:52). A serious sweep of US history at any point of space and time calls into question the possibility of the coexistence of "free" (unregulated) markets and full democratic participation of citizen-subjects, an especially ironic US position to take toward people in Africa. Again, the political and economic hegemony that subjugates and disempowers is marketed as the only game in town.

President George H. W. Bush clarified this white man's burden in official policy. By invading Iraq and liberating Kuwait, President Bush reflected on the "historic moment" and the "great progress" the US had made "in ending the long era of conflict and cold war. We have before us the opportunity to forge for ourselves and for future generations a new world order – a world where the rule of law, not the law of the jungle, governs the conduct of nations."[22] After laying down arms, Bush suggested, Iraq could "rejoin the family of peace-loving nations." The new world family of nations under US hegemony was not so new, but was an updated articulation of the colonizer's model of the world. Condemned to 'othered' spaces, African women, children, and men could be reduced to objects of scorn or pity, triggering "ideologies of 'rescue', while pointing away from addressing causes" (Briggs 2003:180). Erased yet again was Somali political modernity, a legacy of complex resistance to colonial and imperial intervention, the figure of proud anti-colonialist

[22]President George Bush public address January 16, 1991.

fighter Sheik Mohamed Abdullah Hassan re-cast simply as the "Mad Mullah,"[23] any tribe-based military leader who didn't comply with the US/UN directives reduced and re-cast simply as "warlord."

How we imagine refugees and racial threats in Somalia emerges from the store of colonial constructs of Africa. While many pictures of Africa could be shown, the images selected indicate not a neutral showing of objective reality, but a power to represent and a will to reproduce race hierarchy. The "misnomer" of humanitarian intervention, when viewed from this lens turns out to not be such an incongruous pairing after all. Helping and killing have been the hallmarks of Western imperialism. News photographers satisfied editors' lust for a famine story and did not show Somali people struggling for dignity and daily life in wartime. As far as the media was concerned, there were no Somali heroes, not even any 'good' Somalis. The demarcation lines clarified a hierarchy of civility in the geographic distance between the 'lawless' land of Somalia and 'civilization' in the United States, and in the cultural distance between 'evil' 'warmongers' and 'walking dead' in Somalia and the 'white knights' from the West (Razack 2004). These imaginings as race and gender constructs braided the softer and more sympathy-inducing humanitarian impulses with the more spectacular disciplinary violence regularized by military masculinism, both leading to hierarchical control. Strung somewhere between helping and killing, there

[23]Sayyid Mohammed Abdullah Hassan was born April 7, 1864 and from the late 1880s through the 1920s led a religious and culturally based armed resistance to British colonialism in Somalia. Arguably only considered crazy by the British for standing up to colonial domination effectively, he was neither "mad" nor a "mullah" (religious cleric).

were Somali children, endangered by the homicidal geo-politics of the adult world, giving TV viewers in the US objects of hope that killing and then abandoning Somalis was the rightful world order.

BLACK HAWK DOWN

Eight years after the bungled raid and slaughter in Mogadishu that Somalis called *Maalinti Rangers* (The Day of the Rangers), the US would seize the opportunity to rewrite the narrative of humanitarian intervention in Somalia. October 3rd, 1993, celebrated as a "national" holiday by the Habr Gedr clan[1] (Hawiye sub clan that had been led by Aidid), would be fictionalized to go one step beyond the imperialist help and kill racial formation. The "War on Terror" authorized by US Congress on September 18, 2001 reconfigured global politics and removed the need for humanitarians in foreign policy. Released early in December 2001 to channel the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Ridley Scott's blockbuster film *Black Hawk Down* put forth under the pretext of an uber-realistic portrait of modern war the "blatant glorification of US militarism."[2] Amplifying and riding the wave of "patriotic fever," producers released a cut that had been washed and cleaned of all complexity, including soldiers openly critical of the military action, and the US's role in militarizing the Somalis in the 1980s, omissions that sparked nationwide protest in

[1]Mark Bowden 1999.

[2]Ann Talbot (2002) "*Black Hawk Down*: Naked Propaganda Masquerading as Entertainment". World Socialist Web Site. (Feb 19) www.wsws.org.

Somali communities, by anti-war groups like A.N.S.W.E.R., and even from actors in the film (Brune 2002).[3]

Ridley Scott's 2001 *Black Hawk Down*, based on Mark Bowden's 1999 historical novel, revise the October 3, 1993 snatch and grab mission that ran afoul and detoured US interest in Somalia. *Black Hawk Down* celebrates the pure and overt violence of a firefight, while the feminized Africa of now-bygone humanitarian concern looms as a preceding footnote, a precursor to a two hour symphony of machineguns and RPGs, of spraying blood and guts. A five-minute frontispiece about the civil war and famine reduces the recent history of Somalia to a blocky and simplistic narrative of corrupt and evil "warlords" gone wild. The land is barren and the people are idle, dissipating and waiting just like the *National Geographic* cover girl. White humanitarians feed the infirmed as Somalis load new corpses into disposal piles. The elderly, women, and children sit as backdrop to the coming action. The next two-plus hours walk step by step through a US soldier's perspective on the planning, botching, and extraction from a downtown raid to capture two high-ranking officials in Aidid's militia.

Shot in Morocco, *Black Hawk Down* is a straightforward construction of racialized masculinity and the pervading righteousness of US warfare. Reviewer Tom Doherty (2002) characterizes the racial politics of the film as "visceral and (surfacing with) visible force," the Somalis compared to the "crocodile meat" faceless and

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[3]Adrian Brune (2002) points out that Brandon Sexton III criticized the film when speaking at Columbia University because it promoted inaccurate and racist depictions of Somalis and specifically because a speech his character, Alphabet, makes opposing "the US military presence in Somalia," was edited out completely.

luckless natives in the old Tarzan films. Doherty likens the African hordes to the creatures from the *Aliens* films, while the gender politics is "all frantic testosterone." The battle zone becomes the true place where human bonds (read bonds between white men) deepen, "a celestial arena for true glory and mystical brotherhood." These dynamics provide US audiences, Doherty argues, a space to process the pain of 9/11 attacks, reading righteous battle back onto more complicated historical conflicts.

The real life cognitive dissonance caused by Westerners watching hundreds of Somalis parading a dead Ranger's body through Mogadishu streets could easily have been addressed had the media not been so deeply invested in normative racist scripts. Scott's film, however, continues in the opposite direction and erases more ambivalent complexities from the portrait. During the early 1990s intervention, editors scooped, spinned, and engineered news that was "live (i.e. entertaining) even without context or accurate content" (Girardet 1995:18). As early as 1991, the Western media was not interested in Africans killing each other, but "what editors really wanted was famine. A solid, Ethiopian-style hunger story" (Girardet 1995:19). While militia attacks on UN soldiers were aired because they "demonstrated" Aidid's evilness, US aggression was downplayed or went unreported altogether. For instance, Mark Bowden details how Task Force Ranger spent the summer 1993 harassing and terrorizing Mogadishu residents with helicopter stunts and antics called "rotor washing."[4] Bowden (1999:89) writes:

> They flew in groups, at all hours of day and night, swooping down so low that they destroyed whole neighborhoods, blew down market stalls,

[4]Ann Talbot (2002) "*Black Hawk Down...*"

> and terrorized cattle. Women walking the streets would have their colorful robes blown off. Some had infants torn from their arms by the powerful updraft. On one raid, a mother screamed frantically in flex-cuffs for nearly an hour before a translator arrived to listen and to explain that her infant had been blown down the road by the landing helicopters. The residents complained that pilots would deliberately hover over their roofless outdoor showers and toilets. Black Hawks would flare down on busy traffic circles, creating havoc, and then power off leaving the crowd below choking on dust and exhaust. Mogadishu felt brutalized and harassed.

In a more dramatic case, in July, Cobra helicopters pumped anti-tank rockets into a meeting house, killing 70 Habr Gedr clan leaders who had gathered to consider US peace terms and to figure out whether and how to force Aidid to comply. This prompted the Habr Gedr to official declare war on the United States.[29] Because stories like these reversed the dynamics of deviance, they were kept out of pro-military reporting, but brought to light they might have at least fit the Somali demonstration on Bill Cleveland's body within a rational context.

Again, there were two missions, yet the difference between UNOSOM I/Operation Restore Hope where Marines dropped rice into a civil war and UNOSOM II/Task Force Ranger where US soldiers dropped themselves into that civil war was too small to differentiate amidst prevailing ethos of Somali deviance, similarly elided in Scott's film. The film *Black Hawk Down* muted UNOSOM I/Operation Restore Hope, centering Task Force Ranger with UNOSOM II as backdrop. The United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) I and II were minimized in relation to US

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[29]Mark Bowden cited in Larry Chin. (2002) "'Black Hawk Down' – Hollywood Drags Bloody Corpse of Truth Across Movie Screens..." (Jan 8). OnlineJournal.com.

heroics, despite the fact that UN soldiers prevented a larger of number of casualties. But the extent to which the film swings from help to justified killing is beyond cynical. Women and children accounted for an estimated two-thirds of the 6-10,000 Somalis killed by US forces in summer 1993 (Chomsky 1999). The film irresponsibly sanitizes the raid by erasing well-documented killings of Somali civilians. Bowden's novel, for instance, points out that the first helicopter shot down landed on a house crushing a child within. At the beginning of the raid on the Olympic Hotel, another small detail from Bowden's novel was not included in the film. Bowden (1999:33) writes, "Then a helicopter came down low and blasted streams of fire from a gun on its side. The gun just pulverized (Ali's) side of the street. Ali's youngest brother, Abdulahi Hassan Mohamed, fell dead by the gate to the family house, bleeding from the head. Abdulahi was fifteen." Small details like this might have validated Somali perspectives and called into question the mission of Task Force Ranger, likely too distracting from the film's attempt to uncritically promote US militarism.

The film shows the soldiers as disciplined and obeying rules of engagement. Yet, reports from Rangers themselves indicate the soldiers were shooting at anything moving. If they had fired any more munitions into the Somali capital, General Garrison later reported, they "would have sunk it."[30] Many of the Somali fighters were actually children, another fact erased by Scott. In the PBS documentary *Ambush in Mogadishu*, Rangers reported haunting images of killing children that lingered after the raid:

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[30]Larry Chin (2002) "'Black Hawk Down'..." quoting Mark Bowden.

> *Speaker*: In the alley when Joyce got killed that's where I saw the first child with a weapon. I mean he couldn't have been four-foot-five, four-foot-six.
> *Sgt. Mike Pringle*: "I would guess they were no older than twelve. Very young kids where the weapons almost dwarfed them. I was surprised they could handle the recoil of the weapons."
> *Specialist Jason Moore*: "It seemed to me like a moving target range and you could just hit the target and watch it fall, hit the target and watch it fall. And it wasn't real. It was too easy. That upsets me more than anything else, is how easy it was to pull the trigger over and over."

Contrary to the appropriate choices depicted in the film, a 2005 video game, the X-Box first-person shooter "Delta Force: Black Hawk Down" got it more accurate as "players can also kill non-combatants with little or no consequences" and it is easier to "just shoot everybody" than to differentiate militia from passersby.[30]

By and large, women and children, American or Somali, are absent from the film. The few scenes where women are included directly contradict the fact that US soldiers killed thousands of non-combatants. Three key scenes frame the depiction of Somali women. In the opening sequence women's bodies are torn apart by militia gunfire, literally erupting in fountains of blood. They are penetrated, violenced by the bad guys. Somali women are in danger from their own men, and their bodies register of the brute immorality of the food-hijacking militia. Later in the film a young woman, a schoolteacher protecting her huddling students watches as Sergeant First Class Kurt Schmid (Hugh Dancy) sneaks through their building to avoid gunfire. In the presence of this brief moment alluding to normalcy, the Ranger is calm, friendly and good with children. The scene shows the humanity of the older white male and the humanity of

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[30]Video game review of "Delta Force: Black Hawk Down" http://www.commonsensemedia.org/game-reviews/Delta-Force-Black-Hawk.html.

the women and children who do not participate in the fight. He is there to rescue the women and children. A third scene shows a Somali woman pick up the AK-47 from the body of a man who had just been shot by the last Rangers running the "Mogadishu mile", or their flight on foot behind the armored vehicles out of hostile territory. Here Specialist Mike Kurth (Gabriel Casseus), an African American Ranger hesitates, hopes out loud, "Don't do it!" as she reaches for the gun. Schmid, having earlier established his beneficence, fires and her body drops to the ground. These three scenes imply US soldiers only killed when justified, and that the only female non-combatants were killed by Somali militia.

The Task Force Ranger and Delta Force raid on Mogadishu was, contrary to Ridley Scott's military-backed film, not simply about "the man next to you" and the creed to "leave no man behind." In fact, many of the teenage soldiers "went to pieces under fire" and in the heat of battle "their discipline broke down."[32] Mark Bowden (1999:422) writes:

> Their experience of battle, unlike that of any other generation of American soldiers, was colored by a lifetime of watching the vivid gore of Hollywood action movies. In my interviews with those who were in the thick of the battle, they remarked again and again how much they felt like they were *in a movie*, and had to remind themselves that this horror, the blood, the deaths, was real. They describe feeling weirdly out of place, as though *they did not belong here*, fighting feelings of disbelief, anger, and ill-defined betrayal. *This cannot be real.*

Black Hawk Down relies on inexperienced and ignorant young soldiers to tell the story. The disdain young US soldiers felt toward Somalis emerged not only from the

[32]Ann Talbot (2002) "*Black Hawk Down…*" film review.

killings, but also from the constant referrals to Somalis as "Sammies" and "Skinnys," each document in Bowden's novel and Scott's film, but neither problematized in any way. "Sammies," a non-specific racial slur, and "Skinnys" fit the military tradition of dehumanizing an enemy, but calling victims of famine "Skinnys" before blowing them into ancient history can fairly be called the diametric opposite of humanitarian principles.

Reviewer Tom Doherty identifies *Black Hawk Down* as an "extraction film," a subgenre of war films. The danger faced by the Rangers, and their successful but costly extraction set the stage for final punctuation on removal of US personal, resources, and attention from Africa. Another film, Antoine Fuqua's 2003 *Tears of the Sun*, made the case even more explicitly. Set in the mid 1990s Nigeria ethnic civil war, Lt. A.K. Waters (Bruce Willis) and his Navy SEAL Special Ops team are sent to extract an Italian Doctors Without Borders physician (Monica Bellucci) and a Catholic priest who have been working at an orphanage that is directly in the line of an advancing army. This literal remove-humanitarianism-from-Africa performance is punctuated in a dramatic moment when Father Gianni (Pierrino Mascarino) appeals to morals principles of saving humans and says, "Go with God." Lt. Waters (Willis) replies coldly and definitively into the camera, "God already left Africa." Like *Black Hawk Down*, *Tears of the Sun* offers up an inescapable replacing of humanitarian with violence that registers the true costs of tragedy in Africa not in the nameless and numberless Africans mowed down like grass, but in the wounding and death of *any* white US soldiers or any whites at all. These extraction narratives importantly position

the post 9/11 US (coded as white) as the real victims, even in offensive maneuvers abroad where they in reality kill hundreds of people.

Black Hawk Down, a fictionalized film history promoting war on terror ideology provided a definitive baseline for American audiences to watch American soldiers razing Muslim lands and abandoning Africans. Winning Academy Awards for Best Film Editing and Best Sound, Scott's *Black Hawk Down* was promised an attentive post 9/11 audience, and would have unacknowledged effects on the racial attitudes of Americans. Regardless of the environmental effects of such a "real" story, the film *Black Hawk Down* reinforced racist views of Africa through omission of Somali perspectives and history, through reduction of Somalis to invented black thug characters, and through bleaching the performance of white US soldiers to portray them as paragons of character, resolve, and sacrifice.

CONCLUSION

Genuine sympathy that many in the US felt during Somali famine in the early 1990s was undergirded by the narrative of evil warlords at fault and the deeper history of race representations that made black dependence and black menace inseparable. Racialized images and gendered violence naturalized social roles for Somali women, children, and elders on the one side, and fighting men on the other. Repeated images and reports naturalized these constructs, as well as the paternalistic role for the white West as saviors and enforcers. The precarious position of Somali children could only be resolved by their being taken into the fold of US humanitarian and military

institutions. Somali children needed to be saved from their literal and figurative Somali parents, and even from their own future adulthood.

At the advent of the US "War on Terror," a Hollywood version of history re-framed US intervention in the Somali civil war to promote US militarism as the only viable US foreign policy. The more duplicitous role of US soldiers who terrorized and killed Somali civilians and the literal smoking guns implicating the US in Somali tribal conflict and state collapse were summarily erased from the narrative, replaced by naive but honorable white soldiers and equally fictionalized thuggish black brutes. The mosaic race, class, and gender hierarchies established in post 9/11 US culture are grounded in US cultural representations of Somalia and deeply impact how people in the US view Somalis and US foreign policy. What remains to be explored is how these hierarchical constructs impact US views and policies closer to home, at national and local levels.

CHAPTER 2

"SOMALIS VS. EVERYBODY ELSE"
Race Violence and the Construction of Somali Youth Risk

Minutes after school let out ... hundreds of students poured into the street. The melee was on. Between 20 and 30 teen-agers went at each other with shoes, sticks, belts, canes and rocks. Combatants comprised virtually every ethnic group in attendance at the high school. But, said (the vice principal), "The two predominant groups were African-American and Somali." It lasted about 10 minutes ... School police and staff intervened. A San Diego police helicopter ordered the crowd to disperse. A second street fight broke out the following afternoon at the edge of (the park), a few blocks away. Police cars and the vehicles of private citizens were pelted, and one motorcycle officer was struck with a rock. Tensions have receded in the past month. But everyone involved has seen these lulls before. No one's offering a guarantee this one is permanent. For Somalis, the brawls were simply the latest eruption of an ongoing series of smaller conflicts that could be titled "Somalis Vs. Everybody Else."
-San Diego newspaper. November 1997

The anti-police attitude among youths was a throwback to life in their homeland, places such as Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, where anybody in a uniform was to be feared. Police were corrupt and violent. Ditto the military. Warlords ruled. When their families fled to America in the 1990s, the youths brought these so-called anti-uniform attitudes with them. – San Diego newspaper. 2005

The police they didn't care like who started the fight. My parents they always told us not to fight because if you fight you gonna go to jail or get in trouble, so we didn't want to fight. And the other kids thought that we were like scared, like we were scared to fight with them. That's one thing I didn't like about it. So every day you have to, after school, you have to worry about like fighting, or like run. Run or fight. – Hassan, 25 year-old Somali City Heights resident

In the late 1990s a rash of ethnic violence in City Heights consistently featured Somali youth against their peers and triggered discussion of Somali aggressiveness, escalation, and enculturated violence. Having come from families and a society torn apart by anarchy and civil war, Somali youth, it was presumed, were comfortable within the milieu of violence. Having come from a society where authority and uniforms signaled corruption, it was presumed, Somali youth would naturally reject the benevolent peace officers in the City Heights streets. Combined with the urban poverty of City Heights, "Somali violence" provided the volatile ingredients of youth risk.

Over a ten-year period, from approximately 1996 to 2005, City Heights experienced an epidemic of violence near Sunset Park, Warner High School, and Sterling Middle School, making Somali violence a top agenda item for schools, community organizations, law enforcement and residents. The fights, however, seemed to mirror patterns of Filipino and Southeast Asian communities from previous decades. San Diego, it seemed was somehow producing an acculturation eddy where newly arriving groups sometimes found themselves in the heart of youth crisis.

The rhetoric of the crisis, however, deployed stock racial ideologies to explain away the troubles the newcomers were experiencing. Singling out African American and Somali youth, as exemplified in the first epigraph to this chapter, officials juxtaposed a threatening black male mass against "private citizens" whose private property was 'wrongly' violated, and as anathema to the symbols and personages of law and order. Suggesting that the peaceful "lull" was in fact the exception, and not the norm, officials naturalized the violence and erased the experiences of those implicated that might help provide illuminating context. Referencing fear-based "warlord" rule, officials implied that US state institutions and police practices was the only possible remedy for Somali deviance. Drawing deeply from the well of racist views of Africa and of black people, officials positioned local institutions as antagonists in the battle of Somalis versus everybody else.

The views of Somali youth, however, present a very different picture, one in which the presumptions of Somali culpability, cultural collapse, and chaotic anarchy come into question. Somali youth question the fairness of police officers aggressively

detaining and questioning them after their peers have attacked them. Somalis report discriminatory treatment in the neighborhood and at school, often reflecting on a lingering sense of having been violated. Most importantly, the narratives of Somali youth expose the distortion of "culture of poverty" stereotypes that inaccurately portray their parents as apathetic and out of touch, and that blame the parents, the youth themselves, and Somali "culture" more broadly for all of the violence.

"Youth risk" rhetoric is a cover for systemic violence against minority and poor youth. Not inconsequentially, epidemic violence and youth risk emerge from neighborhoods where de facto segregated people of color and poverty are concentrated—functionally overpopulated areas that demand struggle in the face of capital flight, disinvestment, and joblessness. "Youth risk" accepts and enforces the status quo, emerging from the logic of bourgeois individualism: there are "bad guys" who supposedly embody evil by having made personal choices to break the law; there are "at risk" youth who are influenced and counter influenced by law-breakers and law-enforcers; there are professional enforcer "white knights"; and the entire drama centers on the "normal" (i.e. white middle class suburban) people the enforcers protect from the stain of urban racial threat. Justice equals catching the bad guys, thus rescuing the bourgeois individuals from imminent threat. Illegal and unethical practices of housing and employment discrimination, of racial profiling and harassment, and of public policy discrimination, apathy and neglect are overlooked even if those state and state-sanctioned practices have a demonstrable effect on

preserving racialized urban poverty itself (Lipsitz 2006). Any-means-necessary state force carries the day with great fanfare and presumed heroism.

Much like the demonizing of Somalis during the civil war in order to valorize US humanitarian and peacekeeping military actions that we explored in Chapter 1, the dualistic lines of a law and order perspective obscure the dynamics of social power in refuge. Many people criticize City Heights for being full of bad influences, but the solutions to youth risk center on giving activities, information, and role models to the youth so they don't choose to go down the wrong path. Problems that are rooted in broad patterns of political and economic disinvestment, disenfranchisement, and exploitation, as well as in the patterns of systemic racial discrimination are individualized, making the problems and patters decontextualized, depoliticized, and reified. Instead of addressing the broader inequities of race and class marginalization, youth risk strategies provide limited resources and mentorship to 'save' a few individuals by offering them some support to try to steer them out of poverty. Only a few are in a position to receive this support, however, and not all of those who receive it are able to (or desire to) distance themselves from the fate of the community as a whole.

This chapter is about race violence in law and order policy and Somali responses to institutional and environmental violence. I argue Somali youth risk must be re-conceptualized to expose discrimination in law enforcement and the US investment in racist portrayals of Somali deviance. This is a necessary first step in addressing the roots of urban race violence in an immediately relevant social context.

By treating crime as individual deviance and by profiling and policing groups presumed to be fundamentally comprised of deviants, public resources go into containment and detainment, rather than ameliorating the present results of neglect and historic discrimination.

First we will consider how a prevailing policy focus on gang prevention shifts public resources and awareness about urban struggles from systemic analysis to individualized criminal behavior and pathologized racial minorities. Then we will consider one policing practice in particular, a youth activities program specifically targeting Somali youth that tries to improve police effectiveness and officer-community relations, yet complicates the role officers play in the provision of refuge. Finally we will look at young Somali's views on the violence they experience, showing complex negotiations of hostile institutions and adolescence in US inner city schools. The youth provide a marked contrast to law and order official stance on violence in City Heights. This range of optics forces us to critically reconsider the role of race in constructing youth risk, and in constructing refuge in the United States.

YOUTH GANGS AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION

The extensive literature and resources on youth gangs and violence prevention shows gangs to be a growing concern for law enforcement officials, the general public, and parents. The National Youth Gang Center estimated in 2004 that there are 24,000 gangs with more than 760,000 members in the United States, with no "significant

change at the national level" since 2002.[33] Descriptions of the increasing scope and reach of gangs link post-industrial urban cores, suburbs, and even international circuits that fund terrorism.[34] Criminal psychologists, criminal justice scholars, sociologists, law enforcement officers, social workers, and other professionals debate the definitions and meanings of, and 'solutions' to gangs and gang violence. The full range of literature is beyond the scope of this study, but statistics and studies suggest, "No such (gang intervention and prevention) program that works has yet surfaced in the literature."[35] The context of youth gangs and violence prevention programs, as well as critical readings of the relationship between race, violence, and social justice provide an important context for understanding refugee youth acculturation in the US.

Mainstream discourse on gang and violence prevention explains epidemic criminal behavior as personal pathology, "culture of poverty" depravity, or some combination of antisocial characteristics assigned to people of color themselves.

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[33]US Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Violence Prevention, "Fact Sheet" April 2006 (#1).

[34]Relating to terrorism, in 2002 former Maniac Latin Disciple gang member Jose Padilla was elevated to Public Enemy No. 1, held without charges, and used as "fodder for speech making" and as a litmus test for the Bush administration's ability to detain American citizens indefinitely despite Supreme Court rulings and the US Constitution (Dahlia Lithwick. 2005. "Public Enemy No. 43,527" *Jurisprudence: The Law, Lawyers and the Court.*) Additionally, the *Journal of Gang Research, Fall* 2001 special edition included several articles from National Gang Criminal Research Center work on cases like Chicago's Black P. Stone Nation (BPSN) gang whose leader Jeff Fort reportedly contracted with Libya to carry out bombings in Illinois.

[35] The 2001 *Gangs and Guns: A Task Force Report from the National Gang Criminal Research Center* suggests, "In spite of millions of dollars spent by government agencies on gang intervention and prevention service programs, no such program that works has yet surfaced in the literature. In addition, little useful knowledge on the issue of gangs and guns has been added to the literature from this source."

Critics of this trend point out that mainstream gang and violence prevention programs are thus not merely problem-solving practical endeavors, but serve ideological ends to organize social rewards and risks along race and class lines. Researcher Dwight Conquergood (1996:11-12) points out that "gang members", "minority youth", and "black and Latino teenagers" are symbolically conflated to fashion a "barbarian" horde threatening "the foundation of civilization", and to justify the "vitriolic language of racism and revulsion" that dehumanizes and racializes young people and submits them to "a formidable legal-juridical apparatus of surveillance and incarceration." Conquergood identifies three primary tropes for the symbolic threat of gangs: "virulent disease", which supports containment and removal of youth of color to protect 'normal' middle class and suburban social subjects; "vicious animals", which solidifies race ideologies of the primitive, subhuman, and dangerous 'nature' of people of color; and "violent terrorists", which clarifies the media investment (in the early 1990s) in associating, for instance, guerilla fighters in South America, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and street gangs in the US.

These ideologies of racial threat stimulate moral panic, fear, and xenophobia to drive 'law and order' and 'tough on crime' politics that harden social lines (Davis 1999 and Lipsitz 2006). 'Norms' of bourgeois individualism, middle class suburban whiteness, and patriarchal nationalism crystallize against blight, vice, and peril, preserving privileges upward along race and class lines, while marginalizing an ambiguous and 'monstrous' racial underclass. George Lipsitz (2006:145) argues that politicians, media, and popular culture producers promote a "blame the victim"

ideology to divert attention away from disinvestment in the public sector via transfer of resources from, for example, affordable housing to the military, from job creation to tax reductions, from social programs to wealth preservation for elites. A public sector and welfare apparatus demonized and choked by a decade of "trickle down" Reaganomics, followed by almost two decades of big business 'free trade' neoliberal and hawkish neoconservative policies perpetuated the pathologizing of the most vulnerable social subjects.

Resistance to the overt discrimination and racial profiling in gang violence prevention policies registered visibly and publicly. On June 10, 1999 the United States Supreme Court ruled 6-3 that Chicago's General Order No. 92-4, or their "Gang Loitering Ordinance" violated the Fourteenth Amendment and due process. Chicago's gang ordinance, which from 1992 to 1994 accounted for the arrest of 42,000 city residents, allowed peace officers to disperse suspected gang members when they stood in public in groups of two or more people (Roberts 1999). The broad and vague Order 92-4 empowered police officers to approach any black and Latino males on the Chicago streets and arrest them if they didn't 'disperse' quickly enough. Utilizing undefined terms like "suspected gang member" and standing in public "for no apparent purpose", Order 92-4 intensified already existing race tension and ideologies about the criminality of men in the racial underclass. An amended version of Order 92-4 was unveiled by Chicago Mayor Richard Daley in 2002 limiting such policing to "hot spots," and injunctions (restraining orders against specific documented gangs)

were found constitutional and are now common throughout the US, preserving all of the core controversies over civil liberties and police-community relations.[36]

Critics counter the notion that "tough" profiling and harassment policies that swell prison ranks under a cloak of fear are adequate responses to real social issues of poverty, unemployment, and disenfranchisement. In fact research on the "prison industrial complex" suggests that differential enforcement and incarceration of underserved community members establishes an institutional framework to reward private investment in racial antagonism, segregation and exploitation (Davis 2003). At minimum, the prevalence of race ideology in criminal justice and law enforcement forecasts ongoing struggle for social justice around youth gangs and violence prevention in the US.

As refugees transition into the racial social geography of the US, those tracked toward "minority" status find themselves vulnerable to a formidable cycle. Always already racialized as in the case of Somalis back home detailed in Chapter 1, transitionally "foreign" newcomers receive the helping hand of didactic normative moralizing while being dangled over the social bottom. Speaking of black West Indian immigrants in New York, Mary Waters (1999:344) points to the inherent tragedy in this dynamic that newcomers are sold an "ideology of inclusion that in reality is based on defining blacks as 'the other', the people who can never really be Americans." As

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[36]People ex re. Gallo v. Acuna (Jan. 30, 1997), San Jose, California's legal battle against the 'VST' (Varrio Sureno Town or Vario Sureno Treces) and 'VSL' (Vario Sureno Locos) in the Santa Clara County Superior Court netted 4-3 support to use "public nuisance" law to prevent known gang members from being anywhere in public with any other fellow gang member.

black immigrants "dance" this terrain with white and black Americans, Waters suggests, this engenders the "central contradiction" that "their status as immigrants lets the newcomers see, dream, and even visit behind the veil, but their children's and grandchildren's status as Americans may close it again." Crime, punishment, race, and poverty are everyday realities for many refugee youth in urban locales and the racial rhetoric of gangs and gang prevention promises that Somali refugees and minorities will be cast as the problem and will receive little protection from hostility of neighbors, officers, and institutions. This leaves open serious questions about the effect of these social conditions on the long-term well being of communities in US refuge.

SOMALI YOUTH RISK IN SAN DIEGO

According to the San Diego Police Department, an increase in criminal activity had made Somali youth in City Heights a top law enforcement priority. The data and anecdotes seemed to suggest that among all the issues in this diverse "inner city" neighborhood, Somali youth vice and violence were on the rise. Unlike other groups in City Heights—for instance the established Mexican and Central American immigrant communities, African Americans, and Southeast Asians—Somali risk seemed not only particularly extreme, but also potentially preventable. The rhetoric of rescue, however, much like humanitarian rhetoric and action during the Somali civil war, erroneously premised clear lines between society's good, bad, and undesirable. The rhetoric of risk and risk prevention diverted attention and resources away from the more fundamental

social problems of City Heights, namely the absence of protection of all residents from interpersonal violence, the antagonistic role of police officers, and the erasure of viewpoints outside of the race deviance/law and order ideology. The ideology of risk was a construct that, by evading structural and systematic factors, placed blame on racialized people themselves. What appeared to be happening was that the City Heights environment was eating many young Somalis and their peers alive, and local officials seemed more interested in associating emerging risks like gangs, substance use, and prostitution with personal responsibility, cultural/racial deficiency, and criminalization ideologies than working toward safe, meaning non-predatorial and non-violent, neighborhoods. Police officers in the neighborhood could step back out of the spotlight, attenuate residents' franchise, and, as scholar Claire Kim (2000:192) identified in the white mainstream response to black-Korean conflict in New York City, construct themselves as "neutral, disinterested observers who were only concerned with promoting fairness, justice, and the American way." Further, law enforcement officials could be heroic by coming down hard on the blacks-*qua*-threat to society, *and* be humanitarian by caring enough to reach out and teach refugees how to be good Americans.

Youth risk rhetoric offered up a "culture of poverty" explanation to exonerate hostile law enforcement officers and other institutional forms of violence against all racialized City Heights residents. This was especially true in the case of Somali youth and families who, like most refugees of color, were assumed to suffer from deterioration of culture and cultural deviance. Already damaged by civil war and

prolonged periods of languishing in refugee camps, Somali culture supposedly faced urban poverty with additional complicating factors. Culture of poverty codifies specified behaviors as "Somali" and generalizes them in order to pathologize the entire group and then target the behaviors and group for rehabilitation, a process of ethnic cleansing. Whereas in the 19th and early 20th Centuries US officials could say people were bad or criminal because they were black, brown, yellow, or red, now officials need only to point to "dysfunctional" culture before applying the full extent of state violence.

Crystal Smith, a San Diego Police Department community service officer in City Heights, felt that religious values in the community and tight knit family bonds could actually have complicating effects. Officer Smith said:

> I see a lot more special needs coming from the refugee youth than I do the other ethnic groups here in Mid City. I think a lot of it is their religious belief. They have very strong religions. The Buddhist religion and the Muslim religion puts a lot of guidance and beliefs in the teenager's minds, or the youth, the kids, where the other ethnic groups aren't as religious and don't follow the specific guidelines of their religion, meaning sometimes the pressures that the young Muslim girls go through, wearing the cultural dress that they wear, and their parent's belief on dating, and going to public functions or athletic activities or events. I noticed that you don't see that with other ethnic groups. The treatment of the females. The female teenagers. I think in some ways it has a lot of good benefits cause it builds a strong family tie, but I think it also develops negative behaviors, keeping young girls suppressed and not able to go out and socialize as normal teenage girls their age do, or date, or go to parties or go to school functions. And I noticed a lot of the parents are very strict and keep their girls at home, and don't let them participate as much as the boys. It seems to me that the boys stop being disciplined when they turn the age of eight. I don't really don't see a lot of discipline in the refugee community with their sons. I see a lot more with the girls. You don't see that kind of treatment with other teenage kids I work with out here.

Sheltering the girls, Smith argued, made them naïve and vulnerable to people who might take advantage of them. Smith suggested, for instance, that one of her youth program participant's unintentional pregnancy was due to this lack of discretion without any regard for what I experienced in a 17 year old Somali woman choosing to drop out of high school to marry and raise a family, a "normal" life path back home prized by many in the San Diego community. Alternately, a lack of disciplining and holding expectations of boys created an opposite set of concerns. The boys would likely be exposed to a wider range of negative influences, thus they required discipline and punishment that Somali parents appeared uninterested in or incapable of meting out.

Smith believed there were a number of causes for the epidemic of Somali fighting, but interestingly enough, the first "problem" she listed was cultural pride. Smith said:

> We have a real problem with physical fighting with them, both girls and boys in high school. We had a big long, ongoing problem. I think a lot of it is some of their post-traumatic stress is coming out, and that's how they handle it. They're very verbal, aggressive people. They're very into pride and proud of who they are and their culture. And if one person gets in a fight with one person, say an African American and a Somali get in a fight, you've got twenty Somalis on the African American's back in a second. And then that creates a big melee at school, or away from school. It's a lot of fighting. Girls are the same way. I've had to deal and mediate a lot of fighting issues in high school.

Instead of pointing to the direct trauma of being tormented, chased, or picked on by co-ethnics in City Heights, Smith posited that stress related to the Somali civil war and life in refugee camps was a primary trigger. It would seem that 'mobs' of Somali youth arrived damaged in the US and started looking for individuals to attack

because they had to take their aggressions out on an unlucky neighbor. In this case, African Americans, who also seem predisposed to fight, were outmatched only by the social disintegration of Somali refugee flight. Smith's view cleverly conflated the *intact* Somali social fabric, whereby self-defense and collective defense merge with various psychoses to be socialized out as Somalis learn to become American. Based on this construct anything poor minority youth do from not making friends, to squabbling with one's parents, to relaxing near one's house becomes a "high risk" path to corruption. Smith explained:

> Some of the things I see are truancy from school, high-risk behaviors, running away, physical violence against either their peers or their parents, aimlessly roaming through the neighborhoods, loitering in high crime areas, inattention or learning disabilities in school, the inability to mesh in with their peer group, the inability to make friends, self mutilation behavior, kids that withdraw from society in general, start having lot of difficulties making friends and fitting in with their surroundings, their environment. I see almost all of them in Somali youth. In general that's what's across the board, all ethnic groups. But I see a lot of that with Somali kids.

Just as "culture" and "cultural difference" could convey stock racial codes, so could geography. By offering that crime and deviance were connected to living in impoverished neighborhoods, officials could arrive quickly at the traditional *a priori* conclusion that officers who are mainly white needed to police residents who are poor minorities. Officer Smith explained:

> I think that youth that are raised in low-income areas have a lot more issues and needs and wants than children that come from middle class families. They don't have the responsibility levels that children that are raised in low income neighborhoods have: raising their siblings, taking care of the house, doing household chores, at times driving vehicles, taking care of their parents, turning into their parent's parent at young ages. That I don't see with middle class children. I never really saw when I worked say La Jolla and the Mission Beach area, Pacific Beach

> area, I never saw children that were in their say middle school age raising their own siblings and getting them dressed and ready for school and driving their parent's car to the grocery store to pick something up and, you know being their parent's parent, calling the police when their mothers are putting a needle in their arm. I didn't have to deal with a lot of that until I came to this area.

Majority white areas and the wealthy city of La Jolla do not register the alarming need felt by Smith. Poor people, however, manifest a tangle of social pathology that leaves youth in poverty more likely to turn to crime. There may be relevant environmental issues like "gang-ridden and drug-ridden, and prostitute-ridden" neighborhoods full of "pressures" "bad influences" "temptation and opportunity, and predators" telling children, "Hey why don't you come over here and help me out with this." But Smith felt the most significant role was played by a breakdown in Somali families. She said:

> I think a lot of why City Heights is like this is lack of education, lack of family structure. I think that's the two main reasons. In terms of the community as a whole, both resources and educational levels. A lot of it's a cycle, learned behavior from their parents. And it's hard for them to break out of that and make something of themselves. It's easier just to get on welfare, and I've seen some of my youth members that I thought were promising, parents were welfare and laid around and didn't work and then, sure enough, they get pregnant themselves and they see there's no way out. I'm pregnant now. I don't have my high school diploma. So it's just easier to get welfare and just lay around than it is to succeed. I think it's a cycle of behavior, learned behavior from their families and lack of a full mom and dad structure family. A lot of broken homes.

No evidence supports Smith's general application of the culture of poverty cycle of pregnancy and welfare to Somali youth. Rather, my observations and inquiries revealed young men and women who had to work harder than their peers to keep up in school, to compete for exploitive minimum-wage work, and to navigate

hostile and neglectful schools to work up to community college admission. While baseline data on age, household income, education, and crime do not yet exist for Somalis in San Diego, even the police's own anecdotes and statistics, which we will get to momentarily, suggest these worst case scenarios are hardly generalizable and can not responsibly be centered as bases for community-wide policy making.

One service provider, a resettlement director, suggested, "The erosion of the traditional family structure and the authority figures negatively impacted families, then the community. Then the kids who were in both worlds went nuts. But then after a while, I think they got their bearings again." While experiencing their culture being "chewed up" and spit back out into urban poverty, the provider continued, some used the gang structure as a means of survival. Some took a step further and began criminal activity like "stealing cars, doing commercial robberies, home burglaries, that type of thing for money. Then drugs started getting involved." Then began, for some refugees, a cycle of substance use and abuse, increasing cleverness in avoiding arrest, increased incarceration, and the recruitment of newer generations of gang members.

Since the City Heights Somali community initially formed, a few Somalis had joined street gangs. The San Diego Police Department had "documented" two street gangs, "full blown criminal enterprises" with around twenty members combined. There have been some "spikes in certain crime," a refugee service provider explained, but police assured "it's a very finite, very small group." With twenty documented gang members out of a community that has been estimated at between 12,000 and 15,000 persons, gangs played an ideological larger than life threat of racial mob violence. One

consideration, one officer said, was "because of where they put them into and the environment that these kids are raised in, is a lot of the root of the problem. The fact that they don't have the job skills to survive in a metropolitan city when they pull them from the country and say, 'Okay, here live. Now here survive.'" A lot of it, the officer continued, had to do with kids "getting beat up, picked on, made fun of in school. And they got angry and started forming their street gangs to look cool and protect themselves." Amazingly, violence and hostility against Somalis is taken to be just the rules of the game, yet any response where Somalis resist such attacks, or serve and protect themselves, becomes an indication that Somali youth need to be under the watchful eyes of the SDPD.

Growing up in an environment where alcohol, marijuana, cigarettes, and other recreational drugs were readily available and used widely across different peer groups has had significant effects on the lives of some youth and families. Young Somalis like Ibrahim, a technical school student who had struggled through middle school and high school in City Heights, watched their friends drink, smoke, and use drugs like marijuana, crystal meth, and sherm (preservative dipped weed or cigarettes that gives an extra high when smoked). Ibrahim reflected:

> High school for me was like bad because a lot of my friends get into bad thing. I have a few friends drinking every day. They got a hooked up bad friend, as like African American, Mexican, White. And they watch TV and they see things like that's normal. Music videos, like a hip hop, Rap Cities. And they going through parties and they gotta hooked up. One drink take them to be alcoholic.

Ibrahim had developed a reputation as a "bad kid" in school, and had many friends that used *haram* (religiously prohibited) substances, but he reportedly kept himself clean. He described his experience of partying:

> I know a lot of people, all of my friends socialize. We go to clubs and we go to parties and, you know, I'm trying to avoid all that parties and clubbing. I don't go no more. I just want a focus my future and my work. When you go to club, and the end of the night when you leaving you just leave with a headache, and a tired and stressed. I would just drink coke or energy drink, but not liquor. I don't have no friends right now that will drink. And I will not get a close to somebody drinks right now. I used to have friends that drink, smoke, whatever, you know. But right now, I will not get a close to someone drinks and or smoke. It will bad reputation for me, and it will a bad habit, for me to see, for my family to see, or myself. Cause I wanna live the life in the future.

For Ibrahim and other youth I interviewed, religious prohibition provided enough guidance to explain the pitfalls of substance use and abuse. But like fighting, law enforcement officials considered drug and alcohol risk as matters of personal choice. The same was true of the City Heights teen prostitution "crisis."

Given the importance in Somali culture of 'protecting' the virginity of girls in order to ensure their marriageability, teen prostitution was one of the most difficult elements of living in City Heights. Few people in the community would even acknowledge that it existed. According to the police, East African girls were working as prostitutes in City Heights over a period of a few years, with around twenty at most at any one time, resulting in a combination of personal problems at school and "dysfunctional families or unsupervised families" at home. Girls might run away from home. In some cases they would be given drugs and alcohol, maybe get gang raped,

and then forced to work for the pimps. Officer Smith had worked with a girl who had been doing sex work. Smith said:

> One in particular that I was personally involved with helping her get off the streets as a prostitute, was shipped out to a state north of here to family. She embarrassed the family so they shipped her off. I tried everything I could to keep her here. She wanted to stay. She started doing good in school, getting good grades, started attending school and doing wonderful. She started looking healthier. She came from a dysfunctional family and it was very sad. The mother just shipped her off. Just got tired of dealing with her and shipped her out of here. I haven't heard from her since and I was working real close with her. It's kind of sad. You know, she tried to call me last year and I called her back. And my message was never returned. So, I'm assuming she's not getting my messages and isn't allowed to answer the phone.

Rather than interpreting being kept out of the loop as a vote of no confidence in the police and the systemic violence against women, poverty, and vice the police seemed powerless to address, Smith blamed Somalis. In fact, Smith went further to blame parent protectiveness and tight-knit family links, or the sole forms of social capital Somalis could actually independently muster and maintain, as the *cause* of youth risk. Smith continued:

> I notice a lot of this normal teenage girl versus parent type arguments over clothes, or wearing of makeup, and going to this activity. But I do notice that the Somali families in particular adore their daughters and really try to look out for their best interests and really protect them. And I think sometimes they go overboard on that. They don't teach them life skills, common sense issues, so when they go out on their own, they're victims waiting to happen. They're naïve. They're trusting. They haven't developed judgment levels, people skills. What to do if a strange man walks up to you and starts propositioning you, what do you do? Don't believe everything that everybody tells you. What to do if your car breaks down. Don't trust strangers that walk up to you. Don't be so open and trusting and willing to let everybody help you. They've become victims of sexual assault.

What Smith considered to be "normal" arguments about clothes and makeup were actually very difficult family negotiations of changing gender roles and expectations in the US. While Somalis emphasized covering and protecting women to appeal to religious standards of modesty, some Somali girls in City Heights rejected that parental and religious authority, indicating a complex reconfiguration of power dynamics and social roles within the community. For an explanation of the problem of prostitution, though, according to official views, one needed not look past the psychologically damaged girls, families, and young pimps themselves. Thus, instead of raising their daughters as they see fit as parents and as a community, Somalis should turn their children over to law enforcement and correctional institutions, an inevitable eventuality either in preemptive terms now, or in punitive terms down the line. Championing correctional authority as solution to youth risk created by Somali cultural deviance, however, was a very different view then those expressed by many Somali youth. Somalis tended to see San Diego police as perpetrators of violence.

My interviews with Somali youth suggested that they took exception to being jumped by peers and then detained by police for fighting after the others fled the scene, a major contributor to Somalis' animosity for American law enforcement. But Smith described the officers as justified victims of Somali "anti-uniform" hostility. Smith said:

> The reputation for years of the Somali being anti-police was already bred in the back of the officer's mind when they knew when they were gonna go up there and confront them, there was gonna be, it wasn't gonna go smooth. So, its not like they went up there with their guns drawn at them, but they went up there in a demeanor that they were ready for a confrontation cause that's the way it had always been.

> Nothing ever went smooth or easy. So then you had a level of the Somalis reacting to the officers' command presence versus a real casual contact. So a simple contact turned into this big stand off cause the officers were anticipating problems. So you had a level of animosity appear before anything was even said.

Command presence was the assertive, grave-faced and commanding attitude an officer took when you had better do what he or she says or face the consequences. Command presence was a display of power consistent with the preconceived ideas about the lawlessness of Africans and the need for them to be disciplined and punished into conformity by modern institutions, philosophies, and way of life. In the youth program and in the neighborhood, the command presence of the officers was interpreted as paternalism and hostility. Even one service provider who contributed to the youth program recalled being "scared" to have discussions with the youth because "the police set the agenda for the meetings, decided what the kids would do, pretty much told the kids." Considering this an odd, if not misrepresentative model for a "youth-led" program, the service provider found it difficult to stay on the agenda "because of the officers, not because of the kids."

Ibrahim, who earlier commented on substance use and abuse, remembered having negative experiences with patrol officers who would accuse him of being a gang member and who, according to him, called him names like "African booty scratcher" and "nigger", and told him to "go back to your country." Ibrahim explained:

> The police could play the positive roles, but they wanna come in the ghetto as a like mean. I don't know if that is a part of their job, or they just acting like that. Before they tell you something, they want to make you scared. I'm scared, cause they the one have the power, and they the one have the gun. If I say some "nigger" to them, probably, I will get arrested, or probably tomorrow when they see me having a negative

> thing they can use that against that. So that's why sometimes I have a scared.

Far from a general anti-uniform attitude, the Somalis I encountered had a more specific analysis based on observation and personal experience of the police role in exacerbating the risks they faced in City Heights. In City Heights, Somali youth more commonly associated officers with youth being unfairly arrested, or suspended or expelled from school after having defended themselves from attack by their peers from other minority groups. Police were associated with assisting Child Protective Services to remove siblings from a home where there was real or alleged domestic violence. Police were believed to pre-judge Somali young men for being gang members as officers "investigated" the youth hanging out in their own neighborhood. Most tellingly, only a small number of officers, mostly Somali (a full sworn officer and community service officers) and Officer Smith, had any sustained connection with or individual identity within the City Heights Somali community.

The "culture of poverty" notion that Somali families and Somali youth race to the bottom of the social ladder and are especially susceptible to poverty because of their culture and experience of social trauma back home is quite different from how Somalis understand their own experiences in San Diego. Locating the "problem" within individuals who make the wrong personal choices in succumbing to social "evils" like public assistance, sloth, and crime, as opposed to within the operations of systemic power perhaps marks the strongest distinction between the officers and the youth. We will consider youth perspectives momentarily, but first we'll look at one way these law and order views about Somali youth risk translate into public policy.

POLICE ACTIVITES PROGRAMS

In contrast to how they presented Somali family and community formations, which were to be reformed according to US standards in refuge, law enforcement officials presented themselves as unproblematic structures of authority. *Any* time "at risk" youth spend engaged in 'safe' activities under police surveillance was considered better than *any* time they might spend unsupervised in their own neighborhood, own home, or among 'dysfunctional' family members. Shuttling between normative spaces of school and home, "at risk" youth, it seemed, would spend "critical hours" among predators and temptation unless provided structure by the criminal justice system—the racialized urban poverty alternative to subsidized community, gated social segregation, private security, and college preparatory activities.

Police sports activities programs were initiated in the early 1900s and pervasive by the 1990s as leading components of community policing in "at risk" communities. As nonprofit organizations, local Police Athletic Leagues (PAL) drew support from local businesses and residents, including funding, equipment, and volunteer help. Specific activities of a local PAL might include sports, education, arts, camping, leadership training, and related activities.[37] Similarly, Midnight Basketball

[37]The California Police Athletic League was founded in the early 1970s and sponsors a range of activities from "athletic teams and events, to camping trips, ski trips, after school tutoring, self-esteem programs, computer training and educational field trips" (http://www.calpal.org/AboutPrograms.htm). The New York City Police Athletic League was founded in 1914, and provides for 70,000 young people from age 3 to 21 year round activities including child care, education, "dance, music, drama, photography, writing, arts and video programs," "baseball, softball, basketball, soccer,

Leagues would get "young adults off the streets by offering them a constructive alternative to cruising during the late night, high crime hours between 10:00 p.m. and around 2:00 a.m."[38] Police activities programs reinforce a dualistic racialization of space and time: "off the streets" institutional space versus "on the streets" converts neighborhoods into outlaw zones, battlefields, and theaters for state violence; "high crime" or "critical" hours versus work time reduces the poor and working class racialized body to a fully regulated status and substitutes institutionalized time for the individual liberty or "free" time coded as "American." Officers embrace activities programs in particular because racialized law and order institutionalization appears beneficent and charitable rather than armored in riot gear with guns drawn. In other words, enforcement and intervention appear, at least on the surface, as humanitarian.

In San Diego, police officers formed one such activities program in response to the documented street gangs and gang members. Founded in 2002, the Young African's Activities Club (YAAC) had more than three hundred East African youth enrolled at any given time, with active participation from between 50 and 200 during meetings and events. I worked with YAAC for approximately three of my fieldwork years as a volunteer mentor, field trip chaperone, guest speaker, and general advocate. My involvement allowed me to see the possibilities and limits of refuge within a law enforcement framework. Although scholars like Robin Kelley (1998) have pointed out that police activities programs primarily monitor, regulate, and discipline inner city

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track and field and flag football programs" (http://www.palnyc.org/programs_arts.asp, http://www.palnyc.org/programs_sports.asp).

[38]Excerpt from San Jose's Midnight Basketball League, profiled in the *San Diego Mercury News* during the early 1990s. http://www.scu.edu/diversity/mbl.html.

youth, public rhetoric regarding YAAC was overwhelmingly positive, painting the program as "effective" for the Somalis. The parameters of effectiveness for the program, however, related to the Somali "culture of poverty" and "cultural collapse" scripts pitched as Somali refugee origin myth.

The federal Department of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement in 2005 funded three-year grants to counties and state administrations who received refugees, and also provided $4.4 million in discretionary funds for a "Refugee Healthy Marriage Program" that included "faith based" education, counseling, and training, was not an obvious funding source.[39] Officer Smith explained that YAAC enrichment activities like sports events and trips to museums and theme parks fit ORR objectives and at the same time attempted to improve police-community relations:

> I try to develop programs where police officers come, like our basketball tournaments, or take them places that they normally wouldn't get to go. Kind of giving them an outlet to bond with each other, you know bond with me as an officer, the department, take them places that they would never get to go, and expose them to what's out there in their community. And community service is a big thing. Teach them how to give back, you know; kind of show them how to be better citizens. So far I think it's been pretty successful. Made a lot of relationships. Now when they see a police car, they wave instead of flipping it off.

As a community based organization, Young African's Activities Club was run with expert attention to "back office" tasks of book keeping and grant writing, "front office" tasks of networking and community relations, and "classroom" tasks of working with kids. Officer Smith herself handled the office-related, bureaucratic tasks

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[39] http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/funding/cfunding.htm.

while Somali community service officers handled outreach, networking, and "classroom management."

Citing the need for police officers to fight crime effectively, the line between enforcement and prevention activities could sometimes be blurry. It also seemed that the rationale for the youth program was based on an enormous problem of youth crime, as though many African youth were engaging in the worst behavior all the time. At other times the descriptions pointed to a limited group of "criminals" and an effort to prevent other youth from following them, a much more contained problem that includes the youths' own skills of judgment as to whether they themselves want to follow a life of crime. A case in point, a summer 2005 *Union-Tribune* article used a series of exaggerations and suggestive links to connect San Diego's Somali youth issues to more established stereotypes about general African deviance. The article presented a concise law and order perspective based on a stack of problematic constructs. It read:

> In a cluttered storefront in a crowded strip mall in City Heights, Smith is the guiding hand behind an innovative program to decrease crime and improve police relations among young refugees from East African countries. With a $300,000 federal grant from the Office of Refugee Settlement, Smith started a program three years ago that faced daunting challenges from the start. Crime among the African youths on San Diego streets was escalating. Gangs were proliferating. Burglaries, vandalism, assaults and truancies were becoming the norm. "On my patrols, I would see refugee youths loitering on street corners; they appeared aimless and lost," Smith said. "They started getting into trouble, stealing golf carts, fist fighting, being truant." When officers tried to intervene and help in certain situations, the refugees reacted with mistrust, even hate. They would not even report crime. Police were the enemy. Smith said the anti-police attitude among youths was a throwback to life in their homeland, places such as Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, where anybody in a uniform was to be feared. Police were

> corrupt and violent. Ditto the military. Warlords ruled. When their families fled to America in the 1990s, the youths brought these so-called anti-uniform attitudes with them. Smith set out to change all that.

Instead of increasing a general readership's understanding the complexities facing African youth in City Heights, the article was deeply invested in presenting Africans as fundamentally lawless. The "crimes" were listed as individually motivated, personal choice petty crimes while ten years of aggression from other groups, the unwillingness of institutional and law enforcement officials to protect Somalis from aggression, and the general political economy of racialized urban poverty all go completely unmentioned. Further, these crimes that are supposedly "becoming the norm" are suggestively preceded by the irresponsible overstatement that "gangs were proliferating." Officer Smith's own words that African youth hang out in the neighborhoods "loitering" and appearing "aimless and lost" are considerably less alarming than the preceding generalizations, suggesting the crisis-generating generalizations do not hold up to the facts. The "trouble" with "stealing golf carts, fist fighting, being truant" related to inner city schools where Somalis often faced intolerant school officials and peers in classes that failed to provide valuable educational resources (the central topic of Chapter 4). While the officers were responsibly just trying to "help," the Africans were irrational and hateful because uniformed people "in their homeland" were "corrupt and violent" and to be feared. The statement implied that San Diego police are completely trustworthy, thus making them and the symbol of their uniforms the epitome of justice, law and order, a view not supported by youth and other community service organizations representatives.

According to materials from the San Diego Police Department's City Heights community relations office, during the first five years after the US military defeat in Vietnam, from 1975 to 1979, approximately 7,000 mainly Vietnamese professional-class refugees resettled in San Diego.[40] The "second wave" of migration expanded San Diego's Southeast Asian refugee population to 70,000, with many migrants coming from peasant classes in Lao, Cambodian, Hmong, and Vietnamese societies. As opposed to the "first wave" migrants, the second wave refugees "spoke little or no English and had very little formal education, no resources, and almost no marketable job skills." The police department recruited and trained members of these communities to serve as community service officers, but from the police perspective, the second wave refugees were thus more susceptible to the lure of crime because mainstreaming could be very difficult or even out of reach given the high level of "needs" of the refugees. By the 1980s, one officer suggested, Southeast Asians "were forming street gangs for self-protection in school, cause when they first came over here, everybody was making fun of them and picking on them and beating on them. And plus they wanted to do the American thing. It's a big gang thing. It looks cool to be in a gang." The "culture of poverty" and "cultural collapse" ideologies set up law and order to take up the slack and provide replacement structures of authority. The issue was most pointedly *not* that newcomers would face violence and, very likely, a tough cycle of underemployment, under-education, and racial discrimination.

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[40]SDPD youth program brochure.

In 1995 a sergeant formed the Young South East Asian's Activities Club (YSEAAC) to provide the opportunity for more than one thousand refugee youth during its first two years to participate in leadership experience, field trips, awards ceremonies, scholastic achievement and college preparation programs, and community service. An August 1999 program newsletter, for instance, posted the winners of the recent 3-on-3 basketball tournament, announced a fundraising dinner and carwashes, and profiled trips to the water park and a Padres baseball game where a youth member "threw out the first ceremonial pitch…in honor of Asian/Pacific Islander heritage day." For some youth, YSEAAC provided highly motivated and invested mentors who reached out and volunteered time, energy, and resources to help them "succeed" in the US. In all cases, the youth program provided watchful eyes to identify "at risk" behaviors among participants, allowing officers to make early "interventions."

The Somali refugees who came en masse to San Diego beginning in late 1992 came from a wide range of backgrounds. Generally coming from the families who were strong enough to survive the civil war and refugee camp life relatively intact or from families that already had members abroad, the newcomers were generally "astute" as one provider suggested, and were skilled at surviving physically, mentally, and emotionally challenging conditions. Somalis arrived with varying levels of formal schooling and most with little experience with the English language. Some refugees were politicians and servicemen who had been well educated in Africa, Europe, or the Middle East. Others were nomadic people from the traditional Somali herding lands. In relationship to Southeast Asian refugee migration, the Somali influx included, so to

speak, the “first” and “second” waves combined, and very few people were highly educated in English specifically. Regarding the youth, after half a decade of racialized rather than remediated fighting against peers and authorities for control of culture and space in City Heights, Somali street gangs began to form in the late 1990s. City Heights officers who worked with YSEAAC recognized the opportunity to apply the “culture of poverty”-to-law and order youth activities model to their work in the Somali community.

Officer Crystal Smith modeled YAAC after YSEAAC and based her effort on her experience working in correctional facilities. Smith said:

> I trained a lot of them in how to take care of themselves. I did the technical side of the job, but I also spent a lot of one on one with them as individuals and people, to kind of built their self-esteem levels. Cause when you’re locked up for years like they are, you lose your self-identity, who you are as a person. You become a number and the personalization of everything is gone. You get treated very inhumanely at times. So I try to build them back up to people. I’d see the potential in them and I’d build on that and get them feeling good about themselves. When they did get out on the street, they had some sort of self-confidence to fall back on.

In fact it was the repeated times she learned of inmates’ troubled childhoods and how “they could have been saved and how if somebody wouldda gave them direction or reached out to them at a young age, how it wouldda changed their life” that motivated Smith’s career trajectory. She said, “I remember what I learned. I always try to reach out to those kids I feel that are in need and I try to mentor them and provide services to them. That’s what got me going and the interest in youth cause they’re our future.”

Combining feminist compassion and a faith in incarceration as valid problem-solving policy, Smith clarified the links between racialization, criminalization, and institutionalization. According to Smith, a troubled childhood, which is ultimately the fault of the individual even if backed by a "dysfunctional" family or culture, leads to personal responsibility, or the choice of breaking the law, for which one is solely responsible. Once one has made this personal choice, one "rightly" forfeits individuality, personality, and humanity, at which point prison simply facilitates what one has brought on oneself. Instead of having to down the line pump confidence back into the person drained of humanity by the prison, Smith would rather "mentor" and "service" the youth to accept law and order before they get sent to prison. Notably missing from Smith's analysis is a recognition of racial profiling, more enthusiastic prosecution of and harsher penalties for crimes statistically committed by minorities, police harassment, wrongful imprisonment, the tracking of the poor and minorities out of public education and into corrections, and a bevy of social conditions that present correctional institutions and law and order ideology as the rightful "place" for minorities in the US.

The Young African's Activities Club was, like most police activities programs, as much about increasing the "effectiveness" of urban law enforcement and disciplining youth of color to follow the "straight and narrow" "right" route. Officer Smith worked "real close" with the gang unit and would use her knowledge of the youth to identify those who "every afternoon" would "play the name game" with officers at Sunset Park, leading to their arrest "for giving a fake name." This indicated

that participation in YAAC could actually lead to additional risk for Somali youth regarding criminal record and inclusion within the juvenile justice system.

Citywide budget cuts in 2005 forced the department to lay off the Somali staff that made the program possible. Smith explained there would have been no program without African labor. She said:

> The Somali CSOs, I couldn't a done it without them. They've helped with you know teaching me a lot a cultural ways, a lot a cultural understanding. They've done all the outreach for me, a hundred percent of the outreach. They do a lot of the translations with the parents. They help me with that. I couldn't do it without them. They've been valuable. I've learned so much about their culture by talking with them and learning about the kids and why they think the way they do and why things are done the way they're done. I've learned a lot.

Ironically it was another structure of race that led to the demise of YAAC. As is historically the case, discriminatory hiring guaranteed minorities were the last hired and seniority rights ensured they would be the first fired. Officer Smith explained the predicament:

> Things will change with the budget cuts. I can't do it myself. And it'll be me here, by myself to do it. They're going on seniority, laying people off. And unfortunately the Somali CSOs don't have the seniority levels that other CSOs do. All based on seniority, not on skill level, not on need of the department, need of the city, but on seniority, to be fair across the board.

YAAC would be transferred to a community partner with the intention of retaining its function as a police activities program. Unfortunately there would be no indication that the "culture of poverty" and "collapse" scripts or the aggressive and intrusive policing practices would cease.

"TO RUN OR FIGHT"

The experiences of Somali youth were not always consistent with mainstream and law enforcement constructions of risk. While the mainstream press presented the fights as the norm and the "lull" between fights as the exception with Somali "cultural difference" at fault, Somalis reported complex relationships to violence, ranging from self-defense to regretted instigating to questioning American authorities. Importantly, these subaltern Somali views on violence, which were minimized or eliminated from mainstream discourse, help reframe the sweeping racist ideologies of inherent Somali combativeness and "culture of poverty."

Far too common were stories of fights resulting from Somali's need to protect themselves from attacks by their peers. While the mainstream narratives focused on racial deviance, and ethnic conflict and tension, it was social power and neighborhood control at stake. Somalis often reported being aware of the relationship between limited resources in City Heights, the desperation residents felt from underemployment and a high cost of living, and the violence they experienced on the streets. Importantly, police officers were often viewed as perpetrators of violence in the neighborhood.

Zeynab, a teen who had recently graduated from Warner High and had been in City Heights for six years, said, "There was all the fights against the people who are like new to the country, Somalian people and other people like African Americans and Mexicans. They didn't like each other." While neither African Americans nor Mexicans were in a historical sense new to the country, their vulnerable racialized

position resembled that of other groups systematically channeled into City Heights. Zeynab also articulated the ethnic conflict notion that large groups "didn't like each other," reflecting the effectiveness of racialization that encourages all to channel their frustrations and blame toward other minority groups rather than at the exploitive working and living conditions and hostile authorities that affect everyone. Saphia, a young Somali woman in her last year at San Diego State University, reflected on her first experiences at Sterling Middle School. Saphia explained:

> I felt like Somalis were targeted in a lot of ways because they were the new group. They might not like speak English and they looked differently, and so kids that age used to target for them to be picked on. And a lot of Somali kids would fight back, like they would fight. That's their way of defending themselves. Fighting if someone called them names, they'd just fight them. It was just really weird, looking back. But, I guess that's the way they're defended themselves.

Hassan, a soft-spoken and polite college student seemed to almost not believe what he had experienced. He was among the earliest Somali school-age youth to go through Warner in the mid-1990s. He remembered how he was made to feel:

> Every day the Somali kids were like outcast. That's when we first came. So, always there used to be like a lot of gangsters either black gangs, or like Mexican, or like Asian, used to wait us like outside. Like they want to fight with us every day. If they fight with one Somali kids and they see you walking, they will fight with you. It doesn't matter like who you are, whether like you never fight with them or not they gonna fight with you. So you have to like be careful. You have to walk with a Somali or you have to like take a different route that day. So it was very tough.

Again, against a backdrop of at-fault ethnic "gangs," some Somali youth viewed themselves as victims of environmental violence. Between Hassan and home there were few routes as convenient as through Sunset Park. He and many of his

friends had to walk, sometimes in scorching heat, through the city where they rarely felt safe. Hassan elaborated:

> The police they didn't care like who started the fight. My parents they always told us not to fight because if you fight you gonna go to jail or get in trouble, so we didn't want to fight. And the other kids thought that we were like scared, like we were scared to fight with them. That's one thing I didn't like about it. So every day you have to, after school, you have to worry about like fighting, or like run. Run or fight. This was only for Somali boys. We all felt the pressure because they didn't care who you are. If they fight with one Somali, if one Somali guy start a fight or, I mean, if they fight with one Somali guy, they didn't care, like they just wait after school, and if they see you, that you are Somali, they gon' start fight with you.

Rather than dysfunctional families with anti-uniform bloodlust, Hassan described concerned parents and concerned youth put on the defensive between a rock and a hard place: as targets of anonymous peer attack and as targets of inner city policing. On one occasion Hassan found himself in the middle of one of these fights. Walking to school near Sunset Park with his little brother and some friends, they came across twenty "black kids waiting" for them. These were "big kids" from the middle school where his brother went, kids who were bigger than the high school Somalis. They knew Hassan's brother and nothing had happened between them, but all week there had been fights between Somalis and African Americans. Hassan explained the pinch of City Heights violence:

> Somehow my friend he couldn't run so they caught him, and we have to come back and then like try to help him out. Actually somehow we, me and my friend who was like little bit older than us, he came and he yelled like, "Hey get out! Get out!" And somehow they just ran. And then my friend he got up and then we went back. The police came very late. Everyone was gone. Somali parents talk about it but they always blame on the Somali kids. They always tell like, "You guys start the fight." And all that kind of stuff. I think the reason why they say that is

> because like when the fights happened, the other kids would run away and the Somali kids would be there and the police would come and catch the Somali kids. And then tell the parents that they were into fight. I was never caught by police, though. We all just took off.

Hassan continued, clarifying his reasons for fearing and contesting the role of City Heights officers. As in the case of attacks from his peers, Hassan felt the officers unfairly targeted Somalis. He said:

> People like always say that the police don't care like who started the fight. They see you fighting that you're the same as the one who start, start the fight. Okay. But it's unfair. The people consider it unfair because the Somali kids believe that the only way like if they gonna get to home, they have to fight every day. You know the other kids would wait for them at the routes they take home. Most of the Somali kids used to live near Yard Street, and the only way was like, the most popular route was through, through Sunset Park.

Ibrahim, the part time student whose friends struggled with substance abuse, experienced more serious repercussions for being swept into a larger fight. Ibrahim remembered:

> I was just walking, trying to walk home. And then it was fight. And all of a sudden that guy came, so I grab a rock at them. The police stopped me and arrest me, take me to school, and then they kick me out of school. I was in juvey for like one hour, and they said don't come back to Warner. Then I went to this place where they control all the schools, school district, and they sent me off to continuing school for like almost one semester.

Police officers like Officer Smith considered Somali youth damaged by black bad guys back home and thus in need of discipline and punishment. School officials suspended first, and then that would be the end of the matter. Somali parents, despite extensive efforts, had little power to protect their children from pervasive institutional and environmental violence. And in cases where their children were misbehaving, they

had not yet replaced the now-illegal corporal punishment strategies (i.e. spanking and hitting) normative back home. These institutional factors notwithstanding, Somali youth fought more than other groups because of their uncompromising unwillingness to tolerate attacks on them as individuals or collectively. Like the maligning of Somalis in Somalia who refuse or resist Western imperialism and intervention, Somalis' reputation as confrontational came when they resisted institutional and environmental violence.

While young Somalis could easily accumulate marks on their school and juvenile records by being seized upon by the law enforcement system, the risks of violence and frustration with police officers could reach more extreme extents. Sama Ghedi was sent to the US at age 9 by his mother who paid to have him travel with a relative's family. Sama lived with his grandmother, and despite being a "very nice" young man, he had gotten involved in drinking from a young age. His grandmother, unable to discipline hi8m would judge him and throw him out of the house. Leading him back to drinking with his friends. Late one night while I was living with a Somali family during my fieldwork, Sama was shot and killed in an attempted robbery. I heard rumors that the shooter was being recruited into a gang, or that it was a revenge killing because one of Sama's friends was among a group of Somalis who had raped an African American girl the week before, but it was nevertheless clear that Somalis perceived Sama's lifestyle choices as exposing him to unfortunate danger. In addition to Sama's tragedy and the tragedy experienced by his family and the community, the

police, media, and US justice system were objects of scorn. My field notes registered the mix of grief, anger, and resentment reported by community residents.

Thursday, August 14, 2003

Upon reaching the parking lot, we found Dauud and an elder talking; a twenty-year-old young man from the community had been shot that morning in an attempted robbery. Three Somali young men were at the taco stand around three a.m. when an African American and a white youth approached them and asked for money. The white youth had a gun and was focused on Sama. Sama said, "I'm not going to give you the money," and he turned to walk away. As soon as he turned, the white youth shot him in the back of the head. He was on the ground instantly and died within ten seconds. Dauud had been up the block there and just came back. He was quite upset that the police didn't cover the body, because they were looking for evidence, he said. And he was angry about the American system. The police wouldn't do anything to find the robbers and even if they caught him, the legal system would go light on him. "Back home," he said, "they would take the guy out into a public place and shoot him in front of everyone as a deterrent." The elder man laughed when I suggested that the community try to pursue pressure by getting news coverage, to pressure the police. He said, "You tell the news, you tell the police, you tell the high ranking law enforcement, you tell politicians. You go on telling

> and telling and nobody does anything." I agreed with him. Another young guy came and he was one of the other two who were on the scene. We all agreed what a waste it was. Everyone was deeply disturbed.

Schools in City Heights also positioned Somali youth between fights and hostile authorities. While fights could and did happen between peers for a variety of reasons, teachers, administrators, and school security were viewed as part of the problem, not the solution. A senior at Warner indicated her surprise and disappointment when she first learned that teachers were not only not responsible for fights in the class, but that they might not maintain discipline in their own classroom. Muna said, "Teachers are annoying because they never see what somebody's doing to you. They always ignore the problem. Like they still writing on the walls and talking, but they're not trying to listen or watch the kids. It's not their responsibility to do that. Some teachers are scared." She described a fight she was in early in her schooling. She had just arrived in San Diego. Muna continued:

> Everybody mess with you. This is the story happened to me. I couldn't believe that it wasn't her responsibility to stop to fight. My first time in school, like when I started from ninth grade and everything, I had been there like two weeks or three weeks. I was in a class, it was a cooking class, and we were sitting table and everything. And then I was sitting with Somali girls who were explain it to me. And we were just sitting there and somehow the African American girls were saying things about the Somali girls. And then, I don't know, somehow there's something going on, but I never knew because I jus' got into the class and it was like in the middle of the year. They had been in school one month. And then somehow, I had a paper and then I give it to the paper to a Somali girl and she like scrambles it and throw it away into the trash. But actually it goes into the African American girl. The African American girl gets up and goes all over my face. And I got up and then

> I was like almost in the wall. I'm like going back, back. And she like all everything, she'd be spitting in my face, but I don't understand a thing she's saying. It was weird. I was like, I was scared and everything and I didn't understand anything she was saying. And the Somali girls are like, "Fight. She's saying all of that thing. She's saying this and this and this. Fight! Fight!" I was like, "Okay, I don't know." And then I put my hand over my face because she was spitting, when she was talking she was spitting everything. I guess she was really mad. And I put my hand over my face. And she thought I was push, and then she grabbed my hand everything. And then we started fight. I start defending myself. I start fighting. And the teachers up there, I'm looking at the teacher while she's talking. On my face, I'm looking at the teacher, but the teacher's just writing and talking. And when the girl grabs my hand, she calls the security guard. I'm like, "What is going on?" I mean, I thought she was going to come up and tell that girl to sit her ass down, back in the chair and leave me alone. You know. But she didn't, she just call the security and just sit there and while the security will come, she was talking to the student. And all the students were looking at us. And then I got into trouble. And I got suspended two days.

Muna had a less clear experience when a special education student who shared many of her same classes harassed her. Yet again, Muna learned that other students would target her and the school authorities were not there to help her. Muna said:

> A Chinese girl, just wanted to fight with me so bad. I told two of my teachers, two classes we had together. She start fighting with me, and then the teacher ran and then he grabbed her and put her on the side and I just stood there. And when we went to the office, the teachers told the principal about how I was coming up talking about how I was saying that she said all this to me, and I don't wanna fight with her. And every time she seems like she's jumping on me. And then I got u'espended one day. I still don't know why. But I just went home. I didn't care. I was exhausted. And she got espended; I think she got u'espended two days or three days. That was the ten grade, that Chinese girl. Second year. Actually, I'm just saying Chinese. I don't know who she was, but she was Asian.

Muna was one of the sweetest, most polite, and least aggressive young people I had met and worked with during my fieldwork and I was surprised to hear her talking

about having any record of fighting. In contrast, while Muna tended to not physically return violence, Saphia responded differently. Saphia had arrived in San Diego in the mid 1990s and went directly into middle school. She made sure to fight back when she was mistreated. Saphia remembered:

> Once, in elementary school I was playing flag football, and this one girl, she's really bigger. I had my flag like really tight, and she pulled it and it wasn't coming off, so she just grabbed my shirt and just hit me. You know, she pulled me to the ground. So, I got up and I was scraped, like my elbow was really like bleeding and stuff like that. So I just started like jumping on her and hitting her. It was the first time I fought in school. I got suspended, like two days. My mom was just kind of worried. I told her what happened and she was kind of worried. And you know she went back to school with me the next day and she just told me, "Don't get in a fights again."

On another occasion, a classmate who had been her friend provoked Saphia. Their conflict turned bitter. Her experience suggested that what was assumed to be ethnic conflict could be more complicated interlinked spheres of violence. Saphia said:

> I remember one time, I was in math class and we just got out of like lunch. That was during my eighth grade as well, and a lot of the fights would happen right after lunch where kids would walk to class, and its really crowded and its just big fight and the security guard might be far away. And I guess like I was really cool with this girl. Her name was Tina, she was Cambodian. And she's like in class with me. And I was the only Somali in that class. It was a geometry, or something like math. And then I guess her boyfriend fought with Somalian boy. And she slapped a Somalian guy. I guess that's what happened. I really didn't know. And then I was in class and I was just sitting there and then her and her friends walked in. And she was like, "Yeah, I slapped that Somali, skinny and little bastard, stinky ass Somalian." You know, just going off, talking you know a lot of crap about Somalians. And I'm just sitting there. I was like, "Tina could you just be quiet?" And she was like, "What? What'chu gonna do?" You know. I'm like, "Shut the fuck up, please." I cussed at her. So, what happened was, she stood up like she was gonna fight me, and the teacher, he's a Asian guy too, his name's Mr. Phan, and he had us sit in the back of the class. And he had like a rules, "I will not disrespect the teacher." Like we had to write that out like the whole class. And right after I walked out of class. I was just

> like. I had my backpack, and I guess her friends were waiting for me in front of class. So, she was like, "What are you gonna do, hunh?" Like, "You thought you gon' fight me in class?" You know, "What you gonna do now?" You know she was ready to fight me. So, I was ready to defend myself, cause its three girls and I was the only person. So I was just like, okay. You know she swinged at me. I swinged back. And we were like hitting and jumping. I had her hair in my hands. And it was really bad. And her friend was like kicking me. I really didn't notice her friend, but she was really hitting me, though. I had like bruises afterwards, like really bad bruises. And then the teacher came out and he stopped us. We went detention. We got suspended. We went to detention together, which was really bad. And they put us in the same room. And we fought again in that room. She was sitting up front and I was sitting in the back. And her friend was like, "Why you in here for?" You know. And she was like, "Yeah, I fought that little, you know." I was like, "What are you talking about?" And we fought again and they removed us two different detention rooms. So yeah, that's the last time. And that's eighth grade. I never fought after that.

The schools were not equipped to deal with fights between students, as well as their own apathetic authoritarian policies. The few efforts to increase dialog and understand among groups and to increase enforcement were unable to stem the tide of fights. At the peak of one season of fighting in the late 1990s, Saphia recalled the vice principal of Sterling Middle School calling a student body assembly in the cafeteria to get African American and African students to stop the violence. While it did help diminish the fighting for a brief period, fights continued in and around the school and park area. Saphia's mother moved her family out of City Heights and Saphia spent high school elsewhere. When she was a junior, more Somalis started being bussed in from City Heights because of the better educational resources. Saphia felt she had actually grown accustomed to the conflict. She said of City Heights:

> Kids have nothing to do. I guess they enjoyed fighting to be honest. Cause I never complained about fighting when I was like them. It was just like, "Okay whatever," you know, "if someone picks on you, you

> fight back." They get used to after a while, living in that environment. Because you're fighting, and you're like in an environment where a lot of the kids are not going to school to actually learn, you know they're mainly going to school to socialize and see their friends. And then they go back home and the same thing. A lot of the kids are actually really bad. They don't do their homework and they don't care about their grades at school. With me, my mom was more into education, and she would really make sure if I had any bad grades on my report card, she really be pissed off, so I had to really maintain a good grade. When I moved out of that area, it was a lot better.

One high school student, Shukri, described it as a strange test of character, kind of a torment. Shukri said, "It was just waste of time. We didn't really learn anything. We had to face our fears. People, even the teachers were asking us, 'aren't you hot? You're wearing those scarf.' And it was like everybody is staring at you. At lunchtime you have to stand by yourself. And the Somalian girls have a group where they sit. And there's people throwing apples at them, and milk and stuff like that."

Advocates at a Somali community based organization in City Heights clarified the direct role of schools in perpetuating the hostile environment. In a recent case a Somali student was "beaten very bad" and sent home from his elementary school "bleeding and with bruises." Somalis working as advocates found that no police report had been taken. Upon further digging, Somali teacher's aids from all of the City Heights schools reported, "witnessing incidents where the Somali student was attacked but yet the Somali student was suspended and the kid who was initiated was not suspended at all." One Somali aide protested to the elementary school's principal, resulting in his job being scrutinized and his school attempting to fire him.

Instead of recognizing their own discriminatory policies and practices, school officials relied on the culture of poverty ideology to accuse Somali parents of not

caring about their children and of not being involved in their lives. This racist attitude scapegoatted "deviant" parents where discriminatory pre-emptive punishment combined with little to no explanation, outreach, and dialog with Somali parents and youth, positioned the schools as institutional gatekeepers on-the-ready to track Somalis into the criminal justice system. Parents, however, were very concerned and the youth knew it.

June 3, 2003 [field notes]

Rukiyah, a mother with four sons, doesn't want her children to be in high school in City Heights because she feels there are too many fights and they will not get good educational opportunities.

Somali mothers could respond quickly and decisively to their children's vulnerability. Saphia's last fight, which occurred during her years at Sterling Middle School, triggered just such summary action by her mom. After school, Saphia and three friends got jumped in the parking lot by seven African American girls continuing a dispute between one of Saphia's friends and one of the seven. Not fast enough to run away, Saphia looked back to see her friend in trouble. Saphia explained:

> That's I think the last day I walked. My mom bought a car after that. She picked us up every day cause it wasn't safe. She knew it wasn't safe. Every day like Somali parents would talk about it and how hard it is and their kids always like being jumped on. It was really bad as some of the boys were really like be hit, you know, and I think one boy was stabbed once.

Ibrahim, who struggled with school fights and "bad influence" friends, would regularly be nagged at home. But while his family was very disappointed and blamed

him for his troubles, Ibrahim called attention instead to his self-protective response and integrity in the face of environmental problems. He explained:

> I lived with my mom, my young sister and another three brothers. They was mad. They was not happy about it, what happened, what I was doing, you know. They was mad at me because I was doing bad, you know, a bad kid. I had a bad reputation, and that is because it's the place I was living in. It's like City Heights is a place with a lot a liquor stores, drug dealers, gangsters, you know, drive bys. And even though when you go to school, there's a kids up there, you know, they fight with you or harass you. So I used to watch my back. So people just think I was a bad person. When somebody call me ignorant word or as a nigger or a something, I used to fight. And I was just a lonely guy, quiet. And they used to tease me because I'm quiet. And they said that this guy is quiet because he had a lot a things in his mind, and that makes me aggressive. And that's why people think I was bad person. That was one of the reasons my family was mad at me. They just used to lecture me and talk to me and tell me be good. Don't fight, don't do this. Just acknowledge me to be good. That's the only thing my family say.

In the neighborhood, mothers themselves could become unwittingly involved in the youth fighting. Saphia explained that the brawls could extend from the park to the very doorsteps of Somali families. Large after school melees from adjacent Sterling and Warner would ignite in Sunset Park and continue on into Little Mogadishu. Saphia said:

> You'd see kids running across Main Street. They would run from school to all the way to Yard Street and get into their homes and close it. And the kids would be right in their face, like, in the parent's face. The parents would be like, "Get away! Go!" Even past Yard Street kids would run home, get in their apartments, and the kids would be in front of their house. The kids start chasing them.

In a more extreme case, a Somali mother, Amina, found herself involved in and having to mediate a conflict between her oldest son and a group of African American youth at a public basketball court near her home. After they had accused her

son of taking their ball, which was his own ball, they surrounded Amina's son as his younger brother ran to get their mom, aunt, and grandma. Amina described trying to make more of a fair fight, one in which her son gave and received many injuries. She finished the story:

> I didn't do anything but, but I get mad. Because six cause they pick him. He's a big guy and they beat him and baseball bat. They beat him. And I came here and I pick up and I say one by one. Give him one. He picked one and they beat him on his back. And I say, "Don't touch. Anyone but one by one. Who can go one by one." And he hit that pole. They put the guy over there because he's big man. Then they say, "She beat the child. She beat the child." Then they say, "Oh, this is America. Hey refugees, this is America." Then I say, "I don't care America." I get mad. They say bad word, I say bad word too. But fortunately the security guy can see it. And they wanted to say, "She beat the child," not for her son. "She beat by herself." But the guy was there, the security guy was seeing and when the police came, he say, "No, didn't touch the, and he's the one who." My son has a lot of bruises and that cries and he like a seizure. And they say, "She's the one who hit the child." And I say, "No." But, and the security guy say, "No, she's not touching that. He's the one how." And he tell the truth all that. Then I stop my kids to go in the basketball. It was sometimes, but when I am there, they are not going because all the time is fighting, all the time. Is why they are at home. My young son, he always going to the six to six program. Not at home. But he's and my older son, they are at home. I buy for them a video game, and they stay at home all day. Any time they go to, and that's why I say, "Don't go."

During my fieldwork I did gain some insight into the views and choices of some Somali youth that contributed to their reputation as fighters. Some youth described a "cultural" value of fighting, some youth instigated mischief, and I personally experienced challenges to questionable applications of authority. In one interview, two Somali teens who were cousins and a Warner High senior and

sophomore had a lively back and forth conversation elaborating how Somalis fight and why other minority peers found them troublesome. They said:

> **Zeynab M:** The Somalian people, they have their own African style of fighting. I was there. They would get the arrows and they would get Somalian hot sauce and the girls would get their shoes and they have high heels, and they would hit it.
> **Sahra B:** Yeah, they had bats. Because we used to do that the refugee camps. The same thing, we used to do it, like hot sauce, if they put up their hands like this, they had it in their pocket, and they put their hands. When they're like close to their face they, put it on and like, you know, they scratch it, and they put it.
> **ZM:** They would help the boys. We were wild. And the Mexican girls, they didn't used to fight with Somalian girls because we scratch their face, and, they had to wear a lot of make up. They care about how they look, but we didn't. We didn't care if they scratch our face or anything. We scratch their face.
> **SM:** They were annoyed, I guess. And they did like a lot things we used to do in Africa. When we were, you were fight and everything, all the things we used to do, and then they had the African, you like put a rock in it and then you spin it around, and you throw it. They had that, too, but I didn't know how they made it, cause I only knew. I kind of know how to make it.
> **ZM:** So, Somali people have temper. Like if you make them really mad they go crazy.
> **SM:** I even heard that the African American boys, we just come up to them, and they're so big and everything, they will come after the girls and then slap their hair cover, pull it away. And then the Somali boys will run and then that's how its gonna start the fight. And the boys, and then the girls, the African girls will get mad and then the girls and the boys. The Somalian girls used to help their Somalian boys.
> **ZM:** The girls help the boys, though. We're all family. We all know each other, somehow.
> **SM:** Like, because the boys are fighting for them. Like, they're telling, you know, "Don't pull her hair cover!" Then the African American boys, like they're so big and everything, and Somali peoples are skinny, so they need some help, a little help like to, you know, punch and everything. And then when this person gets tired fighting, punching somebody else comes. Then he's gonna go downward. Then, you know.

Laughing and joking through the entire conversation, Zeynab and Sahra wove in a number of stereotypes—"big" African American boys, "skinny" Somali boys, and one big "family" fighting together—to their insider's account of how Somali fights could grow big quickly. Regardless of the actual blood relations between Somali youth, when respect of women and religion were at stake, the fight could easily be seen as within the interests of all the Somali youth.

I also came to know a small handful of Somali young men who were famous instigators. As dynamic and admired figures among Somalis, they had the potential to compete with any authority for the attention of the group. Some of their actions undoubtedly contributed to generalizations of Somali boys as troublesome. One youth in particular, Khadar, a brilliant and talented young man who I came to know throughout my research, had the capability to orchestrate fighting on small and large levels. The following excerpts from my field notes describe some of my key experiences with Khadar.

Tuesday, March 7, 2002

> There was a fight between two girls last Friday, Fardo said. And it had remnants here. As Fardo negotiated the girls being taken to the principal's office, I watched the boys. They were having food wars with oranges, and as staff came by golf cart, Khadar pretended he was eating the orange instead of throwing it. When staff was watching, they feigned appropriate behavior, when staff wasn't watching, they played violence against each other in good fun.

Saturday, July 19, 2003

At the YAAC basketball tournament, Khadar was razzing the Sudanese guy when he lost, the guy from Mr. Jonathan's class on the varsity b-ball team. They went back and forth. "You lost to a bunch of seventh graders!" Then it got more personal "Gorilla Crew", a comment on the darkness of his Sudanese skin. "Have you heard of a toothbrush?" as a response. "You're ugly!" and so on. Then Khadar made a comment about his little brother who stepped in to defend his older brother. "Take your little pet out of here." Then the Sudanese stepped up on Khadar with his fists clenched and told him to leave his brother alone. Khadar swung and hit him in the face, but it wasn't a full connection. I held back the Sudanese and others held Khadar back. They brought them out separate doors and apparently just let them go. Khadar had come back in the gym twenty minutes later and all the Sudanese had left. I talked outside with him to get an idea of what was going on through his head. He stopped thinking. I suggested he is a leader and the people look up to him for an example more than they do to the officers and volunteers. And it was a bad choice to start a fight in a gym full of police. He suggested that he shouldn't have come because the day before he was talking to the younger people, trying to get them to live a good life and make good choices. He felt like he undermined his own message. I shared that I felt he needed to face that side of himself

> directly, that loss of control and conflict. I told him that if anyone could do it, he could. He said, "That means a lot to me, coming from you."

In addition to showing his potential brazen combativeness, Khadar's fight showed the currency of racial and ethnic slurs between refugees themselves, using inassimilability because of skin color or cultural habits (personal hygiene) as penultimate insults. Significantly, the Young African's Activities Club missed out on an opportunity to carry the issue from hot tempers and kids-will-be-kids to a learning and reconciling moment to address the beef and its role in perpetuating "difference" as a community divider.

Three days later, a different instigator, Hussein, jeopardized the Reach High after school program that operated on the Warner High School campus and in which I worked from 2002-2005. Hussein was from a wealthy family that had been prominent back home, and that had many successful entrepreneurs in San Diego. I learned more about what Hussein had done from the other teachers in the program.

> *Thursday, July 22, 2003*
>
> At the staff meeting, Alan expressed increasing discomfort, impatience, and anger with Hussein and the other students who have been in the US for a long time, and who are troublemakers, who act like "spoiled brats." Yesterday, six of them had stolen the contractor's golf cart and had taken it to the hospital parking lot. The custodian said that they also go through the hospital cafeteria and throw napkins on the floor on their way through. While it was initiated by Hussein, Ahmad, Abdisheik, and

Nur, other students Hadji and Rome joined them. Alan was particularly angry about the peer pressure and bad influence that the older students use.

While pranksters and instigators were present in any group of teens in the US, among racialized people like Somalis in City Heights, their shenanigans would be considered evidence for the general view that *all* of the Somalis are violent and lawless by nature. The logic of race ideology in the US explained deviant behavior by whites as individual pathology that did not reflect on the group as a whole, while for non-whites the dynamics were reversed (Lipsitz 2006). No amount of lawful, dignified, respectful, or responsible behavior by Somali individuals or groups could overturn the general racist assumptions about their inherent lawlessness and need to be closely monitored and swiftly brought to justice for infractions as minimal as hanging out in public in their own neighborhood.[40] These conditions of preserving institutional and environmental violence against Somalis while using their responses to that violence as a rationalization for increased surveillance and law and order disciplining constituted the deeper racial violence masked in the pathologizing discourses of Somali deviance and youth risk.

In one case I myself was the perpetrator of a form of institutional violence, that of misrepresentation, and I was swiftly corrected. This experience helped deepen my understanding of the stereotype of Somalis as aggressive, and the self-protective, self-

[40]Following the Chicago model, the San Diego Police Department used loitering laws to facilitate their contact with and monitoring of suspected Somali gang members in the heart of "Little Mogadishu".

righteous responses of US institutional force. While I was at a community event, a young woman approached me and asked if I was "the one who wrote that paper about the community?" When I told her I was a graduate student working on a research project in the Somali community, she said she didn't like what I wrote. I felt intimidated because she walked directly to me and seemed angry, plus I didn't know what she was referring to. I got my bearings and asked her to explain her concern. She was referring to a short piece I had written and given to my friend to check for accuracy. I later found out that my friend approached her because she was "a real Somali lady" to see what tribe predominated in a certain part of the neighborhood. My statement was incorrect and her approaching me implied that if I was going to talk about sensitive topics like tribe identity, I must know what I'm talking about. I was not welcome to make general statements about the community out of ignorance. Once she had my attention she helped me get the important story correct, spending the next half hour telling me about her own experience of fleeing Somalia and holding her dead husband in her arms. Were I invested in exerting authority, I would have labeled her hostile, attacking me for no reason other than her personal trauma, and instead of engaging her I would have retreated or summoned security to protect me from her. But because I desired to understand her concern, I was able to gain her perspective on my mistake, to learn about the pitfalls of misrepresenting the community as an outsider, and to share momentarily in the painful experience she carried daily around people ignorant of and not interested in her story.

The conditions reported by Somali youth complicate prevailing narratives about Somali "cultural collapse" and the need for them to be heavily policed. Somali youth had to run from or fight their peers, had to be wary of law enforcement and school officials, and constantly faced misrepresentation by public media and even supporters like me. These varying experiences of violence force us to re-think normative discourses on Somali "youth risk."

CONCLUSION

Somali youth risk is officially and publicly treated as a problem of Somalis themselves, their own fractured culture and predisposition to violence and anti-law and order anarchy. This view substitutes meaningful and human democratic treatment of social issues in City Heights, a zone of racialized urban poverty, with a rationalization for increasingly disciplinary and draconian law enforcement policies toward Somali residents. The real social issues of attacks between residents, of police racial profiling and harassment, and racialized criminalization ideology are obscured by "tough on crime", "save the good kids" law and order policy that reinforces the racist misperception that white-dominated institutions are legitimate and people of color are illegitimate. Failing to provide a meaningful refuge where those who fled civil war would not need to fear for their personal safety and well being, combined with blaming minority "cultures" for propensities toward violence marked the more cynical extents of US refuge. Somali youth experienced direct physical attacks and an environment that de-valued their culture. Unfortunately for the community, the official

policies to racially profile and surveil youth ensured that US refuge would itself be largely implicated in the violent saga of "Somalis versus everybody else." Somalis, however, would simply be the most recent group to occupy the spotlight of racialized criminalization, a position in San Diego previously and contemporaneously thrust upon African Americans, Filipinos, and Vietnamese among others.

The Young African's Activities Club promoted the leadership and educational development of Somali and East African youth, but was based on inscribing law and order, discipline and punish ethics on those presumed to come from a culture of poverty. YAAC thus provided real activities and resources in the shrinking City Heights public sphere, while at the same time increasing surveillance and "effective" police tactics. Larger political, economic, and cultural issues, including intolerance by schoolteachers, staff, and students went unaddressed, unidentified, and unresolved as public attention and resources went into maintaining "law and order." This positioned YAAC as a problematic institutional resource, a form of refuge not designed to be aware of or responsive to the experiences of the refugees themselves, but to shape them into "good" refugees.

The epidemic violence experienced by Somali youth was as much attributable to self-defense as the disruptive behavior of a few Somali youth leaders. Linking the epidemic violence to general theories of the lawless and deviant African, and the perpetually disabled and incorrigible poor was a way service providers and institutional officials could recite the familiar scripts of racial deviance. As far as the police were concerned, the violence was reduced to a few bad guys, documented gang

members who commit crimes and who recruited innocent youth into their ranks. While they got targeted as the new kids on the block, however, the conflicts were construed as part of the natural process of social adjustment and not as violence from which seekers of refuge should be protected. Further, officers added an additional burden of the heavy-handed command presence, sending the message that state violence would be meted out to any who resisted subordination and discrimination. The ultimate vision of the City Heights police was an unsurprising proliferation of law and order hegemony, a view indicated at the end of summer 2005 in a *Union-Tribune* article. It read:

> There are now an estimated 20,000 East African refugees living in San Diego -- many with a whole new attitude toward police. There is trust and hope. Some officers, such as Smith, are regarded as family or friend. It wasn't an easy transition.... There are some bumps ahead. The grant money runs out in September and new funding must be found. City budget woes may force the storefront to close, and community service officers vital to the program to be laid off. But that may not deter Ali Hassan, 19, perhaps the best example of the program's success. Hassan just joined the police cadets. He wants to be a cop.

While general relations with the police department remained questionable at many community levels, a dominating police presence and the “law and order” approach closed opportunities for dissent, excluding Somali experiences from official channels. Further, with the need of Somali refugees to present self-effacing gratitude at the “humanitarian charity” of the United States, little of the struggles between Somalis and legal structures of authority could possibly register, a desired disciplining effect and self-fulfilling telos of the officially intended Somali “culture of poverty.”

CHAPTER 3

"I SHOULD GET MARRIED EARLY": Comprehensive Sex Education and Somali Masculinity

African American culture indexes a social heterogeneity that oversteps the boundaries of gender propriety and sexual normativity. Roderick Ferguson (2004:2)

The City Heights ethnic crisis of the mid to late 1990s placed Somali youth at the top of law enforcement priorities and featured vice and violence with Somali gangs, sex work, and the specter of teen pregnancy as prominent issues.[41] After falling apart because of civil war, Somali society, it seemed, was falling apart again in San Diego, or so implied the dizzying reports of race riots, petty crime, alcohol and drug use, and teen prostitution. The non-profit sector mobilized to assist institutional officials in seeking solutions. As we saw in Chapter 2, the police community relations officers designed the Young African's Activities Club to keep the youth off the street and to keep a watchful eye over the young newcomers. In 2003 an international humanitarian organization, Humanitarians United, piloted a comprehensive sexual health and abstinence program called Young Men for Responsibility and Community (YMRC). Before this time Humanitarians United had run an array of mental and public health programs reaching more than 3 million people in 11 countries. YMRC marked a number of significant firsts: the first sex education designed specifically for East African refugees; the first time Humanitarians United US programs extended from US-Mexico border health to refugees; and the first time many refugees would encounter formal sex education outside of a school setting. The efforts of YMRC to

[41] See Chapter 2 for description and analysis of the 1990s youth risk crisis.

shape the sex and gender values of young Africans, and the young Africans' responses to those teachings indicate that US structures of refuge are invested in reforming newcomers' personal identities and family and community formations. Somali youth, however, counter mainstream pathologizing and reformatory discourses. Reversing the hierarchy of morality, the youth elaborate fluid gender and sex formations beyond "gender propriety and sexual normativity."

In mainstream US society, the racialization of sexuality is pitched as a contest between liberal and conservative articulations of white heteropatriarchy. The 'pathology' of African American sexuality is taken for granted. Comprehensive sexual education is a primary site where sexual norms become codified, elaborated, and assigned to medical and professional experts. Sex education programs emphasize full disclosure and expansion of sexual health information and resources for minors, personal responsibility, tolerance of race, gender, and sexuality diversity, pre-marital sexual abstinence or "safe" sex and substance-use practices, and political activism for sexual health and awareness. The often-cited rationale entails the increased "risk" behaviors by younger children with the average age of first sexual intercourse dropping into middle school at 15 years old, one study citing that 9% of its sexually active respondents reporting being 13 or younger at first intercourse.[42] Instead of young children learning about sex from their peers and from pervasive messages in mass media, the programs suggest, they should be given scientific information and legitimized influences from educational and community authorities.

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[42]The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, "National Survey of Adolescents and Young Adults: Sexual Health Knowledge, Attitudes and Experiences"

Conservative elements, on the other hand, generally see sexual education programs as part of the problem—a social malaise that includes increased incidence of HIV, AIDS and sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy out of wedlock, and divorce—that erodes traditional white heteropatriarchal religious authority. The sexual education programs, from this perspective, implicitly or explicitly authorize lifestyle choices prohibited by religion, including sex before marriage, same-sex partnering, and lustfulness. In this conservative view, the children should not be given ideas by school officials that may lead them to consider making decisions that could compromise their religious foundations, nor should these choices be presented as viable options. Again what appears to many to be a polar political and cultural debate serves more to stylize intersectional hegemony within the US mainstream. Undergirding the debate is always the looming threat of the out-of-control sexual bodies of color. This chapter explores the threat of racialized sexuality that serves as a driving force behind public policy and nonprofit programming as well as the fluid Somali gender and sex formations that problematize the ossified and inaccurate stereotypes. Somalis negotiate the pressure of racial reform, a subtle and "helpful" form of institutional violence, with a critique of US mores and reassertion of Muslim lifestyles.

This chapter begins with an account of the rise of YMRC and its rapidly adapting programming of culturally sensitive comprehensive sex education for East Africans. I then detail the changing views of young Somali men on sex, gender, marriage, and family, which foreground Islamic and Somali values and are beyond the

scope of program officials. These Somali gender and sexuality formations evidence hybrid adaptivity in response to discrimination and thus reframe the terms of mainstream debate on refugee resettlement and racialized urban poverty.

REFUGEES' "NEED" FOR SEX EDUCATION

The Somali youth "crisis" and the looming threats of urban poverty, race conflict, and unregulated young black men and women engaging in irresponsible sex resonated with society's fear of black sexuality. For many officials in the late 1990s, it seemed that something needed to be done to address the Somali "culture of poverty"—a supposed degeneration into riots, petty crime, and prostitution. While Somalis were conspicuous in the local news, few in the US knew anything about Somali values or experiences, much less how, as one service provider intoned, "such a odd population that nobody has really focused on," fit into their new "East African" pan-ethnic group identity.[43] This fear and lack of knowledge about the "other" prompted public and nonprofit institutions to increase surveillance and disciplining efforts, including the establishment of youth programs. As Michel Foucault argues, institutions of sexual authority, under the pretense of controlling or limiting sexual impropriety, establish their legitimacy by codifying sexual identities and expanding the scope of sexuality discourse.[44] It is within these parameters that the "need" for comprehensive sexual education for San Diego's East African refugees arose. The social heterogeneity

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[43]All quoted material comes from my interviews with four YMRC program staff members unless otherwise specified.

[44]In *The History of Sexuality: Vol. 1*, Michel Foucault (1990).

indexed by Somali gender and sex formations became an active site of regulating and defining Somali "culture" as deviant.

In 2003, a graduate student on the Humanitarians United staff saw the potential in adapting a train-the-trainers, peer advocacy sexual health model and transporting it from US-Mexico border programs to East African refugee males. The Young Men for Responsibility and Community (YMRC) grant proposal was attractive to funders because, as program coordinator Barbara Herman explained, "In the original grant proposal they used mostly anecdotal evidence of teen pregnancy rates, and there were some cases which might have been overblown of reports of like teen prostitution within the African community and stuff like that, but it was anecdotal." These exaggerated anecdotal reports of sexual risk and deviance, or stereotypes by local newspapers and law enforcement officials together with the humanitarian and academic credentials of the grant writers were sufficient to secure funding for an extensive and expensive research program, YMRC was necessarily framed by *in*accurate knowledge about Somalis. Herman said, while "a more thorough needs assessment could have been done," it might have actually jeopardized the program. Herman continued:

> A lot of the kids we work with are choosing abstinence, because their culture promotes it. That's just a reality. If we knew that seventy-five plus percent of the population were abstinent, we probably wouldn't have been funded. But that's what we're finding out. I think that's a valuable thing to have learned. Hopefully in the meantime we'll have proved that through engaging them in recreation and direct education, we are able to sustain those numbers or change the behaviors of the twenty percent that were having sex."

The YMRC grant proposal targeted the federal Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Family Planning interest in the role of males in family planning. YMRC would provide comprehensive sexual education, while serving as a research program to increase institutional knowledge about East African sexuality. As an "intervention" research program, YMRC introduced the lexicon of US sexual responsibility into the community. Herman explained, "Any data that can be gathered from them I think is gonna be really beneficial. We're just figuring things out. And I think it's especially important for this community, where there's not a lot of information." The "intervention" would be, on the one hand, a research project with conservative objectivist and descriptive constraints, and, on the other hand, a public health community service program with action-oriented instruction mandates. Being aligned with the pre-marital abstinence principles Somalis already considered normative, yet insistent upon exerting institutional authority, YMRC was poised to serve as a battleground for struggle between mainstream distortions of African American sexuality and the African sex and gender norms adapting within City Heights. The need for sex education of East Africans arose as a need for US institutions to discipline the specters of race fear and the dreaded black underclass sexual threat.

SEX ED FOR REFUGEES

The current trend in sex education best practices is to promote the responsibility of young men, who tended to be left out of family planning and birth

control considerations. Prior to the 1990s sexual responsibility was considered exclusively a young woman's issue. Researchers now emphasize the presumed biological differences between boys and girls, and foreground statistics indicating that young men "outscore" young women in many "risk" categories like infant mortality, diagnosed emotional disturbance, committing of drug and alcohol-related crimes, suffering as victims of physical abuse and violent crimes, failing in school, and not enrolling in college.[45] Researchers consider sex and gender differences to be natural. Ostensibly differential brain development, specifically action-oriented left brain emphasis generally for young men, versus women's right-brained communication strength, leads males to have difficulty in dealing with emotionally challenging experiences like love and sex in a mutual way. This makes young men more susceptible to pursuing masculine ideals of virility and un-reasoned sexual prowess, or so says the research. Young men are thus a crucial "half of the equation" needing to be seen as "part of the solution rather than part of the problem" in their ability to "grow into healthy, responsible men" with appropriate male-focused sexual health education.[46]

Humanitarians United drew from Right Start, an award winning adolescent pregnancy and STD prevention program already approved for use by multiple funding sources. The North Carolina-based Right Start program, as one example of teen pregnancy prevention, offers an eight to twelve week workshop structure for up to

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[45]Rick Brown, "Males: By Nature and By Nurture" – the Basics, slide show presentation for The Family Life Council.

[46]Rick Brown. 2003. "Wise Guys – Making a Difference by Working with Males." *NOAPP Network* (Fall). p.15-16.

twenty five young men depending on the number and skill of facilitators. Educators use a variety of methods including lectures, group discussion and breakout exercises, role-playing, and multimedia presentations. Addressing the life-changing possibilities of pregnancy and contraction of infection, Right Start topics range from decision-making and goal setting to masculinity, values, and communication, dating violence and parenthood to sexually transmitted infections. Right Start embraces a broad set of educational objectives: (1) to provide young men with the knowledge about sexuality they need for good decision-making; (2) to encourage respect for themselves and others; (3) to help young men understand the importance of self-responsibility, especially in the area of sexual behavior; (4) to help young men increase their level of meaningful communication with their parents; and (5) to prevent partner violence by encouraging healthy relationships.

Pre-marital sexual abstinence, the main point of Right Start, appeals to both conservative religious and medical establishment viewpoints. While transmitting a broad sex education and general masculinity platform, Right Start emphasizes abstinence as the only fully "safe" sex practice. Alternative lifestyles like same sex partnering are subversively interjected under "diversity" issues. No religion is officially included in any of the Right Start curriculum, yet teaching core Christian values insures that such programs continue to receive significant funding under the faith-based and family-values initiatives of the current Republican administration in Washington D.C. Right Start fundamentally offers an extended classroom, or a

regulated community-based institutional space as the primary acceptable context within which to socialize, or educate "responsible" young men.

In the US, comprehensive sexual education programs like Right Start are oriented around bourgeois individualism—the notion that context is less important than choice and that young men and women possess interpretive and decision-making agency that outstrips all authority. At the same time, sex education approaches medicalize dynamic sexualities and present regulatory institutions as the proper authorities for racialized subjects whose deviance forfeits their individuality. Individual choice and responsibility are presented as universal humanity, but are ontologically restricted to in practice to normative subjects, principally white middle-class heterosexual men. Right Start replaces indigenous authorities who are cast as "foreign" or "deviant," with "American"-centered teachers, social workers, and doctors, underscoring the social construction of sexual norms and the concomitant regulatory apparatuses in the form of curricula, non-profit programming, and federal social welfare initiatives that make these norms real. As a regulatory apparatus, sexual abstinence programming integrates state and civil society in the project of promoting hegemonic values. In cases where race, class, and gender intersect, for instance, US politicians and social scientists have been invested in painting African American (and other minority groups') procreation as the *cause* of poverty, deflecting attention from pirate-like mismanagement of collective resources to preserve elite privilege at the cost of all (Lipsitz 2006; Ferguson 2004). Abstinence programming joins more "tough love" approaches like welfare cuts and sterilization programs to negate African

American sexualities in order to remake black people into the image of neoliberal and neoconservative racialized heteronormativity. These struggles for legitimate identity have a significant impact on refugee resettlement.

Young Men for Responsibility and Community (YMRC), Humanitarians United's adaptation of Right Start for refugees, secured five years of funding from 2003-2008 and set as its goal sending 120 new African middle and high school youth through a 10-week program each year. Originally YMRC called for classes for one hour weekly for eight months. Logistical complications and a steep learning curve for staff early on forced adjustments. The program became shorter and more focused, meeting twice a week for ten weeks to facilitate retention and make it more likely to reach their recruitment goal. With a 10-week academic quarter, YMRC could invite four new "cohorts" annually, and still provide an 8-month membership to the activities center that would allow youth to play basketball, lift weights, and swim. The idea here was that they would be off the streets doing positive things. Early in the 10-week program classes emphasize getting to know one's self, one's own values, and getting comfortable speaking openly in the classroom setting. After two weeks on goal setting, diversity tolerance, awareness, stereotypes, and communication skills, YMRC zeroed in on sex, abstinence, and family planning. Consistently incorporating multimedia, popular culture (music and movies), current events, guest speakers, lecture, and discussion, health educators covered classes on "Sexuality versus Sex," "Human Body: How it All Works," "Contraception," "Abstinence and Parenthood," and "HIV and STIs (Sexually Transmitted Infections)." After a trip to a community

health clinic around week eight, the classes turned to a focus on the future with topics like "Decision Making," "College, Careers, and You," and "Goal Setting." YMRC aims to expand the youth's awareness of their own sexuality as a component of media and society and also as a major determinant of their life-choice options. Self-esteem and self-awareness were the key initial aims. One teacher felt that YMRC was "a bit of a commitment for these young guys," and "longer than the average intervention for most teen health programs." With pre-marital sexual abstinence already Somali and Islamic core values, it might have been more relevant to assist the youth with "job preparedness skills, career…services instead of sex ed services." Prepared to teach largely abstinent African youth about sexual abstinence for five years, YMRC program staff made the best of it and proceed with the apotheosis of US institutions and sex and gender regulation.

The initial plan was to teach as an authority, but also to learn as service providers with little-to-no baseline knowledge. As a community service program, YMRC endeavored "to improve sexual and reproductive health behaviors of East African youth…in City Heights" by delaying the initiation of sexual activity, increasing the use of contraception, and educating youth regarding sexually transmitted infections (STIs), pregnancy, and life skills. As a research program, YMRC's goal was to generate substantial data and analysis on the sexual values and practices of a group of new Americans. The validity of the program design, however, was in question early at the ground level. As a structured research project YMRC had to adapt to retain African youth in an extracurricular education program that did not

directly address their experiences or interests. It was unclear whether the purpose of the program was to provide a valuable service for African youth, or to extract valuable information for the medical research community, or to regulate "deviant" Africans. Barbara Herman, the program coordinator, described the tension where health educators wanted to organize a job fair and do more career training, which directly addressed the youths' pressure to contribute to families often struggling for day-to-day viability, yet these topics could not take the place of HIV, abstinence, and contraceptives because "focusing on career is not gonna have them increase their use of contraceptives." Any program components beyond abstaining from sex or using condoms had to fit under the rubric of "life skills." Herman elaborated:

> One of our challenges was getting the balance between having a youth focused program and being a research program. So, on the one hand, we have health educators that are totally into the youth and doing what's good for the youth. But getting them to understand the research components of this are what make this a job for us. I mean without collecting that evaluation data, without reaching our targets, we're not gonna have a job. So, there are a lot of good things for youth that don't fall within the scope of our program. And obviously the health educators want to focus on the youth. Even myself I, you know, there's so many more things we could do for individual youth, or for the youth that would be fun and helpful. But if it doesn't fall into the scope of our program, we're not working to continue our employment. So getting them to understand, look, if our goal is that seventy five percent of the kids improve their knowledge by twenty five percent, so if they only got one question or if they didn't get any questions on HIV right last time, they have to at least know one thing more by the time they are done with our class. So, it might be great to talk about how the AIDS epidemic is affecting Ethiopia, but if they don't know that HIV can be passed through ways besides sex, or that abstinence is the only one hundred percent method, safe method of pregnancy prevention, then our program is not effective in the eyes of the research component. So, getting them to understand that there are a million great things we can do, and we can do them, but we have to focus number one on our objectives.

YMRC's main metric of success was the pre and post testing of each youth. The tests purported to measure changes in attitudes, behaviors and knowledge. The survey questionnaires included factual questions about sexual abstinence, safe sex, and STIs, and questions identifying "responsible" values and decision-making processes. Herman described the difficulty testing the youth:

> Another of our challenges is trying to meet our evaluation goals without having the kids feel like we're just trying to extract all this information from them. They get frustrated. You give 'em the pre-quiz at the beginning of class, and then you give it again at the end of class, and like, "We just did this, why do we have to do that?" And, "Well, we told you." You know, "We're just trying to see if we're good at teaching at all, you know, if anybody's learning anything. You're not gonna get a grade on it and we'll probably never see the results, but somebody's figuring out if we're teaching well enough." So we try to explain that to them.

While the teachers collected and recorded the data, an independent researcher designed the testing tools and handled the evaluation and analysis. The reliability of the data depended on consistency of attendance and the students' ability to access the written tools, which was sometimes in question due to students' low level of English competence.

The YMRC core staff consisted of a small number of motivated and dedicated people. Barbara Herman managed and supervised two health educators and a program assistant to track objectives, write reports, manage the budget, develop the curriculum, and correspond with funders. As Herman said, "I'm the one that is responsible for making sure we have an interesting lesson with cool activities." Already on the Humanitarians United Staff and having returned home to San Diego, Herman's

tangential experience of having been to Africa through the Peace Corps qualified her for the job after the graduate student program designer abruptly left the successfully funded program before it got off the ground. As program coordinator, Herman did not spend as much time with the youth as the health educators, but tried to interact with them in classes and on a field trip once a week. The health and peer educators delivered the sex education and life skills curriculum. Health educators were solicited through want ads and service organization networks in the City Heights area, and peer educators were recruited directly out of the youth cohort ranks. Howard had been a health educator since the first cohort, while several others had filled the other health educator position over the past three years. As a part-time position without benefits, it had been difficult to find consistent workers. The health educator adapted and delivered the curriculum that they designed with the program coordinator. Peer educators help in the classroom with discussion and discipline and assist with outreach, going into the community to get new youth interested in signing up and letting parents know about YMRC.

The youth came from a variety of backgrounds, but all lived in City Heights. All of the students were from Africa, mostly from Somalia with some others from Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Sudan, Togo, Liberia, Uganda, and Congo. To reach this diverse group and make YMRC work, the North Carolina born Right Start curriculum needed to be adapted significantly. Barbara Herman said:

> Probably the only reason we were ever funded is because we work with such an interesting population, and we said that we can do it in a culturally appropriate way. We had this whole idea of incorporating cultural elements into our program. So we have the class on African

> drumming. A lot of our classes begin with African news. And Howard always tries to pick a positive article from the news about Africa, about the new president of Somalia or the African Union's involvement in Ethiopia.

Howard, an original health educator who was himself a second generation African American, led the staff team in class design with his interest in the continent. Discussion of HIV, for example, might be couched in an African context. Howard included hip hop artists and films from African countries, which received mixed responses depending on themes. The notion of "cultural sensitive" was somewhat contested as it tended to signify pure American exceptionalism and bourgeois individualism with a superficial "ethnic" window dressing easily convertible across groups. Not all YMRC staff put "cultural sensitivity" into practice in the same way, in particular with Howard's more detailed engagement.

YMRC staff members describe the African youth as part of a unique, transitional 1.5 generation—born in Africa yet raised in the US literally "torn between two worlds." Initially staff thought that "they won't respond to the same messages that non-African population will," a view Herman reconsidered because "they're Americanizing really quickly." Pete Emerson, a former health educator, thought the youth were on the same path as his immigrant family that within one generation stopped speaking Italian and attending Catholic church regularly, with a Russian Jewish mother who now "eats pork chops" and "loves them." He said, "America knows how to assimilate and so the things that I've recounted to you I like to see because it allows for more of a hybridization than a powerful assimilation process

which I think kills off a lot of the identity that people have but don't know what to do with when they first immigrate, that first generation."

This YMRC framework established a broader "cultural difference" ideology behind the sex education program. "Somali" and "American" stood as discrete and essentialized entities, masking violent processes of racial subject making behind the apparently natural geographical, linguistic, and religious "differences" between Somalia and the US. Emerson celebrated and championed the violence that would be required to generate "hybridized" Muslims who eat pork chops and revel in US secular consumerism. The false dichotomy between "two worlds" coded "American" with bourgeois individualist norms of personal responsibility, law and order, and racialized institutionalization, naming these as home court rules for those in "this" world and no longer in "that" one.

Several program staff took for granted the ubiquity of the American dream and the desire of African youth to "just fit in" and be "normal American teenagers," considering these dreams and desires attainable through education, career advancement, and consumerism, and as diametrically opposed to things African, African American and refugee. Jeff Chandler, a health educator referenced the notion that "money equals happiness" for many in poverty. Chandler adapted the Horatio Alger myth of pulling oneself up by their bootstraps to articulate a concept of love that means taking action to help others lift their lot in life. Here, instead of the pure individualism of the bootstraps myth, Chandler posited a hierarchical uplift, mentorship model linking "love" to transmitting values of materialism and success

from the top down. In this capacity YMRC functioned in large part to connect young African men to older males they could try to emulate, but specifically *not* older males who practiced or preached anything different from "American" norms. By replacing the Somali masculine figure with the health educator-as-mentor, YMRC participated in the subversive marginalizing, obscuring, and eliding of the living lineage of the youth that was conceptually and now practically segregated to the "other," non-"American" world.

The artifice of the mutually exclusive worlds and the from-that-to-this assimilation models was readily exposed, yet lost on the staff. In one service-learning lesson that did not work well, a youth critique of beach cleanup showed them not as desiring to fit in, but as sharply aware of the systems of privilege and segregation they encountered regularly. Pete Emerson explained:

> The identification of being part of an ocean going community I don't think really existed. At least a few of the kids would get to the beach and say, "Oh cool, the beach!" Then, but of course you guys, we've gotta clean up the beach first. They'd be like, "Clean up the beach? I don't hardly ever come to the beach. I only come to the beach with YMRC so it's not my beach to keep clean. I didn't litter here."

Considering an ocean-going mentality as simply not part of the daily reality of the City Heights African youth, Emerson offered that with some "development' (i.e. education and upward mobility out of the urban ghetto) they could bridge these city and beach "worlds." The youth, however, articulated the distance more in terms of the unfairness of being coerced into serving beach communities that have a traceable history of deterring and inhibiting beach access to undesirable residents, poor minorities from the city in particular.

"Cultural sensitivity" can only go so far when its sole mandate is to transport a singular message in a pre-designed curriculum based on white North Carolina adolescent experiences and needs. The YMRC curriculum both intervened in and embraced a broader violent process of subject-making targeting Africans. Moreover, "cultural sensitivity" in the YMRC model highlighted the power struggles in which non-profit organizations, academic researchers, federal social welfare programs, and community residents waged on an ongoing basis.

The sexual mores of YMRC in practice were forms of institutional violence. Social problems in city Heights like fighting, police racial profiling, and vice economy, were naturalized, reduced to race and class stereotypes, blamed on residents, and then addressed with a personal responsibility abstention framework. YMRC failed to engage the youth in their social context, thus encouraging them to extract themselves rather than promoting active agency for social justice transformation and treating social ills as social problems everyone should be enfranchised to solve. By trying to steer a few individuals away from a life of "risk," YMRC preserved and protected the systemic forms of violence ubiquitous in City Heights refugee of color experience. As a research program YMRC also studied from a controlled distance, rather than facilitating democratic enfranchisement in the neighborhood. Most pointedly, YMRC exotified, elided, and then pathologized "African" gender and sex formations, constructing them as mutually exclusive, or a different world, from white heteropatriarchy.

This was evident in a kind of penultimate and poetic moment in the youth program where Barbara Herman described observing Somali youth disciplining their own wayward community member. Fuad was an active gang member who boasted about his substance use and sexual exploits and desires while using YMRC as a platform to recruit partners in crime, so to speak. Barbara Herman described a fishbowl opportunity to see the young Somali men address Fuad:

> After class a while ago, there was an issue between two students. Like it was actually the one student who has a drug problem. And when he comes high, all the other guys mess with him. They know that they can confuse him. They do all this stuff to totally mess, it's actually pretty funny. When he comes high, we have to say, "Sorry you can't be with us today. Come back when you're sober." But he kind of hung around. And so after class, we saw that other guys were kind of messing with him. And all they took his cigarettes, and then they were hiding, passing the cigarettes around. And he was frustrated. He didn't know where they were. So our office is here. If you actually look through this break room, there's a window. And all of these offices have these windows. They're reflective. From the outside, you can't see in, but we can see out. We figured you know we can let 'em like work their issue, and just ask 'em to leave and make sure he gets back his cigarettes. But there was some beef between two of them, I think they were distantly related. And so, we were watching from in here as the two of them are standing face to face. Just face to face, like eye-to-eye talking. Hands kind of cocked, like not yelling, just debating. And there's a whole group of five or six on the periphery just watching. And then the two make up their mind to come around to the corner. So we go into the room and we can see everything. We can see the guys around the corner like hoping to hear any little bit and the two guys again face to face. And we don't have any idea of what they're saying, but the body language the method of talking, you know, like that it was calm. And they were debating something, obviously. But they weren't getting fiery. And ultimately they came to some solution. And we were able to watch this whole thing play out in front of us. It was such a unique process, maybe just because they were males, or maybe culturally it was like watching you know the most foreign tribe ever from a really intimate perspective. It was just so amazing, because I'm sure that they're just different. They're different than every other young man out there. You know, and common in some way. It was really fascinating,

> cause this whole concept of the generation, one point five, they're it and they have very unique ways of doing things that I've never seen anybody else do ever.

The fishbowl was rife with symbolism: proto-Anthropological exotification and utter "difference" inscribed on an ordinary act of an older relative calling aside and admonishing a wayward youngster; and institutional officials as perpetual outsiders knowing the "other" through a literal and metaphorical lens of the air conditioned professional class office building, while the "othered" fashions spaces of intimacy and dignity out of the streets and parking lots afforded to marginal communities.

YMRC, like YAAC, was invested in replacing African authorities with the ideologies and institutions of abstinence and personal responsibility. This tension was clear in YMRC's failed attempt to engage parents. YMRC did include a sub component to work four times a year with parents under the guise of improving parent-teen communication, but even that modest goal was not achieved.

With "different rules and different expectations," "side by side" parent-youth events were "not really culturally appropriate," Herman said. The "culture of poverty" provided Herman's explanatory backdrop. She continued:

> A 25 to 30% minority plurality of people are really concerned about their kids typically the younger kids between 12 and 15. The parents want to meet the people in the program and make sure that they're sending their kids to a place where they can feel good about their kids being, and in general they are more professionally trained Somalis that for one reason or another, be it refugees or they just gained immigration status here for reasons that were non- refugee reasons, are professionals that are within the first generation of immigration doing well for themselves here. Again, it's not the majority.

The idea that seventy percent of African parents are not "really concerned" about their children and that these happen to be the parents who are not as "successful" in the US associated upward mobility with ability to care for self and family, while poverty and lack of "success" in the US made parents less capable of caring for their children. The only way African parents could "succeed" was by conforming to status quo social norms articulated by social service and public education officials, and by society at large. Without taking parents as a key component of education on parenthood, sexual health, and family planning and relying on connections to those few parents who were "successes," YMRC reproduced the violence of erasure in the African families and communities in which it intervened.

African youth and parents viewed YMRC differently from program staff. In fact, because YMRC staff correctly presumed that fun activities would attract the youth while lecturing about values they practice better than so-called normal American teens would not, the activities and rewards components of the program were a constant site of struggle and negotiation. While YMRC staff thought of their work as a necessary study of the exotic other and operationalized the culture of poverty with a reformatory front, the youth tended to view the program as an exchange—private social club access for limited exposure to didactic information dissemination and testing.

Recruited door-to-door or pulled in from the often-precarious public basketball courts of Sunset Park, African youth found in YMRC a social club-like environment complete with well-maintained sports equipment, free food and entertainment, and

field trips around the city. The best practices models suggested, according to Herman, that, "young men will come and learn and participate if there are fun activities, and activities that will help them beyond just sex education, more goal setting, decision making kind of activities." After a typical YMRC class, which runs between forty and seventy minutes, the youth would stay for an optional activity like pick-up basketball at the activities center where staff stay beyond their paid time to play. In order to capture the interest of the youth who likely "did not come because they have a burning desire to learn about how HIV is transmitted," the first two weeks include organized sports like a basketball tournament, a popular movie, pizza, and interesting and fun presentations and discussions. Without these attractions, the program would have no viability at all with the African youth. The upper administrative perspective was the opposite, a chug bodies through curriculum and testing perspective. According to Herman, a Board of Health representative admonished the staff, "This is not a social club for the kids. First and foremost it's a research project about male reproductive health, and that's what were doing here. It's great that you feel that way about the space that this is creating but we gotta look at our first objective."

The youth routinely tried to maximize the benefits of program participation, not just for themselves, but also for their friends and family. The things the youth got in trouble for indicated this collective perspective on program resources. Barbara Herman would be called to the front desk because they would hand their picture ID card to a friend through the fence then lie at the gym entrance about their identity. Bus tokens, an incentive for program participation and a valuable resource granting a

privilege of increased mobility and freedom, were frequently a contentious issue for certain youth. Herman elaborated:

> Just giving them a bus token. They'll do it straight to your face. "You didn't give me a bus token." "Yes I did." And, they really capitalize on this like you're white so you probably don't know me from anybody else, kind of thing. They really try to play that card. "You didn't give me any bus tokens. No! No! I swear you didn't." I was like, "I know that I did." And I'm feeling crazy here, right. This was a day that I did it. "I know that I did." "No you didn't I swear." And I was like, "So you don't have any bus tokens on you?" And you're, "No, no I swear." "Let me see in your pockets." "Okay." And look in this pocket, and this pocket, and that pocket. "Well, what about that pocket?" "Oh, well." "Let me see in that pocket." Out come the bus tokens. "So I thought you didn't have any bus tokens." "Those are from last week." I was like, "I gave those to you today, see you later." You know, but it's a really frustrating thing for the people here and the few times that it happens here. They're pretty respectful to Howard and Jeff, and mostly they don't have any reason to lie. But when it comes to wanting something, wanting to go on the trip. "I swear I gave you my consent form. I swear, I swear." "Ah, well, I don't have it anywhere. And I don't remember you giving it to me." "I swear I gave it to you. Please, please, please let me go." "No. Not until I have your consent form." That's a big frustration.

Tellingly, YMRC staff interpreted the range of ways African youth actively participated in the power struggle and exchange simply as prevarication. Another time, just after a cohort's graduation ceremony, someone had stolen an eighty-dollar roll of bus tokens from Howard's portable cubby box. The thief was never identified and Howard disapprovingly related the students would not get their usual allotment of two tokens, simply asking for the roll back and not wanting to know who stole it. One student retorted, "You don't pay for those tokens anyway. The government pays for them so what difference does it make?" Taking exception to the implication that as long as YMRC staff wasn't hurt then stealing was fine, Howard lectured them, "Look

you guys are all Islamic. You guys have to be responsible Islamic young men. Look all the names that you guys have are just names. All your guys' names are Islamic but they mean nothing to you or to Islam if you're gonna behave like this." Pete Emerson, also a health educator, overheard a student in the back of the room whisper, "He's not even Somali," and the students started laughing. According to Emerson, "That was definitely like another thing that definitely hit everyone between the eyes and it was a little disappointing."

Staff privatized rather than contextualized the bus token issue. By foregrounding personal or religious responsibility they missed the opportunity to engage the broader contradictions: a private, fee-based recreation option made attractive only by disinvestment in urban public sphere and the fostering of police and peer hostility in the neighborhood; or a program advertised to help Africans that actually catalogs, studies, and "reforms" them based on inaccurate distortions of their values and behavior. Not surprisingly, despite Howard's efforts, a deeper engagement with the young men's relationship to Islam and the religious community were beyond the scope of program resources and goals.

Ironically, the one youth who fit the stereotypes was also beyond the scope of the program. Fuad, who earlier was described being admonished in the YMRC staff fishbowl experience, was notorious in the staff narratives. Pete Emerson recalled:

> Fuad just kind of came into the class just thinking, "I'll screw anything that's walking." He's just like one of these kids who's just totally whatever moves he can have sex with and we're just kind of going, "This guy's out of control." You know, we didn't know at that point, we had just met him. We didn't know if he was all talk or if he had actually done a lot of things he was talking about but we certainly knew

> that the 12 and 13 year old kid that was sitting in the corner who was this innocent kid, we're kinda like, "Cover your ears. We don't know this guy. He's not the teacher." You know, the classic dominant student that you're just like, "How'd this guy get in here?" So he was definitely one case, and what was cool about him was, we're like alright and kinda saw where his case went. He definitely struggled through the program, got through the program, had his difficulties in the program, but one thing is for sure was when he would come out with his emphatic sex statements by the end of the program it was always, "Yeah but I'm putting a condom on." So, at least the whole contraceptive thing got through to him even though he was probably wanting to sleep with 20,000 women in the next five years, you know.

Fuad had joined a gang, having been jumped in by his brother who had just been released from jail. He would come to class high on marijuana, drank alcohol, exuberantly advertised his real and desired sexual exploits, and tried to recruit other students from YMRC to join him. One peer educator felt he was important to work with because he would still have contact with the others and would "have contacts with his neighbors' sons and daughters, so he'll contaminate the community." At the same time, some YMRC staff felt they could not divert all of their resources and time to helping him alone, perhaps needing to refer out the most extreme "problem" cases. Fuad stretched the gap between YMRC as a research and as a social service program. Staff interested in Fuad's well being would have to volunteer additional time to work with him and could not slow down or adjust the progress of the curriculum.

In order to get from the 70 youth per year level attained to the recruitment goal of 120 new youth per year, YMRC chose to adjust and expand into Warner High to serve young men from any and all ethnic groups. Driven by disconnected board members who hard-line the research agenda, the anticipated shift to an inter-racial cohort composition, as opposed to the pan-ethnic African composition, clarified the

"culture of poverty" underpinnings of liberal multiculturalism. Several assumptions in the multiculturalist move proved problematic: i.e. that immigrant, refugee, and lower socio-economic groups were comparable enough to include together; that a misguided anecdotal-based "East African" focus could unproblematically be swapped for a multicultural (meaning poor minority) one; and that the abstinence curriculum was 'universal' information good for any group, even though the first group selected (because of stereotypes and anecdotes) did not seem to need it. While it still may have been possible to have an Africa-focused class at one of the multiple potential locations, Howard's attention to African current events and cultural productions, the most valuable element of the adapted curriculum as viewed by other YMRC staff, would be minimized or lost.

In light of the diminishing public sphere through cuts in education spending and public assistance while the costs of living increased and livable wage-earning opportunities decreased, YMRC took advantage of a shift toward private resources (private club and program membership) to bottleneck African youth into voluntary surveillance and monitoring by a liberal state research apparatus. The design of the program, in terms of funding, organizational structure, and curriculum sought reform, eliding the structures of authority of the "other" to replace them with bourgeois individualism and new "institutional parents." Once the program proved misdirected and not meeting the needs of Somalis, instead of reconfiguring it to generate more relevant resources, it was hastily promoted to "help" *all* groups, triggering no skepticism about the broader preconceptions of deviant black ghetto sexuality and

multi-culture of poverty or the institutional structures needed to discipline and control those racial "threats." Despite the fishbowl's evidence to the contrary, African youth, and more generally the African communities, were assumed to be incapable of determining their own future, needing to be monitored by and needing to emulate mainstream authorities. The positions of authority *behind* the glass, *in* the professional class, *behind* the grant proposal ensured that YMRC would not need a meaningful engagement with Somali and African experiences, thoughts, desires, and values.

SOMALI MASCULINITY IN US REFUGE

In the epigraph, scholar Roderick Ferguson points out the social heterogeneity of African American culture that exceeds white heteropatriarchy. Institutional officials like YMRC staff exemplify the target of Ferguson's critical comment by positing Somali youth "torn between two worlds," an ontologically irreconcilable tension that can only be resolved through the eventual abolition of the "other" world. Quite differently, Somali youth viewed the struggle over competing norms of gender and sexuality as frustrating tangle with "American" contradictions. Apart from the didactic moralizing of institutional forces like YMRC's abstinence-only programming, Somali gender and sexuality formations were undergoing notable shifts in City Heights. These developments indicated the multi-directionality and fluidity of Somali ethnicity, gender, and sexuality that contradicts "gender propriety and sexual normativity" and showed values and mores not to be statically lodged in racialized worlds, but to be sites of contestation of US racial hegemony.

The views of Somali youth were changing in resettlement. YMRC takes them to Planned Parenthood where they are given condoms. They attend schools like Warner High where sex talk and boyfriend-girlfriend public displays of affection reach graphic proportions. They consume mainstream media and "hip hop" music videos that qualify as soft pornography. Their life choices become framed by an overwhelming public sexuality geared toward racial conformity and consumerism.

With marriage as the only non-scrutinized, public Somali form of sexual relationship, nearly all of the young men with whom I discussed the topic looked forward to their own eventual marriage. Yet, since I accessed many youth through schools and interviewed many in-college or college-bound students, the notion that finishing college before marriage was important was fairly common. Some youth saw this sequencing as exposing them to influences that troubled their moral framework. Some youth dated inter-racially and "partied," yet often strictly kept this out of their parents' home. One college student, Hassan elaborated:

> I don't think like you can stay around if you're Muslim in America, without like having a wife. It's very tough. In Muslim culture you get married like an early age. Here in America, like everywhere you go there are like a lotta temptation things that's like its very bad for you, but you want to do it anyway. So, for example if you're not married you either have to like party or go to class. I don't think that's a good thing. It's against my religion to do that. So, that's one of the, one of the reasons I think I should like get married early."[47]

The youth almost always imagined their future marriage and parenting through the Islamic space and "back home," which they considered superior to

[47]All quotations in this section come from extended ethnographic interviews with seven Somali youth, unless otherwise specified.

the US in fundamental ways. Ibrahim, who had struggled in high school and technical college, said, "I wanna raise my kids some part in Africa and then bring them when they grow up, like when they around ten years old, bring them America, similar to when I came, because I want a my kids to know their own culture, where I came from, the background, everything. I wanna raise them in Somalia or East Africa."

In every case one's putative partner would have to be Muslim, even in the several cases where young Somalis were open to marrying a non-Somali. In Bil's case, both religion and culture predominated in his desires. Bil, a junior in college, said:

> I want like a lot of kids. The most I can have, you know. Maybe eleven, or maybe more than that. But only if I can like take care of them. If I can like brought them in like good environments. But I don't want to just like have kids and put them in bad environment for the sake of having kids. I would like to have, I think ideal would be like two wife for me. In order to get like married four wife, you have to be like someone who is like very educated, I mean like in Islamic religion you have to be like scholar. You have to know like all the rules, all the rights that the women's have, and all that.

The ability to provide for several wives and many children was the cultural indicator of a man's own status and power. Bil continued:

> Right now, I don't know anything about having two wives, but I know like a lot of my people, after they get married one wife, they always go for like, they wanna have like second wives, you know. And like in Islamic country, in Islamic religion, men are allowed to have like four wives. So it's not like I'm not doing like something that totally against my religion. I believe that in order for me like to be married more than one wives, I at least have to be someone who has stable job. I have to have money. I have to be someone who's like powerful.

Like Bil, young Somali men overwhelmingly reported a desire to marry more than one wife, with Islam permitting under certain circumstances up to four women

marrying the same man. Polygamy is described in the Qur'an as a strategy to protect women and children who might otherwise be deprived of their social franchise. Surah 4:3 juxtaposes polygamy with monogamy, which is "more proper: that you may not deviate from the right course."[48] In the nomadic pastoral context of Somalia, male lineage was social franchise. A woman whose husband died while working or in battle might not otherwise have available mates if remaining men were already married. A woman who was unable to bear children would face shame and vulnerability if her husband had to divorce her so he could marry someone who could produce for him children. Whatever the case, a man should only take more than one wife to increase the "justice" the women receive in society. Somalian women, according to Bil, "get jealous" and do not readily accept being one of several wives. "It's very tough," Bil reflected. "I guess like most Somali people, like we are independence." But views differed. One high school senior who emphatically wanted four wives suggested that if women were very religious they would understand and support the large family structure of a successful man. An older man felt that given a forced choice, a first wife would ultimately see the logic of her husband taking a second wife. Abdullahi, a father of two toddlers, said:

> Most the woman they disagree. You know that. I mean, the woman nature is like that. That they become jealousy and they don't want, you know? But if I say to my wife, "You want me to cheat? Or you want me to have a clear relationship?" So definitely she will choose clear relationship, so she know where you at. Not being wild behind her and bring diseases and this stuff to her. So the reality, the logic, if they think, most of them, they agree. But because of their woman nature,

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[48] *The Qur'an*. 1995. Translated by M.H. Shakir. 7th Edition. Elmhurst, New York: Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, Inc.

> they disagree. They say, "No, no, no. You don't have to get another wife."

While Abdullahi expressed willingness to use male social franchise coercively to achieve polygamy, others emphasized more strongly the demands of positioning oneself to maintain a peaceful multi-wife family. Learning from other men's difficulty keeping more than one wife happy, Bil imagined needing not only to become a successful breadwinner, but having the counseling skills to work out a second wife with whom he would eventually marry:

> I just don't wanna like get married, for example, I just don't wanna like a lot of people they have one wife and they get married and then their wives get really pissed off and then they go through a lot of problems. I don't want to go through that. When I get married, if I'm having a second wife, I'm, first I have to make sure that I have to consult with my other wife. I have to make sure that I have like enough money to take care of both wives. And that I'm doing like the right things.

My conversations with women confirmed the men's beliefs that many women do not support polygamy in Somali society. The women I spoke with did not necessarily represent the viewpoint of all Somali women, but their perspectives indicated that there was a gender and sex negotiation going on among Somalis where the rights, boundaries, and support structures around love relationships and family-building were hotly contested. The following section from my field notes illustrated this dynamic as a small group of us debated while on the freeway coming from an after school program fieldtrip.

Tuesday, January 20, 2004

> Hamse shook his head and said Asha, an adult volunteer, is too Americanized. Hamse is 17 and follows Islamic religious tenets. As long as the man can provide food and shelter and treat each wife fairly they can have up to four wives. Asha continually questioned how that could be fair, how he could treat each fairly. Hamse kept accusing her of being too Americanized. Asha asked me what two people in America do if they like each other. I explained America's version of "sexual freedom" from the 1960s into a cultural ethics allowing people to date and have sex without the requirement of a relationship or marriage. Plus I described recreational sex and "party" culture, as well as the prevalence of people who chose more modest ethics and sex practices. I also explained that the average age of first sexual experience, or first time having sex is continually dropping. Now is down into middle school. They found this surprising.

Somali youth pointed out the irony of the illegality of more than one religiously grounded marriage relative to the celebration of "wild relationships". Considering the divorce rate outdistancing the marriage rate, the omnipresence of sex in advertising and mass media, and the public policy debates in support of same-sex marriage, some Somalis considered these "wild relationships" to cause unclear relationships, broken families, and sexually transmitted infections. They lamented these "wild relationship" values when considered relative to the demonizing and

undermining of Islamic relationship values. Speaking on the prohibition of polygamy one young man said, "It's so funny, you're not allowed to marry twice, okay, but, you're allowed to have five girlfriends, which you can live with them and have as many kids as you want." Abdullahi, the adult man who earlier commented on the sound and coercive "logic" of a second wife, reflected on the loss of religious foundations for Somali youth in City Heights, and offered a solution for 'sexual' 'diseases' based on his religious views. Abdullahi said:

> They talking about the AIDS now, HIV. There is no answer they saying. No! It is answer. There is answer. If there is no medical answer, there is spiritual answer, which is, you need to stop the wild relationship. I believe that. This is my own perspective. If I go outside and just have relationship, just I have relationship, I don't know who's this girl, or who's this man (in the case of a woman), I'm spreading, I'm creating the problem.

While HIV is transmitted through multiple possible situations, including blood transfusions, mother to child in birth, and sex with someone who is HIV+ whether consensual or non-consensual, Abdullahi's view suggested some Somalis considered the stakes of un-Islamic sex values to be life threatening.

Somali notions of gender and sexuality also formed around a strong rejection of the alternative lifestyles and homosexuality often tolerated in YMRC and in the city public sphere. The public display of same-sex coupling was interpreted as *haram*, or not lawful according to Islam, yet with queer-friendly public elements like cable television shows, the nearby Hillcrest neighborhood, and an "out" Warner High School teacher who advocated for LGBT students, Somalis had a high degree of

exposure to sexual tolerance in San Diego. During my fieldwork I had one opportunity to sit in a discussion circle with Somali young adult men at a popular coffee shop while they debated for several hours, including an extensive discussion on homosexuality. Their process was cultural in the sense of turn taking and consensus building, and in drawing upon religious authority. Their views on homosexuality fell within the spectrum of conservative positions in the US.

> *July 7, 2005*
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> One young guy started a conversation with, "If I see two gay dudes, I would kill them." Another guy challenged that it is against the religion to kill with your own hands. A third guy quoted the Hadith and said homosexuality is a sin that is punishable by death. Mostly in Somali, I understood only those statements they stopped to translate. Eventually they reached consensus that homosexuality is a sin and that god would punish with death, but that you yourself could not kill that person. They only translated two Islamic stories that speak of the "sin" of homosexuality: 1. A city where men were gay, God made the earth slam over on top of them (like an earthquake or something), and 2. that when two men have sex, the 7th (highest) level of heaven shakes and this indicates god's anger. Beyond that, the man to my left said the Hadith offer that if you see something wrong, 1) you have to try to stop it with your hand. If you cannot stop it with you hand, then 2) you have

> to stop it with your words. If you can't do this, then 3) you have to stop it with your heart and "hate" it in your heart. This seemed to be the basis of their consensus that you could not kill with your own hand, but you should not accept homosexuality and should say or do something to try to stop it.

Another young man expressed a somewhat transitional view during an interview. His rejection of same-sex practices was not couched in religious terms and he included a caveat for his acquired pleasures of heterosexual voyeurism. Musa said, "two gay dudes making out in front of you is something you rather would not see. I don't mind if they do it in their own home. I don't know, because to me if two women were making out, I wouldn't feel very disturbed (laughing). But two men making out, that would really disturb me."

At the same time that homophobia provided a critique of the US, it also reconfigured Somali masculinity. For example, in the all-male public sphere, customs like holding hands or displaying affection while engrossed in dialog with a close friend or family member were embarrassingly rejected by youth as "gay." The *ma'awiis*, a popular customary male clothing garment like the Indian sarong, was re-styled as a "skirt" or was considered appropriate only at home like pajamas. The non-heteronormativity of African American sexuality more broadly raises the stakes of these gender formations. Already social marginal, Somalis cannot afford to maintain traditions that increase their marginality. In this case, adopting homophobia allows

Somalis to claim Islam *and* mainstream normalcy. That same homophobia, however, also substitutes individualistic heteronormativity for the collective community formation characterized by homosocial intimacy. The non-heteronormativity of African American sexuality thus provides, on the one hand, mechanisms of intolerance, emasculation, and discrimination against race and sex others, and, on the other hand, a seductive promise of the illusory path by which black people could become "American." These hybrid and struggled-over Somali gender and sexuality formations show the youth to be at the center of a maelstrom of reformatory racial violence.

CONCLUSION

In the US, Somali masculinity is viewed as outside of American norms and is outlawed or pressured to conform to mainstream standards, even when Somali men follow "safe" sex practices like pre-marital abstinence at higher rates then their non-Somali peers. Young Somali men struggled with views and values that were impacted by external and internal pressures: the male homosocial bonding and dress central to community building and community marking, and the internally contested views about dating, marriage, and family structure that were shifting in US refuge. Often the youth imagined resolving the internal tensions and external pressures of racial violence and pathologization of black urban youth by leaving the US entirely for a Muslim nation.

The distorted threat of Somali sexuality allowed Young Men for Responsibility and Community (YMRC) to come into being, yet the program's misplaced reliance on

the "culture of poverty" ideology and easy shift to a more diffused multiculturalist framework secured YMRC's role of surveiling and disciplining always already abject youth of color. Young Somalis responded by engaging actively in the power struggle and exchange-based ethics of YMRC. In this social terrain with all of its pitfalls for Somali youth, the young men dreamed of relocating to Muslim lands, marrying early, marrying more than once, and raising many children with "proper" values.

CHAPTER 4

"MINIMAL IN THAT KIND OF KNOWLEDGE"
Educational Structures of Refuge and Somali Youth

"I saw 'em in the classroom like when they first got there, sitting there in the back of the room, like couldn't even hold a pencil. And the teacher's doing this stupid ESL lesson about like these metaphors that they couldn't relate to at all. Like cultural things, from our culture, that make no sense to someone whose lived in a hut in Africa tending the cows and growing corn." Refugee Program Teacher[49]

"The program has an assimilation process." "It's a friendly, timely intervention that helps the participants gain confidence in their abilities and their community." Warner High School teachers evaluating the Reach High after school program

"When I came down to San Diego, people were like all curious asking me questions like, 'So where are you from? Oh, Somalia? Where's that, in Jamaica?' Here they're minimal in that kind of knowledge. It makes me feel like, you know, what's wrong with these people? They should look at the map more often, or something." Somali High School Student

Musa Mohamed was 3 years old when his family moved from the countryside to the town.[50] Though too young to contribute to the family work, he brought with him basic knowledge of the responsibilities of nomadic herder boys. Throughout his boyhood, Musa experienced vast extremes in human experience: the euphoria of love and his first kiss, the confidence of riding the bus alone to explore new areas of the city and resourcefully finding his way home, and the confusion and anger of seeing his imam die in front of him shot in the head by a stray bullet in the Somali civil war. The fighting increased as Musa reached middle school age and he, his mother, and two brothers joined a stream of refugees heading for northern Kenya.

In 1993 he turned thirteen and arrived in San Diego from the Otanga refugee camp. As a result of a clerical error in his paperwork and his small stature due to inconsistent nourishment, Musa was placed in first grade. After a continuous three-

[49]Epigraph quotations come from interviews with author July 2005.
[50]Musa Mohamed's childhood story is a composite drawn from two oral history interviews by author in January and July 2005.

month growth spurt, incredulous elementary school administrators promptly promoted the more than five-foot tall youngster to seventh grade. Semi-literate and unable to speak or understand English, Musa entered the failing inner city schools of City Heights mindful of his homeland, yet hungry for the American dream. The rest, as they say, is history.

This chapter is about education as a structure of refuge and the challenges Somali youth experience in inner city US public schools. As is the case in San Diego, resettlement organizations place Somalis in the most affordable living conditions and nearest their countrywomen and men to facilitate newcomers' adjustment process. In population dense urban areas like City Heights, which houses the vast majority of the San Diego's estimated 12,000 Somali residents, this relocation can place Somalis where underemployment, under-funded schools, and under-resourced public services perpetuate systemic poverty. Refugees who have had disrupted or inconsistent schooling, who may have experienced the horror of war, or who come from cultures more collectivistic and less materialistic than the West face special forms of discrimination in attempting to become scholastically viable in the US. In some cases special programs arise in the nonprofit sector specifically to help young people like Musa Mohamed "acculturate," an ideological construct that naturalizes and depoliticizes the violent process of subject-making in the race hierarchy of the US.

After school programs like the Committee for Continental Needs' (CCN) Reach High After School Program surface to "support" both the newcomers and the schools with the goal of helping the refugees "succeed" in the US academically and in

life generally. By undertaking the "necessary mundane work of true acculturation,"[51] refugee advocacy programs like Reach High emphasize "cultural literacy" and academic skill building. While this approach gives the programs greater flexibility in responding to refugees' educational needs than public schools, their emphasis on "acculturation" fails to address directly the experiences of the youth themselves.

Service providers who, like regular school staff, are minimal in their knowledge of the newcomers may or may not understand the youths' challenges, and in any case limit in their programming to mainstream inclusion. The programs satisfy the American idea of what the refugees need, with "the refugee" being an interchangeable placeholder inhabitable by any of the various newcomer groups arriving with refugee status, and gear themselves to convert all such groups to mainstream American values. While after school programs emphasize "acculturation" and "self sufficiency," the youth in this study weather discrimination, less-than-rigorous schooling that impacts their competitiveness in society, and an undermining of their moral and religious foundations. Most importantly, careful consideration of refugee education in City Heights public schools and the concomitant erasure of ethnic history and identity, illuminates Somali youths' deft critique and negotiation of US inner city schools.

SOMALI EDUCATION

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[51] Characterization by Alan Erickson, former Reach High Teacher, personal interview with author July 2005.

Between a collapsed state since the early 1990s civil war and extended stays "languishing" in refugee camps, Somalis who arrive in US refuge are viewed as having disrupted, incomplete, or nonexistent education.[52] In 2005 UNICEF reported that, absent a central government, only 13% of boys and 7% of girls in Somalia enroll in locally managed primary education.[53] In 1972, just a year before Latin script was officially selected as the universal form for written Somali, literacy rates were estimated to be around 5%.[54] Twenty years of intensive government sponsored schooling had raised literacy by 1990, according to a United Nations estimate, to 24%.[55] Even with hopeful reports of locally managed Community Education Committees re-establishing locally controlled schooling, Somali education systems remain in "crisis."[56]

Service providers, who must demonstrate refugee neediness to validate and build support for their work, and young Somalis who find themselves marginalized in mainstream education represent Somali education very differently. Somali education is a contested site, and at stake is grassroots-level social justice as well as the meaning of African heritage and identity. Discourses of refugee trauma reduce historical, political, and cultural complexities to a master narrative of pathology and

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[52]Interview with CCN resettlement official July 2005.

[53]UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund). 2005. "Communities Unite Around Education in Somalia". April 7. http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/somalia_25906.html.

[54]Wikipedia. "5.4 The Language and Literacy Issue" in "History of Somalia" entry. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Somalia#The_language_and_literacy_issue.

[55]Ibid.

[56]United Nations Girls' Education Initiative. (2005) "Communities Unite Around Education" 7 April. http://www.ungei.org/gapproject/somalia_88.html

incapacitation to position First World humanitarian institutions and programs as *the only* viable sources of healing. Nonprofit institutions thus purportedly supply a scaffolding for civilization building—"development" in a global sense and "acculturation" in a local sense—based on premises of Africans' inability to care for themselves. Young Somalis instead emphasize the discipline and dignity of their learning back home and sharply criticize the interpersonal and institutional discrimination they experience at school.

Awale, a recent college graduate, elaborated on learning conditions of limited material resources, yet high academic standards. He described his Somali school experience as vibrant and engaging, making the most of limited resources:

> The classes were very large. The number of students in one class, I would say, forty five plus, in a not friendly environment, meaning the chairs, the tables, the chalkboard, were all not really conducive to studying or getting a quality education. But the teachers, the quality of the teachers were very excellent to say the least. The materials were run down. We would have to for instance rotate one book for several months. There was no public library that you could just go and at times even the only library around the neighborhood, when you go there would be a long list before you of the book that you want. So it might take you even a month or two months before you get the book that you wanted to read. But the style of teaching was quite different in the sense that (in the US) when we came in we were given books and homework and, you know, they would give printed sheets of the lecture that day. That was not the case in Somalia. The teacher would write down on the board very fast, and the board was very small and limited. He would have to come back and erase it. So you would have to copy very fast so that you don't miss the lesson. At the time I thought it was the best. But now that you know I came here and went to school and I now, obviously, I'm making the comparison.

Furthering his comparison, schools back home would "discipline" students for arriving late, missing school, failing to do homework, or offering incorrect answers in

class. Awale and also Idris, a recent high school graduate, detailed having to do push ups, being hit on the back of the hand with a ruler, having a pen lodged over the middle finger and under surrounding fingers so a hard push down on top by the teacher made the hand ring with pain. Awale was most animated when describing having to bend over and wrap his arms around from the inside of his legs to hold onto his ears, a position some children would have to stay in for up to forty-five minutes before receiving a failing grade for missed homework. Such punishment would be followed by additional "whipping" at home when one's father found out about the misbehavior. Though they did not like receiving corporal punishment and did not long for it in San Diego schools, Awale and Idris articulated a qualitative difference between the "effective" expectations and accountability measures they experienced in Somalia, and the more hostile environment they experience in US refuge.

Education experiences in refugee camps yielded similar respect for prior learning, despite severe disruption. In the mid-1990s as the largest numbers of Somalis left their homes for regional refugee camps, educational infrastructures had not yet been established. By 2003, the International Rescue Committee estimated there were 28,600 students enrolled in schools in the Kenya's Kakuma camp, which has a community of nearly one hundred thousand people from east and central Africa.[57] The high school and college age Somalis I interviewed had been resettled to the United States by the mid to late 1990s. Several were too young to be in school during these

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[57]"IRC Program Brings Special Needs Refugee Children Into Camp Schools in Kenya." July 31, 2003. http://www.theirc.org/news/irc_program_brings_special_needs_refugee_children_into_camp_schools_in_kenya.html.

years, while others simply had not gone to school during displacement. Hawo, a young adult, spoke of the practical and gender specific nature of her camp education. She said, "I learned sewing in the region camp north of Mogadishu. I was there for four years, after I left fourth grade in Somalia until high school. In the camp I also learned shoe making and metal work, to make knives. There was a big shop where we learn. They give tools and space. It was the best years of my life in the refugee camps. Maybe I was a child and not knowing the responsibilities, but it was fun."

None of the Somali youth I interviewed who had school experience before migrating disparaged the education system back home. Like Awale, others expressed appreciation for the quality of education they received briefly before becoming refugees. Ubah learned to value the quality of ideas more than educational products. During a class at her "inner city" US high school, while the teacher was criticizing the shabby books and materials, Ubah proudly related that in Africa she had learned that "it is not the cover that matters, but the contents," to which the teacher responded publicly with a degrading comment about poverty in Africa.

My point is not to use youth experiences to minimize or misrepresent the gravity of refugee experiences, but merely to complicate trauma narratives that remove refugee agency, imagination, and desire. The more important point, it seems to me, is that Somali youth idealize their memories of back home, a narrative that makes sense when situated within US constructs of officials who pathologize Somali in ontological terms.

Some Somali youth I interviewed did not struggle in US schools, and their life in San Diego was shaped by their class privilege back home, which usually entailed private instruction before arrival and more professionally trained parents who could get better jobs and move out of City Heights. Abdi, an honors student in San Diego, said, "Me and my brother, we went to Islamic school. It was like Islamic slash English. They taught both. That went for a while and somehow we stopped because we moved. And then we had a personal teacher who taught us English before we came here. So that was like a three-month teaching. He taught us how to say 'Hello,' 'Hi.' He taught us the ABCs, the numbers. He taught us how to say, 'May I use the bathroom' just in case we go to school. So it was just preparing us when we arrive in San Diego. Just the basics. And taught us how to write a couple sentences." A San Diego State University graduate had an even more extensive preparation, and related his advantages over other Somalis who had come to the city at the same time. Bashir said:

> They would make someone a junior (in the US) when he doesn't speak English, doesn't read English, doesn't write English, or never been to school in his life or her life. But for me the case wasn't that, because coming from a family that was well off, we had a private instructor. He used to come to our home at night and help us with the homework and both in the madrasa and as well as the school subjects. So I had basic background of education so I could, when I started freshman, even the math seemed too basic for me.

Beyond the surface of this ideological struggle over the validity of refugee knowledge and experience lies a deeper contest over the meaning of African culture and history. Somali class history, for instance, is tied directly to Somalia's modernization, development, and formation of a nation-state, and opens up significant

complications to the collapse and trauma master narratives. Primarily an oral culture, Somalis had no written language (other than Arabic or other foreign languages) until 1972. The history of five colonizers since the 1880s (England, Italy, France, Ethiopia, and Kenya: the last two being current border disputes) included colonial and boarding schools, as well as Somali resistance to colonization. Western officials use low literacy rates to bolster arguments about Somalia's cataclysmic failure and neediness, yet these statistics also signal Somalis' historic defiance against Western imperialism. Enforced British, Italian, and French colonial education systems coexisted alongside Koranic and informal communal instruction throughout the 19th and 20th centuries with private schools and tutors replacing the public school system "for Somali households with adequate finances" that had collapsed in the civil war.[58] The historical roots of Somali education indicate a postcolonial modernity rooted in contradictions: oral pedagogy, performance, and story telling running perpendicular to colonial literacy formations; autonomous family-based power running perpendicular to centralized nation-state power; and now Islamic instruction running perpendicular to the war on terror. Within the context of the "Somali refugee" construct, Somali modernity is disallowed, not because it is too much information or too difficult to understand, but because admission of Somali full humanity would expose the vertical power dynamics in and weaken the foundations for liberal state humanitarian action.

Somali youth conceptualize their experiences of education back home as rich in character building and dignity, a very different picture than that created by

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[58]Canada-based Somali Teachers Association (SOTAS) www.lafolle.com/educationtwo.html.

humanitarian trauma discourse. Class differences are absorbed by "acculturation" ideology where "success" makes one "American", yet difficulty with the English language, failure in school, or adherence to traditional cultural practices make one a "refugee," and thus a trigger for "care." These varying viewpoints highlight a very significant struggle rooted in race history and ideology. Even more explicit in contradiction than the construction of the refugee past is the delivery of education as a structure of refuge.

REFUGEE EDUCATION

Refugee youth arriving in the United States bring a vast wealth of energy, knowledge, and experience, little of which is validated or valued in mainstream US society. Thousands of Somali children arrived in various US cities throughout the 1990s, and were placed like Musa Mohamed[59] in age-grade level school systems, swelling on the fly remedial and special education tracks. In educating refugees, public schools have a tough job and perform poorly at it, a hidden tragedy magnified by a dearth of studies on refugee education in the US. Refugees arrive and present unforeseen challenges for schools: teachers do not speak the languages or understand customs well enough to deal directly with students. There may not be enough staff available for additional language and academic tutoring support. Schools may not be capable of significantly engaging the home, family, and community contexts of the newest arrivals from a distant global context. According to UK refugee education

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[59] See opening section of this chapter for Musa Mohamed's story.

specialist Jill Rutter (1999:126,128) school staff, as well as scholars, often view refugee children as "the exotic other, for whom teachers were ill-equipped to support without additional training" and overwhelmingly subscribe to "the hegemonic construction of the refugee child as traumatized." Exoticism, emphasizing "cultural difference," supplies both fixed racial characteristics, and a promised resolution through assimilation. Trauma cements the presumed neediness refugees and their presumed dependence on benevolent hosts (Rutter 2006). At the same time, standards and testing "educational regimes of truth" categorize high scoring refugee students as successful even though they may experience undiagnosed and untreated depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (Rutter 1999:126, Mosselson 2007:204). The prevailing construct of trauma to special education to standardized achievement eschews the broad realities of refugee resettlement in favor of more easily administered rationalizations of a bleak educational status quo.

Schools are particularly vulnerable to cuts in public sector spending with, for instance, 1996 welfare cuts in the UK contributing to malnutrition and stress-related illness in children, greater family breakdown, and little effective learning in schools (Rutter and Jones 1998:31). Secondary schools are least able to meet the needs of refugees and teachers could easily become overwhelmed with the arrival of even one newcomer. In such conditions, trauma has been used as a moral foil so that service providers can "salvage service and decision-making values" and to cover over "the powerlessness of teachers" (Rutter 2006:143,154). The standards-based approach presents irresponsible public policy where as long as refugees score high in school,

which they often eventually do disproportionately to established US minorities, then self-sufficiency and acculturation have adequately been achieved. Such operating principles obscure specific experiences among different refugee groups, minimize the total stress experienced by displaced families and communities with unfamiliar intergenerational and gender systems, and decontextualize refugees from their status as disaporic migrants connected to conditions back home. This is akin to presenting education as the transmission of datum like "2+2=4" and "George Washington was the first president" rather than as an engagement between human beings. Refugee education scholars, therefore, call for an ecological perspective and a culturally relevant pedagogy that moves beyond student achievement, which can cover over the greater needs and experiences of refugees (Rutter and Jones 1998).

Warner High

In City Heights, San Diego, Warner High School has ranked statewide in the lower 20% of California schools in Academic Performance Index (API) since 2001, dipping into the lowest decile in 2004 just before being taken over by the state and broken into four small schools.[60] With high Latino and African American (47% and 28%), low White (4%), and high free or reduced lunch (84%) and English language learner (33%) demographics, the Warner student body bears the markers of an inner

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[60]California Department of Education, Policy and Evaluation Division reports for 2001-2004.

city school.[61] Joining three other failing schools, Warner benefited from $4.1 million from the US Department of Education, $11.6 million from the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation, and a feature on the Oprah Winfrey show for an infusion of resources at the top to expand administrative structures and to ostensibly make the daily round more personable and intimate for everyone on campus.[62] Tallying nearly 40 languages spoken at home among students, Warner hosts around 300 Somalis, a conspicuous minority with "special linguistic and cultural needs"[63] representing 17% of all students.[64] At Warner, it seems both the greatest need and the greatest numbers have come together in the most underachieving school. City Heights property values languished due to disinvestment and densification since the 1950s,[65] while established refugee communities and resettlement organizations continually attracted newcomers to one of the few remaining "affordable" neighborhoods in a region with a skyrocketing standard of living. This array of converging circumstances would present

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[61]California Department of Education 2005-2006 statistics for the four schools include the following percentages for Latino/African American/White of total: 39%/39%/3% of 433; 56%/27%/4% of 431; 48%/22%/6% of 428; and 44%/23%/5% of 397. For free or reduced lunch/English language learners of total, the numbers are: 83%/35% of 433; 82%/32% of 431; 85%/32% of 428; and 85%/35% of 397. California state averages are Latino 48%, African American 8%, White 30%, Free or reduced lunch 51%, and English language learner 25%.

[62]A San Diego Unified School District press release (Aug. 5, 2004) announced the $4.1 million grant from the US Department of Education, while the Gates-Winfrey support came two years later (Maureen Maghee "Winfrey, Gates tape at San Diego High, with media at bay" *Union-Tribune* Feb. 16, 2006).

[63]Personal interview with Somali service provider June 2005.

[64]Somali student count comes from California Department of Education 2005-2006 statistics.

[65]Martinez-Cosio 2006:127.

special, heightened challenges for public school staff, Somali youth and families, and their advocates in a crucible of urban refugee education.

During four years of field work at Warner as a part-time volunteer geometry tutor and after school program supporter, I came to appreciate the youths' challenges in receiving a meaningful refugee education. My first day in a Warner classroom I faced a microcosm of broader problems in acculturation. Sitting next to a young Somali named Idris I encountered a collective sensibility that provided reinforcement for Somalis, yet complicated teaching moments. Unsatisfied by my unwillingness to give him answers to each problem despite his most concerted efforts to charm me and to promise his future friendship and admiration, Idris periodically focused elsewhere and, as I helped another student on my left side, discretely disappeared only to return with several answers filled in his worksheet. When I would compliment him and ask him to explain step by step how he arrived at these answers, he would resist and complain so emphatically that my own focus would begin to wander. Scanning the room I saw several of the students talking about various unrelated topics, and then getting up to search the room for someone from which to copy the class work. The pattern occurred across ethnic groups, yet ethnic-specifically—the class comprised of thirteen East Africans, eight being Somali, with several of the students appearing to be Mexican American, several Southeast Asian, and several white; evenly gender balanced.

"Come on, tell me what is number eight!"

Ignoring him I responded, "Idris, let's go to number one. Explain to me how you got from this step to this step. Do you understand this problem?"

As I played this dialog out repeatedly through that spring and through the next school year, sometimes following Idris to his classes, sometimes with Mr. Jonathan's third or fifth period geometry classes, I saw collective cultures foregrounding peer solidarity and support, while signaling the additional educational burden newcomers face. Idris shared that he takes an English class at nights and it is hard to make the help sessions. While Idris found the geometry class moved too fast, others found some subjects, math in particular, slower than what they remembered back home. Adan, a college student in San Diego, found the math curriculum when he arrived to be equivalent to what he had learned three years prior, a resource that offered some solace through his difficult early English learning.

Mr. Jonathan used to be more invested in the particular ups and downs of the African students, being East African himself and a young, dynamic teacher sought out by refugee students. He said, "I don't get involved with the kids anymore. I used to listen to them and try to help them. There's too many problems." Mr. Jonathan got approached with the personal lives of young people who in many cases had just barely come through civil war, famine, and refugee camps, who were often the functional heads of multigenerational households in families trying to make life in San Diego work, and who reported a range of challenges with Warner High. Mr. Jonathan had been resigned to disconnecting and, with a defeated feeling, just doing his job. He

played out a heart-wrenching script of watching the young people figure out new subversions to adversarial structures of authority.

Somalis at Warner faced significant institutional barriers that complicated their adjustment in refuge. Urban development concentrating poverty and diversity in City Heights, making it the most "affordable" city neighborhood, led to an overrepresentation of low income and English as a foreign language students.[66] White flight and disinvestment led to low property values and tax revenue, weakening neighborhood school budgets. More challenging, less rewarding conditions strained teacher and administrator retention and continuity. Decency and sexual morality were under assault from mass media conglomerate "black" cultural producers. Images of black "hip hop" youth out of control led to authoritarian policing and the privatization of public space, play, and "free" time, a pattern common in US "inner city" (Kelley 1998:53). Fewer community spaces and "preventive" surveillance led to criminalization of "ghetto" youth. Somali parents, unable to use traditional corporal discipline and often unable to navigate the policy substrate of parenting in San Diego, became in many cases bystanders to their children's Americanization. These environmental factors calibrated the challenges of refugee education for Somali youth and their families.

Warner High School itself responded to the influx of Somalis in the late 1990s with a combative pairing of ignorance and authoritarianism. It took the school district more than 10 years to publish a one-page information sheet about Somali society for

[66]See Chapter 2 for discussion of City Heights urban history.

the purposes of "cultural sensitivity" training, and did that only after staff bigotry and student racial violence did not go away with the passing of time. The multicultural education model absurdly reduced dynamic practices and values of heterogeneous ethnic groups to interchangeable one-page contact sheets. Counted as "African American," administrators had no non-disaggregated data to verify, refute, or address claims by Somali youth, parents, and community leaders regarding discriminatory treatment at school.

Even with a Somali staff liaison, youth and parents might find school acts of discipline perplexing. Ibrahim, for instance, a technical college student who had struggled through middle and high school in City Heights, remembered, "I had a one teacher accuse me that I harass her. And I didn't harass her. She sent me to the principal, and I got a kicked out of the class and put in a different class. And to today I can't figure out, you know, why she accused me I was harassing her." Along similar lines Abdi's experience was a bit more detailed. Abdi was a quiet Warner High senior who had arrived in San Diego in the year 2000. He said:

> The only teacher I have difficult was Mr. Foster; it was world history. He was very nice, but I don't know why he did that. We had a test and me and Mohamed was sitting next to one another, and when we finished the test, the next day he gets out the test and I didn't make any mistake. Then he gave me a "D-". I ask him why, it was like, "Sit down, I'll come back." Next thing I know he was writing a note and on the phone. I thought he was just taking a call. And I was sitting, the next time I know the security lady came and took me to the principal. I saw the note he wrote saying, "Abdi was trying to kill me. Trying to fight me." And I never say anything. I said, "What's going on like this? I was supposed to got a A." I didn't even have mistake. He was saying that Mohamed say that I was gonna fight him. Then I talked to the principal, and I said, "I did not do anything, why you guys doing this?" The principal said, "Why you wanna fight Mr. Foster?" I said I was

> only asking him what's going on with my test, and I have a right to get explain. They suspended me by two days from the school. No reason. That's the only teacher I have that was difficult in school. I never talked to him about it after that. I didn't want to get in trouble. They don't listen to my side anything. Almost I got arrested that day. They called the campus police. After that nothing bad happen because I was very careful to not talk back or do anything, even if I fail the class. Just go back again and do whatever I have to do. I was trying to stay out of trouble.

Mr. Foster's actions illustrate that not all discrimination came from overtly racist or bigoted San Diegans. Despite being "very nice" according to Abdi, Foster triggered Warner's regulatory enforcement apparatus passive aggressively when he feared Abdi. A pattern of baffling and unexplained authoritarian measures have led Somali advocates to place disproportionate suspensions and a lack of punishment for students who attack Somalis as their current top agenda item with the school district.

Somali youth and their parents fought a decade-long battle to make Warner and neighborhood schools tolerant to Muslim lifestyles. Food and nutrition played a special role in this process. During one summer program at Warner, for instance, after school program teacher Alan Erickson became sick of ham sandwiches because several times a week for six weeks as many as fifteen students would come in after summer school and plunk their *haram* (pork being prohibited) lunch on his desk. Eventually Warner designated an enclosed courtyard as a prayer space for Muslim students (which in reality meant Somalis), but intersecting patterns of religion, gender, and institutional authority had already established the adversarial Warner stance. Nur, an unemployed high school graduate, reflected:

> I had a bad experience in Warner High School, cause, I hate to say this, when you're Muslim, you know, and you have a duties, and you have

> to pray five times a day. And you ask teachers sometimes "I wanna go pray" middle of the class. They will not like that. And they will say, "Oh, you're disturbing the class." Or some of the culture will not be the same. The girls have to cover up. The guys, they don't have to shake the hands of the woman. So it was a little bit difficult, you know. And so, my religion, I cannot shake a woman hand, unless if she's not my sister, or if she's not my mom. I can't shake her hand. And other thing, when a woman trying to shake 'em and you say no, she will think, you know, "You think you're all that." Or thinking you trying to push her away.

Problematic institutional patterns were exacerbated for many Somali youth with their experiences of personal discrimination. "Somalis," one Somali Warner grad said, "were dealt in a way that was quite different from other minorities over all" by teachers, some of who were "very hostile." This personal hostility could be passive, as through unsupportiveness, or more active through bigotry. Passive intolerance had significant effects like in Maryan's case where her teacher "wasn't really friendly" and "would always blame it on me when I get in trouble with other girls, like when kids tease you in middle school just because you're different." Maryan explained of Deborah, "She was the only teacher I remember her name, just because I hated her."

In another case, one Warner ESL teacher's discouragement stuck in a student's mind. He said:

> I remember a day we were, a group of us, 20-25 Somali students and we had a counselor from one of the universities motivating us to go to university and continue our education as we complete, and right after he left, the teacher said, and I quote, "Guys, be realistic. You guys are not going to universities. Some of you might go to vocational schools. But that's it." And this is a teacher, someone whose supposed to be a role model for you. Someone whose supposed to motivate you. And I took that heart and the funny thing is I saw her in 2004. She said, "Oh, Warsame, how are you? How have you been?" And I said, "Oh, I'm doing great. You know, went to school, completed my bachelor and starting my masters in October." And she said, "Man, I always knew

> you were gonna be great." And I said, "Also for your info, at least nine out of the class that day went to university. Some are still in SDSU and some are in UCSD studying subjects that most people might not have the capability to do: doctors, scientists, computer scientists, and nurses and so forth." And she's all, "Wow, really?" And I said, "Yes, really." And this wasn't really an isolated case. It was pretty much many incidents that we have experienced with other teachers.

Explicit bigotry permeated the school and neighborhood experiences of young Somalis. In many cases Somalis responded despite risk of being disciplined. Zeynab, a senior at Warner, was on her way to school and a younger white boy in her neighborhood tried to pour water on her and her sister. Zeynab spoke up to him and his mom while the boy mocked her accent and the mother blamed the incident on the girls because the boy didn't understand their language. Zeynab countered the mother's defense saying, "He doesn't understand 'Excuse me'?! He does understand 'Excuse me', and he doesn't need to because we have our own language. Maybe he should learn Somali." Since he had repeatedly shouted that they should "go back to their country," Zeynab told him he should go back to his country because this is "Indian country." She recalled, "I felt bad, then I started to think, I mean this is not his country too. He's a white man, just like anybody white man came into our African land, and South Africa. And they live there trying to call themselves Africans."

Called a "nigger" by a student at school, Abdirahman retorted, "'Are you serious?' And it wasn't a conflict but I said, 'Man just don't call me that anymore. We might have a problem if you're going to call me that.'" Another young Somali recalled of his first school experiences, "The African American students welcomed us very well. When some other students were making fun of us and I remember one of them

keep saying, 'Nigger.' And at the time I didn't know the meaning of nigger, so I thought it was just cool thing that he was calling me, until I realized what the meaning was in few months."

These frequent experiences with racial hostility played an important role in instructing Somalis of the language and terms of their pre-established marginal position in US refuge. Experiences of those like young Amina further demonstrated the role of institutional authority in enforcing racial hierarchy. In her nearby elementary school, Amina recalled recently getting a chilling glare and being sent to the principal when after her teacher unconscionably finished telling her how she looked so cute like a little monkey, Amina replied plainly, "You look like a rat."

Religious bigotry brought Somalis a great amount of conflict through the 1990s, and became an even stronger force after September 11th, 2001. Several students reported having been called "terrorist" by other students at Warner, one girl having been specified as "Osama bin Laden's daughter." Throughout my fieldwork I frequently heard Somali girls speak of being asked if they have hair underneath their covering, which they considered a religious test that reinforced their senses of decency and humanity in the face of disrespect and selfish intrusiveness. The solace and personal power the girls found in their *hijab* (Islamic covering for women) countered the deep US cultural logic that truncated women of color subjectivity, especially "foreign" and religious "others." On at least one occasion, young Somalis reported precipitating a group fight after a Somali girl's covering was torn off and thrown down by a non-Somali peer. After reflecting on the hair topic, a teen named Istahil added, "I

think my last year in Warner or so a guy, we were getting our soda out of machine and we put a dollar. And we gotta soda. And this guy was like, he was one of the teachers, he came up and said, 'Oh, you can't drink soda, it's against your religion.' He said that everything's against our religion, and he started talking about how he's a Christian and everything. I mean, that's kind of weird. He was very insulting. We didn't say anything much. We were kind of intimidated, but we think that time he was just trying to make us, you know, feel bad. And trying to make it seem like his religion was better."

Warner and the San Diego school district approached Somali issues as matters of cultural difference, a universal explanation recited by officials, service providers, and even some Somalis. Framing the problems as matters of cultural education, led to the summary information sheet, staff sensitizing filled with details like how curling or pointing your finger to get a Somalis attention is an insult, and landscape tableaux of civil war and refugee camp madness leading to broken homes and pathology. The cultural difference explanation minimizes the aggregated effects of pervasive personal bigotry, and fully obscures systemic and institutional barriers. Being called a monkey by your teacher is considered an individual matter of optional and eventual "sensitizing", but replying in kind warrants suspension and a blemish on your official record. Being called a nigger or being told you will go nowhere in life by a teacher are considered isolated cases, while fighting to defend your culture and religion when a girl's covering gets defiled earns you a group reputation of troublesome scrappers and law enforcement priority #1. The key issues are not about "difference"—like, Somalis

eat sambusas while Mexicans eat burritos and "Americans" eat sandwiches—but are about frustrated realities of "refuge" and "justice" within US racial formations and the consonant resonation of global and local inequality in the experiences of Somalis in City Heights.

Nearly all Somali youth I encountered during my fieldwork wanted to succeed in school with high grades, graduation, college, and a gainful career and family life, sentiments shared by their parents and grandparents. Pointedly, many expressed a desire to receive excellent training and return to help rebuild Somalia. By all accounts the youth, especially the young men, were Americanizing at an alarming rate with loss of Somali language, less observant practice of Islam, and limited knowledge about life back home. Knowledge of family history and Somali customs, politics, and history were not promoted in the standardized curriculum, making refugee education tangential, if not antagonistic to the Somali past and future. Facing significant hostility and intolerance from institutions and officials, young Somalis reversed the moral dynamics of racial hierarchy, imagining schools back home to be superior in many ways to American schools. In classes where the teacher went too fast, they pooled together and "shared" their class work. In hallways where peers and authorities teased and tormented the newcomers, the students grouped together to fight back.[67] In schools shaped by historic inequality, the youth parried religious and racial discrimination with identity affirmation and social cohesion. Beyond the basic

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[67]See Chapter 2, which argues that when Somalis fight back, law enforcement officials map stereotypes about the Somali threat onto Somali fighting and self-defense in order to rationalize increased surveillance and tough-on-crime public policy while masking the erosion of public resources.

incapability of public schools to serve refugee students in general, institutional and interpersonal barriers caused public schools like Warner to fail as structures of refuge.

REACH HIGH

As we have seen in previous chapters, nonprofit organizations initiated services and programs in City Heights to target the specific needs of Somali youth. The programs we have looked at thus far used stereotypical portrayals of the Somali community to secure funding, and beyond serving the community, their work included surveillance, supervision, and inculcating the ubiquity of law enforcement and social service authorities in the Somali community through the youth, the primary point of contact in acculturation. The crisis in education was, like the sex and violence crises, based in large part on spooky phantasmagoria projected onto black bodies, but also much more obviously on an institutional breakdown rooted in persistent and pernicious de facto segregation. At a certain point, minorities could no longer be blamed for the pathetic performance of failing inner city schools.[68]

In 1996, once the City Heights Somali community had grown to several thousand, resettlement agencies generated support programs to help the newcomers finish school, but the additional efforts by the nonprofit sector would be tied up in the contradictions of helping newcomers adjust into racialized urban poverty. Arriving as a young adult between ages 15-17 meant one would spend a couple of years in high

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[68]Despite ongoing racial scapegoatting, especially by neoconservative politicians since the Reagan presidency, the increased presence of minorities in influential positions in education and politics have prevented such traditional US views from being aired publicly without challenge (Lipsitz 2006).

school ESL before having to finish graduation requirements in adult school. 1.5 generation Somalis arriving before their teens would have at least middle and high school years to get on graduation track. Receiving the largest influx of new Somalis, the ailing and overwhelmed Warner staff embraced the offer for additional help following the suggestion by a consortium of more than twenty service providers and community leaders. The Committee for Continental Needs (CCN), an international refugee relief organization with a San Diego branch office, formed the Reach High after school program to address the acculturation needs of Somali youth in the community.[69] With CCN's more than fifty years of experience and world-spanning structure, Reach High originated with humanitarian vision, stabile organizational support, name recognition, and a vast network of human resources.

Reach High offers tutoring and activities Monday through Friday from 3:00 to 6:00pm and during the summer following school from noon to 3:00. Reach High would host twenty to thirty mainly Somali students each day with fluctuations from as few as ten to as many as fifty. CCN materials describe Reach High as follows:

> *Reach High* is an after-school program for refugee teens who are new to San Diego. Credentialed teachers, bi-lingual aides and community volunteers provide students with homework help and tutoring combined with a life skills curriculum. The curriculum, enhanced by guest speakers and field trips, is designed to improve students' understanding

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[69]The vast majority of CCN resources (80%) go to provide basic food and shelter on-site in refugee crises around the world. Some twenty percent of CCN's operations support the resettlement of the few families and individuals who receive an opportunity to leave their refugee camp and start a new life in the United States. CCN branch office in San Diego offers a range of programs and services to assist the fresh start of refugees primarily from Africa, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe. (CCN information provided during my volunteer training in March 2002 and from a 2004 CCN grant proposal).

> of American society and their chances of success in school and beyond the classroom.

"Success" for refugee youth after school conjoins academic performance, avoidance of crime, and self-sufficiency—proper acculturation into mainstream middle class values of (financial) independence, individualism, and industriousness. Reach High's humanitarianism proffers a one-directional didacticism calibrated to US conservatism. One CCN director explained, "If refugees who come today are not successful and don't begin to be productive and give back to the community, there will be a political backlash against immigrants and then we won't be able to bring in deserving people down the line," not having satisfied those in "mainstream America, maybe one of the red states, which are very compassionate people often, but they have expectations that you go to work."[70] Without voter support, funding dries up as well as the pipeline and the programs.

Despite a bifurcated job market with high-skilled high-paying technology sector or low-skilled low-paying service sector work, poor educational and training opportunities, a high cost of living, and systemic discrimination, Somalis in City Heights must learn quickly to make it on their own or else be blamed for their own failure to do so. Spending longer days at Warner, Somali youth can "acculturate": a form of resettlement success that focuses on dominant ideology *not* on social conditions: the individual performance of refugee youth and *not* systemic or personal racial and religious discrimination; personal responsibility and *not* the holistic family and community effects of increased institutionalization (10-12 hours per day in

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[70]CCN director in a personal interview with author July 2005.

schools), surveillance, and criminalization; and the fairness of social Darwinism and *not* the irony of presenting racialized urban poverty as refuge.

Extended day, "Out of School Time", or after school education programs, like educational institutions and the other youth programs in this study, are limited in their capacity to serve as structures of refuge. More flexible than public schools (with optional attendance, no grading, and no standardized curriculum) and more able to engage refugees' family and community life directly, after school programs in refugee resettlement must orient themselves toward youth acculturation and success in regular-day school performance, and must market themselves accordingly. Even with successful marketing, they are vulnerable to fluctuations in policy and funding conditions, both in terms of the broader nonprofit humanitarian sector and the conditions of schools.

Humanitarian advocates supported the program, yet racial ideologies converged to undermine the spirit of refuge. The youth themselves utilized Reach High for "help for homework" (89%) and "field trips" (86%).[71] They liked using computers (93%), seeing new places (89%), learning about America (89%), and getting good grades (86%), while Warner teachers wanted more programs and more funding, and "strongly agree" that Reach High helped with homework completion and accuracy as well as the general acculturation of refugees into "the school setting." Offering academic support to a needy public school, Reach High, like the other programs in this study, nevertheless couched its services (tutoring and mentorship) in

[71]CCN internal evaluation October 2003.

the institutionalization of racialized youth, in this case in converting "free" play time into administered time during the "critical hours" of potential juvenile mischief. The National Institute on Out-of-School Time at Wellesley College, for instance, says the need for after school programs stems from "at risk" low-income racially and ethnically diverse youth who, in the "prime time for juvenile crime," lack "adult supervision and participation in self-care...(with) increased likelihood of participation in delinquent or other high risk activities such as experimentation with alcohol, tobacco, drugs and sex. Teens who are unsupervised during after school hours are 37% more likely to become parents."[72] These ideologies rely on a deep-rooted fear of lascivious poor people of color out of control reproducing the dregs of society, threatening the good of "all" with immorality and draining the economy. Rather than foregrounding transformative justice (or at least participatory democracy) for heavily exploited and vulnerable working class families, these ideologies mask the political and economic status quo and set to work engines that call into being the merit worthy few who can escape poverty and leave behind the geo-spatial hell of the now more hour glass-shaped social pyramid. The present and past of race in the US impacts after school educational structures of refuge.

Regardless of the problematic elements of acculturation ideology, Reach High itself was fragile, and vulnerable to dips in volunteer spirit, to policy shifts, and to

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[72]NOIST (National Institute on Out-of-School Time). 2007. "Making the Case: A Fact Sheet on Children and Youth in Out-of-School Time." Wellesley Centers for Woman at Wellesley College. p.2-3. http://www.niost.org/publications/Final2007FactSheet.pdf.

birdseed funding conditions.[73] After September 11, 2001, for instance, overall refugee admissions to the US dropped by 60% due to drastic federal immigration restriction.[74] From 2001 to 2002, total number of Somalis arriving in the US went from 4,939 to 242, with California dropping from 378 to 14 total.[75] The Reach High originally designed to help newly arrived refugees who "have no idea how to hold a pencil" learn the basic vocabulary and flow of their new city, suddenly found itself serving youth who had already been through nearby Sterling Middle School.[76] Lucinda Bonner, Reach High's teacher from 1998-2002, for instance, found her students had gone from embracing basic computer lessons to criticizing the out-of-date resources made available to them. In her last year when a volunteer donated refurbished computers as gift incentives for the students completing the computer unit, the students would say, "What do you mean it doesn't have the Internet? I don't want this old thing." Former teacher Alan Erickson (2002-2004) explained that with fewer non-literates who

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[73]Roughly 60 million Americans, or 28% of the population volunteer every year for a total value of $150bil. (Corporation for National and Community Service. 2007. "Volunteering in America: 2007 State Trends and Rankings in Civic Life". p.5, 29 www.independentsector.org/programs/research/volunteer_time.html. The total of 8 billion volunteer hours multiplied by the 2006 national average of $18.77 per hour for volunteer equals $150.2bil.). In 2006, 6.47 million Californians volunteered 858.5 million hours for an estimated value of more than $17bil (the 2006 figures multiplied by the 2005 estimated hourly value of $20.36 equals $17.5 billion. Corporation for National and Community Service 2007:47). For academic support services in the nonprofit sector, volunteer labor can literally make or break programs.

[74]US Office of Refugee Resettlement reports that total refugee and asylum arrivals went from 94,222 in 2000 and 87,104 in 2001 to 45,793 in 2002 and 39,201 in 2003 before slightly recovering http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/data/refugee_arrival_data.htm.

[75] http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/data/refugee_arrival_data.htm.

[76]Alan Erickson, Reach High teacher from 2002-2004, personal interview with author June 2005.

needed substantial supplementary education just to "get a foot in the door," Reach High received the youth who had already been through the fights and who had "learned how to not belong to the other ethnicities that lived in their community." "Fresh off the boat," newcomers would "cling to the status quo because it's that very status quo which granted them the right to come to the country." After being resettled for a period of time, Erickson added, the youth in City Heights learned enough about "different institutions" to undergo their own evaluation process, to see the "possibly negative effects" of some programming, and to make sense of their own resources, opportunities, and prospects for the future. An important dynamic came to light in the Reach High student shift. What Somalis seemed to be experiencing was not "acculturation" or a blending in to a new world, but a wizening of Somali youth who resourcefully negotiate the caste-like system of racialized urban poverty.

Shortly after September 11th, in January 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind comprehensive educational reform emphasizing teacher quality, standardized testing, and scientific measures for education quality. Warner High School became singularly interested in the bottom line of test scores, obviously influenced by the high profile rescue endorsement of mega-stars like Bill Gates and Oprah Winfrey and the lingering embarrassment of ranking in the lower deciles in the state-wide Academic Performance Index.[77] Warner faced a state takeover and restructuring, and implemented for the class of 2006 a graduation

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[77]See Maureen Maghee. 2006. "Winfrey, Gates tape at San Diego High, with Media at Bay." *San Diego Union Tribune* (Feb 16), and California Department of Education San Diego Unified – Reports.

gatekeeper, the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE). The turn toward standardization and the drop off in new arrivals forced Reach High to shift its emphasis from cultural literacy to performance measures. Alan Erickson found the now more easily fundable "terms of outcomes, objectives, and measurable objectives" antithetical to the un-measurable, now un-fundable community building programming in which he had been trained. For Erickson, "allowing community to happen on campus" was sacrificed on the altar of "making sure someone scores ten points higher on an exit exam." Erickson's successor, Serena Bianchi, found in her experience starting in 2004 that the inability to meet academic bench marks in standardized test scores made Reach High staff feel as though they had failed miserably. Bianchi indicated, however, that inconsistencies in testing, like no pre- and post-testing, different tests for each grade level, and aggregation of scores across the board, undermined the validity of the performance measures. Nevertheless, grades, graduation rates, and API scores would sufficiently explain to policy makers and the general public the stories of Warner, Reach High, and Somali youth.

Under pressure, Warner staff became less interested in the adjustment challenges of Somali youth and less supportive of Reach High. Some Somali boys had begun rejecting the projected future in City Heights, a laborious and precarious crawl up the social ladder beginning with their pathologization and degradation, and they began rebelling in mundane and more alarming ways against the institutional authorities shepherding that future. When Alan Erickson, a graduate student doing master's degree work in rhetoric, took the teaching position in Summer 2002, and

entered a "huge mess" in which the Warner staff had begun to clean house with a crackdown on Somali boys, a small number of whom were reported to have joined gangs, most of whom had been cast as rioters. Since Reach High had not given up on these students, the program found itself in the administrative firing line. Erickson explained:

> For the first year that we were at Warner, we had to work very diligently in order to not be kicked off campus. In other words, the sentiment of the campus was to close down the after school programming because the idea that certain violence *may* happen (after school), was more important than the idea that educational programming *did* happen every single day. That was an incredibly large battle, not just against like the top administrators, the principals and vice principals, but the very teachers who were letting us share their rooms; the same people who never once stepped foot in the classroom for the entire twelve months, not nine months but twelve months that we were there. We really just weren't deemed that important. They thought, "If there's any problems, just get rid of it ASAP."

A summer water fight, "loitering", and a student "standing on a desk" during an open house were sufficient motivation for the Vice Principal to confront Erickson with closing Reach High down. Some youth fueled general stereotypes of Somali boys by taking Warner golf carts for joy rides, being disruptive and littering in the adjacent hospital's cafeteria, and, in one case, breaking into the school and stealing valuable equipment.

Structurally speaking, Reach High occupied the unenviable role of mediating between a hostile educational system and one of the marginalized groups US society produced. A rescue ideology combined with acculturation mandates made Reach High coherent in humanitarian terms, but by foregrounding the fast track to "success" and

self-sufficiency, the program was less able to acknowledge how Somali youth were themselves experiencing the adjustment to US society.

Reach High undertook "the necessary work of true acculturation" through tutoring, field trips, and partnership-based projects. Staff changes and increasingly Americanized youth triggered significant shifts in the tone and composition of the Reach High curriculum. While Reach High had flexibility to design curricula that critically engaged Somali youth, the program was unable to incorporate many aspects of Somali experience most importantly regarding discrimination at Warner and the de facto segregation isolating their family and community within the neighborhood. This occurred despite the program's relative flexibility in promoting "success" in school and beyond.

Lucinda Bonner (teacher 1998-2002) had developed a "child centered" life skills curriculum that emerged inductively from her observations of the newcomers.[78] When they failed algebra and had to retake the class, Bonner designed vocabulary worksheets to help them access the "foreign language" of variables and equations. When they got their first report card, she helped them calculate grade points and grade point averages, ultimately showing them how graduation is an accumulation of points each school term. When none of the youth were comfortable accessing the new campus computer lab, she put together a unit introducing the students to the machines, operating systems, and programs, but also to the lab itself and the person running the lab. When the students complained to her that they got an F because "Mr. So-and-So

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[78]Lucinda Bonner, personal interview with author June 2005.

doesn't like me," she would facilitate a conference to increase the communication between teacher and student. Additionally, many of the refugees first experienced college in Bonner's Reach High, including visits where they were able to marvel that there were no passing bells and that you choose your own schedule.

Such teaching to the status quo became less adequate when dealing with more controversial topics. In one case, Bonner developed a cluster of activities around law enforcement when Somali youth would jaywalk leaving Warner, would cut class and get into "various kinds of mischief" at Sunset Park, and would give wrong names and addresses to officers, "turn their back and run away." Bonner explained:

> Abdirahim (a Somali community service officer) said, "You know, it's understandable. Where they came from, you don't deal with people in uniforms. You get out of the way." We said, "Okay, what can we do about it?" Well one of the things is to help the kids get to know what police officers in this country are and so forth. We had a whole list of words like arrest, and ticket, and jail. Down the other side it had various definitions. So we'd do this little matching thing. Then some of the slang. Abdirahim came and spoke. He arranged for somebody from the gang division to come, somebody from the graffiti people to come. They showed them their guns. The kids could ask questions.... Another person came from the gang division. That was funny. He says, "Do any of you know any names of any gangs?" They knew them all. So he's writing them on the board, these names that gangs go by, which ones are Somali, which ones are Vietnamese. He talked to them and they asked questions about why do people join gangs, and what are some alternatives of what happens to people who are. So, that ended up being very good. Gangs weren't a big problem for the Somali kids, but there were some. Then the Somali kids were hassled by others. In other words, that neighborhood is pretty intense and everybody's sort of territorial.

Attempting to help in this case meant that Reach High championed law enforcement structures of authority instead of centering the experiences of the youth. Somalis knew the local gangs, demonstrating more knowledge than they were given

credit for. The hostility of San Diego beat officers, who were admittedly ignorant of Somali views and values and who admittedly entered "contact" with Somali youth aggressively and expecting confrontation, was explained away by Somali officials as Somalis' own fault, an "understandable" result of deviant authorities back home. Most significantly, Somali youth were advised to respect and trust authorities that would allow them to be "hassled," to be targets of environmental violence, and then would lecture them on gang prevention, something that was not "a big problem."

Other curriculum experiences indicated Reach High's work of "acculturation" might be out of step with or behind Somalis' adaptation to the US. On one field trip that combined using the public transportation system with a ship tour of San Diego harbor, for instance, Bonner learned about the autonomy of Somali boys. Idris, a "street smart" youth who had lost the privilege to attend, decided to enjoy his own version of the fieldtrip in an unexpected performance that subverted humanitarian social class assumptions. Bonner said:

> I learned that the boys have a lot of freedom. The boys were free to sort of go where they want. And a lot of them had been out exploring around on their own on the busses. But the girls hadn't. We went on down to the harbor. So there he is. You know, on the (city) bus. But I wasn't gonna pay for his bus ride. We would always have reservations, and we'd get discount tickets if possible. And I know I didn't give him a ticket. So, we get there, waiting for this boat that goes around the harbor. And you know how they have these guys that pedal bikes and you ride in the back? We look up and he's in one of those and off he's going. And I thought, you know, cause that costs a bit. So then when he gets back, he had a whole bunch of bills. And he's peeling off these bills to these guys.

More important than self-sufficiency, Idris demonstrated the historical importance of Somali independence from foreign structures of authority. Largely

triggered by constructs of Somali masculinity, as Bonner observed, the conspicuous performance of Somali independence explicitly critiqued the learning pace determined by refugee resettlement officials and the social location assigned to Somalis by society more broadly. This aspect of gendered Somali formations proved to be most difficult for all of the structures of refuge to cultivate, with it often becoming outright rebellion in light of institutions that had already determined Somali men and black men to be undesirable social subjects to be disciplined.

In another case, Somalis played out internal cultural politics that went under the staff radar. A girls' group formed in Fall 2003 based on the interest of older, American-born Somali college students who had sought out Reach High to help in the community. I was a co-teacher and volunteer at the time, and while Reach High fostered this intra-group Americanization, we were unable to facilitate and address it. One Somali college student volunteer pointed out how the nascent space allowed her to play a big sisterly role, dealing with major subjects like college education and more embarrassing subjects like how they would be perceived by people in the US. Faduma said:

> There's a lot of tutors there. I'd look at a tutor and I'd think they're a mentor; you just kind of have this certain authority. I thought about it and these Somali girls, they were refugees. They didn't speak good English. And one of the white tutors was like, "They smell." She was like, "You're these Somali girls going to college. Talk to them about hygiene." So we talked to them and we were like, "We're gonna have a girls group every time." And they were like, "I wanna be there." We also wanted to teach them more about college. We're college students and if they wanna go to college we'll tell them what its like and what you gotta do to get in, tests you gotta take. We mostly talked about school. The hygiene issue came up because I remember in middle school I was (putting on deodorant) and they were like, "Girl, don't do

> that because you can get really hairy arm pits." These people are like from Somali *country*, countryside where they don't see modernized people. I noticed the Reach High girls they didn't wear it. We brought up hygiene, showers and deodorant in the girls group cause when you come to America, things are just so much different than what they're used to. So they need someone to tell them about it. They didn't take it offensively. I thought they were gonna take it like, what are you tryin' to say? But they were like, "Yeah, okay. We'll do that." They really took it good and I was kind of shocked because I honestly did not want to offend them, but I thought it was something we should discuss. It's something that's just rude.

Triangulated between the authority of white volunteers and the *presence* of Somali newcomers with whom they felt only degrees of similarity, Faduma and the other mentors found themselves in the duplicitous position of breaking the news to their "sisters" about marginalization in US society. The natural body, hygiene, and cultural concepts like cleanliness had been effective instruments of colonialism historically and I had, on one occasion, seen African American and Somalian youth teasing each other with the escalating banter reaching a breaking point at "stinky Somalian." [79] The 'smell', which meant smelling like a human body rather than a product, was used through vicious teasing and peer pressure to both ridicule East Africans for being foreign others, and to suggest that washing could be a path to inclusion as American. Once the girls group had become regularized with Vista volunteers, they would meet weekly for icebreakers, guest speakers, games, poetry writing, sharing, and professionalization, a tremendously successful program, yet the

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[79] See Anne McClintock (1995) for discussion about the role of British commercialism and ideology spread throughout the empire in products like soap and imagery of primitive natives cleansing their way toward civilization.

micro-dynamics of these complex moments when Somali youth internalized and projected US normativity would go beyond the scope of Reach High's work.

Some after school projects positioned the youth to more critically engage contemporary issues, or even reversed the dynamics of refugee acculturation and turned them into teachers. In Alan Erickson's first summer (2002) one field trip brought the youth to the US-Mexico border for an exchange with a Tijuana-based after school program. The ensuing discussion entailed youth sharing migration histories and socializing cross-translated between English, Somali, and Spanish. In 2004, some of the youth chaired a Reach High panel at a conference on global conflict and conflict resolution. Addressing high school students at a local university, this panel explored the relationships between religion, gender, and dating. The next year, three students presented interpretations of films they selected for my Ethnic Images in Film course at UCSD. One student showed excerpts from *The Day After Tomorrow* and presented on how the cataclysmic storms and new ice age imagery resonated with descriptions of the Day of Judgment in the Qur'an, inspiring in her a moment of reflection on her choices and the values she lived by. Another young woman presented on Mandy Moore in *A Walk to Remember*, which prompted a spirited presentation on the power and importance of love and respecting loved ones. A young man selected a scene from *Hotel Rwanda* and admonished the United Nations and United States for callous insensitivity and inaction in the African crises within which they were already fully implicated. Even when the Reach High youth were positioned as teachers, rather than as passive recipients of one-directional acculturation, these exercises failed to engage

the broader Somali community, specifically the intergenerational and diasporic issues where the youth could explore their history and culture. While the exercises afforded young Somalis a forum to voice musings on love and family, to teach non-Muslims about their faith, and criticize global inequality and injustice, they were only student-centered in a limited sense where Somali youth would engage a broader general "multicultural" teen peer group.

At the end of my fieldwork, Alan Erickson had secured a five-year federal grant that set up Reach High to become multicultural (specifically supporting Spanish-speaking Latino students) and more embedded in the regular day education. Couched in the evidence of school underperformance and the rhetoric of multicultural diversity, refugee neediness, and the valiant but insufficient efforts of existing programs, the Department of Education grant application promised high attendance, concrete gains in standardized test scores, and extensive collaborations with existing area programs. Now the program would have a regular "study skills" course fifth period during the school day, with regularly enrolled students. Then each day would follow the regular after school program entailing an educational center with services for English learners, a computer lab, and subject tutoring. Warner had re-opened with four new small schools, each with separate administration and separate budgets. Students of all backgrounds now would be encouraged to benefit from the resources. As a structure of refuge, Reach High would remain relatively more flexible than public school education, yet constrained by acculturation rhetoric and the limited engagement with

Somali positionality entailed in that largely one-directional process. Though the five-year grant had secured a period of financial stability, Reach High would look forward to facing again the inevitable vulnerability and uncertainty of the next grant cycle and shift in public policy.

CONCLUSION

Musa Mohamed received his bachelor's degree in San Diego in 2006, began courting a pretty girl back home in eastern Ethiopia, and began pounding the pavement to track down a career position in engineering. With average grades in school and having not sought out additional resources like Reach High, Mohamed's start on the job market would be unfruitful and disappointing. As the first in his family of his mom and five brothers to pursue such a track, his learning curve promised to be steep and arduous. Thirteen years of refugee education had brought him to a fortunate, yet completely uncertain position in a community struggling to make ends meet day-to-day. Beneath the exterior of a new American his past and present connections to back home, as well as his transnational experiences of violence would become the domain of his private interiority, neither validated nor incorporated in his life in US refuge.

Educational structures of refuge in the US fail to create a safe space for newcomers because, as we have seen in the case of Somalis, the newcomers' perspective is occluded and demonized by mainstream US values. In this process racialized people are compelled to take on and even internalize US hegemony from a

spot at the bottom of the social ladder. They are compelled by systemic marginalization as well as interpersonal discrimination. Whether denigrating the Somali past (and "foreign" present), or institutionalizing Somali youth, educational structures of refuge play a principal role in enforcing vertical US social strata. For those like Musa who start young enough to roughly pace their non-refugee peers, or for those who came from middle class families back home, the pitfalls of under-resourced urban schools were more easily supplemented or avoided. For the vast majority of Somali youth in City Heights, regardless of background, prejudice and discrimination figured largely into their educational experiences. The humanitarian construct of refugee trauma served to deflect attention from poor services and discrimination to affirm the importance and effectiveness of regular and extended day education services. Further, resettlement organizations used acculturation rhetoric to avoid conservative backlash politics where the generosity the "traumatized" refugees received would be swiftly rescinded and replaced by hostility if refugees didn't promptly merge into the working class.

As a volunteer, researcher, advocate, and teacher, I brought my own minimal knowledge and spirit of service to Somali youth throughout the period of my fieldwork from 2002-2005. By being an active player in refugee educational structures of refuge I came to appreciate the made-private struggle of Somali youth subordinated by the public struggle of the US to make good on its promises of humanitarian care, liberty and opportunity for all of its new generations. But it takes more than transformative school reform and additional after school services to make City

Heights, and the US more broadly, a safe place and rich learning environment for Somali youth. Ideally refugee education would facilitate newcomers' awareness of their lived conditions. Unfortunately this only happens when newcomers perform the trauma to uplift resettlement narrative that reinforces US assumptions about the moral and material new world order.

Instead of addressing moral issues and injustices with integrity, US structures of refuge handed Somali youth a public contradiction: that they were wanted in theory because they deserved to be cared for after suffering such tragedy at home, but they were not wanted in real meaningful ways. Advocates like the teachers at Reach High were often their closest institutional allies, but none of us, me especially, understood Somali language, history and values or how to defend Somalis from bigotry and institutional racism in the US. We as individuals could offer little to help them develop healthy senses of being Somali, and the "acculturation" program was specifically not designed to achieve that end. Somali youth, however, did resist these dominant processes in unsubtle ways.

Somali youth were willing to work harder than their nonimmigrant peers, taking extra classes for credit at night, and seeking out services like Reach High and Warner teachers who stayed after school. The youth understood that they either had to put in the extra work or fall down and out of social competition altogether. While refugee advocates with minimal knowledge of Somalis scrambled to refurbish refuge education institutions that offered minimal resources in resettlement, Somali youth

navigated precarious structures of refuge, in many cases, longing for an end to the civil war and a return home.

CONCLUSION: Racing to the Refuge of Tomorrow

The programs for Somali youth in San Diego comprising this study bear broader tensions of refugee resettlement and play important roles in lingering cultural struggle "between two worlds." The youth programs are part of an array of nonprofit services that include caseworkers who help individuals and families, adult education schools that offer low-cost or free language and basic job skills training, and micro-enterprise and financial management mentors. Additionally there are programs that emerge from the communities themselves, including several in the Somali community. The expressed purpose of these programs is to help the resettled communities make it through the basic daily round of their new host society. But these nonprofit programs are part of a bigger social context, a deeper unresolved colonial logic. In order to survive and be viable for funding and public support the programs must cater to conservative ideologies of "make it on your own" and "self sufficiency" in a society where inheriting wealth is a virtual precondition for elite status and influence, and homeownership equity is the single greatest path to middle class upward mobility (Oliver and Shapiro 1995; Lipsitz 2006). Unfortunately for refugees, just as they enter the laboring masses and renter class to build the privileges of others in hopes of increasing opportunities for their next generation, state violence and systemic racism rise to channel newcomers into existing race-inflected social hierarchy. The specific mechanisms of this racialized refuge that get called into service vary between refugee "of color" groups. It is in this tarnished past and uncertain future that we can reconsider the meaning of US refuge for black people.

In Berlin 1884 colonial powers divvied up the African continent and Italy, France, and England each solidified their territorial claims with a piece of the African horn. Not only did Europeans cross borders to jockey for political and economic hegemony, but also they literally *set* boundaries to fragment indigenous socio-cultural geographies of power. These nation-state formations made by and for Europeans packaged the domination and plunder of African people as necessary and for their own good, to “help” “racially inferior” Africans join the modern world. While detailing cooperative logistics of colonial trade rights, the “General Act” of the Berlin Conference admonished the religiously and culturally diverse (and mutually sanguineous) powers to “protect and favour all religious, scientific or charitable institutions and undertakings created and organized (to watch over the preservation of the native tribes, and to care for the improvement of the conditions of their moral and material well-being, and to help in suppressing slavery, and especially the slave trade), or which aim at instructing the natives and bringing home to them the blessings of civilization” (Article 6). Charity, care, and protection for the purposes of civilizing were present, if peripheral components of the colonial subjugation of Africa.

In 1960 British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan waxed grandiose about the “winds of change” in African independence, and the “emerging” “third” world African political consciousness that might “be drawn into the Communist camp,” or follow “the great experiments in self-government that…prove so successful, and by their example so compelling, that the balance will come down in favour of freedom and

order and justice."[80] The violent border crossings of imperial powers would escalate from the Cold War through the end of the twentieth century. In Southeast Asia 1975 would dawn the age of the refugee, those who stand as the bodily blowback from military invasion in the name of freedom, peace, justice, and the benefit of humankind.

Somalis have found themselves consistently opposed to the west: intermixed, or crossed with Arab Muslims prior to the advent of European control, famously defiant of British colonialism early on,[81] siding with "second" world Soviet Union, killing US Rangers in Mogadishu streets, finding stability in 2006 under Islamic courts in the US War on Terror.[82] The US has ensured this independence would not go unpunished. Despite mainstream marketing of humanitarian charity, the US has taken the help–and-kill race and nation logic to extreme lengths by bombing *and* feeding Somalis back home in open warfare and refugee camps, respectively, while in the very same instant providing tax-payer subsidized welfare and intrusive surveillance in US urban neighborhoods.

The US War on Terror has in the Somali case reduced help-and-kill imperialism to brutish and violent subjugation. The December 2006 US-backed

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[80]Harold Macmillan. 1960. "Winds of Change." Speech made to the South African Parliament (February 3).

[81]Dervish rebellion against English occupation under Sayyid Mohamed Abdullah Hassan ("Mad Mullah") from 1899-1920 ("First Jihad of the 'Mad Mullah' 1899-1905" http://www.onwar.com/aced/data/mike/madmullah1899.htm).

[82]"Profile: Somalia's Islamic Courts" (2006) BBC News (June 6). http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/5051588.stm. The Union of Islamic Courts had driven out the hated warlords, but in December 2006 were removed from power by US-backed Ethiopian troops who recently have escalated their one-year occupation of Mogadishu (Brian Smith and Chris Talbot. 2007. "Ethiopia Steps up Military Occupation of Mogadishu" World Socialist Web Site (November 12). http://www.wsws.org/articles/2007/nov2007/soma-n12.shtml.)

Ethiopian invasion of Mogadishu to unseat the Union of Islamic Courts was followed in January 2007 with the US's own A-C130 and attack helicopter air raids.[83] In an illegal US-backed occupation that has lasted nearly one year, the recent dragging of Ethiopian soldiers through Mogadishu streets was *Black Hawk Down* déjà vu, only this time not covered in US media either because it only involved black faces, or because it would bring unnecessary attention to the costs of the war on terror and the US role abroad. In Ethiopia's reprisal 70 civilians were killed, 200 wounded, and more than 90,000 fled over a three day period, 46,000 joining semi-permanently the 100,000 in 50 makeshift camps on the route west from Mogadishu.[84] The US has, as before, resorted to producing more Somali refugees than it resettles.

US structures of refuge, as demonstrated in this study, operationalize and reproduce race hierarchy, characteristics that undermine their ability to provide a safe space of recovery for Somalis fleeing political and tribal persecution, and foreign invasion. Policies tied to cultural representation, police activities clubs, abstinence-only sex education programs, and public school education are among the primary institutions charged with the task of supporting newcomers to help them attain self-sufficiency and to help them avoid perpetual dependence. As we have seen in the case of City Heights, San Diego, the ideological hopes of Americanism stucco over structural disinvestment and neglect and notions of racial inferiority and threat. Racial

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[83]Ann Talbot. 2007. "Washington admits role in illegal war: US troops took part in invasion of Somalia" World Socialist Web Site (Jan 17). http://www.wsws.org/articles/2007/jan2007/soma-j10.shtml.

[84]Brian Smith and Chris Talbot. 2007. "Ethiopia Steps up Military Occupation of Mogadishu" World Socialist Web Site (November 12). http://www.wsws.org/articles/2007/nov2007/soma-n12.shtml.

fear cements the prevailing view that poor people of color are personally responsible for their own suffering. Because the urban poor and people of color are viewed as themselves failing in the system rather than the other way around, they, as the ideology goes, subject themselves to all manner of intrusive surveillance, disdain from neighbors, and erasure from (or at least segregated containment within) the cityscape. This system, which is great for business at the top and for preserving the privileges of whiteness for bourgeois classes (Lipsitz 2006), unfortunately is incapable of delivering basic democracy, much less safe space for black newcomers to recover from well founded fear of persecution back home.

Nonprofit corporations, or 501(c)3 business organizations, are conspicuous and primary social support structures in lower socio-economic strata generally. Although they provide only a patchwork and porous safety net, in many cases they are the only identifiable US refugee support structures. Nonprofit corporations have become increasingly professionalized, however, with chief executive officer salaries reaching scandalous proportions,[85] more credentials required to be competitive for employment and grants, and grant writing and IRS record keeping and reporting protocols that demand expertise and enormous amounts of work time. The requirement of having a

[85]For some examples of nonprofit executive salary scandals see: L.A. Lorek. 2004. "Unreasonable Compensation?" *Express-News* (http://www.mysanantonio.com/business/stories/MYSA080104.1R.Nonprofitpay.1eefa60c.html) and Mike Swift. 2005. "For Area's Top Officials, $300,000 is High End" *Hartford Courant* (http://www.hartfordinfo.org/issues/documents/artsandculture/htfd_courant_042405_a.asp). For a contrasting analysis that points instead to 'depressed' nonprofit employee wages, see Peter Manzo. 2004. "The Real Salary Scandal". *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (Winter), p.65-67.

board of directors with at least three members (between nine and fifteen are considered ideal) invites conflicts of vision and interest that can undermine the solidarity of the organization and can cause it to fall apart in the rigorous incorporation and funding-seeking process.[86] One provider explained, "Most nonprofits fail within the first year."[87] Granting agencies want to see a clear mission statement, corporate organizational structure, and extensive reporting, in some cases for grants as small as one or two thousand dollars.[88] Forced to demonstrate a business plan and program orientation toward measurable objectives, nonprofit organizations are limited in their flexibility and responsiveness, being held 'accountable' more for serving funders and corporate communities than providing direct service. Networking and paying respects to elites is required for survival. Longevity in the nonprofit sector is affected by fickle policy shifts and a Johnny Appleseed funding environment that makes sustaining a new nonprofit extremely difficult. A high degree of dependence on 'good will' means that fluctuations in attitude or perception register significantly in the level of support.

Dylan Rodríguez (2004) calls this systematic orientation toward elite interests and structural insecurity of organizations part of the "nonprofit industrial complex." Rodríguez calls the nonprofit industrial complex, "The set of symbiotic relationships that link together the different technologies of state and owning class proctorship and surveillance over public political intercourse, including and especially emerging social movements historically since the 1970s." Proctorship means the power to approve or

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[86]"How to Form a Nonprofit Corporation" 2002:2/8.
[87]Karen Huff, personal interview with author, May 17, 2001.
[88]Nonprofit founder, personal interview with author, July 18, 2005.

deny applications, while surveillance means constraining activities, mandatory reporting, pressure to fit funding guidelines, and the controlling of radicalism. Activist efforts to alter the roots of inequitable resource distribution, for instance, could benefit from the tax-exempt nonprofit corporation structure, but would have to submit themselves to intrusive state monitoring and discriminatory enforcement of the tax code. This is not to mention the unlikelihood that committed activist efforts would ever compete for large federal or foundation grants. Additionally the post 9/11 climate has given the nation-state an easy, no hassle justification of suspected "funding of terrorism" to infiltrate, monitor, and eliminate community support structures in Muslim, Arab, and South Asian communities. In the case of the Somali community, nonprofit corporations have been specifically targeted and truncated by Homeland Security to minimize the possibility that these community support structures may eventually support "terrorists."[89]

The nonprofit industrial complex minimizes the potential good works of nonprofit organizations, which often exist only because of structural barriers that disenfranchise minority and poor people. Community based organizations, for example, can formulate services around dispensing information about public health threats, but cannot directly address systemic social inequality that places racialized and immigrant communities at higher health risk through exposure to industrial and environmental waste, or cannot monitor the companies and individuals responsible for

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[89]One relevant example in San Diego is the Western Somali Relief Agency that was targeted in the prolonged detention and prosecution of Somali community leader Omar Mohamed from January 2004 through January 2006 (Kelly Thornton. 2006 "Somali gives up fight against deportation." *Union-Tribune* (February 1)).

producing environmental hazards. Further, the corporations cannot address the roots of a medical system that cynically denies effective healthcare and discourages racialized poor communities from accessing what public resources are available to them.[90] For another example, community based organizations can "help" newcomers "adjust" to US society, but they cannot directly address systemic under- and un-employment of racialized people, the real estate systems that under gird systemic housing discrimination and affordable housing crises, or the racist attitudes of public officials like law enforcement officers, teachers, and business owners that often condition the daily experiences of newcomer communities.

One thing seems clear, nonprofit organizations are not designed to liberate the masses of Somalis from violence and discrimination in the US or elsewhere. For resettled Somalis hopefully social movements can provide valuable resources: the history of radical black activism, for instance, that contested the legality of chattel slavery, the inhumanity of public lynching, the "democracy" of Jim Crow, the "modern-ness" of a barbaric prison industrial complex, the "sisterhood" of bourgeois white feminist liberation, and the "universality" of white heteropatriarchy. What this legacy conveys is that while American individualism and exceptionalism can lift *some* blacks into the privileges of aggregate discrimination, the masses of black people are promised a protracted, painful struggle at the bottom of a very steep and thorn covered US social pyramid.

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[90]The passing of California Proposition 187 in 1994 was an example of this where US citizens were often denied access to healthcare and education because they were profiled as "illegal immigrants from Mexico."

Somalis in San Diego maintain their tradition of responding to western imperialism. One example is the case of *USA vs. Omar Abdi Mohamed.* Omar Abdi Mohamed was an international trader until 1989 when he was detained and brutally tortured by the Somali government, being accused of supporting resistance to the president. After reaching Canada in 1990, Omar Mohamed made his way to the US in 1995 and eventually applied for naturalization in 2000. While in the US, he and his family remained self-sufficient (never drawing upon available public assistance) and he worked as a community advocate here and back home. As an activist, Mohamed had been instrumental in addressing the distressing conflict in San Diego between African and African American youth. He also channeled hundreds of thousands of dollars to eastern Ethiopia to aid victims of famine. He earned a master's degree, started an Arabic school serving hundreds of students, guided numerous youth to succeed (many of whom are now at UCSD, SDSU, and various other local colleges), and counseled numerous people with marriage problems.

Omar Mohamed was arrested on January 22nd 2004, when invited to a follow-up citizenship interview and federally indicted for giving false information to an immigration official in 2002. It was alleged that he failed to disclose having received a large sum of money from an Islamic charity, Global Relief, which had later become designated a "Special Global Terrorist" by the US Treasury and the story broke immediately: "Somali pleads innocent in terror-finance case" (*Union-Tribune* January 23, 2004). As is characteristic of War on Terror reliance on fear and doubt, the weak indictment was superseded with accusations that painted Mohamed as a wolf in

sheep's clothing, a suspicious liar covering over "top secret" "national security risk" activities. The whole case, which ended up being cast as a routine lying to an immigration official scenario, was permeated by hush-hush, sidebar deviations from standard legal protocol, hiding of "secret" evidence, and draconian detention of Mohamed who suggestively appeared to be public enemy number one.

Mohamed was convicted of lying about how many children he had, that he worked for the Saudi government, and that he had not worked for the mosque sponsoring his visa, relatively understandable issues in immigration processes where written applications and multiple oral interviews are conducted on migrants in English. His missionary work, the defense argued unsuccessfully, was not employment, and his work in City Heights *was* for the mosque even though he did not log office hours there. Mohamed was acquitted of all terrorism-related charges, yet sentenced to 18 months (time served under 22 months of incarceration) on a recommended 0-6 month offense to secure an aggravated felony ruling to expedite deportation.[91] Without charging or proving terrorism, the US courts labeled, detained, prosecuted, and deported Omar Mohamed *as a terrorist*. Ironically, Global Relief, the "specially designated global terrorist" was never charged and by the time of the trial had already begun suing the US government to unfreeze its assets. The War on Terror needs its villains, and in the case of Omar Mohamed and the San Diego Somali community, the US removed a leader and chilled a community based on evidence that will never come to light looming behind charges prosecuted well out of proportion.

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[91]United States District Court, Southern District of California. Case Number: 03CR3433-JAH.

Law abiding citizens who believe in the US Constitution must trust a court system that is willing to bend the rules to secure minor convictions in order to deport "enemies," to break apart families, and target communities without offering any more justification than the hushed suggestion that they really have something on them, something so bad they can't even say. This violent mode of nation-state-to-subject relationship requires glaring amnesia of McCarthy-era politics as well as of today's documented deception and erosion of the US Constitution in the name of national security.

Somalis showed out fifty strong or more to every hearing throughout the two-year period. Additionally planned demonstrations attracted hundreds of supporters at the federal building to bring general social awareness of the case if only to pressure the courts to keep the hearings public and to demand due process. Worn out, Omar Mohamed surrendered his Somali passport and permitted Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to deport him to Somalia, where he now resides without his family. Some nonprofit staff who were community advocates attended the rallys, but the only organizations that gave official endorsement for Mohamed's defense were local branches of La Resistencia and the Blue Triangle Network. The community lost. After his deportation, Mohamed's "self sufficient" family went on public assistance and his children began having problems in school. How would frustrated and angry elementary school children be able to explain all of these experiences to a teacher who just wants them to follow instructions?

A second example of Somali activism is the current Ethiopian persecution of Somalis and human rights violations in the Ogaden region. Members of the

community have arranged international forums in San Diego to lobby UN and US policy makers to recognize and condemn human rights violations by the Ethiopian government against the people of the Ogaden, to stop supporting the Ethiopian government, and to recognize and support the victims who are mainly Ogaden Somalis and Oromo, the majority ethnic group in Ethiopia who are subject to minority Amhara rule. Ogaden Somalis are the largest tribe in San Diego, and because these issues are viewed by many non-Ogaden Somalis as tribe-specific, they do not gain universal support in the community. Many Somali youth get involved with adults and elders to address this ongoing colonial oppression in eastern Ethiopia, a part of the deeper historical context around the current US-backed occupation of Mogadishu.

It would be ideal if nonprofit organizations as well as broader institutions and organizations helped with these and other related issues. This would lead to not only a more safe space for Somali refugees, but for US citizens as well who in the post-Patriot Act US are subject to the same institutions and to the rippling effects of US nation-state violence abroad. Somalis in East Africa and throughout the Diaspora are aware of US War on Terror intervention back home and in San Diego, and must deal with the loss of their family and friends and weakening of their transnational communities on a regular basis. An organization designed to get you a job on an assembly line, or to help you differentiate between junk mail and legitimate documents would clearly not be chartered for involvement in these paramount issues of today, but who established the resettlement agenda? For what purpose? 501(c)3 nonprofits cannot legally get involved in political campaigns and necessarily walk a

thin line when engaging the political minefield surrounding refugees like those from Somalia. But these important questions and contradictions indicate that the agenda may need to be re-set so that a meaningful refuge of tomorrow might be in fact attained.

Turning resettled Somalis into self-sufficient and responsible Americans may very well eventually make them as ignorant of, indifferent to, or hostile toward Somalia as the average US citizen. Such racist social engineering is seen as more possible with the youth and the unborn, those who do not remember, those whose bodies did not feel the horror of war, those who do not remember the language and names of twenty generations in their patrilineal descent. Available technology and the pace of life in the US accelerate such a future. But such pressures are also resisted by youth, especially 1.5 generation Somalis who attain high school or college degrees and who continue to identify more strongly with their elder kin and religious community. They are part of a diasporic generation still impressionable enough to attempt to realize their parents' and elders' longing to return home. Little credit is due the nonprofit resettlement programs, which scramble to maintain daily business as usual while following behind to clean up bits of the next mess the nation-state makes. Hopefully Somali youth will be able to endure help-and-kill foreign humanitarian intervention and domestic urban ghetto policy, and respond in ways that rearticulate affirmative identity into a new moment when they can actually get down to business and deal with some of the deep issues of race, tribe, religion, gender, sexuality, and nation waiting for them back home. Perhaps my optimism is misplaced, though, a

reality we must consider when looking back over the established record of safety and civilization for black people and black communities in more than two hundred years of US refuge.

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