Recentering the Periphery, Coloring the Discourses and Expanding the Frames

A Guide to the American Folklore Society *Notable Folklorists of Color Exhibitions* and the Contributions of BIPOC Scholars to Folklore Studies

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The ***Notable Folklorists of Color: Expanding the Frames*** exhibition is an extension of the American Folklore Society's ***Notable Folklorists of Color: Remembering Our Ancestral Legacies***, an exhibition that marked the 25th anniversary of AFS's Cultural Diversity Committee with panels honoring 25 ***BIPOC*** (Black, Indigenous, People of Color)[1] folklorists that I co-curated with Olivia Cadaval in 2019. *Expanding the Frames*, the new exhibit curated by Olivia Cadaval, Sojin Kim and me, is the outcome of an extensive collaboration with approximately fifty scholars of color who wrote nearly 160 panels about BIPOC ***ancestor***[2] folklorists. Combined, these two exhibitions honor African American, Indigenous, Latino and Hispano, Asian American, and Native Hawaiian ancestor scholars whose works make contributions to folklore studies scholarship spanning the 19th century through 2021, in what is now the United States and its territories. These exhibitions also feature writing by African American, Latinx, Native American, Asian American, and Native Hawaiian scholars, currently active in both public and academic arenas of folklore studies and allied fields. The content of these exhibitions is not exhaustive—there remain many more scholars to uncover—but our efforts have attempted to provide a glimpse into the breadth and scope of the scholarship of BIPOC ancestor folklorists.

In order to reveal their contributions to folklore studies, our approach to this exhibition has been to center BIPOC ancestors—who often have worked within their own communities—as significant producers of scholarly knowledge about the communities and traditions they studied. By bringing these ancestors and their scholarly contributions from the peripheries to the center of folklore studies, we can begin to develop a more inclusive history of the field from within and beyond academia. Each panel offers a short biography highlighting the ancestor's contributions to folklore studies with a linked extensive bibliography of the ancestor's scholarship. We believe that the examination of the research, praxes, methodologies, and perspectives of these scholars can broaden and strengthen folklore studies, moving it toward a more equitable, antiracist,

and decolonial practice. To further these goals, this essay also highlights the contributions of several contemporary BIPOC scholars to demonstrate current extensions of some of the ancestral approaches. Our initiative seeks to intervene in the citational practices of our field in order to awaken, reassess, and expand consideration of the diverse approaches, conceptions, interpretations, legacies, sources, and praxes that could be applied in folklore studies.

Our interdisciplinary and ***intersectional*** approach[3] to the stories of these ancestors shows that folklore knowledge and scholarship has been fundamental to the vibrant expressivity of BIPOC communities. The BIPOC ancestor scholars highlighted in this exhibition come from a spectrum of cultural groups with diverse social and political standpoints within their communities.[4] Their scholarship raises new questions and considerations for folklore studies from their community-based, interdisciplinary, and intersectional perspectives. Ancestors in this exhibition range from young adults to venerated seniors; from those with academic degrees in folklore to many who attained little formal academic training but were grounded in the knowledge systems of their respective communities. Numerous others approached folklore studies from groundings in other fields, having attained advanced degrees from academia, despite having to navigate exclusionary educational practices. For many ancestors, contributing to folklore studies was an avocation of devotion. For others, documenting cultural traditions was their life's work. Some of these ancestor scholars embraced and applied mainstream academic approaches and perspectives in their folklore research, regarding the "folk" as remnants of the past. Alternatively, others anchored their research in the cultural knowledge frameworks and traditions of their own communities and intentionally worked for the benefit and futures of those living communities. Several of these ancestors' theories and approaches are resonant with contemporary praxis, while others are representative of the historical periods and circumstances within which they were conceived. Across these continuums, ancestor scholars of color have produced works of lasting significance for their communities and for understanding their cultural traditions.

Most of the ancestor scholars conducted ethnographic fieldwork (with and without recording technology). They preserved, archived, interpreted, and wrote about cultural traditions and practices. Many ancestor scholars enriched their research with insights as "native" scholars. Some forged new concepts to describe the circumstances of their lives, while others explicated cultural values central to the worldviews and cultures in which they worked. Yet, many of these ancestors would not have called themselves folklorists, for a variety of reasons, and several also questioned the appropriateness of the use of "folklore," a term that suggests some hierarchical organization of humans, to refer to the cultural knowledges and practices of their own communities.

The work of BIPOC scholars of folklore has primarily been located outside predominantly ***white***[5] academic folklore departments, historically and currently. Although a few of the contemporary BIPOC ancestor scholars acquired academic training in folklore studies, most did not have access to educational or professional opportunities to do so, due to segregation and exclusion based on their race, class, and/or gender. For a range of reasons, including segregation, stereotypes, and racial discrimination, folklore curricula has mostly ignored, trivialized, dismissed, tokenized, excluded, and even appropriated the scholarship and cultural knowledge of these ancestors.

In the AFS Centennial Publication *100 Years of American Folklore Studies* (Clements 1988), published only 34 years ago, **William H. Wiggins, Jr.** was the only scholar of color included in the volume. Wiggins framed a conceptual history of African American folklore studies within the context of American folklore studies, and cited scholarship by both white and African American scholars (Wiggins 1988). The next article in the monograph about the state of Native American folklore scholarship, only mentioned white scholars who had published in the area and suggested that 1900 to 1940 was the golden age of Native American folklore scholarship because the field turned from Boasian anthropological approaches to literary approaches to folklore study (Cunningham 1988: 33-35). Yet several Indigenous scholars had published substantive independent and collaborative scholarship in the field since the earliest days of the 20th century. In fact, neither Hispanic/Latino, Asian American nor immigrant folklore in general (with the exception of that of English immigrants) were even mentioned as significant arenas of study in folklore studies at that time—and it seems that scholarship in these areas, like the voices and intellectual perspectives of scholars of color, were peripheral to American folklore studies. The repeated calls to transform folklore studies to embrace BIPOC scholarship, theories, knowledge, and voices from the communities we study, sometimes searing but loving critiques—iterated by **Davis** (1996), and more recently by Cantú and Nájera-Ramirez (2002), N'Diaye (2021), Prahlad (1999, 2019, 2021), Roberts (1999, 2021), Zhang (2015), González-Martin (2017), and more—are urgent and seem to be gradually having an impact.

Folklorist Anand Prahlad (2005: 260) has asserted that western folklore studies operates out of a colonial discourse and has not yet interrogated its impact. Colonial discourses, as discourses of domination, label the cultural knowledge and traditions of the people colonized as "other" in contrast to the frameworks of the colonizer's culture, and provide rationales that justify the taking of Indigenous lands and the subjugation of Black people and other peoples of color. By defining BIPOC peoples as primitives and savages (in contrast to modern

people), folklore studies used the concept of "folk" to build a foundational hierarchy of white, male, and classist superiority over people of color defined as deficient, inferior, and incapable of maximizing available opportunities or resources, or of fully functioning in the modern world (Roberts 1993, 2000). The assumptions of colonialism have been a significant force in shaping the vision of folklore studies since its beginnings, so that Indigenous histories of disruption, dispossession, and violent self-defense are erased, and BIPOC communities have been defined only as subjects of study by the discipline, with little space for members of those communities, in their intersectional fullness, to participate in conceptualizing the discourses of the field (Bailey 2021). Until the late 20th century, most of the academic folklore research about these communities was developed in the interests of humanity, for an academy from which BIPOC people were mostly excluded by law and practice.

From its beginnings, folklore studies as a field also didn't question or challenge the assumptions and conditions under which BIPOC communities lived—the dispossession of Indigenous lands, segregation of BIPOC peoples, the exploitation of people's labor and deprivation of economic opportunities and citizenship rights, and the precarity and violence used to disrupt or manage BIPOC communities, assigning these groups to a variety of biologically, culturally, and economically inferior statuses, worthy of "exotic" and sometimes exploitative study, but not of full equality.[6] Instead, these situations were accepted as normal and even as evidence of these groups' inherent cultural inferiority or deficits in character.

Folklorists Adrienne Lanier Seward (1983) and John W. Roberts (1993) observed that folklore studies adopted a Eurocentric conception of "the folk" which, through the perpetuation of distorting racial stereotypes and speculated cultural histories, was one way the field supported the colonialism of Black people and other people of color in scholarship. Folklore studies was not alone, and in fact was a field more progressive than some in even recognizing the cultures of BIPOC communities as worthy of study. However, despite folklore's "proud heritage of liberal, progressive postures" (**Davis** 1996: 115), as Edward Said has noted, "there is no discipline, no structure of knowledge, no institution or epistemology that can or has ever stood free of the various sociocultural, historical, and political formations that give epochs their peculiar individuality" (1989: 211). Folklore studies, like other disciplines, has absorbed and been shaped by the strengths and biases of the intellectual frameworks and cultural ideologies of its times. Roberts (2021) explicates this idea in detail.

Beyond the othering colonial discourses that have presented BIPOC peoples as lesser beings than white Europeans are the discourses of settler colonialism

based in British settler colonial epistemological frames that facilitated and maintained the dispossession of Indigenous lands and crowded Native peoples on reservations, and ***invisibilized***[7] them outside of that context. ***Settler colonialism*** can be defined as:

> an ongoing system of power that perpetuates the genocide and repression of indigenous peoples and cultures. Essentially hegemonic in scope, settler colonialism normalizes the continuous settler occupation, exploiting lands and resources to which indigenous peoples have [familial] relations....[T]he settlers have come to stay, displacing the indigenous peoples and perpetuating systems that continue to erase native lives, cultures, and histories....in order to replace them and establish themselves as the new rightful inhabitants. (Cox 2017)

In the adoption of antiquarian and evolutionary paradigms, folklore embraced settler colonial ideologies and structures, relegating Indigenous peoples to vanishing relics of the past, no longer relevant or vital contributors to the modern world, thus supporting the erasure of Indigenous histories (Dunbar-Ortiz 2021). This notion was also extended to other peoples of color, in assuming that they were static and incapable of adapting to the modern world because their development represented earlier stages of unilinear human development that would eventually die out—so it was necessary to document their folklore before they moved forward on the savage-to-civilized trajectory. Consigned permanently to the bottom of the racial hierarchy, Black people were labeled closest to nature and cast as property (with no human rights) for the capitalist gain of their "superior" masters.

Systemic racism is a form of oppression that is a pervasive, persistent, and an actively ever-present, adaptable force that operates through structures, practices and institutions that maintain the racial hierarchy. It interlocks synergistically with other social identities and with multiple other systems of oppression, such as sexism and patriarchy, classism, heterosexism, colonialism, and religious oppression, among others. Systemic racism, as one of the siblings of colonialism, also has informed folklore discourses and it has historically shaped and continues to shape the experiences and cultures of all BIPOC groups. As another hierarchical construct designed to designate who has access to power, privilege, and influence to get the things that the powerful want and need at the expense of targeted others, it also perpetuates and normalizes harm to targeted groups.

One aspect of systemic racism that folklore studies embraced in its history is ***cultural racism***, which can be defined as:

a racially-defined societal group using systemic power
to establish its cultural way as dominant and superior
and to simultaneously

impose its cultural way of life onto oppressed groups;
destroy, distort, discount and discredit the cultures of oppressed race-based groups;
while appropriating aspects of their cultures *without accountability* to those groups.

(Barndt, 2007; emphasis mine)

Examples of cultural racism include: American Indian boarding schools, designed to assimilate Native American peoples into white American culture—"Kill the Indian, save the man"— devaluing and criminalizing Native American cultures and enacting cultural and physical genocide; World War II Japanese American incarceration, which stripped U.S. citizens of their constitutional rights and stigmatized expressions of Japanese culture; and the beliefs that Black people were intellectually unfit to hold positions of authority or acumen, and needed someone to oversee them. Such beliefs, often operating in policy and practice, denied BIPOC people jobs, choices, opportunities, and even physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being, frequently delivering irreparable harm to BIPOC people's lives.

Although race is an assigned group designation, systemic racism, the fraternal twin to colonialism, is framed around the concept of ***race*** which is often erroneously assumed to be a static natural biological category (Smedley 2005; Goodman, Moses, and Jones 2019). Race is instead a classification system constructed in inconsistent and arbitrary ways. It uses the pretext of a group of people with stigmatized skin color or "aberrant" physical features, religion, or languages to lump and relabel numerous cultural groups with varied languages, cultures, religions, ethnicities, nationalities, geographies, experiences, and perspectives together under umbrella terms that homogenize their diversity and have little to do with how those groups define themselves. This fabricated notion of race presumes distinct boundaries between biological racial groups, but since all groups have mixed and acculturated with other groups of people, there is no racial purity and no distinct biological boundaries between groups (Goodman, Moses, and Jones 2019). Masking significant cultural diversities among those in each group, society uses these lumping terms to designate which side of the racial construct (privileged/targeted) a group is on (Roberts 1993; Barndt 2007) in order to direct power, influence, and resources to the privileged group at the expense of stigmatized groups. Over time, these labels have also become part of the ways that individuals and communities of color have come

to identify themselves (Tatum 2003). The notion of race can conflate with ideas and practices of ethnicity because multicultural groups that have been lumped together frequently begin to develop blended and shared identities within their labels in order to interact with the mainstream.

Rather than using the static concepts of race and racial groups, what should interest folklorists are the concepts of ***racialization***, which is a systemic process that in the U.S. impacts all of us, determining which side of the racial hierarchy we fall by placing us into **racial*ized*** groups of privilege or disadvantage. The difference between race and the racialization of groups is that racialization focuses on the processes of making and unmaking groups into racialized groups rather than accepting race as inherent, immutable biological characteristics of a group. Ethnic studies scholar Michael Omi and sociologist Howard Winant define racialization as "the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group" (1986: 111). By understanding that "racialization is something that is done to a group, by some social agent, at a certain time, [often] for a given period, in and through various processes, relative to a particular social context" (Garcia 2003: 285), one can see how the Irish (Ignatiev 2012), Italians (Gugliemo 2003), and Jews (Brodkin 1998) became white; or that Native Americans, Latinx and some Asian American peoples at times have been reclassified from the targeted side to the privileged side of the racial hierarchy, and back again, to serve the whims of white supremacy. Racialization often impacts how cultures practice their traditions. One can observe the racialization processes applied in order to disadvantage Muslim Americans after 9/11 (Khan 2020), or immigrants from Central America or Haiti, as they attempted to seek asylum by entering the U.S. Through the processes of racialization, many languages other than English, spoken as primary languages by BIPOC communities, have been criminalized and even eradicated, and with them, vast archives of cultural knowledge.

Stereotyping through beliefs, imagery and ideologies are among the strategies of racialization. Depictions of Mexican Americans as chihuahuas or Pancho (Pedro, or Ramón), the Sleeping Mexican, and undeserving intruders; Chinese Americans as Siamese cats or perpetual foreigners; Native Americans as mascots; Asian Americans as shifty and dishonest; and Blacks as apes and brutes are common representations that BIPOC people encounter in various arenas of their lives including education, healthcare, business, and popular culture. These images not only shape how BIPOC communities have been seen and treated, but even how they see themselves. In his film, *Ethnic Notions* (1987), **Riggs** exposed the construction and the long-term legacies of African American stereotypes on Black lives,[8] and in later films, similarly unpacked stereotypes about Black gay men.

The research of many BIPOC ancestors has been in conversation with both traditional, colonial, and racializing discourses about BIPOC communities in the past, present, and future. Cognizant of the experiences and challenges faced by their communities, many of the ancestor scholars chose to respond to the histories of harm, exclusion, segregation, isolation, and violence. Many directly and indirectly offered counterdiscourses and perspectives to rebut the academic and mainstream distortions of their histories and cultural practices. Their meticulous scholarship connects the real-life concerns of communities and promotes the development of responsible, responsive, and reciprocal research for community benefit. Doing so has often demonstrated resistance to pervasive systemic oppression. African American scholars have researched legacies of slavery and segregation in order to retrieve buried and fragmented histories and cultural practices. Several Indigenous and Latinx scholars have reclaimed erased histories of plants, damaged landscapes once known and maintained, and forgotten seasonal rituals once practiced. Japanese Americans documented their experiences of immigration, their World War II forced removal and incarceration, and the new traditions generated under oppression.

Several ancestor scholars have directly addressed racism and colonialism, which have their own sets of traditions, practices, and stories. The following authors are among the many ancestors that have written about some of those traditions: **DuBois**, "The Souls of White Folk" (1920); **Morrison**, *The Origin of Others* (2016) and *Playing in the Dark* (1990); **hooks**, *Displacing Whiteness* (1997); **Lorde**, *Sister Outsider* (1984); **Fry**, *Nightriders in Black Folk History* (1975). **Chesnutt** wrote about the 1898 massacre in Wilmington, N.C., through fiction in *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901), and **Baldwin** was among those who wrote an essay about lynching (1948). **E. Deloria** offered pathways to mitigate the impact of decades of federal assimilation policies on Native American communities in *Waterlily* (1988) and **V. Deloria's** *Custer Died for your Sins* (1961) told a history of the effects of federal Indian policy on Native communities. **Takaki's** *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America, rev. ed.* (2012) reveals the racialization processes incorporated into policies and institutional practices that have impacted BIPOC communities. In the present day, folklorist Trudier Harris delineates white terrorism in *Exorcising Blackness, Historical and Literary Lynching and Burning Rituals* (1984) and Fernando Orejuela and Stephanie Shonekan (2018) also tackle issues of racism in their examination of the music of the Black Lives Matter movement.

Community and civil rights activism have been part of the traditions of response to oppression practiced by these ancestors. Some ancestor scholar/activists organized, marched, performed, and published for racial, social, and economic justice, civil rights, and community and cultural well-being, including: **Baldwin**,

Boggs, Chesnutt, A.J. Cooper, Douglass, Du Bois, Faulkner, Kochiyama, V. Deloria, Freeney Harding, Henderson, J. Hirabayashi, C. S. Johnson, J.W. Johnson, B. Jones, Kalokuokamaile, Lester, R. Long, Mabalon, Martínez, C. Nahwooksy, F. Nahwooksy, Negrete, Otero-Warren, Primus, Rivera, Sánchez, Sikoun, Taylor, Zitkala-Ṡa.

Relaying experiences with racism and colonialism also have been central to exposing this facet of the difficult truths of their lives. In many BIPOC communities such stories are shared only because of deep trust of the ethnographer or editor. BIPOC authors in *A Good Time for the Truth: Race in Minnesota* (Sun Yung Shin, ed., 2016), have written contemporary stories of experiences of racism and Denise K. Lajimodiere details interviews with American Indian Boarding school survivors in *Stringing Rosaries: The History, the Unforgivable, and the Healing of Northern Plains American Indian Boarding School Survivors* (2019).

More commonly, BIPOC ancestor scholars tackled these topics indirectly. Through an accumulation of evidence and careful research, they contributed to demonstrating the full humanity, intelligence, and creativity of their communities. They studied how people in their communities created and used traditional arts and creative practices to express and support their lived experiences and frequently used cultural identities and knowledges as bases from which to find resilience against oppression and to launch resistance to cultural domination and white supremacy. Across the span of nearly two centuries they have addressed several recurring themes:

- In response to BIPOC communities being subjected to cultural racism, colonialism, and inaccurate representations of their histories and cultural practices, many ancestor scholars sought to rectify representational distortions and to reinforce the vitality and integrity of their communities in the present. At the heart of these BIPOC ancestors' scholarship is a driving commitment to present their community knowledges with informed understanding, respect, and historical context. The presentation and preservation of cultural knowledge; researching, unearthing, constructing, and reconstructing accurate histories and knowledge of their communities; and offering alternative and respectful frameworks from which to understand these communities was a fundamental focus.

- Another significant theme concerns how Native, Black, Mexican and immigrant communities have sustained or experienced disruptions to their linguistic heritages. Historically pressured to abandon their heritage languages for standard English, some ancestors

were dedicated to retrieving, documenting, and preserving non-English languages, dialects, and the cultural concepts and linguistic practices embedded within them. Among the ancestors doing this work were: **Cobos**, **Hewitt**, **W. Jones**, **Jones-Jackson**, **Kalakāhua**, **Kalokuokamaile**, **Kawena Pūkuʻi**, **E. Martinez**, **L.D. Turner**.

- Both implicitly and deliberately, these ancestors produced scholarship that actively countered the long histories of misrepresentation, appropriation, and marginalization of their cultures. Some ancestors explicitly were engaged in social and civil activism, and many framed their scholarship as ***counternarratives*** to scholarly misrepresentation and mainstream stereotypes of their communities. Several historian ancestors worked to rectify and reclaim histories, including: **Blassingame**, **Boyer**, **Cabell**, **Cade**, **V. Deloria**, **Floyd**, **Higa**, **the Hirabayashis**, **Lai**, **Lewis**, **Lovell**, **Mabalon**, **Mabalot**, **Paredes**, **Raboteau**, **Reddick**, **Riggs**, **Settle Egypt**, **Stuckey**, **Takaki**.

Despite the fact that BIPOC ancestors operated within the confines of segregation and racial and gender exclusion, many utilized culturally based epistemological frameworks, developing and deploying responsive methodologies as well as new concepts in their folklore research and praxes. As **bell hooks** has noted, marginality can be "the site of radical possibility, a space of resistance" (1990:304). These ancestors created and enacted new concepts to describe experiences of living with resistance and restoring wholeness and resilience within the confines of racialization and coloniality. Such concepts of resistance and reframing include terms which address their particular experiences such as: indigeneity, double consciousness, nepantla/borderlands, and multiraciality.

More than a racial identity, ***indigeneity*** is also a political identity that claims the heritage of sovereignty and mobility of Indigenous peoples over historical lands prior to European settlement and colonization, and their knowledges of place and traditional ways of life. It also acknowledges the cultural, social, and political tolls and invisibilities of colonialism. The definition, accepted by the UN Working Group for Indigenous Peoples (1972) is:

> Indigenous populations are composed of the existing descendants of the peoples who inhabited the present territory of a country wholly or partially at the time when persons of a different culture or ethnic origin arrived there from other parts of the world, overcame them, by conquest, settlement or other means, reduced them to a non-dominant or colonial condition; who today live more in conformity with their particular social, economic and cultural customs and

> traditions than with the institutions of the country of which they now form part, under a state structure which incorporates mainly national, social and cultural characteristics of other segments of the population which are predominant.

In 1986, it was amended to add: "any individual who identified himself or herself as indigenous and was accepted by the group or the community as one of its members was to be regarded as an indigenous person" (Sandberg McGuinne 2014).

Maxidiwiac, followed by **Keewaydinoquay** and **Mary Geniusz**, more than a century later, revealed and taught Indigenous epistemologies through their knowledge of the land. Maxidiwiac sought to document and pass on her knowledge of plants and Hidatsa gardening practices after her people had been forced onto the reservation. Keewaydinoquay and Mary Geniusz, using Anishinaabe land-based knowledge handed down for generations, shared their Indigenous knowledge of plants as living beings through stories and practices, and Kimmerer (2013) also offers insight into indigenous epistemologies. As a traditional knowledge keeper, **W. Long** shared his vast knowledge of ceremony and traditional practices in spirituality and making material culture. Native Hawaiian ancestors have also worked to revitalize and sustain traditional knowledge and epistemologies.

Ancestor scholars also theorized about interracial and intercultural encounters and identities in several ways. Credited to **DuBois**, ***double consciousness*** is a concept of resistance referring to grappling with the phenomenon of being othered in American society. In response to the impacts of racism on Black people, DuBois asks, "How does it feel to always be seen as a problem?" In acknowledgement of the liminality and stress of living on the targeted side of the racial hierarchy, he describes the challenges of:

> a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness—an American, a Negro... two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (DuBois 1903)

Other BIPOC communities have also found this idea useful in examination of their own experiences. Connected concepts of resistance that illuminate

some of the gendered and sexualized aspects of this liminality are **Anzaldúa**'s concepts of ***borderlands*** and ***nepantla***. The ***borderlands*** concept offers a theory of resistance to aspects of racial and gender oppression. Anzaldúa states that "A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and the forbidden are its inhabitants" (Anzaldúa 1987: 3). Living in a borderland, in a state of "perpetual transition," where there are frequent clashes of cultural beliefs and values, leads to confusion, a "mental and emotional state of perplexity" (Anzaldúa 1990: 377), out of which can emerge a new level of awareness, leading to a new hybrid consciousness, that rejects oppression and draws from the strengths of multiple cultural heritages. ***Nepantla*** is an expansion of Anzaldúa's borderlands concept that represents temporal, spatial, psychic and/or intellectual points of crisis that occur during the many transitional stages of life identity issues (eg., race, gender, queer) and epistemological concerns (Keating 2006). Anzaldúa (1987: 276) notes that the term is a "Nahuatl word for the space between two bodies of water, the space between two worlds. It is a limited space, a space where you are not this or that but where you are changing." She explains:

> Living between cultures results in 'seeing' double, first from the perspective of one culture, then from the perspective of another. Seeing from two or more perspectives simultaneously renders those cultures transparent. Removed from that culture's center you glimpse the sea in which you've been immersed but to which you were oblivious, no longer seeing the world the way you were enculturated to see it. (Anzaldúa quoted in Keating 2006)

Several ancestors struggled with their standpoints of multiracial identity and the experiences associated with those identities. They described it as a liminal place where they fit nowhere fully. Their scholarship alerts us to the need to understand the experiences in multiracial identities, encounters, and interracial relationships, including adoptions, as a set of concepts that continue to be reformulated over time and are impacted by the racial hierarchy. ***Multiraciality*** is a concept related to but different from biculturality and multiethnicity. Integral to discussions of colonialism and racism, this discourse has a long history of being shaped by unequal power relations, but at the end of the 20th century, has developed a new, more liberatory frame. There are many multiracial people whose lives have been invisibilized. In recent decades, Naomi Zack (1993) has articulated a modern discourse on the topic, noting that the U.S. racial hierarchy has not made space for living in that identity, and Jessie D. Turner (2014) compares two different scholarly discourses about multiracial identities from Latinx and other people of color's

cultural perspectives. **Anzaldúa** theorized the power of racial mixture in her scholarship. **Chesnutt**, **Dunham**, **Eastman**, **Hewitt**, **W. Jones**, **Mourning Dove**, **Parker,** and **Yerby** highlighted some of the challenges of being multiracial in their writings. **Schoolcraft** and **Zitkala-Ṡa** also operated out of mixed-race heritages. **Morgan** featured issues of crossing racial boundaries.

The complexities of multiracial existences are perhaps most visibly demonstrated in the lives of several ***Native American interlocutors***.[9] Among them are: **Dozier**, **Eastman, Parker**, **Hewitt**, **Mourning Dove**, **Yellow Robe Frantz**, **La Flesche**, **W. Jones**, **W. Long**, **Ortiz**, **Shotridge**, **Schoolcraft**, **Starr**, **Tantaquidgeon**. In times past, ***Native American interlocutors*** were bicultural (and often bilingual and/or biracial) researchers who straddled and crossed racial and cultural boundaries to share Indigenous cultural knowledge with white people. Many were shaped by the boarding schools and the liminality of colonialism and forced assimilation. Several had acquired ambivalence about their own cultural identities, being biracially bicultural. Many worked in the white work world, with and as anthropologists, to document Native cultures. The purpose of their work was two-fold: 1) to preserve traditions that were disrupted by colonialism before they disappeared, and 2) to convince white people of the humanity of a particular tribe's culture and traditions. Some interlocutors absorbed ideas of white superiority and possibly violated the cultural mores and expectations of their nations in this process. Others used this work to preserve as many of the traditions as they could document, hiding secret knowledge in their documentation. They are sometimes mentioned with translators and knowledge keepers who also played a role in recording ancient stories and cultural traditions.

The interlocutors and their research are distinctive because they are, and were, in a unique position as both insiders and outsiders to the communities in which they worked. As such, they had access to materials, knowledge, and resources that their contemporary academics did not. In this position, they transferred traditional stories to texts written in European languages and they moved living traditions to static spheres, such as those found in museums and universities.

> Native American interlocutors come from/came from different cultures in different geographical areas—all of which have their own protocols for how and when knowledge is transmitted, and all of which have been affected by different degrees of colonial policies. They were/are writing in different eras, during which rules within cultures have changed. . . . For all of these reasons, and the fact that so many Indigenous cultures discourage judgment between beings, it is difficult for us to judge which interlocutors did, and which did

> not, cross into restricted access in what they chose to share with the outside world. (W. Geniusz, personal communication, 8/2/2022).

Margaret Bruchac (2018) illustrates these complexities in her new book.

In addition, BIPOC ancestor scholars examined many areas familiar to folklore studies and introduced several new discourses related to their knowledges as BIPOC people. Several ancestors demonstrated their capacities to bring <u>traditional methodologies of academic folklore and ethnographic scholarship</u> to new areas, among them: **Adams**, **Alegría**, **Bryce-Laporte**, **Cabrera**, **Cadilla de Martínez**, **Campa**, **Cobos**, **Dauenhauer**, **E. Deloria**, **Dozier**, **Dunham**, **Espinosa**, **Fauset**, **Flores**, **Fry**, **González Mireles**, **Gwaltney**, **Hewitt**, **Hsu**, **Jabbour**, **L.W. Jones**, **La Flesche**, **Leandicho Lopez**, **D. S. Lee**, **J. Lee**, **Lewis**, **Lovell**, **Wiggins**, **Watson**, **Ortiz**, **W. Jones**, **Murray Chiesa**, **Naff**, **Nakuina**, **Pukui**, **Reddick**, **Santoni**, **Siu**, **Talley**, **the Tings**, **Yang**, **Yerby**, **Young**. Some ancestors were also affiliated with <u>archives, museums and public folklore</u> including: **Bryce-Laporte**, **Floyd**, **Higa**, **the Hirabayashis**, **Houchins**, **Mabalot**, **C. Nahwooksy**, **F. Nahwooksy**, **Naff**, **Jabbour**, **Shotridge**, **B. Jones**, **R. Long**, **Hewitt**, **W. Jones**, **Nakuina**. Current scholars Cadaval, Kim, and N'Diaye explore curatorial and presentational questions in *Curatorial Conversations: Cultural Representation and the Smithsonian Folklife Festival* (2016).

However, ancestors also engaged <u>new and less frequently used methodologies</u> in their folklore studies:

> <u>Embodied Ethnography</u> as an extension of participant/observation, uses the researcher's entire body as a research tool to gain knowledge in multisensory ways. The researcher's body becomes one of the means by which she uses experiential knowledge of her body to learn, observe, and analyze, with feedback from the community. **Dunham**, **Hurston**, **Primus** used this methodology to understand dances and rituals in their fieldwork. The **Iwanagas**, **Kanakaʻole**, **Naʻope** and **Urata** also taught using an embodied method.
>
> <u>Native Ethnography</u> is the practice of studying one's own community, society, or ethnic group. While **Hurston** and **Gwaltney** are among the most recognized for studying their own communities and racial groups, and are leaders in theorizing about this methodology. This is a major research method for the majority of these ancestor scholars, who found it particularly important to research their own or closely related communities in order to document and preserve important rituals, language, beliefs, and vernacular practices.

Among the important research methods introduced by African American scholars researching Black communities during the 1920 to1940s were collaborative fieldwork and community studies to examine various traditions and institutions within a single community with a team of scholars with various areas of expertise. Some of the ancestor scholars using this method are: **Adams**, **the Hirabashis**, **James**, **L.W. Jones**, **Lewis**, **C. S. Johnson**, **Reddick**, **Settle Egypt**, **Work III**, **Watson**, **Young**, **Federal Writers' Project writers**. In addition, several ancestor scholars worked in pairs to do their research. **Dauenhauer**, **La Flesche**, **Hewitt**, **the Iwanagas**, **the Johnsons brothers**, **the Tings**, and **the Work brothers** worked in pairs or with another scholar to complete some of their field research. Similarly, scholars today find value in collaboration such as the research of Lawrence and Lawless in *When We Blew the Levee: Race, Politics and Community in Pinhook, Missouri* (2018).

Communication through media, such as photography, film, and radio as primary media, has been a vitally important method for dismantling stereotypes, documenting everyday life, ritual, and historic events in BIPOC communities with respect, and with detail often missed by those outside the community. Among the ancestors tied to these methods are: **Anwar**, **C. Lee**, **Lester**, **Mabalot**, **McNeill**, **Parks**, **Porter**, **Riggs**. Living photographer Roland L. Freeman (1996) continues to research in this vein.

Using more traditional lenses of folklore, ancestor scholars explored:

Literary expressions of folklore are among the most popular forms for presentation and incorporation of folklore in traditional and new forms. Among the ancestors expressing themselves this way are: **Baldwin**, **Belpré**, **Bontemps**, **Brown**, **Chesnutt**, **Christian**, **de Cristoforo**, **E. Deloria**, **Ellison**, **Fauset**, **Gaines**, **Grimke**, **hooks**, **Hughes**, **the Johnson brothers**, **Killens**, **Y. Lee**, **Lester**, **Lorde**, **Lucero-White Lea**, **Maxidiwiac**, **Morrison**, **Mourning Dove**, **Ramanujan**, **Schoolcraft**, **Smart-Grosvenor**, **Walker Alexander**, **Wright**, **Yerby**.

Geographic/Cultural intersections have been important to many ancestors. Several ancestors wrote about BIPOC people living in specific regions: **Cabbell** (Appalachia); **Bailey**, **Jones-Jackson**, **Smart-Grosvenor**, **L.D. Turner** (Gullah/Sea Islands); **Cade, Christian**, **Porter** (Louisiana); **Anzaldúa, Brewer**, **Paredes** (Texas); **Fauset** (Nova Scotia); **Bryce-Laporte**, **Clark**, **Dunham**, **Primus** (Diaspora studies);

C.S. Johnson, **Egypt**, **Watson**, **Reddick** (Tennessee); **Adams**, **Freeney Harding**, **Hurston**, **James**, **L.W. Jones**, **Muse**, **Walker Alexander**, **the Work family**, **Young** (Deep South); **Maxidiwiac** (Hidatsa Reservation); **Dozier**, **E. Martinez**, **Ortiz** (Pueblo Nations); **Geniusz**, **Keewaydinoquay** (Anishinaabe lands); **E. Deloria**, **V. Deloria**, **Yellow Robe Frantz**, **Zitkala-Ṡa** (Lakota/Dakota/Nakota lands); **Cabeza de Gilbert Campa**, **Cobos**, **Espinoza**, **Rael**, **Lucero-White Lea**, **Otero-Warren**, **Martínez-Jaramillo**, **R. Martínez**, **Rael** (Hispano/Nuevo Mexicano); **Alegría**, **Belpré**, **Bonilla**, **Flores**, **Murray Chiesa**, **Rivera**, **Vidal Santoni** (Puerto Rico); **Hsu**, **Lai**, **J. Lee**, **Y. Lee**, **Siu**, **Yang** (Chinese American communities); **Gamboa Fernandez**, **Leandicho Lopez**, **Mabalon**, **Mabalot** (Filipino diaspora); **Liliʻuokalani**, **Kanakaʻole**, **Kalakāhua**, **Nakuina**, **Naʻope** (Native Hawaiians); **di Cristoforo**, **Higa**, **the Hirabayashis**, **Urata** (Japanese American communities); **Federal Writers' Project Teams** (Virginia, Florida, Illinois, and New York City.)

Among those ancestors who theorized and created frameworks for aesthetic and creative expression of traditional arts are: **Brown**, **Boyer**, **Davis**, **DuBois**, **Floyd**, **Fry**, **Hurston**, **Henderson**, **hooks**, **Hughes**, **James**, **Morrison**, **Wilson**. Gonzalez (2020) and González-Martin (2019) offer new frameworks for analyzing these topics.

Decades before the performative turn in folklore and anthropology, Black scholars at HBCUs and Black dancers developed sound-based and movement-based theories of performance for Black music and dance, based in embodied ethnography, participant observation/ethnography, and autoethnography. Ancestors in other communities also developed pedagogy for teaching traditional repertoires. Among these ancestors are: **the Johnson brothers**, **Stuckey**, **Work II**, **F. Work** (spirituals); and **Work III** (blues); **James** (song); **Boyer** (gospel); **Riddle** (country music); **Urata** (song); **Wilson** (aesthetics); **Dunham, Hurston**, **the Iwanagas**, **Primus**, **Welsh** (dance); **Naʻope** and **Kanakaʻole** (hula).

Music has been key to the work of several ancestors. Among them are: **Boyer**, **Floyd**, **Jabbour**, **James**, **the Johnson brothers**, **C.S. Johnson**, **B. Jones**, **Kanakaʻole**, **Kawena Pūkuʻi**, **Liliʻuokalani**, **Lovell**, **R. Martínez**, **Naʼope**, **Negrete**, **Peña**, **Riddle**, **Sánchez**, **Wilson**, **the Work family**.

Foodways is another important arena for understanding BIPOC communities. Among the ancestors who focused attention on this are: **Cabeza de Baca Gilbert**, **Gamboa Fernandez**, **Smart-Grosvenor**.

From relaying experiences of childhood, to sharing cultural histories and traditions in formats for children to digest, several BIPOC ancestor scholars wrote and taught folklore for children including **Belpré**, **Yellow Robe Frantz** and **B. Jones**, who devoted their lives to teaching accurate representations of their culture and folklore to children. **Y. Lee** provided descriptions of Chinese children's traditions in *When I was a Boy in China* (1887). **Anzaldúa** wrote *Friends from the Other Side/Amigos del Otro Lado* (1993). **Faulkner**, **Lester, E. Martinez**, and **Morrison** are among those who have written children's books featuring folklore. **Robinson** contributed to the establishment of a folklore-based mentorship program for children at Mindbuilders in the Bronx.

Numerous BIPOC women ancestors conducted folklore studies. Intersectionality tells us that women's knowledges are not a monolith. While focusing on women's everyday lives, women's experiences are varied by the myriad synergies between race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, religion, age, and geography among other social identities. From their varied standpoints, they have fought against the synergies of patriarchy, sexism, and racism and created their own frameworks for expressing their knowledge. In *100 Years of American Folklore Society,* Kalčik noted scholarship *about* some BIPOC groups included in women's folklore studies (Kalčik 1988), but from the 19th century to 1988, the diverse scholarship of BIPOC women scholars talking about their own research and their communities was absent from both folklore curricula about women and the field in general.

Some more contemporary BIPOC women ancestors directly engaged feminist ideas in their research, while others documented the work and experiences of womanhood in their communities. As a contemporary of DuBois, **A.J. Cooper**—an ancestor scholar who theorized ethical social relations, race and gender domination, critiques of racial representation, social and economic oppression, radical approaches to education, and community advocacy—demonstrates new perspectives on these issues from her social and racial standpoint (Moody-Turner 2009). **Maxidiwiac**'s books about Hidatsa gardening traditions and **Fry**'s *Stitched from the Soul* (1989) offer studies of primarily women's work traditions. Contemporary scholars, Cantú and Nájera-Ramirez edited a groundbreaking anthology, *Chicana Traditions* (2002) that builds a solid foundation for Latinx women's folklore scholarship and Cotera offers insight into women ancestor scholars in *Native Speakers: Ella Deloria, Zora Neale Hurston and Jovita González and the Poetics of Culture* (2008). The BIPOC women ancestor scholars whose research is highlighted in this exhibit are: **Bailey**, **Clark**, **Cooper**, **Dunham**, **Fry**, **Forten Grimke**, **hooks**, **Freeney Harding**, **Higa**, **Hurston**, **B. Jones**, **Jones-Jackson**, **D. S. Lee**, **Lorde**, **Morgan**, **Muse**, **Primus**, **Robinson**, **Settle Egypt**, **Smart-**

Grosvenor, **Walker Alexander**, **Welsh** (African American); **Anzaldúa**, **Belpré**, **Cabeza de Baca Gilbert**, **Cabrera**, **Cadilla de Martínez**, **Martínez Jaramillo**, **Lucero-White Lea**, **Otero-Warren**, **Zamora O'Shea** (Latinx); **Maxidiwiac**, **Mourning Dove**, **Dauenhauer**, **Yellow Robe Frantz**, **Geniusz**, **Keewaydinoquay**, **E. Martinez**, **Zitkala-Ṡa** (Native American); **Anwar**, **Boggs**, **Cristoforo**, **Gamboa Fernandez**, **Higa**, **Houchins**, **Kochiyama**, **Leandicho Lopez**, **Mabalon**, **Mabalot**, **Okamoto Iwanaga**, **Sikoun** (Asian American); **Kawena Pūkuʻi**, **Liliʻuokulani**, **Nakuina** (Native Hawaiian); **Naff** (Arab American).

EMERGENT QUESTIONS FOR FOLKLORE STUDIES

Ideas emerging from these ancestors' professional experiences and community work challenge us to grapple with a number of questions for our field. Among them:

- Who has defined the field and how has this contributed to whose work and concepts are centered? Whose contributions have been overlooked, absent, unattributed, or misattributed?
- Which academic disciplines and sectors have been considered salient to the work of folklore?
- If we examine the concept of "folk" as an expression of domination from colonizing discourses, how has the concept of "folk" been socially constructed? In relation to what? Why are those who are labeled "folk" labeled in that way?
- How is the construction of humanity and citizenship related to the construction of folklore studies? Who is defined as part of humanity and as part of American culture? Who has been excluded?
- How have ideas of racism, classism, colonialism, and other systems of oppression been embedded into folklore studies?
- What cultural knowledges have folklore studies missed in neglecting the scholarship of these ancestors? What new concepts and insights can folklore studies gain from the perspectives of these marginalized scholars?
- How and in what ways has folklore studies perpetuated or countered stereotypes, invisibility, marginalization, and bias in how cultures are represented in theories, epistemologies, methodology,

documentation, and presentation practices? What role has and can activism for equity play in folklore studies?

- How have BIPOC communities and scholars responded to racism, classism, colonialism, and other forms of oppression through BIPOC folklore scholarship and praxes?
- What does an inclusive and equitable critical antiracist and decolonized folklore praxis look like?

ONGOING AND FUTURE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

There are many figures and content areas in need of further research that could contribute to deepening and diversifying the stories and perspectives representing BIPOC communities in the U.S.

- There is more scholarship to explore by ancestor scholars in East, South, and West Asian American, and Central and South American immigrant communities in the U.S. The recent scholarship of Juwen Zhang (2015), Fariha Khan (2019), Margaret Magot, Nancy Yan, Sojin Kim and others have begun to address the Asian American lacunae. Maria Herrera-Sobek, ed, *Celebrating Latino Folklore: An Encyclopedia of Cultural Traditions* (2012) as well as some of the public folklore work of Olivia Cadaval begin to fill the gap on Central Americans.
- We need greater knowledge about the research and epistemologies of Indigenous ancestor scholars across the continent**.**
- We have barely explored histories and traditions of labor and occupation as well as the material culture of BIPOC communities. **Siu's** *The Chinese Laundryman: A Study in Social Isolation* (1953/1988); **Smart-Grosvenor's** *Thursdays and Every Other Sunday Off* (1972) and N'Diaye's African American Crafts Initiative provide important foundations for this line of inquiry.
- We know too little about expressions of gender and sexual identities in ancestral BIPOC communities. Among the most outspoken BIPOC ancestor scholars theorizing about queer intersectional identities are: **Anzaldúa**, **Baldwin**, **hooks**, **Lorde**, **Riggs**. Thorne and de los Reyes (2021) have contributed new scholarship to this area. Among

the most outspoken ancestor scholars who theorize about BIPOC masculinities are: **Baldwin**, **Ellison**, **Gaines**, **Y. Lee**, **Murray, Riggs**. Current scholars Roberts (2010), Oforlea (2017) and Wilkins (2021) have expanded upon these perspectives. While more research has been conducted on women's gender studies than other areas of gender and sexual identity folklore, more intersectional studies of BIPOC women's folklore and feminist work are needed.

- We need more knowledge about BIPOC experiences of disability**.** Prahlad (2017) and May-Machunda (2021) have begun to explore the intersections of race and disability in folklore studies.

- To better understand religious and spiritual traditions and epistemologies outside of practices of mainstream Christianity, we should consider how BIPOC scholars have researched and interpreted ritual and vernacular material culture as well as the ways religious and spiritual traditions have been used for healing, resilience, and resistance. **Dunham** and **Yerby** researched religious practices in storefront churches and mosques during the Illinois Federal Writers' Project. **Dunham**, **Hurston**, and **Freeney Harding** each were initiated into Caribbean religions as part of their field research and wrote about aspects of the knowledge they gained. **V. Deloria** contrasts Native religions and Christian theology. **Geniusz's** book, *Plants Have So Much to Give Us, All We Have to Do is Ask* (2015) details some aspects of Anishinaabe spirituality that she learned from her mentor, **Keewaydinoquay** as well as on her own journey. **Anzaldúa**, **Freeney Harding** and **Welsh** join Native American communities in advocating for the significance of spirituality for communing with nonphysical dimensions of our world. Recently Solimar Otero (2020) has shed insight into the spirituality of Afro-Latinx communities in her new book.

- Furthermore, the ancestors featured in this exhibit may also lead us towards other scholars about whom we know too little or nothing at all—those people whose names we may not know, despite the fact that we have access to some of their research.

- Finally, since our communities live transnationally, we also need to continue to highlight the contributions of international scholar ancestors of color in folklore studies.

CONCLUSION

We must both listen to and understand how scholars and students from BIPOC communities conceive of folklore, and examine the social construction of folklore as an academic concept, in light of the diverse and sometimes contested understandings that it accrues. Many Indigenous and Latinx communities perceive the academic concept of folklore to be trivializing, negative, and dismissive of their epistemologies and worldviews as superstition and ignorance rather than as reflective of the truths of their experiences. Sharecropper's son **Richard Wright** (1941) also viewed folklore as cultural expressions distorted by oppression, arguing that it should be a remnant of a past that should be left behind for modernity and progress, yet some traditional genres influenced his writings. Nevertheless, folklore is at the heart of thriving BIPOC communities.

In this essay, I have introduced readers to some of the scholarship and perspectives of BIPOC ancestor folklorists of color and connected that scholarship to that of a few of their descendants—contemporary BIPOC scholars—who have expanded the legacies of this formidable archive. These ancestor scholars sought to guide their communities and the American mainstream to attain cultural and historical literacies through folklore studies and to share their wealth of epistemologies, interpretative frameworks and insights that extend from their lived experiences with and despite racism, racialization, and colonialism. We believe this knowledge is vital for folklore studies.

Go online to read the brief but illuminating biographies of these ancestors and explore their substantial scholarship through the accompanying bibliographies that we have compiled. We hope their work will stimulate new, important, and critical conversations in folklore studies, introduce new paradigms and questions, and reframe what we, as folklorists, think about our relationships with and accountabilities to BIPOC scholars and communities.

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NOTES

1 ***BIPOC*** *i*s a contested concept, as most racial group labels are. As a term of coalition among racial groups, arising from youth on the East Coast around 2013, it is designed to recognize differential experiences of the commonalities of systemic racism in the US across racial groups. Acknowledging the harm that persons of color experience on the targeted side of the racial hierarchy, it foregrounds the fundamental racial constructs that have most intensively harmed Black people (based in forced migration/slavery/labor and economic exploitation) and Indigenous people (based in land dispossession and colonialism) over centuries. It recognizes that the systemic racism constructs experienced by other groups of color (POC) have borrowed and combined strategies from each of these foundational racial constructs but have tended to be applied less encompassingly, less consistently, less intensely and/or in less sustained ways. For all groups, cultural racism has been a key component of systemic oppression, including the banning and destruction of languages and cultural traditions, the criminalization of religious practices, the distortion of cultural imagery and practices as inferior, primitive, ignorant, savage or not fully human, and the trivialization, misrepresentation, and erasure of the group's histories, values, epistemologies, and knowledges.

2 ***Ancestors*** are venerated deceased family members in many cultures. In those cultures, through practices of invocation and remembrance, ancestors can provide mediatory access to spiritual guidance, power, protection, as well as lines of genealogical connection to the living. In this vein, the *Notable Folklorists of Color* exhibitions acknowledge and remember our BIPOC ancestor scholars for their scholarship that contributes to folklore studies, their dedication to examining and preserving the cultural knowledge of their communities, and for their persistent resistance to racism and colonialism. **Ancestor names are bolded throughout this article.** Other cited names are scholars still among the living at time of publication.

3 ***Intersectionality*** is a qualitative analytic framework developed in the late 20th century by Black feminists that identifies how interlocking systems of power impact those who are most marginalized in society in a synergistic way, rather than separately. Building on the ideas of the Combahee River Collective (1977), law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw first coined the term in 1989 (B. Cooper 2016). Patricia Hill Collins (1990) traced the roots of similar concepts to **Anna Julia Cooper** and Ida B. Wells and expanded the use of the term beyond the legal arena and to other communities of color. It is a concept designed to make visible dynamics and traditional practices overlooked in academic scholarship that distinguish the experiences of people of color from those on the privileged side of the hierarchies of racism, sexism, and other systems of oppression.

4 Former AFS President John Roberts (1993: 157) noted that African American folklore studies commonly did not recognize diverse African American communities and lacked knowledge of the diversity of their traditions.

5 Racial labels are fluid sites of contestation. In this essay I have chosen to capitalize Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Asian Americans as names for groups whose diverse cultures were forged into pan-group ethnic identities imposed on them through the costs of racism and colonialism. The members within these groups share histories, key culture practices, experiences, knowledges, worldviews, and sometimes languages, borne out of common experiences of oppression while also recognizing the cultural distinctions within their melded groups. Capitalization of these group names has become common practice in scholarship and journalism because of their cultural dimensions. *White people* is a term constructed as a racial category designated to denote having access to traditions of privilege, domination, and white supremacy by virtue of having white skin. Unlike for peoples of color, being white is not an ethnicity and is not based in a common ethnic culture forged out of oppression. By choice, white people can claim or not claim

their diverse cultural heritages. While some style manuals enact an equivalency by capitalizing white to match Black or Indigenous, I choose to leave white in lower case because it does not designate a culture in the ways that Black and Indigenous do and thus is not a label holding an equivalent valence, culturally.

6 Although AFS founder Boas is recognized for his progressive stances against scientific racialism before 1930, some scholars suggest he also held paradoxical stances toward peoples of color (Williams 1996).

7 ***Invisibilized*** is a term devised by Brenda Dixon Gottschild (1996) to refer to being made invisible or not recognized by processes of colonialism and racism.

8 Folklorist Patricia A. Turner was a key scholar featured in *Ethnic Notions*.

9 The Native American interlocutors section of this paper was co-written with Wendy Makoons Geniusz.

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