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## Beyond Négritude: Black cultural citizenship and the Arab question in FESTAC 77

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When Nigeria hosted the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC 77) to celebrate the cultural foundations of the ‘Black and African World’, it was fashioned after Senghor’s festival mondial des arts nègres (FESMAN 66) held in Dakar 11 years earlier. What began as an alliance between festival co-patrons, however, soon developed into a divisive debate over the meanings and horizons of black cultural citizenship. At issue were competing Afrocentric frameworks that clashed over the North African or ‘Arab’ question. Should North Africans fully participate, as Lt-Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo maintained, or should they merely observe as second-class citizens, as Leopold Sédar Senghor resolutely insisted? If Nigeria’s expansive and inclusive vision of blackness was motivated and underwritten by its enormous oil wealth, Senghor refused to compromise his position, precipitating a face-off that ultimately lowered Senegal’s prestige. To understand why North Africa became the focus of these competing definitions of blackness, we turn to the 1969 Pan-African Cultural Festival in Algiers, where Négritude was disclaimed as counter-revolutionary. Placed within a genealogy of postcolonial Afrocentric festivals, the struggle over North Africa in FESTAC 77 shows that the political stakes of black cultural citizenship were neither trivial nor ephemeral, but emerged within a transnational field of symbolic capital accumulation.

**Keywords:** African festivals; citizenship; Black power; Négritude

At the core of the analytic apparatus on which black cultural citizenship gains its force is the reality that there are spaces of cultural production that are not dependent on the regulatory role of the state  
.... –

Kamari M. Clarke

When Nigeria hosted the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC 77) to celebrate the cultural foundations of the ‘Black and African World’, it was fashioned after *Le festival mondial des arts nègres* (FESMAN 66) held in Dakar 11 years earlier. Like its predecessor, FESTAC featured the dance, drama, music, arts, and philosophical legacies of a precolonial African heritage that was regimented by opening and closing ceremonies and exalted as a framework for black nationhood and modernity. And if FESTAC was planned on a far grander scale, funded by the windfalls of a rising petro-state, its kinship with FESMAN was further solidified between both heads of state, who would serve together as co-patrons of Nigeria’s cultural extravaganza.<sup>1</sup> What began as a diarchic alliance, however, soon devolved into a divisive debate over the meanings and horizons of black cultural citizenship. At issue were competing Afrocentric

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frameworks that clashed over the North African or ‘Arab’ question. Should North Africans fully participate, as Lt-Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo maintained, or should they merely observe as second-class citizens, as Leopold Sédar Senghor resolutely insisted? If Nigeria’s expansive and inclusive vision of blackness was motivated and underwritten by its enormous oil wealth, Senghor refused to compromise his position, precipitating a face-off that ultimately lowered Senegal’s prestige.

To understand why North Africa became the focus of these competing definitions of blackness, I turn to the 1969 Pan-African Cultural Festival in Algiers, where *Négritude* was disclaimed as counter-revolutionary. Placed within a *genealogy* of postcolonial Afrocentric festivals, the struggle over North Africa in FESTAC 77 shows that the political stakes of black cultural citizenship were neither trivial nor ephemeral, but emerged within a transnational *festival field* of cultural spectacle, racial politics and symbolic capital accumulation.<sup>2</sup> As we shall see, our focus on post-colonial festivals in Africa as primary objects of study ‘in themselves’ rather than as secondary reflections of ‘external’ realities de-centres the state as the locus of citizenship while foregrounding the performative and embodied conditions of its genesis.

### *Le divorce*

I first encountered the ideological fracas between Senghor and Obasanjo over ‘the Arab question’ during my archival research for *The Pan-African Nation: Oil and the Spectacle of Culture in Nigeria*, a study of the paradoxes of oil-prosperity through FESTAC’s mirror of cultural production (Apter 2005).<sup>3</sup> Interested in how oil-capitalism generated the illusion of development by masking an inverted system of deficit-production, I understood the conflict between both leaders in geopolitical terms, when an oil-rich Nigeria displaced Senegal as West Africa’s regional powerhouse by assuming leadership of the Economic Organization of West African States (ECOWAS) and by remodelling the global horizons of blackness.<sup>4</sup> Bolstered by oil and its global commodity flows, if FESTAC was for ‘black people’, it was also ‘for everybody’, as proclaimed on the airways by the jùjú musician and superstar King Sunny Adé. As far as Nigeria was concerned, *Négritude*, like its founding father, was falling out of touch with the changing fortunes and tempos of the times.

Housed in the Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC) within Nigeria’s National Theatre (built specifically for FESTAC), the International Festival Committee (IFC) papers run from the first planning meeting in October 1972 until the concluding session in February 1977, documenting a fascinating trajectory of changing plans and committee debates among FESTAC’s zonal representatives. Problems with ‘Arab’ festival participation first appear in the minutes of the 7th IFC meeting of 29 November–3 December 1975:

At the current meeting of the International Festival Committee, one of the 16 zones, which is the West African Francophone Zone (1) headed by Senegal, has been spear-heading a move to exclude the North African countries from fully participating in the Festival, contrary to the decisions of the International Festival Committee. The Zonal Vice-President, Mr. Alioune Sène, the Senegalese Minister of Culture, has gone as far as to threaten that Senegal will not participate in the festival, if the Colloquium, which is the heart of the Festival, is not restricted to Black countries and communities. This in effect means that Senegal is trying to exclude North Africa from fully participating in the Festival.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, Senegal initiated the opening challenge to the ‘Arab countries’ of the North Africa Zone, whose presence at the FESTAC Colloquium – on the theme of Black Civilization and Education – it would only authorize as ‘non-participating observers’ who could listen but not speak, and who would be barred from submitting papers. The Nigerian response was swift and decisive, issued from the then Head of State, Brigadier Murtala Muhammed

(before his assassination three months later), stating that such discriminatory nonsense would not be tolerated:

While the Federal Military Government would not like any African country or Black community to withdraw from the Festival, it wishes to affirm unequivocally the basis on which it originally accepted to host the festival; that is, full participation by all member states of the Organization of African Unity, Black Governments and Communities Outside Africa and Liberation Movements recognized by the OAU.<sup>6</sup>

Speaking for the festival at large, and the international community of participating states and communities, Nigeria asserted sovereign authority over an emerging body of black and African zones which both included and cross-cut independent nation states according to membership in FESTAC itself. These included all member states of the Organization of African Unity (OAU); liberation movements such as South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) in what is now Namibia, and the African National Congress (ANC) under apartheid South Africa; and those black communities in North America, Europe, and even Papua New Guinea which comprised 'nations within nations'.<sup>7</sup> Within such expansive black cultural horizons, North Africans would enjoy full citizenship rights.

Indeed, hosted by Nigeria and remapping the African diaspora, FESTAC had the trappings of a Pan-African nation, with its own emblem, flag, stamps, secretariat, and identity cards for registered participants that served as passports for entry into FESTAC Village. Breaking from the strictures of *Négritude* and its 'Negro-African' sub-Saharan focus, a new definition of black cultural citizenship accompanied a new black world order animated by oil. For participating black communities and liberation movements, black cultural citizenship in FESTAC trumped national citizenship. Senegal's call for limited North African participation was not merely seen as divisive and discriminatory, but as a form of second-class citizenship, ironically reproducing the very form of disenfranchisement that Senghor and his black confrères experienced in interwar Paris (Wilder 2005). Vilifications of Senegal and its doctrinal leadership soon erupted into Nigeria's popular press. Commander O. P. Fingsi, the Nigerian president of the IFC, was widely quoted that 'if the North African countries should be barred from the colloquium on the ground of the colour of their skin, it would amount to racial bigotry in the most nauseating sense'.<sup>8</sup> Andrew Aba wrote in the *Sunday Standard*, 'Today I want to hammer down the nail on the lid of the dead orphan called *Négritude*', adding that its 'masks, rivers, tam-tams, erect breasts, bamboo huts, black Madonnas and swinging buttocks are no use in present-day Africa, if we are to survive the world's technological culture'.<sup>9</sup> One editorial diatribe against 'the Black Frenchman' exclaimed that '*Négritude* is the whiteman's Trojan horse to African culture; Senghor and his French masters should be ignored'.<sup>10</sup> More sober protestations against Senegal's position appealed to North African linguistic and cultural inroads into so much of Sub-Saharan Africa, manifest in Islam, Swahili, the Tuaregs of Mauretania and Mali, the Fulbe/Peul/Fulani societies across the Northern Sahel, and all manner of historico-cultural crossings, inspiring one editorial call for 'our intellectuals [to] take up the challenge posed by the bluffing Senegal'.<sup>11</sup> Senegal had a few allies in its dogmatic stand against non-black participation in the Colloquium, such as Ivory Coast, but support hardly followed along francophone lines. Adding to the developing fault line, Guinean president Sékou Touré promised a counter-boycott 'if Senegal was allowed to have its way'.<sup>12</sup>

By 27 May 1976, with Olusegun Obasanjo newly installed as Nigeria's Head of State, the crisis reached a breaking point when Senegal announced its withdrawal from FESTAC, invoking the 'cultural' boundaries of blackness in opposing 'Arab' participation in the Colloquium. In the words of Alioune Sène, who as Senegal's Minister of Culture also doubled as vice-president of FESTAC's Francophone Zone, 'Arab culture is different from that of the black community and they would have nothing to offer us in that aspect'.<sup>13</sup> Nigeria responded by reaffirming its

commitment to full participation for all OAU member states, and retaliated by removing Alioune Diop from his position as Secretary General of the IFC, stating conflicts of interest that shed further light on the lineaments of black cultural citizenship. Addressing the ninth official meeting of the IFC, Commander O. P. Fingsi explained:

The Secretary-General, in the person of Alioune Diop, had to be relieved of his duties following the confirmation that the Senegalese Government had taken the definitive decision to boycott the Festival ... That decision of the Senegalese Government ... did consequently compromise the position of Dr. Alioune Diop, *who is a Senegalese citizen*, as well as the Secretary General of the International Festival Committee. It must be emphasized that the move to relieve Dr. Alioune Diop of his responsibility as the Secretary General of the IFC was in no way a direct personal affront to him. It was a decision that had to be made purely on issues of principles as well as pragmatic realities.<sup>14</sup> (my emphasis)

What stands out in this measured proclamation is how Diop's Senegalese citizenship became a political liability for the greater good of FESTAC's sovereignty, necessitating his removal by virtue of a higher authority that controlled access to an emerging Pan-African nation.<sup>15</sup> For Diop, FESTAC's black cultural citizenship trumped Senegalese citizenship and the political community to which it was wedded. Diop was replaced by Cameroon's more compliant Ambroise Mbida as the new IFC Secretary General, after the entire Colloquium committee was reorganized to gain further control over its francophone members.<sup>16</sup>

By 26 August 1976, a peace between Nigeria and Senegal was brokered, and Senegal rejoined FESTAC, albeit with diminished responsibilities and wounded pride as Senghor's co-patronage was permanently rescinded. Wole Soyinka played an important role in establishing a '*compromis dynamique*' between what the press described as Senegal's philosophical principles and FESTAC's political and practical imperatives, heralding the rapprochement as a victory in African diplomacy 'in keeping with the true spirit of African brotherhood and unity'.<sup>17</sup> Even if it was too late to reinstate Alioune Diop as Secretary-General of the IFC because his successor had already been installed, Senegal re-entered the comity of black nations with its FESTAC citizenship fully restored. But the question remains, why all the *Sturm und Drang*? Why did Senegal put so much on the line when it marginalized North Africans and waged its boycott? What was at stake over 'Arab' participation in the Colloquium, and why was Senegal so adamant in its racist refusals? It was Dr. Garba Ashiwaju, Chairman of FESTAC's National Participation Committee, who identified the root cause of Senghor's animus in the First Pan-African Cultural Festival hosted by Algiers from 21 July to 1 August 1969.<sup>18</sup> The festival is worth revisiting not only for the Fanonian model of revolutionary culture which it promoted (Fanon 1965), contrasting with *Négritude*'s cultural conservatism, but also for the more militant contours of black cultural citizenship that it brought into focus.

### The battle of Algiers

When the OAU hosted the First Pan-African Cultural Festival from 21 July to 1 August 1969, liberation movements in Angola, Mozambique and Rhodesia were in full swing, while the SWAPO-led Namibia was still occupied by South Africa, representing struggles for national self-determination further fuelled by the Cold War superpowers vying for influence throughout the continent. A related shift in African socialist paradigms was also occurring – in many ways articulated by the Algiers festival itself – whereby the first wave of populist socialism of the late 1950s and 1960s, modelled on the socialist communalism of 'traditional' Africa societies, was followed by a second wave of more militant regimes that would seize control in the 1970s, embracing scientific socialism with its Vanguard Party while renouncing the false consciousness of traditional culture (Apter 2008). It is hardly surprising that a more revolutionary definition of African culture was on the Algiers agenda, with its Symposium theme addressing 'The Role of

African Culture in the Struggle of Liberation and African Unity'.<sup>19</sup> Nor is it surprising that it was in this venue – evoking the Algerian revolution and the critical spirit of Franz Fanon – that Senghor's philosophy of *Négritude* was so vociferously denounced.

Tensions within the Symposium began with the discursive restrictions that insulated official representatives from popular critique. Presentations during the plenary sessions were limited to the heads of national delegations, none of whom 'could be answered from the floor' (Lindfors 1970, 5). During the break-up sessions on substantive themes, journalists and 'uninvited foreign observers' were kept out of the conference rooms, sequestering dissenting views from public dissemination. It was under such conditions of 'systematically distorted communication', appropriate for the monopoly of a vanguard party line, that the assault against *Négritude* gained declamatory momentum.<sup>20</sup> Guinea opened the charge at the first plenary session with a 40-minute recorded message by Sékou Touré, stating that 'there is no black culture, white culture, yellow culture ... *Négritude* is thus a false concept, an irrational weapon encouraging the irrationality of based on racial discrimination, arbitrarily exercised upon the peoples of Africa, Asia, and upon men of colour in America and Europe', a theme amplified by Mamadi Keita, the head of the Guinean delegation:

Holy *Négritude*, be it Arab-Berber or Ethiopian-Bantu is an ideology auxiliary to the general imperialist ideology. The Master transforms his slave into a Negro whom he defines as being without reason, subhuman, and the embittered slave then protests: As you are Reason, I am Emotion and I take this upon myself ... The Master assumes his preeminence, and the Slave his servitude, but the latter claims his right to weep, a right that the Master grants him ... One easily understands why the imperialist propaganda system goes to such trouble to spread the comforting concept of *Négritude*. *Négritude* is actually a good mystifying anaesthetic for Negroes who have been whipped too long and too severely to a point where they lost all reason and become purely emotional. (Lindfors 1970, 5)

*Négritude* has long been criticized for reproducing the formal oppositions of colonial discourse if revaluing their meanings to celebrate African cultural agency, but the progressive dimensions of the movement and its contributions to black nationalist politics were given short shrift if acknowledged at all.<sup>21</sup> Henri Lopès of Congo-Brazzaville decried 'the pigmentary belt' imposed by *Négritude* across the African continent, while Paul Zanga of what was then Congo-Kinshasa found the doctrine 'out of date as an historic movement', recognizing its former importance and 'the need to transcend it' (Lindfors 1970, 6). Wabu Baker Osman of Sudan joined the fray, voicing his criticism in Arabic of a racial philosophy that could only 'serve the interests of the colonialists who have worked for two centuries to characterize people of different continents according to racial criteria' (Lindfors 1970, 6). But Dahomey's Stanislas Adotevi delivered the final of *coup de grâce* in his concluding remarks of the final plenary session. Denouncing *Négritude* as a reactionary 'mysticism' that impeded the progress of African development, Adotevi identified a fundamental flaw in its recuperative approach to African socialism, one that looked back to a traditional past rather than forward towards the African revolution: '*Négritude*, by pretending that socialism already existed in traditional communities and that it would be sufficient to follow African traditions to arrive at an authentic socialism, deliberately camouflaged the truth and thus became ripe for destruction' (Lindfors 1970, 6). Thus, Adotevi's attack went beyond the 'spirit' of *Négritude* to negate the central proposition of its socialist humanism.<sup>22</sup>

Needless to say, the battle over *Négritude* was not just one of words, but of spaces from which to speak. Responding to Adotevi, Senegal's Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport, Amadou Mahtar M'Bow attempted to defend *Négritude* in more nuanced and dialectical terms – re-emphasizing the 'symbiosis' and shared cultural base between '*Arabo-berbères et Nègro-africaines*' while quoting Lenin on the necessity of recognizing cultural specificity in the USSR – but the damage was done.<sup>23</sup> Lindfors (1970, 6–7) reported that other Senegalese delegates such as Alasane N'Daw and Lamine Niang contributed papers quoting liberally from Senghor, which were



distributed but not read. In effect, the discursive deck was stacked from the start. The *négritudistes* were largely excluded from the discussion, present more as observers than full-fledged participants.<sup>24</sup> Placed in the broader festival contexts of FESMAN 66 and Algiers 1969, Senghor's opposition to 'Arabs' in the FESTAC Colloquium was retaliatory, giving the North Africans a taste of their own medicine while restoring his doctrine to the Pan-African stage.<sup>25</sup>

It would be a mistake, however, to reduce 'the Arab Question' to a bruised ego and vindictive personality. Such motivating factors may help explain why Senghor put his reputation on the line at FESTAC 77, but do little to illuminate the contours and characteristics of a *transnational form* of black cultural citizenship that was emerging not only within these festivals, but also between them, over space and time. One characteristic clearly apparent in the doctrinal debates over *Négritude's* purview, as they contested the limits of the 'Negro-African' world, highlights an important semantic slippage between race and culture in which the diagnostics of phenotype were never fully eliminated. Both the critics in Algiers and in Nigeria's FESTAC assailed the race-based exclusions of *Négritude's* blackness, declaimed (as we have seen above) as 'a pigmentary belt', a colonialist delusion, and after Senghor's attempted ban of North Africans from the FESTAC Colloquium, 'racial bigotry in the most nauseating sense'. To be fair, Senghor's doctrine is far more complex and humanistic than such dismissive attacks suggest, emplotting a dialectical movement of opposition and synthesis that sought nothing less than the 'civilization of the universal' in its politico-philosophical telos (Senghor 1971). And yet, it was precisely such '*racisme antiraciste*', so termed by Jean-Paul Sartre (1948, xiv) in his preface to Senghor's edited *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache*, glossing a self-negating racism destined to achieve its own transcendence, that nonetheless persists and lingers despite the most adamant culturalist disavowals, a theme rigorously pursued by Gilroy (2000) and reworked more recently by Mbembe (2013).<sup>26</sup> The lurking racial essentialism within *Négritude's* blackness, and its associated forms of black cultural citizenship, can be philosophically negated, officially rejected, but never fully eliminated or transcended because it persists, not as a relic of racism, but as the historical condition of its possibility. Such finer distinctions, however, fell on deaf ears at the more militant Algiers festival, which forged a high-profile alliance with the Black Panther Party and a cultural politics of what Meghelli has called 'transnational solidarity' (2009).

### 'All power to the people'

Not that Algiers subordinated cultural spectacle to realpolitik. Cultural affinities uniting Africans and their overseas descendants were celebrated and elevated in dance, music and drama, as when jazz legend Archie Shepp invited some Tuareg musicians to jam during one his sets, providing 'living proof' for poet Ted Joans 'of jazz still being an African music', while reaffirming Miriam Makeba's pronouncement that 'We are all Africans, some are scattered around the world living in different environments, but we all remain black inside.'<sup>27</sup> But black culture in Algiers was forward-looking and revolutionary, unified and motivated by the shared struggle against Euro-American racism and imperialism – bringing French colonialism and American segregation (with its associated prison-industrial complex) within the same oppositional battlefield.<sup>28</sup> And it was here, within the festival's transnational community that a distinctive form of black citizenship emerged, based not only *contra* hegemonic racial orders, but also 'positively', on inclusive rights of political recognition that took precedence over the sovereign authority of western nation-states. In this context, the presence of the Panthers in Algiers posed more than an embarrassment for the US government, but ramped up their struggle to international proportions. The Algerians built a new, two-story Afro-American Information Center which was lavishly stocked with Black Panther pamphlets and posters, where the invited Panther delegation held court

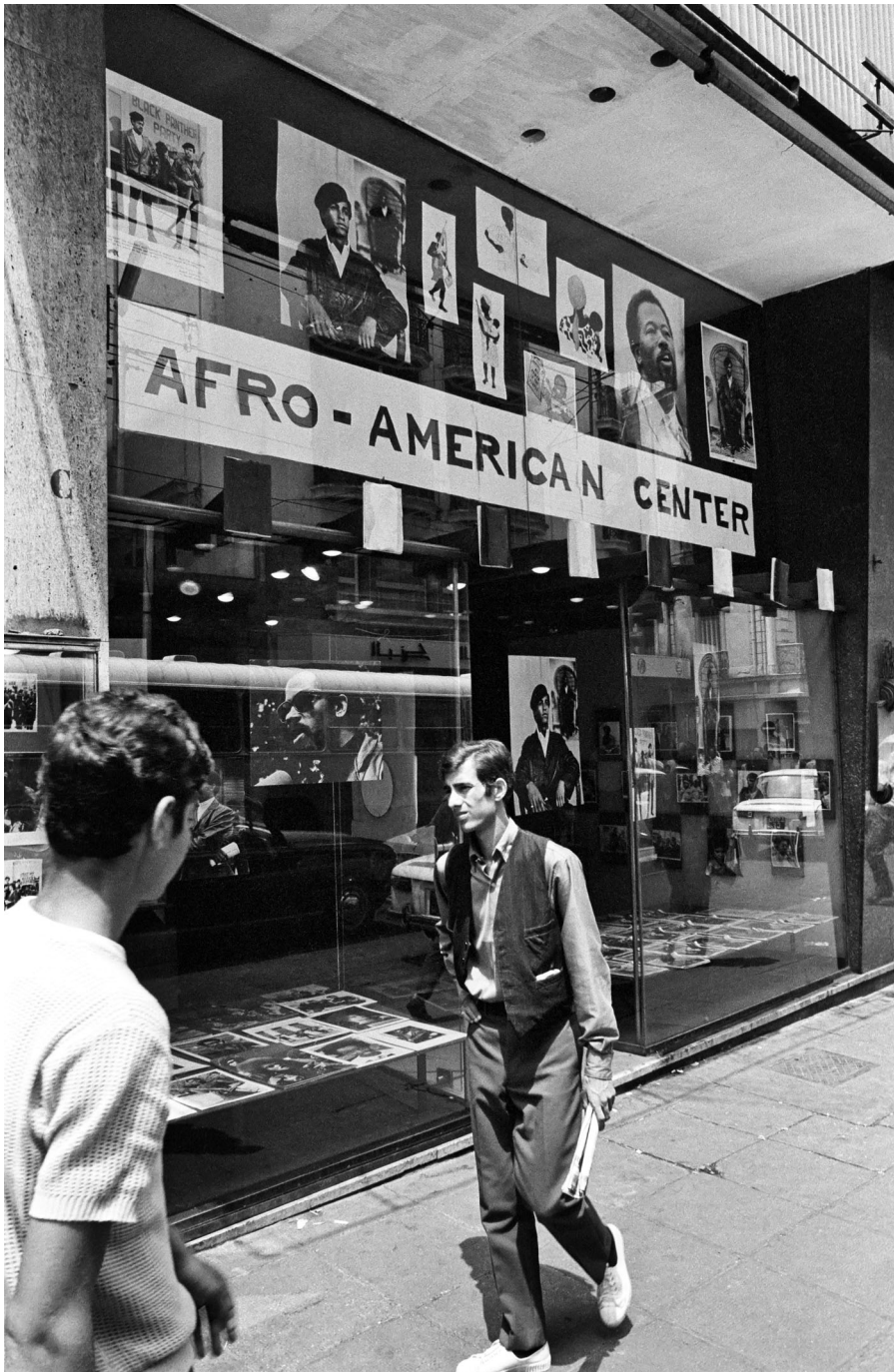


Figure 1. Afro-American Information Center, Algiers, 1969.  
Source: Robert Woods.

(Figure 1). These included none other than Information Minister Eldridge Cleaver, arriving after eight months of exile from the United States via Cuba, together with his wife Kathleen Cleaver,



who was the party's Communications and Press Secretary; Emory Douglas, who served as Cultural Minister; and the party's Chief of Staff, David Hilliard.

Articles in the party's newspaper, *The Black Panther*, illuminate the multiple meanings and dimensions of black citizenship as it intersected with conflicts in the United States, the Middle East, and with liberation struggles throughout Africa.<sup>29</sup> Eldridge Cleaver was initially welcomed in Algiers by supportive crowds shouting 'Power to the People' and 'Al Fatah will win', explicitly identifying the black struggle in America with the plight of Palestinians after the Six Day War of 1967, together with Yasar Arafat's Palestine National Liberation Front, the insurgent wing of the PLO. Standing next to an unnamed Al Fatah official, Cleaver proclaimed that although 'we recognize that the Jewish people have suffered', nonetheless 'the United States uses the Zionist regime that usurped the land of the Palestinian people as a puppet and pawn'.<sup>30</sup> The Panthers' solidarity with Palestinian refugees expressed a shared experience of discrimination and disenfranchisement, a denial of full citizenship within the United States and Israel that brought both struggles together. Indeed, *The Black Panther* featured full articles on Al Fatah and its calls for armed resistance and radical change, honouring heroes of the revolution like Ribhi Mohammad and William Najib Nassar, who made the ultimate sacrifice. But if Cleaver's solidarity with liberation movements in Africa and the Middle East resonated with the radicalizing directives of the OAU, it was the latter's recognition of the Black Panther Party as the revolutionary vanguard in the United States which empowered Cleaver and his comrades.

In a press conference called by Panther Chairman, Bobby Seale, and Chief of Staff, David Hilliard, who had recently returned from Algiers, the take away from the festival was all about Eldridge. When asked about the festival, Hilliard replied:

The only report that I have to bring back to Black people in particular and to the American people in general is Eldridge's wish to return to America ... Eldridge has stated that he would return today, if he could have his day in court. So that I am here, along with Bobby and the Black Panther Party nationally to create some machinery in order to bring Eldridge back to America, because this is where he prefers to struggle.<sup>31</sup>

Emerging out of a flurry of questions as to whether they were working on a deal ('No'), whether Eldridge trusted the courts, and when in fact he might be expected to return, were the Panthers' concerns with due process and citizenship. On the question of Cleaver's imminent return, Hilliard explained:

Well, that's dependent upon the actions of the mayor of San Francisco in offering Eldridge protection, *as he would any other citizen*, and also the actions and attitudes of the governor of California, – if they're willing to cooperate in terms of letting Eldridge return and have his regular appearances in court, then he'll return today.<sup>32</sup>

Needless to say, Cleaver would be expelled from the Party in 1971, and would not return to the United States until 1975, where he did serve an eight-month prison sentence. But the Algiers festival revealed the vulnerabilities of his citizenship, both at home and abroad, bringing significant political calculations into play. The Party framed the need for adequate city and state protection as the right of any ordinary citizen, not only for an exiled fugitive of justice who found temporary asylum in Cuba, but for all black people who were taking up arms to protect themselves against the police, or 'fascist pigs'. Moreover, Eldridge's tenuous citizenship at home – where his assets were seized as a 'designated national' of Cuba – was balanced against different ambiguities in Algeria. When asked if Eldridge would remain in Algeria, Hilliard replied:

That's not clear, you know. I don't know how permanent it is. We were only offered that center in Algeria and that we were invited there only for the cultural festival and when that's ended, I don't know what's going to happen. I'm not sure.<sup>33</sup>

Hilliard's uncertainty reflects the ephemeral character of Cleaver's cultural citizenship in Algeria, circumscribed in space and time by the parameters of the festival itself. The Panther's did not know if Cleaver would be allowed to remain in the country after the celebration ended and the guests went home. If Cleaver's citizenship was activated throughout the festival, would his political welcome extend post festum?<sup>34</sup>

The question is bigger than Cleaver himself because it addresses the shifting and permeable boundaries between ideology, rhetoric, and realpolitik. If, as I have argued, black cultural citizenship was a significant political status worth fighting over in the festivals of Dakar, Algiers, and Lagos, then how did it resonate beyond the festivals themselves, with broader struggles for liberation and recognition? To address this concluding question, we reframe conventional distinctions between transnational festivals and nation states, between the performance and institutionalization of what is called citizenship.

## Conclusion

We have seen how Senghor's humiliation in Algiers struck a serious blow, not to be easily forgiven in FESTAC 77, even if it was French West and Central Africans rather than North Africans as such who had voiced the most vicious criticisms of *Négritude*. But beyond the politics of Afrocentric principles and doctrines are the forms and modalities of black cultural citizenship which these discourses of Africanity framed, generated and promoted. Returning to 'le divorce' between Senghor and Obasanjo, how are we to understand the meaning of black and African citizenship in the context of FESTAC 77, and the problematic status of North African ('Arab') participation?

First, we have located FESTAC's black citizenship within the Pan-African nation that Nigeria produced from 15 January to 12 February 1977; replete with its secretariat, employees, security forces, FESTAC village, food distribution system, transportation system, identity cards, and sovereign territories based in Lagos and Kaduna, represented by the FESTAC logo and flag. Hosted, administered and financed by Nigeria, FESTAC's 'Black and African World' was national in form, imperial in scope, and self-actualizing in its capacity to become a transnational sovereign entity. Clearly for Senghor, the North African delegation at FESTAC was at best entitled to a form of second-class citizenship, as observers but not participants in the FESTAC Colloquium. Had Senghor succeeded, they would have been barred from negotiating the ideological horizons of the Black and African World. That Senghor failed, and suffered a loss of both personal and national prestige, proves that *within the context of FESTAC itself*, black cultural citizenship was a highly valued form of political capital – not a secondary representation of national citizenship but a recognized form of entitlement *sui generis*. Indeed, it was within FESTAC's political community that Senegalese citizenship became a political liability for Alioune Diop, who was relieved of his post as Secretary General of the IFC.

Second, we have located FESTAC 77 within a genealogy of Afrocentric festivals that developed institutional frameworks and networks of participation over time, even as these shifted, conjoined and sometimes split apart. Senghor's initial status as FESTAC co-patron derived from his inaugural role in hosting the *Dakar Festival mondial des arts nègres* in 1966, establishing something of a blueprint for postcolonial celebrations to follow, although hotly contested by the 1969 Pan-African Festival in Algiers and its more revolutionary model of national culture. It is highly significant that Senghor's campaign against the North Africans in FESTAC revisited the attacks against *Négritude* in Algiers, and therefore only makes sense in relation to prior festival colloquia and participatory frameworks. In this sense, the cultural battle of Algiers carried over to the Senegalese fracas in Lagos, revealing how FESTAC's black cultural citizenship was partially embedded in prior festivals.

Third, we have related the citizenship of festivals to its cognate forms within the states, communities and liberation movements of its participants. By recognizing black cultural citizens within non-black states like the United States, Canada, and Apartheid South Africa, *without recognizing the states themselves*, FESTAC constituted a de facto black empire that cut across the global colonial and neo-colonial order. This aspect of what Holston (2008) calls ‘insurgent citizenship’ – establishing transnational solidarity between the racially disenfranchised and dispossessed – was epitomized by the prominence of the Black Panthers in Algiers, whose militant fight against white power at home resonated with the Palestinian struggle, the liberation movements in Africa, and a new wave of revolutionary socialist regimes embraced by the OAU. For Eldridge Cleaver, living in exile, black cultural citizenship was eminently personal, a matter of freedom and incarceration if not life and death. Granted ‘festival’ citizenship and sanctuary in Algiers, where his longer term prospects remained uncertain, we saw how his negotiations to return to America focused on the concrete protections of full citizenship at home.

Finally, the manifold dimensions of black cultural citizenship exposed by ‘*le divorce*’ and ‘the battle of Algiers’ reveal complex pathways and fluid boundaries between the politics of festivals and nation states.<sup>35</sup> Conventional approaches to world’s fairs and cultural festivals cast them as dramatic forms of colonial and postcolonial theatre, representing ‘real’ countries, cultures and political projects in ‘secondary’ symbolic performances and displays. From this perspective, delegations represent actual states and communities in symbolic terms, as simulations or artistic expressions of the larger world beyond. The lessons of FESTAC suggest an alternative approach which destabilizes the ontological distinction between real world and staged representation, according what Bennett (1996) calls the ‘exhibitionary complex’ a primary status in structuring political entities and projects. If from the first perspective, cultural citizenship within a black world’s fair is a secondary representation of ‘real’ national citizenship, from the second perspective, treating the festival as a socio-political entity *sui generis*, its endogenous forms of citizenship and recognition are real unto themselves. Black cultural citizenship within Afrocentric festivals is not a simulacrum of an external reality, but occupies a place within that reality – not only of recognized rights and duties, but also of violence and utopian possibilities. If such an approach seems far-fetched and counter-intuitive, perhaps we should return to the French Revolution, and – as Mona Ozouf (1988) has so brilliantly revealed – the birth of modern European citizenship through its choreographed festivals.

### Disclosure statement

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### Notes

1. Recent innovative work on FESMAN includes McMahon (2014) and Wofford (2009).
2. These interconnected dimensions of festivals as linked transnational communities of cultural production overlap with similar frameworks in film studies such as ‘a parliament of national cinemas’ discussed by Elsaesser (2005, 88.). See also Dovey (2015) for the dynamic networks and global communities of African film festivals on the continent and beyond, including the influences of the Dakar and Algiers festivals on FESPACO, the international film festival in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. The status of film at the Dakar, Algiers and Lagos festivals raises important issues I have been unable to pursue – particularly in Algiers, where a distinctive style of ‘Third’ and ‘Third World’ cinema achieved its ‘combative phase’ (Gabriel 1982) in the service of socialist revolution. For a discussion of film in the local press during the Algiers festival, see ‘Le cinema africain sur le chemin de sa liberté.’ *El Moudjahid*, July 21, p. 5.
3. Developed as a case study of FESTAC 77, I document the production of black cultural tradition in a variety of festival events and displays to illuminate two related historical trajectories; the nationalization

of colonial culture under the sign of precolonial tradition, and the commodification of cultural value by the oil boom of the 1970s. Both trajectories, and their concomitant forms of erasure, highlight the symbolic foundations of an oil economy – and its mystifying forms of commodity fetishism – that masked deficit production beneath the illusory signs of development and prosperity.

4. Comparative approaches to ‘global blackness’ include Thomas (2004), Clarke and Thomas (2006), who frame a ‘macroanalytics of racialization’, and most recently, Pierre (2013). See also Thomas (2011) for an extended explication of ‘embodied citizenship’ in relation to race, gender and sexuality, and Castor (2013) for a discussion of ‘differentiated’ black cultural citizenship in relation to multiculturalism.
5. IFC VII/127/press release, CBAAC.
6. IFC VII/127/item 10, CBAAC.
7. North America Zone Report for the 7th Meeting of the IFC. IFC/VII, CBAAC.
8. See, for example, ‘FESTAC: Fingsi Clears the Air.’ *Daily Times*, January 4, 1976, p. 1.
9. Andrew Aba. 1976. ‘FESTAC 77 and Senghor’s Negritude.’ *Sunday Standard*, July 11, pp. 5–6.
10. ‘The Black Frenchman.’ *New Nigerian*, June 3, 1976, p. 5.
11. ‘FESTAC and the Senegalese Boycott Threat.’ *The Nigerian Observer*, December 12, 1975, p. 6.
12. ‘Massive Boycott Threatens FESTAC.’ *Daily Times*, December 5, 1975, p. 3; ‘The Colloquium: The Heart of the FESTAC.’ *Daily Times*, January 15, 1977, p. 20.
13. ‘Massive Boycott Threatens FESTAC.’ *Daily Times*, December 5, 1975, p. 3.
14. ‘Opening Remarks by Commander O. P. Fingsi, Federal Commissioner for Special Duties of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and President of the 2nd World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture to the Ninth meeting of the IFC, held in Lagos on 6th to 9th July, 1976.’ Doc IX/148 CBAAC.
15. Nigeria’s removal of Alioune Diop was no small decision. Diop was a central figure of the *Négritude* movement, having founded its flagship journal, *Présence africaine*, in 1947, and thereafter co-organized FESMAN with Senghor. For a critical engagement of *Présence africaine* and its productive literary, political and philosophical engagements, see Mudimbe (1992).
16. The Minutes of the 8th IFC meeting reveal some sneaky manoeuvres by the Nigerians in control of the IFC. The Cameroonian Father Engelbert Mveng, who had been virtually appointed as Colloquium chair by the Francophone Zone, was never given a plane ticket to the 8th IFC meeting, resulting in lack of a quorum. Nonetheless, Mbia proposed an ad hoc vote to approve a new East African chair, Dr. Katoke, which went through unanimously, just as the delegates’ salaries were doubled by Nigeria’s Udoji reforms. ‘Session of Jan. 29th,’ IFC/VIII, CBAAC
17. Gabriel J. Gomis, untitled editorial, *Soleil* (Dakar), August 26, 1976; ‘Late News Release No. 1050,’ Federal Ministry of Information, Lagos, August 25, 1976. ‘Senegal Now to Take Part in FESTAC,’ Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Clip File ‘World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture.’
18. Interview with Dr. Garba Ashiwaju in Lagos, October 12, 1993.
19. This was one of two themes; the other addressing ‘The Role of African Culture in the Economic and Social Development of Africa.’
20. For a clarification of Habermas’s theory of systematically distorted communication as an index of political domination, see Gross (2006, 337–42).
21. One of the best discussions (in English) of *Négritude* as a literary and ideological movement remains Irele (1990, 67–116).
22. For an insightful discussion of Adotevi’s Algiers statement in relation to ideas he developed further in *Négritude et négrologues* (1972), a book which he dedicated to Angela Davis, see Jules-Rosette (1998, 92–93). See also Meghelli (2014, 175). For Senghor’s key ideas about *Négritude* and socialist humanism, see Senghor (1964a, 1964b).
23. ‘Les Interventions du Debat de Samedi – communication du Senegal.’ *El Moudjahid*, July 27–28, p. 7. M’Bow was referring to a regional ‘symbiosis’ argument elaborated at length in Senghor (1967), a book based on a lecture that he delivered at the University of Cairo.
24. The North African participants, including the Algerian delegation, led less of a frontal attack against *Négritude* than an alternative vision of a ‘new Africa’ that embraced the very scientific rationality that Senghor dismissed as paradigmatically European. The Algerians’ ‘man of African culture’ was ‘le technicien, l’ingénieur agronome, l’ingénieur de conception, le planificateur des economies nationales, le pedagogue, le medecin ...’, working in the service of a modernizing state. See ‘Le texte de l’intervention du porte-parole de la délégation algérienne.’ *El Moudjahid*, July 27–28, pp. 6–7.
25. For perhaps the richest account of the *Négritude* debates at the Algiers festival, see Hare (1969). Hare also clarifies the tensions between Eldridge Cleaver and Stokely Carmichael at the festival, with reference to doctrine and ideology. See also Fuller (1969) and Shepherd (1969). For extraordinary daily

- coverage of the festival events and debates as they unfolded in Algiers, see *El Moudjahid*, July 20–August 5, 1969.
26. Thus, Mbembe (2013, 263) concludes his critique of ‘raison nègre’ and its historical logics of differentiation and desire with the appeal for ‘un monde débarrassé du fardeau de la race, et du ressentiment et du désir de vengeance qu’appelle toute situation de racisme’ (‘a world rid of the burden of race, and of resentment and the desire for revenge called for by any racist situation’). For an illuminating discussion of this point, and other critical strategies in Mbembe’s complex genealogy of blackness, see Coburn (2014).
  27. Joans (1970, 5). For the LP recording of his live performance, see (and hear!) Shepp (1971).
  28. Samir Meghelli identifies an important discussion, held in October, 1962, between Ahmed Ben Bella – then Algeria’s first president-elect – and Martin Luther King Jr, at the time of Bella’s United Nations swearing-in ceremony. As King reported, ‘the significance of our conversation was Ben Bella’s complete familiarity with the progression of events in *the Negro struggle for full citizenship* ... The battle of the Algerians against colonialism and the battle of the Negro against segregation is a common struggle’ (my emphasis). Quoted in Meghelli (2009, 103). For explications of the prison-industrial complex, see Davis (1971, 2000).
  29. Meghelli (2009, 106–7) shows how the Algiers festival also resonated with the Nation of Islam, which ran several anticipatory articles in its newspaper, *Muhammad Speaks*. See, for example, Kenneth C. Landry, ‘Algerian Festival to Spotlight Africa’s Vast Cultural Heritage.’ *Muhammad Speaks*, July 13, 1969, p. 31, cited in Meghelli (2009, 117, n.38).
  30. ‘Eldridge Warmly Received By the People of Algiers.’ *The Black Panther*, August 9, 1969, p. 3. The article quotes from a New York Times article without full citation.
  31. ‘Press Conference Chief of Staff’s Return From Algiers.’ *The Black Panther*, August 9, 1969, p. 7.
  32. ‘Press Conference Chief of Staff’s Return From Algiers.’ *The Black Panther*, August 9, 1967, p. 7, my emphasis.
  33. ‘Press Conference Chief of Staff’s Return from Algiers.’ *The Black Panther*, August 9, 1969, p. 7.
  34. The turbulent complexities of Cleaver’s citizenship in exile, from accredited envoy of the International Section of the Black Panther Party to expelled revolutionary on the run, lacking passport and papers, follows a tortuous itinerary from Cuba and Algiers – with visits to Vietnam, China, North Korea, and Congo-Brazzaville – to the United States via a safe-house in Paris. For the high point of Cleaver’s political clout in Algeria, where he outranked the US Chargé d’Affaires, see Gramont (1970). For an extraordinary account of his travels, travails and expulsion from Algeria, written by his ex-wife, who provided key support during those years, see Cleaver (1998).
  35. For an analytic framing of these dynamic spaces of cultural production, beyond the regulatory machinery of the nation state, see Clarke (2013).

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