Out of Many, One People; E Pluribus Unum: An Analysis of Self-Identity in the Context of Race, Ethnicity, and Context of Race

Kamille Wolff

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OUT OF MANY, ONE PEOPLE;  
E PLURIBUS UNUM:  
AN ANALYSIS OF SELF-IDENTITY IN 
THE CONTEXT OF RACE, ETHNICITY, 
AND CULTURE

KAMILLE WOLFF*

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2. Latin for “Out of Many, One,” this phrase is included in the Seal of the United States and is considered an informal motto of the United States. See FAQs: Coins, U.S. Dep’t of the Treasury, http://www.ustreasures.gov/education/faq/coins/portraits.shtml#q7 (last visited Mar. 21, 2010) (explaining that the motto is possibly a reference to the unity between the early states).

* Assistant Professor, Thurgood Marshall School of Law, Texas Southern University; B.A. Queens College of the City University of New York; J.D. University of Pennsylvania Law School. I would like to thank my parents and colleagues for their guidance and support. I am also grateful to the LatCrit organization and the editors of the American University Journal of Gender, Social Policy & the Law for facilitating the publication process.
I. INTRODUCTION

I was apprehensive at first. I did not know what to expect. Whenever someone inquired as to my attendance at the annual LatCrit conference, I immediately thought of myself as somewhat of an outsider. I did not fit in; I did not belong. I embodied the theme of the conference—Outsiders Inside. I did not self-identify as Latina, so clearly I was not authorized to speak or comment about critical Latina/o theory. Despite my inclination that I could not “check the box” as a Latina, I registered for my first LatCrit conference as a panelist after some encouragement from my colleagues. I arrived to find conference attendees of all races and ethnicities, as was to be expected. I held close to my initial concern even as I joined this welcoming community of scholars because I did not want to be perceived as someone who did not belong. I was innately aware that Latinos comprise a diverse community. I teach at a diverse law school, where there is a sizeable Latino population. Yet, I was confronted with self-induced feelings that I did not belong. It was then that I began to question my own social and legal constructs of race and ethnicity. As an American

3. Latina & Latino Critical Legal Theory, Inc.
5. See Jeffrey Passel & Paul Taylor, Pew Hispanic Center, Who’s Hispanic? 3 (2009); Sonya Tafoya, Pew Hispanic Center, Shades of Belonging 1 (2004) (“According to federal policy and accepted social science, Hispanics do not constitute a separate race and can in fact be of any race.”).
7. Paula Arriagada has noted:

“[E]thnic identity is often conceptualized as that part of the person’s self-knowledge or self-identity, which is defined by their membership in an ethnic group as well as their particular emotional attachment to that group. This refers to the thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and behaviors that are part of someone’s membership in a specific ethnic group. It is possible to argue that ethnic identity constitutes a basic but extremely important part of an individual’s personality and as such, it is a powerful contributor to ethnic group formation, cultural maintenance, and the development of social ties.”

woman of Caribbean descent, I decided to explore the boundaries of racial, cultural, and ethnic identity within our global society.8

My quest for self-identity encompassed a number of uncertainties.9 I constructed my self-identity around what society compelled me to self-identify. In this paper I analyze how societal pressure and expectation regarding the boundaries of race and ethnicity operate within the “outsiders inside” theme of LatCrit XIV. In building a foundation to support my self-identity, I criticize my own critical race theory.10 In an effort to catalogue my background, I find it to be an impossible task.11 Our collective ancestry weaves a rich fabric which melds together various cultures and customs within the common thread of humanity.12 I offer my ancestry to illustrate that we are diverse yet tied through a sense of commonality. Despite societal exertion to categorize individuals according to race, we are a dynamic population.13 We are a culture which lends from other cultures to

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8. The concept of identity is a recent one, as it became an important area of research when Erik H. Erikson published the book *Childhood and Society* in 1950. Identity is defined by Erikson as the psychological sense of inner self. Id. at 11 (citations omitted).

9. Arriagada explains: “Ethnic identity is a multidimensional construct that refers to a set of ideas and feelings about one’s own ethnic group membership. According to most researchers, ethnic identity includes some or all of the following components: (1) ethnic self-identification as a member of a particular group; (2) feelings of belonging and commitment to the group; (3) certain attitudes towards the group, which can be both positive or negative; (4) a sense of shared attitudes and values; (5) and finally specific ethnic traditions and cultural practices.” Id. at 14 (citations omitted).


11. Research provides that ethnic identity is fluid and changes in response to several factors, as there may be sizable variation in the imagery that individuals construct in characterizing their identified group along with an understanding of how this imagery is reflected within. Cf. Jean S. Phinney et al., *Ethnic Identity, Immigration, and Well-Being: An Interactional Perspective*, 57 J. SOC. ISSUES 493, 496 (2001) (describing ethnic identity as a fluid concept that changes over time and in different contexts).


reveal different, yet familiar customs and practices which transcend definition. I present my lineage, which highlights a non-linear image of race and ethnicity. Through this imagery, I find justification to exist as a world citizen beyond the concrete lines of cultural identity.

Through this personal account, I conduct a self-assessment. This self-assessment connects my personal experience to my self-identity by examining familial relationships to provide insight on our shared existence. My personal story is retold in phases as I encounter various facets of my life leading to an observation of who I am. This personal narrative provides an essay of evolution as I document my process of assimilation while maintaining cultural pride. Through this essay, I conclude that we encompass degrees of similarity in forming our identities which are a construct of our personal experience. Through a cross-cultural and inter-generational lens, I recognize that we are complex individuals with complicated theories on race, culture, and ethnicity that encompass class, religion, custom, gender, age, immigration status, family structure, and socio-economic factors in general. What follows is my commentary on forming my own self-identity.

II. SELF-IDENTITY AND ETHNICITY

A. Self-Identity Viewed Through the Immigrant Lens

I was born in New York to two parents who immigrated to the United States from Jamaica. The land of opportunity called, and like many of their countrymen, my family felt compelled to answer.

14. “[E]thnic self-identification is not a linear or one-directional process into the ethnicity of the dominant group. Instead . . . multiple ethnic identities may develop across different contexts and among various groups.” Arriagada, supra note 7, at 24 (citation omitted).


16. The ethnic socialization of immigrant parents plays a crucial role in the development of their children’s ethnic identity. Phinney et al., supra note 11, at 501. Afro-Caribbean migration to the United States is categorized into four stages: (1) the colonial period to 1900; (2) 1900 to the Great Depression in the 1930s; (3) the late 1930s to 1965; and (4) 1965 to the present. Winston James, The History of Afro-Caribbean Migration to the United States, in THE SCHOMBURG CENTER FOR RESEARCH IN BLACK CULTURE, IN MOTION: THE AFRICAN AMERICAN MIGRATION EXPERIENCE, http://www.immigrationname.org/texts/viewer.cfm?id=10_000T&page=1; see also Booth, supra note 13 (explaining that family reunification was a primary criteria for immigration to the United States after a change to the law in 1965. This policy, which was a response to the claims that the previous law favored white Europeans, permitted immigrants in the United States to sponsor relatives to immigrate, who could in turn sponsor more relatives to the United States.).

17. The Immigration and Nationality Services Act of 1965, also known as the Hart-Cellar Act, abolished national-origin quotas following more than forty years of
proud of their origins and they continue to hold the country they left in high regard. They maintain cultural ties to their homeland, and strive to retain relationships within their ethnic community.\textsuperscript{18} As their first born child, my self-identity was positioned between the realization of the American Dream and the desire to cultivate my own cultural identity.\textsuperscript{19} My birth ensured my citizenship and contributed to that of my parents,\textsuperscript{20} but this divided us from our roots even while establishing a new branch. The Caribbean Sea may have divided us from Jamaica, but that did not separate us from its influence.\textsuperscript{21} I spent my childhood listening to the music of Bob Marley and eating “ackee and saltfish,” the national dish of Jamaica.\textsuperscript{22} I heard my

\textsuperscript{18} “Ethnic identity is likely to be strong when immigrants have a strong desire to retain their identities and when pluralism is encouraged or accepted.” Phinney et al., \textit{supra} note 11, at 494; see also Helen I. Safa, Book Review, \textit{2 J. POL. ECOLOGY} (1995), http://jpe.library.arizona.edu/volume_2/safavol2.htm (reviewing \textit{VIRGINIA H. YOUNG, BECOMING WEST INDIAN: CULTURE, SELF, AND NATION IN ST. VINCENT} (1993)) (“National identity has long been problematic in the small, open and dependent islands of the Caribbean, where a history of slavery and colonialism have brought about marked racial, religious and linguistic differences.”). See generally William Branigin, \textit{Myth of the Melting Pot: America’s Racial and Ethnic Divides, Immigrants Shunning Idea of Assimilation}, \textit{WASH. POST}, May 25, 1998, at A1 (discussing ambivalence of immigrants about assimilation).

\textsuperscript{19} “We know that immigrant children and children of immigrants are, in reality, quite plural in their self-identities; they often choose from a wide range of labels including identifying themselves as American or hyphenated Americans to identifying by the parents’ national origins.” Arriagada, \textit{supra} note 7, at 12 (citations omitted).


\textsuperscript{21} “Immigrants generally arrive in a new country with a strong sense of their national or cultural origin and with varying degrees of willingness to adopt the identity of their new society. Subsequent generations face differing identity issues associated with their sense of belonging to their ancestral culture and to their country of settlement.” Phinney et al., \textit{supra} note 11, at 504; see also Booth, \textit{supra} note 13 (expressing the concern of immigrant parents that their children not become too Americanized).

\textsuperscript{22} See National Symbols of Jamaica, Jamaica Information Service, http://www.jis.gov.jm/special_sections/Independence/symbols.html (last visited Jan. 6,
family speak Patois, the unofficial language of Jamaica.\textsuperscript{23} While I could not speak Patois, I understood every word. At the time I did not realize that I was in a sense bilingual; I had mastered the English language and could also communicate with those who spoke Patois, a broken English dialect spoken by a number of people in Jamaica.\textsuperscript{24}

During my youth I was referred to in jest by my Jamaican relatives and friends as a “Yankee,” a cultural reference meaning someone of American descent.\textsuperscript{25} My birth on American soil prevented me from being a full-blooded West Indian, even though Jamaican blood ran through my veins. There were moments of confusion as a child because I did not fit in with the “Yankees,” but I had no stories of the old country to validate my Caribbean heritage.\textsuperscript{26} I made a deliberate effort to come to terms with my American classmates who had parents without accents and who did not live in houses filled with the aroma of curry goat.\textsuperscript{27}

\textbf{B. Self-Identity and Nationality}

There are West Indians\textsuperscript{28} who do not self-identify as African American,\textsuperscript{29}


\textsuperscript{24} Cf. Petrina Francis, \textit{Majority favour patois as an official language of Ja}, JAM. GLEANER, NOV. 2, 2005 (finding that 69\% of Jamaicans believe Patois should be an official language of Jamaica alongside English and that most Jamaicans feel that the use of Patois by the government would improve public communications).

\textsuperscript{25} Children are influenced by messages regarding identity from adults and the ethnic community. Phinney et al., \textit{supra} note 11, at 501.

\textsuperscript{26} According to Arriagada,

\begin{quote}
“Adolescents who grow up in immigrant families often face an added dimension to the identity formation process, as they encounter complex issues of adaptation involving their old and new cultures. Many of these adolescents live in two worlds—the American and the ethnic—which can be very different and often opposed to each other. As a result, these young adults are likely to experience intense acculturative stress and intergenerational conflict.”
\end{quote}

Arriagada, \textit{supra} note 7, at 12 (citations omitted).

\textsuperscript{27} “[For adolescent children of immigrants] growing up in a society where the mainstream culture is significantly different in terms of values and customs from their culture of origin, the process of integrating ethnic identity into their own self-identity may become a significant challenge.” Arriagada, \textit{supra} note 7, at 13 (citation omitted). \textit{See also} Curry Goat, Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Curry_Goat (last visited Sept. 19, 2010) (“Curry goat is a dish originating in Indo-Jamaican cuisine that has become so popular it is now regarded as being typical of Jamaica.”).

\textsuperscript{28} The term “West Indians” is used to collectively describe people from the Caribbean. \textit{See} Graphic Maps, West Indies, WorldAtlas.com, http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/namerica/caribb/special/westind.htm (last visited Mar. 14, 2010). The term, coined by Christopher Columbus, is technically
especially since some are not “American” in the technical sense of being a United States citizen. Malcolm Gladwell, a best selling author of Jamaican and British ancestry, describes this practice in part as follows:

To a West Indian, black is a literal description: you are black if your skin is black . . . . This question of who West Indians are and how they define themselves may seem trivial, like racial hairsplitting. But it is not trivial. In the past twenty years, the number of West Indians in America has exploded. There are now half a million in the New York area alone . . .

The West Indian practice of considering skin tones as distinct from race may be attributed to the colonial practice of devising a class structure by which lighter skinned descendants of black slaves and white plantation owners were afforded favorable benefits within Caribbean society. Beneficiaries of this social caste system were at times provided with superior education, wealth attainment, and political influence. a misnomer due to Columbus’ erroneous belief that his voyage led him to India when in fact he had landed in the Caribbean. Id.; see also MERRIAM-WEBSTER ONLINE, West Indies, MERRIAM-WEBSTER’S ONLINE DICTIONARY, http://209.161.37.11/dictionary/west%20indies (last visited Mar. 25, 2010).


30. See Ingrid Brown, Caribbean Nationals Push for Own Category in U.S. Census, JAMAICA OBSERVER, May 20, 2008, http://www.caribbeantoday.com/index2.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2605& (“[Caribbean nationals in the United States] are part of the African American experience . . . however, we also have additional distinct cultures and needs that must be addressed . . . .” [T]here is a different socio-economic mix emerging in the diaspora where its members are more highly educated, with higher earning capacity and spending power.” (quoting in part Irvine Clare, managing director of Caribbean Immigrant Services); Malcolm Gladwell, Black Like Them, NEW YORKER, Apr. 29 & May 6, 1996, available at http://www.gladwell.com/1996/1996 04 29 a_black.htm (relating the story of two immigrants who consider themselves Jamaican, not black); see also Darryl Fears, Disparity Marks Black Ethnic Groups, Report Says; African Americans Trail Immigrants in Income, Education, WASH. POST, Mar. 9, 2003, at A7 (observing that blacks allowed to immigrate to the United states from the Caribbean may have higher earning potential and educational achievement than native-born black Americans, according to the report “Black Diversity in Metropolitan America,” by researchers at the State University of New York at Albany).

31. In 2005, Gladwell was named by Time Magazine as one of the “100 Most Influential People,” and his books have been bestsellers. See, e.g., Rachel Donadio, The Gladwell Effect, N.Y. TIMES, Feb. 5, 2006, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/05/books/review/05donadio.html?pagewanted=print (noting that Gladwell published multiple best-selling books and wrote for the Washington Post and the New Yorker).

32. See Gladwell, supra note 30, at 74-75.

33. See Glenda Simms, Cynical Dualities of the Jamaican Society, JAM. GLEANER, June 21, 2009 (discussing the post-emancipation tension and inequality between
Despite the cultural divide of African Americans and Caribbean Americans along ethnic lines, the American and West Indian sectors of the black community share a common struggle and legacy. Both groups are extrinsically linked by their history in the African slave trade and ancestry to the African Diaspora. West Indians actively joined black Americans in the Civil Rights Movement, most notably through Jamaican American Harry Belafonte and Bahamian American Sidney Poitier. These advocates of Caribbean descent stood for equal rights and for the dismantling of Jim Crow alongside Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Belafonte and Poitier embraced Dr. King’s dream and protested against white oppression, even though the racial lines in their native countries were not

34. Cf. Fears, supra note 17 (“America’s black community, which now includes more West Indian and African immigrants than ever, is no longer the monolithic group that many politicians, civil rights advocates and demographers say it is. A new African American community is being forged, sociologists and anthropologists say, in which culture and nationality are becoming more important than skin color. It is as diverse—and as divided—as the Latino community or the Asian American community, each made up of migrants from numerous nations.”).

35. See also id. (paraphrasing Jemima Pierre, a Haitian American doctoral student as saying “It almost goes without saying that black people of all persuasions also share a bond . . . .”); James, supra note 16 (“The distinct but intertwined history of Afro-Caribbeans and Afro-Americans is revealed most clearly during [the Colonial Period to 1900]. Sharing a common West African heritage and the trauma of the transatlantic slave trade that dispersed them on the North American mainland and the islands, Caribbeans and Afro-Americans were brought together in Britain’s North American colonies, Southern as well as Northern.”). See generally Hollis R. Lynch, Americans of African Ancestry, History World International, http://history-world.org/black_americans.htm (last visited May 7, 2010) (By 1919, the Universal Negro Improvement Association which was founded by Marcus Garvey in 1914 on the island of Jamaica, had become the largest mass movement of American blacks in U.S. history.).


38. See GOUDSOUZIAN, supra note 37; Harry Belafonte, supra note 37.
so rigidly drawn between black and white.\footnote{39}{See \textit{How Poitier Conquered Hollywood}, supra note 37 (“Having come from the Bahamas, which was predominately black, [Poitier] found it a shock to arrive in the US, where he experienced his first taste of racial discrimination.”).}

Dr. King found inspiration in the multicultural harmony that existed on the islands, when he visited Jamaica with his wife Coretta Scott King.\footnote{40}{See Rebecca Tortello, \textit{June 20, 1965: Martin Luther King, Jr. Visits Jamaica}, JAM. GLEANER, http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/pages/history/story003.html (last visited Jan. 27, 2009) [hereinafter Tortello, Martin Luther King Jr.].} On June 20, 1965, Dr. King arrived to deliver a sermon at the University of the West Indies' valedictory service.\footnote{41}{Id.} It was entitled “Facing the Challenges of a New Age,” and he used it to discuss the creation of a worldwide brotherhood as a result of global interdependency.\footnote{42}{See id. (addressing the issues of fighting injustice with love and working hard to be the best one can be).} It was during this speech that Dr. King set forth an insightful quote recently expressed by U.S. President Barack Obama in recognizing Dr. King’s life; Dr. King stated: “If it falls to our luck to be street-sweepers . . . . Sweep the streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth would have to pause and say . . . ‘Here lived a great street sweeper.’”\footnote{43}{Id.}

Later he delivered another address to the Jamaican people\footnote{44}{See id. (noting that Dr. King indicated that the time was ripe for freedom).} stating that “[i]n Jamaica I feel like a human being.”\footnote{45}{Tortello, Martin Luther King Jr., supra note 40.} Dr. King also visited the grave of Marcus Garvey,\footnote{46}{See Exhibition: Marcus Mosiah Garvey, http://www2.si.umich.edu/chico/Harlem/text/garvey.html (last visited Mar. 11, 2010) (describing Garvey as a Jamaican-born immigrant to the United States whose goal was to create a free, United Black Africa).} a national hero of Jamaica, to lay out a wreath of homage to the man, who gave blacks in the United States a “sense of personhood, a sense of manhood, a sense of somebodiness.”\footnote{47}{Tortello, Martin Luther King Jr., supra note 40.} Two weeks later, in his sermon entitled, “The American Dream,” delivered on July 4, 1965, Dr. King stated in reference to Jamaica:

Here you have people from many national backgrounds: Chinese, Indians, so-called Negros, and you can just go down the line, Europeans, European and people from many, many nations. Do you know they all live there and they have a motto in Jamaica, “Out of many people, one people.” And they say, “Here in Jamaica we are not Chinese, . . . we are not Japanese, we are not Indians, we are not Negros, we are not Englishmen, we are not Canadians. But we are all one big family of Jamaicans.” One day, here in America, I hope that we will see this and we will become one big family of Americans.\footnote{48}{Martin Luther King, Jr., \textit{The American Dream}, in \textit{A Knock at Midnight}:}
On the fortieth anniversary of Dr. King’s assassination, I realized that the small island nation of Jamaica was related to this American icon. Jamaica was a living definition and example of King’s dream. Dr. King was well-received by the Jamaican people and even received keys to the city of Kingston. Dr. King’s dream transcended race and even geographical boundaries, and his message continues to resonate as much with Jamaicans as it does with Americans because, “[i]njustice anywhere, is a threat to justice everywhere.” In the words of Dr. King, “the time is always ripe to do right.”

Jamaicans and Americans are intertwined and interconnected through a shared history, which transforms my views from an outsider to an insider. My position as an American “insider” child of immigrant “outsider” parents impacted my developmental years when I questioned my self-identity as a “Jamerican”—an American of Jamaican descent. Some moments in history, such as Dr. King’s impact on Jamaica and Jamaica’s resulting impact on his vision, allow me to harmonize the two sides of my identity.

C. Self-Identity in the Shape of Ethnic Consciousness

In my formative years, I did not want my “Yankee” friends to discover that my parents were foreigners. I did not want to be perceived as disingenuous, as I desired credibility in my engagement with American culture. I had every right to claim that I was an American, but once
again, I received a persistent message that I was somehow different. I had international relatives in Canada, the United Kingdom, and Jamaica, and distant relatives in places such as Guyana and even Germany. When I came of age, I made the profound revelation that being different was something to be celebrated. I recognized that my mix of diversity made me unique. Not that I wanted to disclaim my American heritage, but I wanted to embrace the fact that I could innately relate to different people, places, and things. I no longer concealed my true identity. I began to accompany my family to cultural events, and I told anyone who would listen that I was an American of Jamaican descent. I now enjoyed the brown stew chicken and escovitch red snapper fish that I refused as a child. I morphed into a “Jamerican.”

With newfound pride in my parents’ cultured past, I began to take trips of living in the midst of two cultures. One of those cultures is the culture of their parents. The other is that of the host community into which the children are growing.” Ruth Johnston, Immigrants’ Search for Cultural Identity, 6 INT’L MIGRATION 216 (1968).

55. In describing the cultural conflict of the young immigrant, Johnston writes, “[i]n the conflict between the new and the old way of thinking and acting they find little help either at home or in the outside world since both the home and the larger community prescribe their own code and are indifferent or hostile to that of the other[.]” Id. at 216.


57. A bicultural identity has been found to be the most adaptive to acculturation, though it remains unclear what exactly “bicultural” means. See Phinney et al., supra note 11, at 502. A strong ethnic identity does not correlate with prejudice against other groups. Press Release, Brown University Media Relations, Study: Children of Immigrants from Ethnic Identity at Early Age (September 24, 2007), available at http://news.brown.edu/pressreleases/2007/09/ethnic-identity.

58. “The process of ethnic identity formation has been conceptualized in terms of a progression, with an individual moving from the unexamined attitudes of childhood, through a moratorium or period of exploration, to a secure achieved ethnic identity at the end of adolescence.” Phinney et al., supra note 11, at 496 (citation omitted).

59. See Arriagada, supra note 7, at 15 (“[S]ome existing research finds that certain second generation immigrants may experience a trajectory, in which they initially reject their ethnic backgrounds but over time begin to embrace their parents’ national origins as their own ethnic identities.”) (citations omitted).


61. A Jamerican is a person who was born in the United States and who is of Jamaican parentage and/or ancestry. Isabis Inside, Who Are You? Just a Jamerican, JAMAICANS.COM, Dec. 27, 2007, http://www.jamericans.com/articles/primearticles/whoisjamericans.shtml. See generally Booth, supra note 13 (noting that a study conducted of the identity of children of immigrants from the West Indies found that most respondents identified themselves as hyphenated Americans).
in my adulthood to visit the land of their birth. Jamaica was the first international destination to which I ventured. I was accompanied by a close friend from college on my first trip back to Jamaica without my family. My friend was also a child of immigrants, but her family was from the Dominican Republic. We later traveled to her parents’ native land where I was repeatedly mistaken to be Dominican while she was mistaken as Jamaican apparently due to her braided hairstyle that resembled dreadlocks.

I was anxious as the plane landed on the runway at the Donald Sangster International Airport in Montego Bay, Jamaica. My first trip without my family serving as tour guides was daunting. In fact, this was the first time that I had the opportunity to explore Jamaica as a tourist. Yet, I felt that I was expected to entertain my friend in this foreign land as a Jamaican ambassador.

We arrived at the resort to be greeted by hotel representatives. This was also my first hotel stay in the tourist-driven Montego Bay, as I previously lodged with family in Kingston. I was hours away from anyone who would know or recognize me. I struggled with whether I would reveal to the hospitality personnel that I was one of them, a Jamaican. I held a secret that could not be discerned by my appearance alone. Through my guarded identity, I knew what it meant to be Jamaican. With my U.S. Passport in hand, I declared that while I was not Jamaican, my parents were. As a result of my cultural affirmation, we were embraced and treated to complimentary services due to our newly acquired preferred guest status. Upon my departure, I was informed of my eligibility to become a Jamaican citizen by descent, even though I was born in the United States.

During one of our excursions on the island of Jamaica, I encountered several posted signs advertising a theatrical play. I recognized the playwright’s name as that of my grand-uncle and experienced an


63. The Dominican Republic encompasses the eastern two-thirds of the island of Hispaniola, which it shares with Haiti. U.S. DEP’T OF STATE, Background Note: Dominican Republic, June 7, 2010, http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/35639.htm.

64. See Jamaica Const. ch. II (1962).

immediate connection to my ancestry. My family’s presence was apparent despite their absence. My travel was to mark my independence, but in retrospect it confirmed my interdependence. My family would refer to an established Jamaican playwright whom I never met, and I could now confirm what I initially believed to be folklore. Through further inquiry into my family history, I discovered that my grand-uncle was also the son of a Jamaican politician and the nephew of an accomplished sculptor whose work included some of Jamaica’s most cherished monuments.

I perceived my chosen profession in the law to be an isolated incident until I recently met a professor from the Norman Manley Law School in Kingston who informed me that a distant relative was a distinguished member of the Jamaican judiciary. I also confirmed that my distant

gleaner.com/gleaner/20020210/focus3.html.


67. See Marriott, supra note 65.


69. The Norman Manley Law School was established in 1973 and is part of the Council of Legal Education of the University of the West Indies including the Hugh Wooding Law School in Trinidad and Tobago and the Eugene Dupuch Law School in the Bahamas. Norman Manley was a legendary Jamaican politician and lawyer born in 1893. Manley was a Rhodes Scholar and a contributor to the Jamaican Independence Constitution. See Norman Manley Law School, http://www.nmls.edu.jm/ (last visited Nov. 27, 2009).

70. Chief Justice of Jamaica and acting Governor-General, Lensley Wolfe. See Governor-General to Retire—Lensley Wolfe to Act After February 15, JAM. GLEANER, Jan. 17, 2006, http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20060117/lead1.html; JAMAICAN INFORMATION SERVICE, Manchester Gets 40 New Justices of the Peace, Nov. 13, 2009, http://www.jis.gov.jm/officepm/html/20091113/190000-050. The spelling of my surname varies throughout the family. Some family members have the spelling “Wolff” while others spell their last name “Wolfe.” Part of this discrepancy may be attributed to the way that the name was recorded by immigration officials at the port of entry into the United States.
Jamaican cousin is an academic at the University of the West Indies. The establishment of my relatives within the academy and judiciary brought some clarity to my chosen profession. I felt deprived of this relevant information that drew me closer to my heritage. When I approached my father about our familial link to the administration of the Jamaican legal system, he simply stated, “but that was in Jamaica.” I countered my father’s comment with my appreciation for his sharing of our family history. I provided the context for my inquiry by explaining that it was necessary for me to understand where I came from so that I could understand where I was going.

Upon the discovery of my family’s place in the law, I felt a kindred connection to my distant relative which further justified my decision to enter the legal profession. I am now committed to the study of American and Caribbean law through my involvement with the American and Caribbean Law Initiative. Through this experience, I have a deeper consciousness of this organization’s mission of enhancing relations with our neighbors in the Caribbean. The branch is now receiving water from the root.

I returned home from my island vacation with a newfound appreciation for my parents’ struggle. They came from a developing country to establish themselves in a capitalist country. We were settled in the suburbs of New York, when in years prior my parents were part of a declining British commonwealth. While I was wrestling with my dual

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71. “The mission of the American Caribbean Law Initiative (ACLI) is to advance the common interest of its members in the growth and development of the Caribbean Basin by facilitating collaborative relationships and by strengthening its legal development and institutions.” American and Caribbean Law Initiative, http://www.fcsl.edu/acli/ (last visited Mar. 7, 2010). Members include the Thurgood Marshall School of Law at Texas Southern University along with law schools throughout Florida and the Caribbean.


74. See HERBERT HEATON, THE G.I. ROUNDTABLE SERIES, WHAT MAKES THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH HOLD TOGETHER? (2002); Safa, supra note 18 (“Admiration for British culture [in the English-speaking Caribbean] also served to maintain a Eurocentric orientation [among the elite at the West Indian island nation of St. Vincent] . . . . Eurocentrism almost certainly stifled [St. Vincent’s] sense of national identity and denigrated the African-derived components of Caribbean culture.”); see also James, supra note 16 (“The British Caribbean, the primary source of black migration to the U.S. [in the late 1800s and early 1900s], experienced a catastrophic stagnation and decline in its sugar economy, the mainstay and primary employer in the region since the seventeenth century. This crisis was especially deep in the so-called Old Colonies of Jamaica, Barbados, and the Leeward Islands, whose economies were most heavily dependent upon sugar.”).
heritage, perhaps my parents experienced similar discomfort. Some West Indians felt the need to justify their independence from colonialism and establish their identities as Caribbean apart from European dilution. The same cultural conflict may be experienced by the children of immigrants in relation to their search for an identity.

I was internally and externally motivated to perform well in school, internally to justify my family’s sacrifice in starting a new life in America. After years of struggling through my own independence and individualism, however, I became outspoken in the need to develop and recognize my own story; my family’s story could no longer dictate my path. I would respect my foundation, but I had to grow in order to flourish. I, along with some of my second-generation friends, came to the

75. The process of “identificational assimilation” takes place across generations over a length of time as individuals gain increased exposure to American culture. See Arriagada, supra note 7, at 22; Safa, supra note 18 (“An important effect of emigration may be to reestablish national unity in opposition to other islanders met abroad, while also serving to create a pan-West Indian identification in others.”); James, supra note 16 (“It is this kind of blindness to the Afro-Caribbean strands within the American tapestry that . . . [highlight] the double invisibility of black immigrants: invisible because of their blackness and invisible because they are black foreigners, a combination of characteristics that, until relatively recently, was apparently unthinkable and certainly imperceptible to most Americans, including scholars of immigration. The relative neglect of black immigrants is paradoxical, for . . . these immigrants have been simultaneously . . . the least visible but most articulate and active of America’s ethnic constituencies.”).


77. “[E]thnic identity has an important influence on a number of key outcomes including aspects of psychological well-being such as depression and self-esteem, academic expectations and school achievement, and the ability to handle experiences of racism and discrimination.” Arriagada, supra note 7, at 10 (citations omitted).

78. Many immigrants regard education as a path to societal inclusion and mobility in their new country. See Phinney et al., supra note 11, at 503. A majority of immigrant parents and children have positive attitudes towards schooling. See Qin-Hilliard, supra note 53, at 601. Studies have shown the extensive time and effort spent by adolescent children of immigrants in completing homework to achieve academic success. See Wen-Jui Han, Academic Achievements of Children in Immigrant Families, 1 EDU. RES. & REV. 286, 287-88 (2006); see also Patrick Welsh, Making the Grade Isn’t About Race. It’s About Parents, Wash. Post, Oct. 18, 2009, at B01. (“Knowing how hard my parents worked simply to give me the opportunity to get an education in America, it was hard for me not to care about getting good grades.” (quoting a student whose parents emigrated to the United States from Sudan)). See generally Vivian Louie, COMPelled TO EXCEL: IMMIGRATION, EDUCATION, AND OPPORTUNITY AMONG CHINESE AMERICANS 137 (2004) (stating “[w]e [second-generation children], we definitely have it easy . . . the sacrifices we make are sort of like, okay, I don’t want to be a lawyer, but I will be. Compared to the things that my mom went through, they are nothing.”).

conclusion that while our backgrounds propelled us to be “over-achievers,” we languished in our parents’ dreams for what our American lives should be. We had to think outside the box and pay homage to the nuclear family, while breaking away to breathe. Now we were challenged with our own thoughts and ideas on culture and self-identity.

Through my experience, I know that this world is not black and white. I am aware of the “melting pot” theory that America is built upon. There is rhetoric that we currently exist in a post-racial society due to the election of Barack Obama as President. However, the assertion that we are post-racial, or that we are color-blind, has its flaws. While such a view may


82. Booth, supra note 13 (“The demographic shifts are smudging the old lines demarcating two historical, often distinct societies, one black and one white. Reshaped by three decades of rapidly rising immigration, the national story is now far more complicated.”).

83. See id. (explaining that the “melting pot” theory is based on “the promise that all immigrants can be transformed into Americans, a new alloy forged in a crucible of democracy, freedom and civic responsibility.”). The melting pot theory will be tested as a demographic shift takes place in this country due to a wave of migration from Asia and Latin America. See id. (“This shift. . . will severely test the premise of the fabled melting pot, the idea, so central to national identity, that this country can transform people of every color and background into ‘one America.’”); see also Branigin, supra note 18 (“Some sociologists argue that the melting pot often means little more than ‘Anglo conformity’ . . . . [W]ith today’s emphasis on diversity and ethnicity, it has become easier than ever for immigrants to avoid the melting pot entirely. Even the metaphor itself is changing, having fallen out of fashion completely with many immigration advocacy and ethnic groups. They prefer such terms as the ‘salad bowl’ and the ‘mosaic,’ . . . .”).

84. See Lydia Lum, The Obama Era: A Post-Racial Society?, 25 DIVERSE ISSUES IN HIGHER EDUC 14, 14 (2009) (acknowledging that while some believe race no longer matters, many scholars still believe that race does still matter); see also Cepeda, supra note 15 (“[E]ven after making history by electing our first African and white-American president, our society has only managed to place a ‘post-racial’ Band-Aid over the subject of race in the United States.”).

remove the verbal distinction of black and white, it does little to remove the subconscious judgments that we make with regards to race and cultural norms.\textsuperscript{86} We are conditioned to instantly categorize and dissect one another upon introduction despite best efforts to view one another as equal.\textsuperscript{87} We remain racially bound to stereotypes and biases despite our progress towards equality and justice.\textsuperscript{88}

My Dominican friend who identifies as Latina\textsuperscript{89} revealed that an ancestral relative was of African descent after I demanded an explanation for her curly hair and full lips.\textsuperscript{90} My friend from high school, who identifies as Caucasian, balanced her love of matzo ball soup with her favorite dish of baked ziti through her mixed Jewish and Italian heritage. This experience is not so different than that of my black American associates and colleagues, as they also encounter a history of mixed race and heritage.\textsuperscript{91}

From the Creoles of Louisiana\textsuperscript{92} to the Gullahs of South
Carolina, we all share in this ambiguous existence.  

III. SELF-IDENTITY AND CULTURE

A. Music as Cultural Expression

1. Reggae and Reggaeton

One of the most celebrated cultural icons of my parents’ native land is Robert Nesta Marley, also known as Bob Marley. As a child, I continuously heard Marley’s music, but as an adult I cherish his music as a significant cultural link. In response to my cultural immersion, I also developed an appreciation for reggae music in general. Marley set Jamaica’s indigenous language to primal African rhythms to help pioneer an international phenomenon known as reggae music, which recently morphed into “reggaeton.” While much of Jamaica’s culture is derived unity in the Caribbean based upon the continuous process of interaction and adjustments between the major cultural traditions of Europe and Africa."

93. The Gullah people are a community of African Americans who inhabit the coastal areas of South Carolina, also known as the low country region or the Sea Islands. See Nat’l Park Serv., Low Country Gullah Geechee Culture: Special Resource Study & Final Environmental Impact Statement (2005), http://www.nps.gov/sero/planning/eg_process.htm (last visited Nov. 27, 2009).

94. See Defining ‘Mutt’ Obama’s True Colors, MSNBC.COM, Dec. 14, 2008, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/28216005/print/1/displaymode/1098/ (last visited May 13, 2010) (“Today, the spectrum of skin tones among African-Americans—even those with two black parents—is evidence of widespread white ancestry. Also, since blacks were often light enough to pass for white, unknown numbers of white Americans today have blacks hidden in their family trees.”).


from and shaped by British and Spanish customs, reggae music is indigenous to Jamaica. Reggae is the music of Jamaica, said to be created by the descendents of Africans who rebelled against European subordination in the Caribbean, also known as the Maroons. The Maroons were runaway slaves who fled to the hills of Jamaica to escape from the European establishment. Jamaicans promote the Maroons as their strong-willed predecessors who overcame their continued exportation in the slave trade.

Marley’s role in Jamaican culture was one part folk singer and one part soothsayer, as he disseminated the story of the Jamaican people and predicted the resulting political and social unrest due to the injustice taking place before him in Trench Town, an inner-city slum of Kingston, Jamaica. Marley was also a teacher of history and religion, as he at times sang of biblical text and the teachings of Marcus Garvey.


99. The founders of the Rastafarian movement built upon the legacy of Jamaica’s Maroons. See also Dread History, supra note 96 (“From the early 1930s, Rastafari in Jamaica have developed a culture based on an Afrocentric reading of the Bible, on communal values, a strict vegetarian dietary code known as Ital, a distinctive dialect, and a ritual calendar devoted to, among other dates, the celebration of various Ethiopian holy days. Perhaps the most familiar feature of Rastafari culture is the growing and wearing of dreadlocks, uncombed and uncut hair which is allowed to knot and mat into distinctive locks. Rastafari regard the locks as both a sign of their African identity and a religious vow of their separation from the wider society they regard as Babylon.”). See generally E. Kofi Agorsah, The Caribbean and the Americas, MAROON HERITAGE RESEARCH PROJECT, http://www.blackstudies.pdx.edu /Maroon_Heritage.htm (last visited Mar. 14, 2010).


101. Cf. id., at 23-24 (discussing how Jamaican perceptions of the Maroons’ ability to “defeat[] the strongest military power in the world with few resources” inspired many “romanticized views” and influenced the Rastafarian movement).

102. See Christopher John Farley, Remembering Bob Marley, TIME, Feb. 4, 2005, http://www.time.com/time/arts/article/0,8599,1024886,00.html; Dread History, supra note 96 (“In the island of its birth, Rasta culture has also drawn upon distinctive African-Jamaican folk traditions. . . .”); see also Bob Marley Biography, supra note 96 (“The pared down folk-sounding ‘Redemption Song’ was an illustration of Marley’s talents as a songwriter, crafting poetic lyrics with social and political importance . . . . Marley had received the Order of Merit from the Jamaican government. He had also been awarded the Medal of Peace from the United Nations in 1980.”).

was off limits to Marley as he defiantly declared, 
Until the philosophy which holds one race 
Superior and another inferior
Is finally and permanently discredited and abandoned
Everywhere is war, me say war.104

Marley’s song “One Love” in particular has withstood the test of time.105
The song was performed for President Barack Obama as part of the
inauguration festivities during which Obama became the first African
American President of the United States106 in January of 2009.107 The
classic composition “One Love” states in part, “One Love, One Heart / 
Let’s get together and feel alright.”108 This verse was an appropriate
sentiment during the celebration.109 I felt a deep sense of pride that
Marley’s legacy, as an ambassador of Reggae and Jamaican culture,

104. See BOB MARLEY, War, on RASTAMAN VIBRATIONS (Island Records 1976); see also Bob Marley Biography, supra note 96 (“The lyrics of ‘War’ were taken from a speech by Haile Selassie, the twentieth-century Ethiopian emperor who is seen as a type of . . . spiritual leader in the Rastafarian movement. A battle cry for freedom from oppression, the song discusses a new Africa, one without the racial hierarchy enforced by colonial rule.”).


106. See MSNBC.COM, supra note 94.


108. BOB MARLEY & CURTIS MAYFIELD, One Love, on EXODUS (Tuff Gong Records 1977).

109. See WE ARE ONE: THE OBAMA INAUGURAL CELEBRATION (HBO Jan. 18, 2009) (highlighting the recording artists’ Will.i.am and Sheryl Crow performance of Bob Marley’s “One Love” at the We Are One: The Obama Inaugural Celebration, performed at the Lincoln Memorial on January 18, 2009 and presented by HBO); see also We Are One: The Obama Inaugural Celebration, NPR, Jan. 18, 2009, http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=9389770 (quoting the Presidential Inaugural Committee that they wanted the performances to be “grounded in history and brought to life with entertainment that relates to the themes that shaped Barack Obama”).

http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2008/oct/14/blackhistorymonth-race
(discussing Marcus Garvey).

http://digitalcommons.wcl.american.edu/jgspl/vol18/iss3/17
transcended time, race, and national origin to become part of our national stage during the installation of the Commander-in-Chief of the United States. It was a reminder that my Jamaican culture has made its mark on American history. Marley was a worldwide figure who hailed from his humble island existence to champion the social causes of countries other than Jamaica, including several nations in Africa. The impact of Marley’s message resonates with a large and diverse group of people while projecting the culture of the island of Jamaica on the world stage. Marley’s view on race and identity may be summarized by his quote:

If you’re white and you’re wrong, then you’re wrong, if you’re black and you’re wrong, you’re wrong. People are people. Black, blue, pink, green—God makes no rules about color, only society makes rules where my people suffer and that [sic] why we must have redemption and redemption now.

Accordingly, my self-identity expands in view of Marley’s stake in shaping American culture and expanding my views on race and equality. My cultural link to Marley not only solidifies my ancestral roots but connects me to those around the world, including my American cohorts.

Marley was a forward thinker as he propelled concepts and theories on
racial equality, political fairness, and economic parity throughout pop
culture.

2. The Hip Hop Movement

Living in New York City provided me with exposure to a vast array of
ethnicities and cultural experiences.\footnote{L AIRD W. BERGAD, T HE LATINO POPULATION OF NEW YORK CITY, 2008 7 (Nov. 2009), available at http://web.gc.cuny.edu/lastudies/latinodataproject/reports/The%20Latino%20Population%20of%20New%20York%20City%202008.pdf (reporting that in 2008, New York City population by race/ethnicity included: Non-Hispanic White (35.1%); Non-Hispanic Black (23.3%); Asian (11.8%); Latinos (27.9%); and Other (1.9%); and pointing out that New York City had more racial and ethnic diversity than the United States as a whole, the proportion of minorities (Hispanics, blacks, and Asians) was double that of the nation as a whole, and a higher proportion of New Yorkers identify as multiracial than individuals living elsewhere in the United States); see also NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING, NYC2000: RESULTS FROM THE 2000 CENSUS: DEMOGRAPHIC/HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS & ASIAN AND HISPANIC SUBGROUPS (2002), available at http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/pdf/census/nyc20002.pdf (New York City was the largest city in the nation in 2000 regarding population). See generally Francisco L. Rivera-Batiz, The Multicultural Population of New York City: A Socioeconomic Profile of the Mosaic (Colum. Un. Inst. for Urban & Minority Educ., Working Paper No. 93-1, 1993) (citing the presence of people from numerous continents and regions throughout the world).} New York is one of the most
diverse states in the country.\footnote{See Sam Roberts, Population Study Finds Change in the Suburbs, N.Y. TIMES, May 9, 2010, at A23 (noting that racial and ethnic minorities currently comprise the majority of the population in many metropolitan areas and predicting that the 2010 census will show the same for New York); see also BERGAD, supra note 115, at 26 (noting that Latinos accounted for an estimated 28% of New York City’s total population in 2008).} New York City remains a gateway for
immigrants upon entry to the United States.\footnote{See Roberts, supra note 116.} I frequently interacted with
New Yorkers who described themselves as Puerto Rican and Dominican.118 We lived in the same neighborhoods and attended the same schools.\footnote{See BERGAD, supra note 117, at 26 (stating that Puerto Ricans are the largest Latino subgroup in New York City, followed by Dominicans with the second largest subset).} It was just as common that I was offered arroz con pollo\footnote{See Rivera-Batiz, supra note 115, at 9 (reporting that the largest groups of immigrant children enrolled in New York City public schools were Dominican, Jamaican, and Russian).} as it was to eat Jamaican rice and peas. I regularly communed with my Nuyorican\footnote{See Blue Gaia, When Do You Eat Arroz Con Pollo?, http://www.ehow.com/about_4686171_do-eat-arroz-con-pollo.html (last visited Sept. 19, 2010) (Traditional Puerto Rican recipe consisting of a mixture of chicken and rice).}
friends, as we were raised in close proximity within the urban metropolis of New York City.122

Spanish Harlem123 and Washington Heights124 are analogies of how people of color combine, yet encapsulate themselves in separate ethnic enclaves.125 As minorities were pushed to the fringes of Manhattan, Blacks and Latinos carved out their own plots of upper Manhattan’s colorful landscape.126 We may cohabitate and even politically align together,127 but social norms dictate that labels will persist in separating and distinguishing us.128

Cultivating relationships with my diverse group of friends often involved listening to music. From choosing which entertainment venue to attend to what radio station to listen to, music influenced our lives in several ways. One musical form that we could agree on was hip hop, as we were part of the hip hop generation.129 Hip hop embodied familiar stories spoken over a
rhythmic beat to formulate bonds across socio-economic lines and demographics.\textsuperscript{130} The various forms of hip hop music and culture spoke to different experiences and diverse populations.\textsuperscript{131} As the genre that was modeled in part after a Jamaican style of music and began in the streets of New York City in the early 1970s, my affinity towards hip hop overlapped my American and Jamaican cultural influences.\textsuperscript{132} We would recite lines from the same songs, and learn new terminology required to relate to others within our hip hop generation.\textsuperscript{133} Collaborations between white, black, Caribbean, Latino, and Chicano musicians solidified ties within ethnic communities and built a subculture across color lines and emerged as a unifying force.\textsuperscript{134}

Hip hop truly became a universal language.\textsuperscript{135} Through music, we were able to express our individuality of choice and come to a common ground regarding messages of social and political importance.\textsuperscript{136} However, at 1984. This same era is called “post-soul” by Mark Athony Neal, who considers it as picking up where the Civil Rights and Black Power movements left off. See generally \textit{Mark Anthony Neal, \textsc{Soul Babies} (2002)} (identifying the “post-soul era” as beginning after the \textit{Bakke} case challenging affirmative action in 1978, and therefore including those born to the era as being roughly from the 1963 March on Washington until the \textit{Bakke} case).


\textsuperscript{132} See \textit{id.}; \textit{see also} Tony Karon, ‘Hip-Hop Nation’ Is Exhibit A for America’s Latest Cultural Revolution, \textit{Time}, Sept. 22, 2000, \texttt{available at http://www.time.com/time/arts/article/0,8599,55635,00.html} (distinguishing hip hop’s language as “a complex, ever-evolving organism that has spawned countless dialects that are constantly in conversation with one another”). \textit{See generally Rhodes, supra note 130.}

\textsuperscript{133} \textit{See generally Juan Flores, From Bomba to Hip-Hop Puerto Rican Culture and Latino Identity} (2000); Roberta L Singer and Roberta Friedman, \textit{Puerto Rican and Cuban Musical Expression in New York.}, \texttt{http://www.dramonline.org/content/notes/nwr/80244.pdf} (last visited July 4, 2010) (introduction to an audio track).

\textsuperscript{134} \textit{See Rhodes, supra note 130.}

times hip hop embodied the labels, categories, prejudices, and stereotypes that we were trying to escape from.\textsuperscript{137} Hip hop continues to carry political baggage in implicating race, gender, and class.\textsuperscript{138} As hip hop evolved and expanded beyond the New York inner-city, so did its message and its impact.\textsuperscript{139} With the growth of hip hop culture\textsuperscript{140} into a worldwide force, the musical landscape has room for diverse voices to provide social commentary.\textsuperscript{141} The freedom and empowerment expressed in hip hop may provide a basis in forming self-identity.\textsuperscript{142} Hip hop continues to be embraced by a diverse population, no matter the race, ethnicity, nationality, class, age, gender, or political affiliation of its producers and consumers.\textsuperscript{143}

IV. SELF-IDENTITY AND RACE

A. The Racial Self-Identity of Popular Culture Icons

Bob Marley was born the son of a black Jamaican mother and white British father.\textsuperscript{144} The details of the union of Marley’s parents are vague,
but it is documented that Marley’s father played a minimal role in his development. Marley was described as biracial, and his mixed heritage resulted in his lighter skin tone. In post-colonial Jamaica, Marley’s lighter complexion afforded him the privilege of advancing in social status. However, Marley adamantly rejected this class system and spoke openly about his alliance with the Kingston ghetto. At times, Marley even denounced the white blood that ran through his veins.

legend of the great musical artist’s father being from Wales), and Farley, Before the Legend, supra note 111, at 15, and Jamaica Information Service, National Symbols, Cedella Marley-Booker to Get Posthumous OD, PM Announces, Apr. 29, 2009, http://www.jis.gov.jm/officepm/html/20080429t0909000-0500_14992_jis_cedella_marley_booker_to_get_posthumous_od_pm_announces.asp [hereinafter Cedella Marley-Booker] (discussing the legacy of reggae legend Bob Marley’s mother), with Jack Malvern, The Times traces Bob Marley’s white, English family to North Devon, TIMES ONLINE, May 20, 2009, http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/music/article6322755.ece (relating that the respective ancestries of Bob Marley’s parents are well established, demonstrating evidence of his mixed-race background).

145. See generally Farley, Before the Legend, supra note 111, at 3–4.

146. See MSNBC.COM, supra note 94 (exploring Obama’s identity as biracial/multi-ethnic and reactions to it).


148. See Christopher A. D. Charles, Skin Bleachers’ Representations of Skin Color in Jamaica, 40 J. BLACK STUD. 153, 153-67 (2009) (depicting the social and political institutions in Jamaica that shape the country’s images about skin color); see also Serge F. Kovaleski, In Jamaica, Shades of an Identity Crisis: Ignoring Health Risk, Blacks Increase Use of Skin Lighteners, WASH. POST, Aug. 5, 1999, at A15 (characterizing the phenomenon of skin bleaching as controversial because many Jamaicans believe it is the key to achieving status, while others view it as an attack on black heritage); Safa, Popular Culture, supra note 1, at 120 (describing the colonial patterns of the Creole or brown elite stratifying the population between mulattos who aligned with European culture in the promotion of cultural superiority, and the black masses who retained the values of their African identity).

149. See Matt Jenson, Professor, Address at Africa Unite Ghana—Symposium: Bob Marley—His Music: More Than Music! (Feb. 2006), available at http://africa-unite.org/site/content/view/23/57; Mikal Gilmore, The Life and Times of Bob Marley: How He Changed the World, 969 ROLLING STONE 68-77, Mar. 10, 2005 (illuminating Bob Marley’s association with inner-city Kingston residents in order to find a sense of community in his new home, which ultimately led to his discovery of the rhythm & blues scene); see also John Aizlewood, Fighting for Survival, GUARDIAN, June 1, 2001, at 2 (noting that Bob Marley lived part of his life in Trench Town, a low income community in west Kingston, and how, even after he made enough money to move five miles away, he “carried on as he always had” and did not distance himself); Russell Hall, 30 Years After Exodus: Remembering Bob Marley’s 1977 Masterpiece, http://www.gibson.com/en-us/Lifestyle/features/30%20Years%20After%20Exodus_%20Remember (last visited May 11, 2010) (citing Bob Marley’s widow that Bob lived his life humbly despite his international fame).

150. See Scott Gurtman, The Influence of Bob Marley’s Absent, White Father, http://www.uvm.edu/~debate/dreadlibrary/gurtman02.htm (“Marley was . . . partially ashamed of his white heritage.”); Rita Marley with Hettie Jones, supra note 147
Perhaps Marley was insecure in his self-identity, struggling to find the place where he felt he belonged. Marley never identified as biracial or mixed race, although he spoke about the different race of his mother and father. Instead, one is left to draw independent conclusions as to Marley’s seemingly contrary features including his straight nose and thin lips, with a head full of dreadlocks. Marley’s message of peace and unity was inconsistent with his attitude towards his own racial composition. The ultimate irony is that Marley died of skin cancer, a form of cancer which predominantly affects Caucasians. What Marley may have failed to confront, eventually killed him.

Perhaps we all struggle in navigating social groups for acceptance in order to gain peace of mind. While Marley tried to expand the meaning of humanity, there are people who still view the world as black and white, though an academic contrast to this paradigm is still vibrant.

("[Marley’s] black consciousness covered his light skin. You see him, [sic] you hear him, and he’s a black man."); see also MSNBC.COM, supra note 94 (stating that Barack Obama wrote in a memoir that he was “deeply affected” upon reading that Malcolm X once denounced his “white blood”).

151. See Gurtman, supra note 150 (“Experiencing racism from both the black and white sides was also difficult because early on Marley had difficulties identifying with either racial group.”); see also id. (quoting Benjamin Foot as saying, “I felt Bob wasn’t secure in himself at this time . . . I think he was perturbed that one of his parents was white, and he wanted to prove himself very much as being a black Rasta”).

152. See id. (quoting Bob Marley as saying, “[m]y father was white and my mother black . . . Me don’t dip on the black man’s side nor the white man’s side. Me dip on God’s side, the one who create me and cause me to come from black and white. . . .”)

153. See RITA MARLEY WITH HETTIE JONES, supra note 147 (describing Bob Marley’s as “very half-black, half-white, with a high, round forehead, prominent cheekbones, and a long nose”); see also Rob Nash, Not Worried ‘bout a Thing, SUNDAY TIMES, June 29, 2008, at Features 31 (“As with Bob Marley, his white European father’s genes are expressed in fine features and light-brown skin [comparing a contemporary recording artist with Marley].”).

154. See Gurtman, supra note 150 (“The strong allegiance to black culture that resulted from the absence of his white father also partially attributed to Marley’s unwaveringly sense of Pan-Africanism.”); Dread History, supra note 96 (“Despite the fact that Rastafari continue to be widely misunderstood and stigmatized outside Jamaica, the movement embraces a non-violent ethic of ‘peace and love’ and pursues a disciplined code of religious principles.”); see also Thigpen & Garcia, supra note 111 (noting Marley publicly stood for racial equality and social justice). FARLEY, BEFORE THE LEGEND, supra note 111, at 4 (“I don’t think of Third World. To me, I am of the First World. I can’t put people in classes.”) (quoting Bob Marley).


156. See generally Gary Younge, Home Is Not a Postcode: The Row over Bob Marley’s Bones Demonstrates the Tensions Between Race, Identity and Belonging, GUARDIAN, Feb. 7, 2005, at Guardian Leader 15 (“‘While in life [Marley] called for peace, love and Pan-African unity, in death he is at the heart of a dispute that spans but also splits the black diaspora.’”).

157. Cf. id.

158. See also Beyond Black and White: Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in the U.S.
one cannot escape being placed in one category or the other.\textsuperscript{159} As we witness our nation’s first black president,\textsuperscript{160} whose biracial experience draws similarities to that of Bob Marley,\textsuperscript{161} we find that we are not a united people of America.\textsuperscript{162} Instead, our biracial leader could not avoid addressing issues of race, as issues of racism eventually came to the forefront of his campaign and his presidency.\textsuperscript{163} Some critics even state that Obama is not the country’s first black president as a result of his

\textsuperscript{159} But cf. Brent Staples, Editorial, \textit{Why Race Isn’t as ‘Black’ and ‘White’ as We Think}, N.Y. TIMES, Oct. 31, 2005, at A1 (noting that the advent of DNA testing allowing individuals to discover their ancestry is “forcing people to re-examine the arbitrary calculations our culture uses to decide who is ‘white’ and who is ‘black.’”).

\textsuperscript{160} Cf. MSNBC.COM, supra note 94 (debating whether President Obama truly counts as the first “black” president but stating that “Obama [himself] has said, ‘I identify as African-American—that’s how I’m treated and that’s how I’m viewed. I’m proud of it.’”)

\textsuperscript{161} See Jason Carroll, \textit{Behind the Scenes: Is Barack Obama Black or Biracial?}, CNN Politics, June 9, 2008, http://www.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/06/09/btsc.obama.race/ (identifying a crucial part of Obama’s ‘post-racial’ America, which was connecting to the millions of white Americans who grew up listening to Marley’s music, and appealing to both black and white audiences by transcending the labels of race and using his own experiences to translate his racial history into political success).

\textsuperscript{162} MSNBC.COM, supra note 94 (“Debate over whether to call this son of a white Kansan and a black Kenyan biracial, African-American, mixed-race, half-and-half, multiracial—or, in Obama’s own words, a “mutt”—has reached a crescendo since Obama’s election shattered assumptions about race.”)

\textsuperscript{163} See Barack Obama, Speech at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: A More Perfect Union (Mar. 18, 2008), \textit{in Barack Obama’s Speech on Race}, N.Y. TIMES, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/18/us/politics/18text-obama.html? r=1&pagewanted=print (exclaiming that the discussion of race during the campaign has been a divisive issue, creating racial tensions and controversy); Liz Halloran, \textit{Obama’s Race Speech Heralded as Historic: African American Scholars and Leaders See This as The Presidential Candidate’s Moment to Lead}, U.S. NEWS & WORLD REP., March 18, 2008, http://www.usnews.com/articles/news/campaign-2008/2008/03/18/obamas-race-speech-heralded-as-historic.html (quoting Rev. Alfon Pollard, Dean of Howard University School of Divinity, as saying, “Race was never an issue that was going to disappear . . . . It’s too much a part of our national fabric to think that we can gloss over it and move on without having to contend mightily with each other.”).
The reality of the biracial experience lived by Marley and Obama resulted in their racially identifying as black. Obama is described as comfortable in his blackness, although some argue that he should be described as biracial or multiracial, the same as could be said for Marley. Both Marley and Obama searched for a self-identity. Yet, despite the efforts to define, categorize, and compartmentalize these historic figures; they have transcended boundaries and borders to relate to different races, cultures, and ethnicities.

Obama and Marley permeate pop and mainstream cultures in disseminating messages across the globe. The “Obama Effect” is far reaching, perhaps because of Obama’s ability to connect to a wide range of individuals through his diverse background. Marley has likewise...


165. See MSNBC.COM, supra note 94.

166. See MSNBC.COM, supra note 94 (noting that six million people, which amounts to two percent of the U.S. population identify as belonging to more than one race. The White House Office of Management and Budget decided against adding a “multiracial” category to the census stating that the category is not a race in and of itself); David Aaronovitch, Black, White or Neither? The Mixed Race Dilemma, TIME, Nov. 11, 2008, at Features 22, available at http://www.timesonline.co.uk/101/comment/columnists/david_aaronovitch/article5126706 (noting that in the mixed-race proportion of the population in the United States and the United Kingdom is growing).

167. MSNBC.com, supra note 94.


posthumously carried reggae music and the Rastafarian movement into international forums.\footnote{Jess Blumberg, \textit{Rasta Revealed}, 38 \textit{Smithsonian} 34, 34 (Jan. 2008); Rastafarian Music, BBC, http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/rastafari.customs/music.shtml (last visited on May 16, 2010); see also Luis Cino, \textit{Babyloni Too Can be a Red Island in the Caribbean}, 1 \textit{Islas} 76, 76 (2009), available at http://www.angelfire.com/planet/islas/English/v1n1-pdf/76-77.pdf (documenting the influence of Bob Marley and Rastafarians in Cuba and the persecution of Rastafarians); cf. Samuel Fure Davis, \textit{Reggae in Cuba and the Hispanic Caribbean: Fluctuations and Representations of Identities}, 29 \textit{Black Music Res. J.} 25, 27, 47 (2009) (noting that “reggae music is [still] marginalized and regarded with contempt” in Cuba but that even the Spanish-speaking Caribbean has been influenced, if more slowly, by reggae music and culture).} The mass appeal of Obama and Marley may be due, in part, to their cross-over appeal to diverse individuals who find a connection to their multicultural experience.\footnote{See generally Jeff Chang, \textit{On Multiculturalism: Notes on the Ambitions and Legacies of a Movement}, 18 \textit{Grantmakers Arts Reader} 80 (2007) (discussing the evolution of multiculturalism and mentioning how Bob Marley’s album \textit{Catch a Fire} and Bruce Lee’s movie \textit{Enter the Dragon} influenced mid-seventies artists of color to become interested in Third World art and culture).} Both Obama and Marley self-identify as black, but are relatable to people of various races, ethnicities, and cultures.\footnote{See Barack Obama Biography, http://www.biography.com/articles/Barack-Obama-12782369?print (last visited May 16, 2010); cf. Kwame Nantambu, \textit{Obama’s Bob Marley Effect}, \textit{Trinidad and Tobago News Blog}, Nov. 9, 2008, http://www.trinidadandtobagonews.com/blog/?p=702 (suggesting that “Obama’s youthful, white–looking, physical appearance was the magnetic force to draw young white Americans to his side”).} They have also been cited as the voice of disenfranchised minority communities around the world.\footnote{See Anne Hickling-Hudson, \textit{Postcolonialism, Hybridity and Transferability: The Contribution of Pamela O’Gorman to Music Education in the Caribbean}, 22 \textit{Caribbean J. Educ.} 36, reprinted in http://eprints.qut.edu.au/3503/1/3503.pdf, at 10 (addressing the global influence of reggae and Bob Marley and its use for political empowerment by “racially oppressed people such as Australian aborigines and countless others of the world’s dispossessed”) (citation omitted); Howard W. French, \textit{Celebrating Bob Marley. Voice of the Dispossessed}, N.Y. Times, May 13, 1991, at C11; see also Nobelprieze.org. The Nobel Peace Prize 2009, http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2009/ (explaining that the prize was awarded to Barack Obama “for his extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples”).} This reality provides hope that through our shared existence and the embrace of cultural awareness, we may overcome obstacles to self-identity while maintaining authenticity.\footnote{But see Mark Anthony Neal, \textit{ Appropriation and Reinvention}, \textit{Duke Mag.} 33, May-June 2009, available at http://www.dukemagazine.duke.edu/issues/25/faculty/7.html (“What many folks see as reflecting black popular culture is a commercialized, sanitized, airbrushed version of something very superficial at play, not necessarily [Obama himself], but what people read in the man.”).}
B. Self-Identity and Race Within the Hispanic Caribbean

Recently, I learned that I have relatives who were born and/or lived in Cuba. My relatives with a Cuban connection appeared black, although some have Latino names. I even found that Rita Marley, the matriarch of the Marley family was also born in Cuba. I decided to conduct further research on what it meant to be Afro-Cuban and study Cuban/Jamaican relations. I also explore here what it means to be a black Latino.

Although the phrase “Afro-Cuban” on its face is self-explanatory, I acknowledge the rich context that is associated with this loaded term. To state it simply, although its meaning is anything but simple, Afro-Cuban is a term used to describe Cubans of African ancestry, as distinct from other inhabitants of the island including white Amerindian, Hispanics, mulattos, and mestizos. Over 1.1 million people of Cuba’s population are black. In addition to the Afro-Cubans, Afro-Caribbeans who


177. Fawzia Mahmood, Close Ties between Cuba and Jamaica Analyzed, as CLAS Launches New Focus on Cuba, Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University (Oct. 6, 2007), http://www.watsoninstitute.org/news_detail.cfm?id=695. (noting deep running ties between Cuba and Jamaica due to a shared history and the migration of people between the two islands).

178. Cf. Navarro, supra note 130 (noting that Black Latinos, or Afro Latinos, are a subset of the Latino population with African roots, that only two percent of Latinos counted in the 2000 U.S. census identified themselves as black, and that, of these, twenty-eight percent lived in New York City); Gabriel Escobar, Dominicans Face Assimilation in Black and White, WASH. POST, May 14, 1999, at A03 (stating that, to assimilate, black Latinos must adapt to White American, African American, and Latino American culture in navigating the complex racial code of the United States).


180. See WAYNE S. SMITH, AFRO-CUBANS IN CUBAN SOCIETY, CTR. FOR INT’L POLICY’S CUBA PROGRAM (1999) (clarifying that blacks were brought to Cuba from Africa as slaves and that their descendants over four centuries have lived and maintained their cultural and ethnic heritage).


182. See id. at 6, 10 (defining the term used for people of European and Indian descent); see also Helen I. Safa, Challenging Mestizaje: A Gender Perspective on Indigenous and Afrodescendant Movements in Latin America, 25 CRITIQUE ANTHROPOLOGY 307, 311 (2005) [hereinafter Safa, Challenging Mestizaje] (“In Latin America, it was possible for persons to pass out of the indigenous or Afrodescendant communities by adopting the cultural and class characteristics of the dominant white, mestizo society. Education and income ‘whitened’, contributing to a large intermediate sector of mestizos or mulattos.”).

originate from mainly Haiti and Jamaica contribute to Cuba’s black population.184 My family relates that a few of my Jamaican ascendants migrated to Cuba temporarily to obtain employment opportunities and thereby some of their children were born on Cuban soil.185 My grandparents returned to Jamaica after the completion of their temporary assignments.

Jamaica and Cuba share a common link to imperialism through Spain’s occupation of both Cuba and Jamaica.186 Though the Spanish eventually were forced to flee Jamaica after British occupation, 187 they left their influence in naming such cities as Ocho Rios.188 Jamaicans also tend to be proficient in Spanish to establish relations and strengthen ties with their Spanish-speaking neighbors.189 With their shared history and experience of Spanish occupation, Cuba and Jamaica both recognize Simón Bolívar’s role in spurring a liberation of both countries.190 However, there are differences in cultural nationalism and national identity between Jamaica and Cuba.191

(depicting a chart of selected indicators for Cubans, such as race, age distribution, and child-woman status); G. EDWARD EBANKS, POPULATION CHALLENGES: CUBA AND THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC 16 (June 5, 2004), available at http://www.canpopsoc.org/2004/Ebanks-CPS04Sess12paper2.pdf (reporting migration patterns in Cuba and the Dominican Republic).


187. Id.


191. See Safa, Popular Culture, supra note 1, at 119, 121 (“In the Hispanophone Caribbean, the sense of national identity is based less on race, than on language, religion, and other aspects of Spanish culture . . . . This Spanish heritage included superiority of white skin and European culture, but in the Hispanic Caribbean, racial
While racism and color-consciousness exists in Cuba, particularly in the media and in employment prospects, Cuba is unique in terms of national and cultural identity. Cuba acknowledges that an integral portion of its cultural legacy is attributed to an African influence. Further, there is recognition that even the white population of Cuba comes from a diverse mix of Spaniards who themselves have been infiltrated by North African occupation. Racism is illegal in employment for socialist Cuba, although racial oppression is still reported to have an effect. Subtle racism reportedly persists throughout Cuba, contributing to a racial hierarchy which favors individuals with lighter complexions. However, racial equality played a role in Cuba’s Revolution. What has ensued is a movement by black Latinos to ensure racial equality and eliminate color consciousness which manifests in discrimination and affects class, employment, politics, and mobility.

IV. THE BLENDING OF RACE, ETHNICITY, AND CULTURE IN FORMING SELF-IDENTITY

The one-size fits all racial and ethnic categories which dominated our historical past no longer fits our current cultural trends and societal needs. The black-white paradigm historically failed to depict the divisions were never as strong as in the Commonwealth Caribbean.” (citation omitted).
complete picture of America’s racial and ethnic landscape. Racial and ethnic boundaries are no longer fixed and stationary, but individuals are still subject to mandatory classification by governmental authorities due in part to the historic role of the law in preserving racial bias within the United States. Perhaps we are moving towards unhinging our rigid ideology of race and ethnicity into a more fluid concept which recognizes a wide range of possibilities for self-identity. This perceived malleability potentially permits the inclusion of individuals who have a bond in one or several groups absent their exclusion from a particular group when an ethnic, racial, and/or cultural connection is not observed or recognized by the mainstream. However, the nuances of race and ethnicity continue to regard to the U.S. Census in counting Hispanics “reflect evolving cultural norms”;

see also Booth, supra note 13 (“[T]here was a greater consensus in the past on what it meant to be an American, a yearning for a common language and culture, and a desire – encouraged, if not coerced by members of the dominant white Protestant culture – to assimilate. Today . . . there is more emphasis on preserving one’s ethnic identity, of finding ways to highlight and defend one’s cultural roots.”).

202. See Fears supra note 17 (“The black-white classification is uniquely American, a fact of history that has persisted since it was laid down by Virginia Slaveholders in the 1700s.”); GREGORY STEPHENS, ON RACIAL FRONTIERS: THE NEW CULTURE OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS, RALPH ELLISON, AND BOB MARLEY 1, 2 (1999) (“[W]e cling to our “color complex,” or “color-phobia,” as [Frederick] Douglass called racialism, with entrenched institutional support of an ‘ethno-racial pentagon.’ . . . [O]ur very conceptions of “race” grew out of interracial contexts – and most specifically, with the repression of interraciality, in order to construct racial privilege.”)

203. See Brent Staples, On Race and the Census: Struggling with Categories that No Longer Apply, N.Y. TIMES, Feb. 5, 2007; see also ASSOCIATED PRESS, Multiracial America is Fastest Growing Group, MSNBC.COM, May 28, 2009, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/30986649/ (pointing out that the fact that multiracial individuals are the fastest growing demographic are “challeng[ng] traditional notions of race”).

204. See MSNBC.COM, supra note 94 (finding that our concepts of racial identity is in transition and the concept of choosing to be either black or white is becoming outdated); see also F. JAMES DAVIS, WHO IS BLACK? ONE NATION’S DEFINITION (1991), reprinted in PBS, Frontline: Jefferson’s Blood: Mixed Race America: Who is Black? One Nation’s Definition, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows /jefferson/mixed/onedrop.html (“The one-drop rule has long been taken for granted throughout the United States by whites and blacks alike, and the federal courts have taken “judicial notice” of it as being a matter of common knowledge. State courts have generally upheld the one-drop rule, but some have limited the definition . . . .”);


205. See generally PASSEL & TAYLOR, supra note 5, at 2 (noting that whether one is Hispanic is partially whether one claims the label); Oscar Avila, Dahleen Glanton & Kristen Mack, Census Snapshots: An Evolving Portrait, CHI.TRIB., March 14, 2010, http://2010-03-14/news/ct-met-census-race-20100309_1_census-time-racial-box-census-form (suggesting that many people are not content with the current choices in the census racial listings).

206. DAVIS, supra note 202 (observing the deleterious effects of the one-drop rule and its ability to categorize an individual with many heritages into a single, socially-
To illustrate the evolving aspects of racial and ethnic identity, the term “African American” may be inclusive of a variety of diverse individuals.

I recall a North African friend in law school who appeared to be of Middle-Eastern descent, but he insisted that he was more African American than anyone in the room as we attended a meeting for a black student organization. What does it mean to be African American? What are the rules for checking the box? Perhaps there are no rules. We generally self-select where we fit in, although that selection may not be our constructed group; see also Fletcher, supra note 12 (noting that the children of interracial unions are increasingly identifying as white, but that their concepts of racial identity are becoming more fluid and that there are several approaches to the choices made by parents regarding the mixed-race identities of their children).

207. See Pitts, Racism, supra note 202 (citing Yvonne Maggie of Brazil that “social racism” can still exist culturally, even when we choose not to label or recognize race); see also Safa, Challenging Mestizaje, supra note 184, at 311–12 (describing Brazilian racial and ethnic labeling and characterization). But cf. Sam Roberts, Census Figures Challenge Views of Race and Ethnicity, N.Y. TIMES, Jan. 22, 2010, at A13 (noting that America’s “foreign-born population [is] challenging conventional views” and that one in four American child under six “[is] being raised by at least one foreign-born parent”).


209. See generally John Tehranian, Whitewashed: America’s Invisible Middle Eastern Minority 37 (2008) (observing that Middle Easterners are not considered minorities at the federal level); John Tehranian, Compulsory Whiteness: Towards a Middle Eastern Legal Scholarship, 82 IND. L.J. 1, 1-2 (2007) (relating the author’s personal experience of being passed over for an academic position because, as a Middle Easterner, he was considered “white”); Office of Management & Budget, Federal Register Notices (1995), http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/fedreg_race-ethnicity/ (noting that Middle Easterners are defined as “white” for federal purposes).

210. See Davis, supra note 202; see also Booth, supra note 13 (noting that “[i]t is a particularly American phenomenon . . . to label citizens by their ethnicity” and that many foreign-born individuals think in terms of nationality).

211. See also Fletcher, supra note 12 (recounting the concerns embodied by a parent of a biracial child who currently identifies as half Asian and half white, but may decide in the future to identify as solely Asian or White, or neither). See generally Ian Haney Lopez, White By Law: The Legal Construction of Race (1996) (tracing the historic legal definitions of “white” and “non-white” in the United States to illuminate how current definitions do not encompass many ways that diverse Americans self-identify).

212. MSNBC.COM, supra note 94 (nineteen million people, or six percent of the U.S. population, identified themselves as “some other race” than the five available choices on the 1990 U.S. Census). See generally Passel & Taylor, supra note 5 (explaining that self-reporting of ancestry on the U.S. 2010 Census will not be independently verified); Associated Press, Multiracial America Is Fastest Growing Group, MSNBC.COM, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/30986649/ (last visited July 22, 2010) (under new federal guidelines, K-12 schools will permit students for the first time to specify that they are “two or more races”).
affirmative choice.\textsuperscript{213} Perhaps society forces us into a box, even if that is not the box of our choosing.\textsuperscript{214} Confirming why or how we fit in may not be ascertainable in some instances, especially in tracing the roots of African Americans.\textsuperscript{215} Further, racially defining oneself may be complex due to a variety of factors, including intermarriage,\textsuperscript{216} legal constructs, and the history of enslavement.\textsuperscript{217} The racial identity of Hispanic subsets may also be multi-dimensional.\textsuperscript{218} Scientists, historians, and anthropologists believe that we all originate from a common ancestor, lending credence to the fact that we are all one; we are the world.\textsuperscript{219} Recognizing our common experience does not necessarily deprive us of unique cultural and racial identities and distinctions.\textsuperscript{220} Perhaps one may maintain a multifaceted self-identity while claiming ties to specific racial, cultural, and ethnic groups since these traits are not necessarily mutually exclusive.\textsuperscript{221}

We must first distinguish racial traits from cultural traits, since they are

\textsuperscript{213} See also DAVIS, supra note 202.

\textsuperscript{214} See MSNBC.COM, supra note 94 (describing the frustration encountered by a woman of Russian, African, Irish, Scottish and Native American descent with people’s response to her self-identification as “human.” She found that society finds it necessary for people to racially identify); see also Navarro, supra note 130 (while self-identification is a personal choice, some assert that society may force a racial label upon individuals based upon how they are viewed by American culture).

\textsuperscript{215} MSNBC.COM, supra note 94 (describing one author’s contention that five former presidents had black ancestors, and that Obama is not the first multiracial president); see also DAVIS, supra note 206.

\textsuperscript{217} See DAVIS, supra note 202; cf. MSNBC.COM, supra note 94 (noting that, due to occurrences of racial mixing throughout American history, an “untold millions of today’s U.S. citizens need a DNA test to decipher their true colors.”).

\textsuperscript{218} See Diana Peña Pérez, Understanding Ethnic Labels and Puerto Rican Identity, http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/2000/1/00.01.05.x.html (pointing out that “there are different cultures and races among the more than 20 million Spanish-speaking people in the U.S.”). See generally Nancy A. Denton & Douglas S. Massey, Racial Identity Among Caribbean Hispanics: The Effect of Double Minority Status on Residential Segregation, 54 AM. SOC. REV. 790, 790 (1989) (“Within the Caribbean region, racial identity forms a multigrade continuum from white to black, whereas in the United States it is a dichotomy of black versus white.”).

\textsuperscript{219} Cf. S.A. Tishkoff et al., The Genetic Structure and History of Africans and African Americans, 324 SCIENCE 1035, 1035 (“Modern humans originated in Africa ~200,000 years ago . . . .”); STEPHENS, supra note 202, at 1 (“Scientist at the dawn of the twenty-first century agree: ‘Race has no biological justification,’ the Association for the Advancement of Science states.”).

\textsuperscript{220} See Booth, supra note 13 (questioning whether the latest wave of immigrants will divide the nation into distinct communities without a shared commonality).

\textsuperscript{221} See id. (“[T]he neighborhoods where Americans live, the politicians and propositions they vote for, the cultures they immerse themselves in, the friends and spouses they have, the churches and schools they attend, and the way they view themselves are defined by ethnicity. The question is whether . . . there is also enough glue to hold Americans together . . . . ‘As we become more and more diverse, there is all this potential to make that reality work for us’”) (quoting Angela Oh); Avila, et al, supra note 205 (pointing out that individuals who check more than one race category on the 2010 census would add one additional person for each racial category but not count more than once in the overall population count).
so often confused with each other. As defined in physical anthropology and biology, races are categories of human beings based on average differences in physical traits that are transmitted by the genes not by blood. Culture is a shared pattern of behavior and beliefs that are learned and transmitted through social communication. An ethnic group is a group with a sense of cultural identity . . . but it may also be a racially distinctive group.222

In illustrating the social and legal construct of race, ethnicity, and culture, a cross-section of individuals described as black may be examined for the varying degrees of diversity.223 The diversity in the black community does not necessarily preclude diverse individuals from self-identifying as black as well as another minority.224 The identification of diverse racial categories might not alter the cultural authenticity of minority groups, despite concerns of dilution.225

The shared aspirations of Jamaica and the United States regarding the issues of race, ethnicity, and culture may be generated from the national motto of both nations—Out of Many, One People and E. pluribus Unum.226 However, both countries continue to battle with racialized classifications.227

Our vast and encompassing mixed heritage, racially and culturally,
explains our pluralistic appeal. In examining the works and lives of Frederick Douglass, Ralph Ellison, and Bob Marley,

[T]he possibility of a transracial, if not a postracial, style of communication, leading to the creation of “new cultures” which cannot always be defined in racial language . . . [and] the development of multiple allegiances in multiracial public spheres in which no one group is either centered or excluded. Such an “ideal speech community” may be presently unattainable, but it is an orienting horizon, I agree with public sphere theorists, which must be continually redefined and reaffirmed.228

While we voice different areas of concern, they ring the same alarm of racial and ethnic inequality. By respecting different and divergent viewpoints, we permit ourselves to search for areas of commonality. Each racial, ethnic, and cultural group has been marginalized at some time in our history. Accordingly, the search for commonality in the struggle which unites us should ensue.

V. CONCLUSION

The culmination of my personal experiences presents a mosaic picture of varied races, ethnicities, and cultures. In defining my self-identity, I discover the over-arching theme that we are inter-connected. From Bob Marley to Obama, and hip hop to Havana, the interconnectedness of my influences is evident. My relation to popular culture, the immigrant experience, and American society, are not so different than that of my peers. In answer to my question, “Who am I?”—I am a dynamic being who stands upon the legacy of my ancestry in light of my own personal experiences. I strive for the continued development of my diversity and the dismantling of my preconceived notions of self. Commonality leaves room for synergy between communities, and LatCrit provides a forum for that synergy to be harnessed and directed towards positive change. We may have separated journeys, but our paths intersect.

Through my studies on identity, I found that cultural exposure and collaboration facilitated the process of recognition and enlightenment in my understanding of race, ethnicity, and culture within the global community. I am tied to the fabric of the Latino people through our shared and varied ancestry. We can retain our own cultural identity while uniting our voice for the common good, combining to create a truly rich composition to be treasured by all. By recording and disseminating our shared and distinct traditions, we hold ourselves out to the world as united.

Perhaps with increased education about each group we will enhance our respect for each other. This is the type of communication that can only

228. Id.
happen in a safe place. For me, I found that safe place at LatCrit. At times I cringed at the level of honesty openly expressed, but I knew I had to sit still and bear the sting of disinfecting my wounds.

Next year I plan to attend LatCrit in anticipation of meeting with friends who share common goals, thoughts, and ideas. We are one in any language and in any dialect. The human spirit has persevered to connect us all to the human struggle of our existence. We are distant relatives trying to find our way home. I look forward to finding refuge at LatCrit for years to come.