*The Japanese Journal of American Studies*, No. 34 (2023)


# Informal Mediation on the Street: An Ethnographic Exploration of Discrimination and Division within Muslim Communities in Harlem

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In this paper, I describe in the manner of ethnography several events at which confrontations between African American Muslims and African Muslims took place in New York City in 2004. These events seemingly indicate a sense of resentment between the two ethnic groups. To the eyes of outside observers, it may look as if it were a clash between two ethnic communities. The matter is, however, not as simple as it appears. By narrating several different episodes, I first identify the moments of discrimination in the narratives of several African American Muslims and examine the ways in which they differentiate themselves from African as well as Arab Muslims. I argue that often invoked in their differentiation process are differences in appearances and language expressions. I then describe two other episodes that serve as counterpoints to the story I constructed through the preceding episodes. My aim is to demonstrate how African American Muslims constructed African Muslims as "others" through their narratives but, at the same time, deconstructed them as such through their actions. By focusing on exceptional moments in which an African American Muslim man tried to mediate possible conflicts, the paper challenges constructivists' assumptions of collective identity and difference.

## Introduction

It's early on a Friday afternoon in Harlem, around 12:30 pm.[1] The *Adhan* or Islamic call to prayer sounds from loudspeakers outside a building and travels melodiously across 116th Street. The *Adhan* composes a strange and unique harmony, or perhaps rather a disharmony, with the noise of the

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street—the chatter of people, the incessant engine sounds of the MTA city buses, the hysterical honks from cars and "gypsy cabs" that cannot wait to reach their destinations. Accompanying the voice reciting the *Adhan* is the conspicuous aroma of incense sold on the street, intermingling with the appetizing smells of barbecued and fried chicken.

An African American Muslim man in his jeans and T-shirt greets a Wolof and French speaking African Muslim man in his traditional clothes, "As-Salaam-Alaikum."

"Wa-Alaikum-As-Salaam," the African brother greets him back.

It is a common greeting that takes place many times a day on 116th Street. Yet there seems to be no further engagement between African American Muslims and African Muslims in the neighborhood.

From the corner of 116th Street and Manhattan Avenue, Masjid Aqsa and Masjid Salam are clearly visible, both of which are led by African imams, Imam Souleimane Konate and Imam Moustapha Soumahoro respectively.[2] On Friday noon, both of the masjids are filled with the newly arrived African immigrants. Those who cannot crowd themselves inside the masjids form lines outside the buildings to listen to the *khutba* (sermon) and to pray. While Muslims in general repeatedly emphasize the significance of the Islamic unity and the *umma* (community), no African American Muslims appear to be in attendance at these two masjids. African American Muslims in Harlem have their own separate mosques, such as Masjid Malcolm Shabazz.

In the course of my fieldwork in New York City from 2002 to 2004, I came to learn that communication between Africans and African Americans in Harlem was indeed very limited. Furthermore, some African Americans told me that that there was a strong sense of tension between those two ethnic groups and that many members of both groups harbor deep-seated resentment against the other. These local narratives residents told me reveal significant conceptions of identification and differentiation for members of both groups, resulting in possible intensification of ethnic conflicts that could potentially trigger communal violence.

In academic literature, there is widespread acceptance of the concept of social constructivism, which asserts that virtually all concepts of collective identities or collective entities should be understood as imagined constructions, involving particularized media, language, representation, and rituals. For example, Benedict Anderson explains that a rise of mass media printed in vernacular language, circulated on a massive scale, and consumed daily by individuals like a newly introduced, modern ritual

creates a particular shared mode of imagination in people.[3] These modes of imagination in turn cause individuals to form strong, emotional attachments to people whom they have never met.

The consequences of the expression of this type of attachment when it is very strong can be catastrophic. A person's seemingly loving, caring, and altruistic act of self-sacrifice for the broader group with whom they identify can be both fatal for them and destructive to many others when one conceives of their own death as collectively meaningful—perhaps, even part of destiny. Over the last two centuries, countless millions of people, from the American Revolutionary War to the Second World War, from the French Revolutionary War to The Yugoslav War, have willingly sacrificed their own lives out of their imagined fraternity with particular other people. Anderson observed: "If nation-states are widely conceded to be 'new' and 'historical,' the nations to which they give political expression always loom out of an immemorial past, and, still more important, glide into a limitless future. It is the magic of nationalism to turn chance into destiny."[4]

Many scholars who embrace this constructivist view of what is considered communal and are responsible for its widespread acceptance view the process of creating identity and difference to be the product of multiple contributory factors. Those factors include the influence of representations,[5] constructions of identity and the undertaking collective actions,[6] the politics of recognition,[7] the politics of identity,[8] and "non-conscious" dispositions such as "habitus."[9] Vernacular identities and categorizations regarding race, ethnicity, religion, and class are understood to have a direct and almost immediate impact on individuals' actions. For Anderson, "the magic of nationalism" is performed through a persons' consuming of printed materials (newspapers and novels) and confirmed by the language of everyday life, which together determine the nature and course of one's identity.

The assumptions held by Anderson and other constructivists closely resemble those of such anthropologists as Claude Lévi-Strauss and Marcel Mauss, who emphasized the force and effectiveness of symbols in their study of magic in traditional cultures.[10] Magic, for them, is only possible through the sorcerer's articulation of unfathomed events that could cause anxiety among the community; the sorcerer's role here is to relieve if not eliminate the community's anxiety by telling a story that would most likely match and reinforce the community's preexisting beliefs and pretend to explain away the often unfathomable and unbearable reality.[11] Their studies reveal many aspects of collective identity and the value-making process

which are significant in analyzing the relationship between an underlying structure or institution and its force.

However, their research disregards important exceptional moments of deviation from expected behavior in which negotiation and counterpoint work to reduce or even eliminate dominant forces of collective imagination, identity, and differentiation. In other words, they do not address the transformative and therapeutic aspect of human behavior which might give us an idea about how to cope with the "routine violence" of discrimination/assimilation, division/unity, and inclusion/exclusion.[12]

In this article, I will describe and analyze six episodes I recorded as part of my ethnographic research relating to conflict and tension between African American Muslims and African Muslims in Harlem. The first four episodes represent evidence of resentment between these two groups, which an outside observer may interpret as a clash between two ethnic groups. However, what was going on was not nearly as simple as it appeared as the final two episodes I recount will reveal.

The first four episodes involve incidents of discrimination by African Americans against African immigrants. Through the narratives of several African American Muslims, I examine the ways in which they differentiate themselves from both African Muslims and Arab Muslims and have discriminatory attitudes toward them. Differences in appearances and language are often invoked in this differentiation process.

I will then describe two other episodes that serve as counterpoints to the narrative of unnuanced discrimination I constructed in the preceding four episodes. I seek to demonstrate how African American Muslims' conceptions of African Muslims as "others" are constructed in the narratives they related to me; yet, at the same time, they are deconstructed through the individuals' actual deeds. While many of the statements employed by the African American Muslims to differentiate African Muslims as "others" seem to be based on apparent consensus and belief of African Americans, they do not serve as a magic talisman that necessarily forces them to act within that system of belief.

Before recounting and analyzing these episodes, I will briefly sketch the history of Harlem and the geopolitical context of the neighborhood, in which many newly arrived African immigrants and many long-time African American residents spend their everyday lives.

## A Brief Overview of "Harlem"

Harlem is not only the name of a neighborhood in Manhattan, but also a term that stands for every ghetto in the United States. The pain and suffering, the joy and creativity, the present and future, and perhaps more importantly the histories of ghettos all across the country are encompassed by the term Harlem.[13]

As Harlem became known a hundred years ago as the capital of Black America, it gained its fame through both the mass media and word of mouth. The term Harlem evokes certain images and has particular implications. To some, it is a site of politics (of race as well as of class). Cultural anthropologist John L. Jackson describes how political commentators' questions such as "What would people in Harlem think?" are misguided attempts to use the word Harlem to represent a supposedly unified and monolithic community of mostly lower-class African Americans.[14]

To others, Harlem is a site of tourism and entertainment, where people of any racial or ethnic background line up in front of churches to listen to Gospel music and dine at soul food restaurants where they can enjoy what used to be the particular food for African Americans in Southern states. It is a place where the Harlem Renaissance cultural movement took place in the 1920s and 1930s and where revolutionaries once came to speak. Today, Harlem is subject to encroaching gentrification.

Yet to others, Harlem is a site of social illness, whose image aligns with a collective perception of a certain race and class. and thereby (re)produces the infamous but yet ever recurring equation: Harlem *is* infested with drugs, crime, and other social ills, *is* Black, *is* underclass, *is* dangerous, *is* chaotic, *is* violent, *is* inhumane, and so on. No matter how hard constructivists try to "deconstruct" the ways these equations define the identity of Harlem, their relevance is sustained by the unrestrained shifting of the definition of particular terms from their original meaning.[15] I shall come back to this issue of persistent, vernacular equations that are sustained by everyday beliefs. Suffice it say here that the copula "is" in these defining formulas conjoins elements that belong to radically different categories, but the equations, at once, fit and are confirmed by the vernacular use of the term "Harlem" in America.

The images and implications attached to the equation, though certainly not limited to the ones described above, have circulated around the world. Harlem is now one of the most well-known neighborhoods of New York

City. Thus, when Professor John L. Jackson, Jr., who is African American once traveled to Jamaica, locals he happened upon beckoned him to join them by calling to him: "Come, come, Harlem, come!"[16]

Harlem is also a highly historicized place. As Jackson correctly observes: "Much of Harlem is famous today almost exclusively because the argument can be made that it (this store, this building, this brownstone) was famous in the past, way back 'when Harlem was in vogue.' This all *was* Harlem, a wasness that tethers Harlem to another time altogether."[17] The food, the music, the drug businesses, the crack houses, the cultures, and even the celebrities were *once* famous. Jackson states: "This fetishized connection between Harlem and its past is the first point to stress about a location where notoriety is contingent on what the place used to be, on connections between the present and the once-glorious past."[18]

But Harlem is neither a monolith nor symbolic destination that exists only in the past. One of the anthropologists' tasks is to reveal the various levels of diversity within Harlem, a place which is often narrated as a single, coherent Black neighborhood, and show how different groups interact with each other in the diverse Harlem community today.

## Episode 1: Encountering Hamid

On a Friday afternoon, I walked past Masjid Aqsa, went eastward along 116th Street, and entered the Masjid Malcolm Shabazz. The building, whose round green roof stands out among the relatively low-rise buildings that surround it, occupies the corner of 116th Street and Malcolm X Boulevard (Lenox Avenue). Inside the masjid on the third floor, there were already about eighty Muslim men sitting on the carpeted floor. In the corner near the entrance, about fifteen women and several children were sitting on chairs. As I entered, James, a large man in his forties, ushered me to a back corner of the room, where several old men and a few other visitors were sitting on the chairs.

After a while, a young African American man came to the front, brought the palms of his hands to his ears, and beautifully sang the Adhan. It was bluesy and soulful. Then the imam of this masjid entered and began giving his khutba at the front. As the imam was speaking, more men showed up, made short prayer on their own, and then sat down on the floor with the other men. Some men were dressed casually—jeans and T-shirts. Others wore business suits with ties. They all sat there quietly.

As the imam finished talking and turned to face the same direction as the

congregation was facing, people stood up. Men were now standing shoulder to shoulder, facing the east corner. The imam waited until the ranks were in order, and then began *salat* (ritual prayer). "Allah akbar," he called, and everybody responded in kind.

After salat, an old African American man who was sitting in front of me took me downstairs to a room on the first floor, where lunch was being served buffet style. About forty people were in the room, all of whom were African Americans except me. There were both men and women, but mostly men. Although I was starving, I worried that if I ate I would not be able to talk to people so only ordered fruit juice and began conversing with others. After several short interactions, the old man introduced me to a calm-looking man in his forties.

The man's name was Hamid, who I learned ran a barbershop and construction business in Harlem. Hamid looked young but moved rather slowly. His lips were very dried, and his eyes looked swollen. I introduced myself and told him that I had come from Japan to learn about the relationship between Harlem and Islam. He seemed to be interested in my presence and was willing to talk to me. He sat down next to me rather sluggishly. I noticed there was a white paper band around his right-hand wrist. He said that he recently had a stroke and was released from hospital a few days before. "I have to move slow," he said, "'cause they put me on a whole lot of medication, you know. I'm still feeling kind of weak."

I was eager to talk to Hamid, but at the same time did not want to bother him with my many questions when he was feeling weak. Nevertheless, he began talking. He did not flood me with many words; rather, he seemed to be searching for the right words to say. Or perhaps he was carefully choosing what would be considered correct English phrases for a college-educated, non-native English speaker like me to be able to comprehend what he really meant to say.

Hamid was born in Harlem and raised by Muslim parents, who were active members of the Nation of Islam. "I was born into the Nation," he said. And he was raised and trained within the Nation's circle, serving as captain of the Junior Fruit of Islam when he was younger.[19]

After chatting briefly, he said something that struck me. "You know, religion and culture are two different things," he said. "You can't confuse those two." For a moment, I did not know what he meant. Nor did I know how to respond to him. The only thing I could think to do was to wait for his next words.

"Sometimes you see people in African clothes or Arab clothes," Hamid

continued. “You know, the type of clothes that look like a dress?” He made a slight gesture to indicate what he meant and looked at me to see if I understood. As I nodded, he kept talking. “I look at them like, ‘Come on!’ As long as I’m in New York, as long as I’m in the United States, I will just wear my regular clothes, you know. If I go to the desert in the Middle East or Africa, maybe I will wear them [African or Arab clothes]. But as long as I’m here, there’s no point to it.” He articulated the sentences word by word. He was constantly checking to see if I understood him or if I was convinced by his words.

“Sometimes they wear that type of clothes and think they are good Muslims,” Hamid continued. “The same thing with a beard. Some people think people with a long beard are good Muslims. They say, ‘Oh, you don’t have a long beard and you think you are Muslim?’ You know what I tell them? I tell them, it’s got nothing to do with Islam. People with a long beard can be serial killers. You understand? Wearing a certain type of clothes or having a long beard is something to do with culture. It has nothing to do with Islam. Sometimes people think they have to go to the Middle East or Africa to become a good Muslim.”

“No matter what they say, I love America. I prefer to stay here. I don’t like to travel outside of America. There is a freedom of speech and a freedom of belief in this country. I’m not saying America doesn’t have problems. It has many problems. But it also has a freedom whereas many countries in the Middle East or Africa don’t.”

As Hamid talked, he became distracted many times, looking away at people walking by. He said he could not focus very well because of the prescription medication he was taking. People in the dining area were finishing their conversations and starting to leave. A sharp looking man, who was serving the buffet in the center of the room, started cleaning up the large plates that had held fried chicken, fried fish, french fries, rice, and bread. Every move he made was quick and sharp and looked abrupt, creating a striking contrast with Hamid. It was time for us to leave the room, too.

“You should get in touch with the MSA, the Muslim Students Association. Columbia [University] or City College may have one,” he said, as he stood up from the chair. “But,” he added jokingly with a giggle, “try to stay away from those weird groups.” He did not specify what he was referring to by “those weird groups,” but it was apparent that he meant to indicate groups which might appear to some to be anti-American, revolutionary, or terrorist-like.

*Clothing and Appearance*

Hamid's words echoed in my mind for quite some time. It was obvious that Hamid, as an African American Muslim, sought to distinguish himself from African Muslims and Arab Muslims. However, the way in which he tried to do so was noteworthy. Hamid invoked what he conceived as cultural elements such as beards and clothes for differentiation. For him, regular clothes meant casual mainstream American clothes that many people wore, such as jeans and T-shirts, the type of clothing Hamid himself was wearing when we met.

As I came to learn later, Hamid was not the only one who made this kind of distinction. I was struck by innumerable accounts of such a distinction made by African American Muslims. They repeatedly emphasized the differences between African American Muslims and African Muslims or Arab Muslims, and they did so by referring to clothing, personal appearance, and sometimes even language. For example, they argued that so-called "Islamic looks" such as long beards or African and Middle Eastern clothing had to do with culture, not religion, and that the ability to speak Arabic was not at all a necessary condition for being a good Muslim.

Distinctions in clothing and appearance have particular meaning and significance as part of the construction of differentiation and distinction in the cultural context of African American Muslims. Hamid and other African American Muslims (both members of the Nation and others) have employed clothing and appearances as symbols to draw a boundary and distinction between themselves and others both within and without the African American Muslim community. These visual markers, in turn, serve as a significant factor in constructing their collective identities.

Members of the Nation of Islam have long been required to adhere to a strict and distinctive dress code, with their uniforms and clean-cut appearances, and are easily recognizable by their apparel. The Nation uses formal clothes as a sign of identity and membership in the organization with a special uniform and bowtie or a formal suit and tie for men, and a white dress and veil or a regular dress and veil for women. The clothing for them serves as a means to distinguish themselves from other African Americans; but interestingly it at the same time incorporates some elements of the formal clothing traditions of the American middle and upper-middle class, such as suits, uniforms, formal wear, and bowties.

When the Nation's longtime leader Elijah Muhammad died in 1975, his son Imam W. D. Muhammad assumed leadership and decided to reform

the organization, eventually renaming it the American Society of Muslims. Members who wanted to continue following the teachings of Elijah Muhammad reconstituted the Nation as its own organization under new leadership in 1977.

Hamid had belonged to the Nation but began following W. D. Muhammad after he took over the organization and initiated reforms. As part of those reforms, W. D. Muhammad abandoned the clothing and personal appearance requirements and permitted followers to wear what is considered to be regular American clothing.

The mainstream clothing distinguished members of the American Society of Muslims from those of the Nation and enabled the organization to assimilate into Sunni Islam. Some members still occasionally wear suits, but they do not follow the strict dress code of the Nation. Many of the followers of W. D. Muhammad also refer to distinctions between their clothing and appearance and the Arab and African style of clothing and appearance to indicate the differences between the newly arrived immigrants and themselves, and thereby distinguishing the immigrants from what they considered the mainstream of Islam.[20]

## Episode 2: An Attack on an African Immigrant Muslim

As I continued to reflect in the course of my fieldwork on the processes of differentiation between African Americans and African immigrants and on their relationship to each other, an event occurred on 116th Street that seemed to illuminate the dynamics of their relationship. It revealed the presence of potentially deep conflicts in the neighborhood.

On the morning of July 14th, 2003, I had an abominable headache and could not get out of bed until noon. I left my apartment around 3:00 pm and headed toward Masjid Salam, one of the African immigrant mosques on 116th Street. I had been told earlier that there would be a joint protest of both Africans and African Americans concerning an incident which had taken place on 116th Street about a week before.

When I arrived, there seemed to be no sign of any gathering. People were scattered along the sidewalk here and there. I waited for about ten minutes, but nothing really changed. Worried that they might have relocated their protest somewhere else, I asked a man standing in front of Masjid Salam if he knew anything about the protest. He was looking around and smoking a cigarette with a pack of Marlboros in his left hand. He said to me that he was also waiting to join the protest himself and that he was not a Muslim, but a Christian from Ethiopia.

As we waited and talked, he began to explain the incident to me. "An old man was attacked by young people," the man said in a heavy accent. "I have kids. It's scary, you know. The police don't show up soon enough in this neighborhood." In his voice was a sense of fear that his children could have been the victims, which coincided with his tone of accusation against the perpetrator(s).

After another ten minutes, people started to gather. They were mainly African Muslims, but there were also several African American Muslims, whom I knew personally. Yellow, hand-written flyers were being distributed by the victim's son, a tall, quiet man. He said his father was in an intensive care unit and was expecting another operation on his nose.

I learned about the details of the incident from the flyer. A seventy-three-year-old African immigrant Muslim man had been attacked in the early evening of July 9th on 116th Street near Masjid Salam. According to the flyer, "He suffered broken nose, chin, multiple arm + shoulder fractures, a cut under his eye + brain hemorrhage. He was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit and has had three operations."[21]

Besides the brief description of the incident, the flyer also listed three demands for the police:

1. Increased + more rapid police protection
2. The quick arrest + prosecution of the brutal youth gang responsible for this + other violence.
3. Increased police sensitivity + regular meetings with community leaders.[22]

Suddenly, a journalist from a local radio station appeared, holding a microphone in his hand with a big tape recorder hanging from his shoulder. He was a light-skinned African American man in his early-forties. He introduced himself as David and gave his business card to just about everybody there. "This is just to show you I am not with the FBI," he said jokingly, but nobody laughed.

The imam of Masjid Salam spoke with a heavy African accent. "This is not the first time," he said. "There are many cases like this. We cannot allow this anymore. If something happens to African Americans, Imam Pasha of Masjid Malcolm Shabazz can do something about it because he is an American. We are Africans. We cannot do anything. We came here to make some money. We don't want troubles."

After a short while, people began walking toward the Precinct 28 police station on 123rd Street. Some of them continued to distribute the flyers as we walked. After we arrived at the police station around 4:30 pm, we were

led to a room inside the building. We were about eighty people—mostly Africans, some African Americans, and a few whites. Roughly one third were women. The room was too small for us, but people managed to crowd themselves in and arrange enough chairs for many of the women there.

Five uniformed police officers, who were non-white, introduced themselves, confidently explicated their daily tasks in detail, and proudly talked about their positive accomplishments. Eventually, one of the officers took charge and gave a long speech in which he presented his ideas that he asserted would solve problems concerning street violence, the lack of police officers, and the reluctance of the police to respond to the calls. I summarize the gist of his speech in his own voice as follows:

We [the police] are not your enemy. Stop complaining and start cooperating. We have a meeting once a month on Wednesday here. Various leaders come and participate in this meeting. Show up for this Wednesday meeting. If you come in here on Saturday and get training for the police auxiliary program, you can wear a police uniform and perform some of the roles of an officer. If half of you in this room can participate, we can place many uniformed officers on 116th Street. If people realize that there are a lot of uniformed officers on the street, we can prevent many of the crimes beforehand. This attack case is not a special one. We should not stick to the mistakes we made in the past and continue to complain about them. We need to think about the future.

This community is our [the police officers'] community, too. The kids who committed this crime were also the kids of our community. We need to protect our community by ourselves.

The officer's speech was met with a round of applause. Whenever he mentioned the words "our community" and emphasized the unity between the residents and the police, there was a strong sense of affirmation. Whenever he said that they didn't have to worry about getting arrested for violating the immigration laws, Africans in the room applauded.

The protesters also voiced several issues, which I also quote in their own words:

> "When Africans report to the police, it takes twenty minutes for the police to arrive."
> "When African kids are playing, African American kids yell, 'Go back to your fucking country' at them."
> "There are several abandoned buildings on 116th Street where people are dealing drugs right now. Why doesn't anyone do anything about it?"

> "After 9/11, it became okay to attack Muslims. We need to let people know that it is not okay. We need to let them know that they can be in trouble if they attack us."[23]

But as the protestors voiced these serious concerns, it somehow sounded as if they were merely complaining rather than seriously protesting, especially after the officer's eloquent speech and the subsequent applause.

Shortly after 6:30 pm, the meeting ended. Many protesters claimed that the attack on the old African man was one of many frequent incidents and not special. The victim's son never spoke a word. He merely stood there quietly the entire time.

As I walked out of the room, I saw Sister Aisha, an African American Muslim woman whom I knew. She had years of experience in social activism and was usually the one who would speak up and address issues such as this one. But she was rather quiet today. It was unusual for her to be quiet for a whole meeting. We walked together toward the main gate of the precinct building filled with officers. She looked tired and disappointed. She asked me what I thought of the whole protest. I started sharing my impression, but before I could fully explain, she began talking. "I don't think this is going to work," she said in a calm and soft voice. We were already outside the precinct building, and I could barely hear her voice over the noise of the street. I leaned forward to make sure I could hear her correctly.

"We can't take off our beautiful clothes and put on police uniforms," she stated determinedly as she knitted her eyebrows as she always did when she had something to say. "It's important to live safely without changing our clothes. It is important, Yutaka. If you go to a Jewish neighborhood, for instance, you see those Jewish people in Jewish clothes living peacefully. They don't have to wear police uniforms to live peacefully." She was wearing an African style dress, which many African American women sometimes wear in everyday lives.

"What they've done today is going to bring about a rift between serious Muslims and those who are not so serious.…We also have to think.… We have a history of white police officers doing whatever they want to do in Harlem. If you look at it, there ain' many Black or Asian officers, even today. They used to try recruiting me to the police. But I said no. I said no, Yutaka. I just can't do it. After seeing what they have done to the people in Harlem. I just can't.… What they did today is not right. They did it at the will of people. Not the will of Allah.… When you think about their history,

Africans are the one who sold us to white people. They know this. Why do you think the [African American] kids said what they said to the African kids? There is a reason for that. There is a reason for everything. What happened today also has a reason. It's all by the will of Allah."

*The Police Uniform*

Although it was never explicitly stated at the time of the protest, both African Americans and the African immigrants knew that the accused attackers were African American youths. The African imam distinguished the status of Africans from that of African Americans by referring to the particular difficulties that African immigrants faced. At least one protester mentioned the animosity between African youths and African American youths. While some of the protesters were African Americans, there was a subtle tension between those two ethnic groups.

As Aisha noted, the police uniform can take on at least two different meanings for many long-term African American residents of Harlem. On one hand, it is a symbol of state power both in terms of violence and corruption. Police brutality is an issue that has been raised by community leaders for many years, and yet it is still an everyday experience for many Black residents of Harlem. On the other hand, the police uniform also provides a twisted sense of security to certain people by its exhibition of overwhelming authority and power, especially during nighttime when there is a possibility of being assaulted or mugged.

The police officers' welcoming the protesting residents into the precinct is also noteworthy. The officers repeatedly used the term "community" and emphasized that they were in sync with the "community." It appeared that the police officers did not really intend the meeting in the precinct room to be an opportunity for the protesters to voice their concerns to the police. Rather, the meeting seems to have been conceived as an opportunity for the police to incorporate the residents into the fold of the law enforcement agency.

## Episode 3: Attitude of the Street

A few days after the protest, I was at Hamid's barbershop on 116th Street. There were many people at the shop, chatting and waiting for their hair to be done. Hamid suggested that we grab chairs, go outside, and talk. Realizing he had to make a phone call, Hamid told me to go ahead and

take a couple of chairs outside. I did so and held the chairs as I waited for him to come out. I was looking forward to enjoying a hot summer day of conversation with Hamid in Harlem.

Suddenly, a middle-aged African American woman walked toward me and snatched one of my chairs. She did not say anything, but simply took my chair, walked away from me, set it in front of the 99 cent store next door, and sat down on it. Then, before I could do anything, an African immigrant woman came over and said to me, "This is my chair." Without even waiting for my response, she snatched the other chair from me and walked inside the African store next door.

My mind went blank. After a moment and still taken aback, I did not know what to do but to yell at her, "Hey!" It was ignored. I stood there in utter amazement, like a fool on the street. I felt helpless. At this point, Hamid came out. Seeing the expression on my face, he asked me what happened.

"That lady just snatched the chair from me," I told him, pointing toward the African American woman sitting outside the 99 cent store.

Without even looking surprised or disturbed, Hamid walked straight to the woman, who was now in the vernacular comfortably chilling on the chair, as if nothing had happened. After a brief exchange with her, Hamid came back to me and said, "She is going to return the chair. Don't worry."

I also asked about the second chair. Hamid's verbal response to this was not clear. But his facial expression and gesture somehow implied to me that he did not want to talk about it at the moment.

"Is it always like this? That's messed up," I said to Hamid, still feeling somewhat appalled. Clearly hearing this, the African American woman looked at me and shrugged with a little smile on her face.

"Are you upset?" Hamid asked me. "Well, welcome to the neighborhood!"

The woman must have not known that I was a friend of Hamid. Seeing me talking with Hamid, she came to us carrying a small hotdog and the chair. "Sorry about what happened," she said. "I didn't mean to be rude to you," she said and offered me a handshake. I felt ridiculous but thought that I had no choice but to shake her hand.

"I am glad you experienced this," Hamid told me a little later. "That is the mentality in this community. You can't really understand all about the protest march to the precinct you just mentioned unless you understand the mentality of this community. What happened [the assault] was bad, and I don't agree with it. But let's say when the lady tried to snatch your

chair, what would have happened if you resisted her and didn't mean to but accidentally hit her? She would say, 'That man hit me.' She wouldn't talk about her trying to steal your chair. Do you understand? People do whatever they need to do to protect themselves, you know. Nevertheless, there are a few things we can do. One of the things is to set up a place where we can have a dialogue regularly."

As he talked, the weather suddenly started to change; it started drizzling. An African man in his white African clothes, carrying a table he used to display the African clothes, T-shirts, and scented oils he sold, walked up in front of Hamid's barbershop. There was a small space in front of the barbershop where the building's roof provided protection from the rain. Without even looking at us, he started setting up his foldable table there in front of us, and laid out his wares. Hamid simply watched him.

"For example, he's just set up his table right there, right?" he said to me in a low voice. "If you are a normal person, you don't do that in front of other people's stores. He didn't even say anything. But I don't yell at him. I will speak to him personally later and tell him nicely. If I make a fuss about it, that will build up tension [between Africans and African Americans]."

I was not quite sure why Hamid was comparing this incident with the African man and his table and the women's snatching the chairs from me with the assault case of the old African Muslim man. The man who set up his table was African. One of the women who snatched a chair from me was African American; the other was African. In the assault case, the "young people" accused of the attack were identified as young African American men. But Hamid seemed to be implying that there were common elements likely underlying all three of the events that could help me understand the context for the attack on the old African man, assuming that the allegations against the alleged perpetrators were in fact true. Hamid appeared to have offered the scenario of what might have happened if I had responded physically and more assertively to the women who snatched the chairs from me to help me understand the way of thinking and acting that may have underlain the youths' assault on the old man (again assuming they were indeed the attackers). It was only later that Hamid's interpretation of the assault became clearer.

## Episode 4: A Brief Exchange at the Barbershop

As Hamid and I were chatting in his barbershop on another day, an African woman in a beautiful African gown walked in. She seemed to be

looking for someone, but did not say a word.

"Hey! You dressed up! Are you getting married or something?" Hamid asked her jokingly. It was his usual procedure. He would often talk to some strangers, especially women, to compliment them and engage them in conversation.

"Yes, I am," the woman said without showing any interest in continuing the conversation.

"Get outta here! When?" Hamid said humorously, trying to continue the chatter. But the woman did not respond, continued to look around the room, and began to leave.

Hamid did not give up. "Sister! When are you getting married?" Hamid asked again.

"Tomorrow," answered the woman, apathetically.

Clearly realizing her disinterest, Hamid changed his question. "You are looking for May, right? Do you want me to call her?" May was an African Muslim woman, who worked at the shop.

"No," the woman said and left the shop quickly.

After the woman left, Hamid reflected on what had just happened. "Did you see the attitude of that lady?" Hamid said. He was clearly annoyed although he did not show it to her. "Now, that is the attitude of Africans toward African Americans. That's what you gotta understand about the incident [the assault case]. I am not saying what they did was right, but if you come to this community with that kind of attitude, you have to know what they gonna do, especially those young kids. They'll feel disrespected. Do you understand what I am saying?"

*Resentment between Africans and African Americans on the Street*

There clearly was animosity between Hamid, an African American Muslim man, and African immigrants. Hamid's interpretation of the broader underlying context for the assault was clear and unequivocal. While Hamid said he did not agree with what he believed the youths had done to the African man, he articulated that there was a reason for it. Hamid believed that many newly arrived Africans exhibited a disrespectful attitude toward African Americans, and that provided the context and background for the assault on the old man and for broader tension and conflict.

Hamid was not the only African American who recognized the tension between Africans and African Americans. Many other African American residents of Harlem also clearly acknowledged and articulated it to me.

For example, an African American scholar told me: "I would say around ninety percent of the stores on 116th Street are owned and run by the new-coming Africans." He had lived in an apartment on 116th Street for a long time and had seen the changes of the street. "There have been a large number of Africans coming into this area of Harlem, and that is happening without removing anyone who had lived in the area. So, it is like a clash of cultures.… There is also a great amount of resentment toward one another."

While there was an effort to create understanding between African masjids and African American masjids, many African American residents identified to me a general tone of resentment underlying the relationship between the two groups.

## EPISODE 5: CONFRONTING CONFLICT

About four months after the protest, I came by Hamid's barbershop one day and saw an African woman sitting on a chair inside. I greeted her, but she did not respond. I walked to the small office space at the back of the shop to greet Hamid. Hamid said the woman was looking for a hairdresser named May. Hamid offered some fruit to me and then the woman. She did not seem to speak English but started eating the orange Hamid offered without saying anything—without even changing her facial expression. As we were eating the fruit, Maryam, May's niece, walked past the shop. Hamid suddenly ran outside and tried to catch her. He came back several minutes later. He said he had asked Maryam where May was but that she did not know. The woman looked as if she was giving up and was about to leave.

"Do you want me to go to May's place and ask where she is?" Hamid asked her slowly so that the woman could understand.

"No," she said in a small voice and left.

As the woman left the store, Hamid and I were the only ones left at the shop. Hamid started reflecting on what had just happened. "See what I just did? I tried to find May for her, right? I am the only one who runs up to May's place and tells her, 'Someone is looking for you.' Some people perceive it as weakness. To me, it is kindness. That's why I always tell May, 'They may smile at you, but don't think for a minute that they are your friends.' I saw some nasty things. They blame everything on her while she is not here. The minute she walks out the door, they say nasty things about her. It is a slave mentality."

"What do you mean 'they'?" I asked him, slightly confused. "Who are

'they'?" I did not know to whom Hamid was referring when he said "they."

"People at the shop!" He answered immediately as if my question was ignorant.

Not knowing at this point the ethnic composition of the other hairdressers at the shop, I asked Hamid another naive question. "This is regardless of African-American or African?" What I meant to ask was that whether Hamid was referring to African American or African hairdressers at the shop when he said "they."

Hamid looked confused. "No," He responded slowly. "I am talking about African Americans. They have the slave mentality. May is the only African at the shop."

"Really? I didn't know that."

"Yup," he said. "That's why I tell her, 'I don't mean to hurt your feelings or anything, but you gotta be careful. They may smile at you but don't think for a minute that they are your friends.' That's what I tell her."

Then May came into the shop. As soon as she came in, she started complaining about Jihad, an African American Muslim man who co-managed the barbershop with Hamid. "He called me and asked me for money. He looked for me all over the place. He came to my place. When you are Muslim, you are supposed to know you can't do that. If you come looking for me like that, people will say to you 'Jihad was looking for you.' He is crazy." May was worried that people might start spreading rumor that she and Jihad were romantically involved. Hamid, who had repeatedly emphasized differences between African Americans and Africans and expressed his resentment toward Africans, was now quietly listening to May, an African woman.

After May finished complaining about Hamid's friend and colleague Jihad, she asked Hamid a personal question. She asked Hamid if he was married and had children. Hamid did not answer the question seriously and tried to make a joke out of it. But as May kept asking the same question, Hamid started answering it little by little.

"I have one [wife] in Virginia," Hamid said playfully. "One in upstate. One in uptown [Manhattan]." He was actually telling the truth in a way. But he was divorced from two of them and was in the process of divorcing the other one.

"And you don't love them anymore?" asked May.

"I love them all!" Hamid exclaimed.

"That's not possible," May objected politely. "You can only love one at a time. After you separate, you only like them."

"Oh, I love them all." Hamid said quietly without giving it much thought.

"You know why I ask you this?" May continued. "Because I can't love my husband. I like him. But I don't love him. I tried to be back with him, but I can't love him." She started talking about the degrading circumstances she was forced to endure with respect to her husband. She sounded as if she was disgusted with the sense of disrespect with which he treated her.

"You are a nice person," she said to Hamid. "You can talk to people. Sometimes I say bad things to you, but the next day we can still talk, right?" It was the first time I had ever heard May complimenting Hamid. Having seen the lack of communication between Hamid and May, I had always thought that they might not like each other. When they had communicated before, the exchange between the two had been trivial if not hostile.

"Remember when I said that I would like to pray with my wife side by side," Hamid said in response. "We pray side by side. I just can't stand a woman who puts herself behind me. I can't stand a woman who gives in to the position. I wouldn' learn anything from that type of person." Hamid slowly but assertively stated, as if to give his choice of words careful consideration. "Let me tell you something. That's not a wife. That's a slave."

"Thank you!" responded May, giving a big nod. "And you know, I am here to work and send the money to my country. Some men come in and try to talk to me [make sexual advances toward me]. What are they thinking? I am not here to find a man. There are a lot of men in my country. I am here to work. Some people buy expensive clothes. Me, I go to 125th Street and by $10 pants. Some people say, 'Oh, May, you look good.' I don't care."

May usually wore jeans and shirts. I had never seen her in what Hamid might have called African clothes. Perhaps it was because she worked as a hairdresser and needed to be in comfortable clothes when she worked. Or perhaps because she wanted to save money as she claimed. Every time I saw her at Hamid's shop, she was always dressed casually.

## Conclusion: Exceptional Moments and Mediations

Contrary to what Hamid had expressed to me about his views toward African Muslims, he played the role of mediating between African Americans and African immigrants. He acted in a way that transcended the forces of collective identity. This is not to suggest that the conflicts between the two different ethnic groups to which Hamid and May are considered to belong were resolved or had disappeared. Nor do I intend to romanticize

Hamid's conciliatory and pacifist attitude. But this small sample of episodes I have recounted above suggests the existence of countervailing forces that undermine the constructedness of collective identities and differences. While Hamid's narrative along with those of many other African American Muslims in Harlem seemingly construct Africans as offensive "others," Hamid's actions contravene such a reductive conclusion. Hamid worked to help May personally, mitigate resentment among both Africans and African Americans, and thus help prevent further tension, conflict, and violence.

The above episodes also pose an epistemological question about the conceptions of discrimination and conflict. Many scholars have repeatedly argued that differences, discrimination, and conflicts are always culturally constructed. Michel Foucault, for one, explained that a discourse is not merely a collection of words, but is a practice that shapes the object to which it refers.[24] And many anthropologists and other analysts concur with this understanding. Charles L. Briggs, for example, drawing on the works of Foucault as well as of Michael Silverstein, claims that narrative can be seen as a process, through which "narrators and their audiences gain access to a range of metadiscursive practices for shaping *social interactions* as well as the *production and reception of discourse*."[25]

While I do acknowledge the forces of representation and discourse and their influence on various practices, I am dissatisfied with constructivists' relative disregard for exceptional moments for which narrative and discourse fail to fully account and thus are inadequate reference points. I am not suggesting that discursive practices either do or do not construct group members' perceptions of reality. Rather, I am simply wary of constructivists' often tacit assumption that discursive practices always determine and dictate one's actions to the same degree. To say representational forces of language *influence* one's actions is one thing. To assume that they are always determinative of one's actions in the same manner is quite another.

Examining this issue from slightly different angle, Valentine Daniel observed succinctly "the uncanny resemblance that certain schools of constructivism bear to the essentializing impulses operating in ethnicism, racism, and culturalism which they critique."[26] Pointing out that constructivists themselves often erroneously essentialize what they consider as "essentialist," Daniel wrote: "[I]n the excitement to find nothing but constructions, there has been a flattening down of culture to a single dimension and a loss of perspective on the relative differences in resilience among the various cultural constructions as well as their relative

latency…."[27] While Daniel's focus here is on different dimensions of cultural constructions and on varying degrees to which such constructions have force, he clearly recognizes the potential of subtle moments in which cultural forces claimed to inexorably determine actions in fact meet their "counterpoint."[28] I am not arguing that there *is* always an a priori, steady counterpoint to cultures, but if there are moments in which an action contravenes the supposedly definitive forces of cultures, it is vital to capture those moments through ethnography.

I will conclude this article with a final episode I recorded as an ethnographer in Harlem. The scene, as in the previous episode I described, conveys a subtle indication of an exceptional moment, in which Hamid's actions do not coincide with what he had persistently professed about differences between African Americans and Africans. It also involves another African American Muslim man named Ali, who was in his sixties, with whom I also met regularly while I was conducting research in New York City. Ali's gesture as part of the episode was also inconsistent with his usual attitude I would characterize as combative. Both Hamid and Ali employed the language of conflict to articulate their resentment against African Muslims, thereby constructing Africans as "others" and African Americans as "selves" as essentially different beings. However, their actions demonstrated something different in an exceptional moment of connection in the face of perceived otherness.

On a Wednesday, Ali and I headed for 116th Street after our regular meeting. It was unusual for Ali to go to Harlem, because he always claimed that he did not like to "hang around" in uptown. But Hamid had called earlier and asked us to come and see him at his barbershop, which Ali and I did.

We greeted one another and went outside to talk. The topic of our conversation quickly became the changes in the neighborhood. Since Ali had not come to 116th Street for a long time, he immediately pointed out the increasing number of African immigrants. And he was not fully happy about it.

"Lots of Africans are here now," Ali said. "Those buildings used to be ours. They even built their own mosques. That's like me going to Africa and building my own mosques, man."

For Ali, Africans' building of their own mosques in the middle of Harlem was a disrespectful act. According to him, they should attend the local masjids, which were established and run by African Americans. Having observed what Hamid thought of the African Muslim immigrants and

his repeated emphasis on the differences between Africans and African Americans, I automatically assumed that he would agree with Ali. But he did not.

"No," Hamid responded slowly and calmly. "But they [the African immigrant Muslims] have been talked down to by the imam [of an African American masjid]. He [the imam] kept saying some nasty things to them. See, even I go in there [the predominantly African American mosque] just to make a prayer. I don't go there to listen to his khutba. But he [the imam] doesn't like that. He has ego."

Hamid could have agreed with Ali and said that it was indeed disrespectful of Africans to build their own masjids. Instead, Hamid blamed it on an African American imam, who had been active in one of the local mosques in Harlem. He said that it was that imam and other African American mosque goers that eventually kicked out many African Muslims, who used to come to the masjid. That was what had led the African Muslims to build their own masjids.

Hamid was again playing the role of mediator. He described the cultural context in which African Muslims built their own masjids and counterposed it to the resentment which Ali had exhibited.

"Oh, really?" Ali said, rather peacefully in a low voice. "I didn' know none of that.… Hmmm. I didn' know that. That's bad." Ali was rubbing his chin and seemed to be contemplating what to make of it. Ali's response, too, was remarkable to me at the time, because he had always employed strong, militant language to articulate his attitudes and positions toward the problems of Harlem. But now, talking to Hamid, his attitude shifted strikingly. He no longer exhibited an aggressive tone and defiant approach. He was willing to listen to Hamid.

"Yes," Hamid added, quietly. And he changed the subject and suggested that we walk to the corner of 117th Street, where there was a newly built apartment with a novel design. The sign on the wall read, "For Rent; Luxury Apartment; Silverman," followed by a phone number. According to Hamid, who also ran a construction business in addition to the barbershop, the selling price for a studio apartment in the new building was at least $300,000, and it would go up to a million dollars within six months. "Twenty years ago, we paid five dollars per week, or ten dollars per week for rent," Hamid said.

Ali and Hamid then talked about their memories of life in 1960s and 1970s Harlem. They both talked about times when they had been shot. They both claimed that Harlem used to be a community in which people helped

one another in the sixties, but that the crime rate rose in the late sixties, and that fighting and conflicts became everyday occurrences in the seventies and eighties. “There were a lot of people on the streets,” Hamid said, “and you couldn’ see the other corner of the block. And unless you are from that block, you can’ really walk around. If you are from another block, people be like, ‘Who are you?’”

They then contrasted their memories of the neighborhood with how they perceived it now. Hamid explained the changes in the neighborhood to Ali. As we chatted on the street, a white woman came up from the subway station and walked past us. A couple of Asian women and a few African Americans in gentrified clothing carrying shopping bags with high-fashion brand logos on them walked by as well. Each time newcomers walked past us, Hamid said to Ali, “Look.” And we would watch them walk by.

“Remember how we used to make fun of people who live in that building there?” Hamid asked Ali, discreetly pointing out the people who were about to go inside another building. “We used to say, ‘How can people live in that kind of building?’ Now, Caucasians live there.” The building was now renovated, and the rent was much higher.

Ali pointed out that Columbia University purchased a property on 114th Street and was now renovating it. The building, Ali said, had been used illegally as a crack house, and thus nobody could have protected the property from sale. “What bothers me is that there is no fear,” Ali claimed. “You know, the fear. Like, for instance, if you go to Brooklyn, people are afraid of Brooklyn. It used to be like that here. But not anymore. That was when Harlem was real Harlem.” Brooklyn was only one example for Ali, and, of course, he meant a certain part of Brooklyn, not the entire area. He persisted in emphasizing the lack of such fear. According to him, people should be afraid of Harlem, the symbolic capital of Black culture. For him, there was no sign of respect without such fear.

Hamid had once again performed the role of mediator here. In restorative justice, the role of mediator or facilitator is to stand between two conflicting parties and promote dialogue.[29] Hamid had never trained as a professional mediator. Nor was he conscious of such restorative and therapeutic approaches to cases of conflict. Rather, he informally intervened in potential conflicts in his everyday life. It is clear that he tried to mitigate Ali’s animosity against Africans, but at the same time Hamid avoided confronting Ali and talked peacefully with him about their shared memories, as if to confirm their brotherhood.

Ali left first, after exchanging greetings with Hamid and me. Then Hamid

walked me to Morningside Park. As we walked, Hamid pointed out that there was a smell of gunpowder in the air. There certainly was a distinctive odor, although we did not hear any gunshots.

## Note

[1] The stories I recount in this article are drawn mostly from the fieldnotes I took as an ethnographic researcher in New York City from the fall of 2002 to the summer of 2004. For privacy and security purposes, I used pseudonyms for everyone except famous public figures. Most of the data and episodes were previously used in my dissertation and published as a book. But I have also continued my research and fieldwork in Harlem and other neighborhoods in New York, which led me to reframe the description theoretically. For my previous work on the dynamics of 116th street, please see Yutaka Nakamura, Community in Crisis: Language and Action among African-American Muslims in Harlem. (PhD Diss., (Hitotsubashi University, 2008), especially chapter 3; Yutaka Nakamura, *Zankyou no Harlem: Street ni ikiru Muslim-tachi no koe [Howling Harlem: Voices of Muslims on the Street]* (Tokyo: Editorial Republica, 2015), chapter 3.

[2] Both masjids are no longer there. I was informed that they had to relocate because of increases in rent.

[3] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006).

[4] Ibid., 11–12.

[5] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

[6] Alberto Melucci, *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age* (Cambridge University Press, 1996); Alberto Melucci, *The Playing Self: Person and Meaning in the Planetary Society* (Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[7] Charles Taylor and Amy Gutmann, *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition: An Essay* (Princeton University Press, 1992).

[8] W. E. Connolly, *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Expanded Edition) (University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

[9] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Harvard University Press, 1984); Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge University Press, 1977).

[10] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Schoepf (New York: Basic Books, 1963) (especially "The Sorcerer and His Magic" and "The Effectiveness of Symbol"); Marcel Mauss, *A General Theory of Magic*, trans. Robert Brain, (London: Routledge, 1972).

[11] In thinking about the role of language in traditional magic and its implications, I am inspired and influenced by James Siegel's fascinating book on sorcery. See James T. Siegel, *Naming the Witch* (Stanford University Press, 2006) (especially chapter 1 "The Truth of Sorcery").

[12] "Routine violence" is the term I borrowed from Gyanendra Pandey. Rather than treating violence as an extraordinary event, he reminds us that violence is embedded in the much familiar institutions of our daily life and therefore routinely practiced. See Gyanendra Pandey, *Routine Violence: Nations, Fragments, Histories* (Stanford University Press, 2006).

[13] Thus, in the famous song "Across 110th Street," Bobby Womack sings: "In every city you find the same thing going down, / Harlem is the capital of every ghetto town. / Across 110th Street, / Pimps trying to catch a woman that's weak / Across 110th Street, / Pushers

won't let the junkie go free. / Across 110th Street, / A woman trying to catch a trick on the street. / Across 110th Street, / You can find it all in the street" (Bobby Womack, "Across 110th Street," 1972, https://genius.com/Bobby-womack-across-110th-street-lyrics). For other references, see e.g., David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue* (London: Penguin Books, 1979); Gilbert Osofsky, *Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto: Negro New York 1890–1930*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Ivan R Dee, 1996).

[14] John L. Jackson, *Harlemworld: Doing Race and Class in Contemporary Black America* (University of Chicago Press, 2001), 18.

[15] See Shinichi Tsuji, *Kokujin Ghetto No Ima Wo Ikiru [Harlem Speaks: Living the Present Black Ghetto]*, (Tokyo: Shinjuku Shobou, 1995), 236. Having spent many years interviewing Harlem residents, Tsuji observes and beautifully summarizes the manner in which Harlem has been represented. "Harlem as a symbol. It is an intense sign. There always seems to be two seemingly contrary meanings involved in it. Brightness and darkness. Glory and misery. Hope and despair. Integrity and corruption. Numerous nicknames have been produced within and outside Harlem. Uptown. Colony. Ghetto. Slum. Confined town. The capital of Black culture. The capital of American music. The city of dissipation. The underworld. The cancer within the city. The tester of racial issues. A stronghold of Black movements. The hometown of Langston Heughes, of Duke Ellington, of James Baldwin, and of Malcolm X. A fortress. A prison. Beauty. Chaos……." (English translation by Yutaka Nakamura.)

[16] Jackson, *Harlemworld*, 18.

[17] *Ibid.*, 21.

[18] *Ibid*., 22.

[19] The Fruit of Islam is a section of the Nation of Islam, the members of which are to be trained to carry out security-related tasks. Their training includes karate and other martial arts.

[20] I use the term "followers" for convenience's sake to indicate those who support Imam W. D. Muhammad and his organizational activities. The degree to which each of the individuals follow Imam Muhammad varies, and the distinction between the followers and non-followers is not always clear.

[21] Here, I am quoting from the handwritten flyer distributed on that day.

[22] Again, the quotation is from the handwritten flyer.

[23] From my fieldnote and memos.

[24] See, e.g., Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972).

[25] Charles Briggs, *Disorderly Discourse: Narrative, Conflict, and Inequality* (Oxford University Press, 1996), 19 (emphasis in original).

[26] Valentine E. Daniel, *Charred Lullabies: Chapters in an Anthropography of Violence* (Princeton University Press, 1996), 13.

[27] *Ibid*., 14.

[28] Daniel talks about a "counterpoint to culture" in the final chapter of his book *Charred Lullabies*. The specific counterpoint Daniel describes is violence, but he does acknowledge that violence is not the only counterpoint. See *Ibid.*, chapter 7.

[29] For explorations on restorative justice, see, for example, John Braithwaite, "Principles of Restorative Justice," in *Restorative Justice and Criminal Justice: Competing or Reconcilable Paradigms?*, eds. A. von Hirsch, J. V. Roberts, A. E. Bottoms, K. Roach, and M. Schiff, (London: Hart Publishing, 2003), 1–20; Mark Walters, *Hate Crime and Restorative Justice: Exploring Causes, Repairing Harms* (Oxford University Press, 2014); Howard Zehr, *Changing Lenses: Restorative Justice for Our Times* (Harrisonburg, VA: MennoMedia, 2015); Howard Zehr, *The Little Book of Restorative Justice: Revised and Updated* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015).