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Africans in Dublin:
Race Relations,
Cultural Preservation, and
Working the Immigration System

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Senior Thesis Seminar

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Chapter 1: Introduction

"I did not even know there were Africans in Ireland," is the common response I received upon telling people about my research interests in Ireland. This exact response is what this paper seeks to disprove. *Africans in Dublin: Race Relations, Cultural Preservation, and Working the Immigration System* not only uncovers the existence of an African population in Dublin, but documents fascinating immigration stories a few African interviewees experienced and their lives within the African immigrant community and within the larger Irish society. My interest in this topic derives from my two passions: Irish history and the African Diaspora. One characteristic both Ireland and Africa, in general, have in common is that they have significant and wide-spread Diasporas. My family is part of the Irish Diaspora. In this way, I can relate to being a second or third-generation immigrant child. This paper will shed light on the understudied African immigrant population in Dublin in their daily interactions with the Irish and each other, their identity formation, and their culture.

It is estimated that 45,700 people of the African Diaspora currently live in Ireland. This makes up 1.1% of Ireland's population. In addition, statistics state that approximately 25,000 people of African descent live in Dublin, specifically.¹ Although people from many African nations migrate to Dublin, this paper will primarily focus on the two largest groups of people: the Nigerians and the South Africans. There are approximately 15,000 Nigerians in Ireland and the number of South Africans are unknown precisely.² It is important to note that each person depending on race, age, gender, class, ethnicity, has a different immigration experience. The

¹ United States of America. CIA. *South Africa*. The World Fact Book. Web. Apr.-May 2010. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ei.html#People>

² Helm, James. "Nigerians Put Down New Roots in Ireland." *BBC News*. 2 Sept. 2004. Web. May 2010. <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3618590.stm>>.

conclusions made in this paper are based on my knowledge and analysis and are in no way representative of every African immigrant. My analysis is based on secondary scholarly sources, interviews conducted while I was in Dublin, and primary sources like Irish governmental documents.

Chapter 2, entitled "The History of Relations: Africans in Ireland and the Irish in Africa," explores the history of interactions between the Africans and the Irish. The chapter highlights that the Africans and the Irish have had a history and it dates back to much earlier than people assume. It is possible that these groups interacted in B.C. times. Relations happened in all nations involved: Ireland, Nigeria, and South Africa, specifically. The Irish served as missionaries throughout the African continent and Africans travelled to Ireland as soldiers. In this chapter, the depth and complexity of the relationship is uncovered.

Chapter 3, "Irish Immigration Policy and the Celtic Tiger" documents the Irish immigration policies that are relevant to this paper. This is important because Ireland's lax immigration policy is one of the reasons there was such a large influx of African immigrants in the 20th and 21st centuries. In this chapter, I analyze the Irish immigration policy and see what policies appeal to the African immigrants. I will reveal statistics about African immigration and explain why the Irish government changed their policies after the chaotic influx and economic expansion officially called the Celtic Tiger. The Nigerians found a loop hole in the immigration policy through Ireland's *jus soli* policy which permitted citizenship based on a person's birth country. Their experience of "working the immigration system" will be explained more in depth in chapter 5.

Chapter 4 called "Reasons for the Migration," discusses the various reasons for African migration to Dublin. Africans immigrated to Ireland for many different reasons including economic opportunities, education, to seek refuge, for the welfare system, and the relaxed immigration policies. All of these reasons are fully explored and discussed. As each African country and each individual African has a different reason for immigration, I explain the most commonly found reasons for immigration. This chapter investigates why Africans chose Ireland for their destination, but also what the reasons are for leaving their homelands.

Chapter 5 analyzes the "Nigerian Experience." The Nigerians have proved to be a special case in the African immigration process to Ireland. In this chapter, I will discuss how the Nigerians manipulated Ireland's immigration policies to the best of their advantage and gained not only citizenship for their children, but also for themselves. This chapter explores the reasons for immigration specific to the Nigerian experience. An importance is placed on the bodies of pregnant Nigerian women. These women were critical in the immigration debates that happened at the end of the Celtic Tiger. The Nigerians are the most prominent group in Ireland and I use them as my primary focus for studying their interaction in Irish society and culture.

Chapter 6, the "South African Population" focuses on another specific group of Africans that have made their presence known in Ireland, the South Africans. Again, I discuss the reasons for the immigration to Ireland, mainly economic reasons and aftereffects of the South African Apartheid. Not only will I discuss the black African experience from Africa to Ireland, but also the white South Africans' immigration experience. I argue that the White South Africans had an easier time assimilating into Irish society, merely because of their color and being mistaken for a British person.

Chapter 7 entitled, "Race Relations" analyzes and answers major questions I had about the racial relations between the African nations and the Irish. I explore whether racism exists or whether they accept each other, based on my own experiences in Dublin. I demonstrate how the difference in race sometimes affects the interactions between Africans and the Irish, specifically in a social and working setting. There is generational hostility towards the Africans from the Irish and I will explain the reasons for this feeling.

Chapter 8: called the "Identity and the Preservation of African Culture: Assimilation or Separation?" investigates the significance of traditional culture in the African immigration populations' lives. Culture is a major component to a person's identity, especially when living in another country other than that person's home country. In this chapter, I develop the dynamics of the area known as "Little Africa" in Ireland based on my observations. I explain my insights into African culture in Ireland after viewing the St. Patrick's Day Parade and the African involvement. I conclude whether the Africans are preserving their African culture in Ireland, assimilating into Irish culture, or both. Furthermore, I plan to discuss the reasons behind preservation and assimilation.

Let the analysis begin!

Chapter 2: The History of Relations: Africans in Ireland and the Irish in Africa

In order to fully analyze the intricacy of Afro-Irish relations, one needs to uncover the complex, long-standing history between the two groups needs to be uncovered. Although the recent African migration to Ireland has been the main focus of study, in all reality, the Africans and Irish have had interactions since possibly the B.C. period. By highlighting these interactions, the relationship between the two groups may be better understood. The interactions happened on both the African continent when the Irish travelled to Africa to act as missionaries during colonial times, and on the European continent where Africans were brought over as soldiers and slaves.

Although little physical evidence exists to prove the existence of Africans in Ireland during B.C., ancient Irish folklore supports this notion. It is said that around 1000 B.C., a group of African sea pirates, known as the Fomorians, arrived in Ireland.¹ The legend tells the story that these African pirates were Canaanites, meaning they were direct descendants of Ham,² the biblical ancestor of the black nation. Ironically, "fomors" means the "dark of the sea." These early people were seen as sub-human demons with extra body parts and sometimes the head of a goat. Furthermore, although not yet scientifically proven, but being studied now, the "black Irish" population in Ireland is said to have Northern African ancestry. For example, the "black Irish" are Irish people with darker features: dark brown or black hair, darker complexion, and

¹ Bonwick, James. *Our Nationalities*. London: Clay and Taylor, 1880. *Google Books*. Google. Web. 1 May 2010. <http://books.google.com/books?id=gYwBAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA23&lpg=PA23&dq=james+bonwick+fomorians+in+ireland&source=bl&ots=cOd0jilQaW&sig=b-REokcq-OW5rqCI5LAnSGKqTIU&hl=en&ei=NCzqS4-QBcP-8AajiPHhDg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CB1Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false>, p. 23

² O'Donovan, John. "The Fomorians and Lochlanns. Pedigrees of MacCabe of Ireland and MacLeod of Scotland." *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* 1st ser. 9 (1861-2): 94-105. *Jstor-Fordham University*. Web. Apr.-May 2010. <<http://www.jstor.org/pss/20608927>>, p 95.

brown eyes. These people are said to be descendants of the selkies, another Irish folklore. Although not proven, the irony of the story to Africans should be noted. The selkies are said to be “half-breeds” and have these darker features. Moreover, the origin of the Irish people with a darker complexion is said to be unknown and researchers attribute these characteristics to the early explorers, some of whom were from Northern Africa.

The next chronological interaction recorded in history coincides with the arrival of vikings in Ireland. As scholar Folarin Shyllon says, “Some Irish sources from the year 862 attest to the presence in Dublin of African prisoners of war called ‘Blue Men’ brought back from Spain.”³ The most famous Blue Man was known as Earl Thorfinn, described as “one of the largest men in point of stature, and ugly, sharp featured, and somewhat tawny, and the most martial looking man...it has been related that he was the foremost of all his men.”⁴ It is important to keep in mind that these people were not brought by choice. Some of the earliest Africans on Irish land were brought by force.

Another generation of Africans is recorded in Ireland’s history during the eighteenth century. Beginning in 1787, Africans began to be drafted into the British 29th Military Regiment and were stationed in Dublin. These men served as soldiers and drummers in the British Army. Other members of the African Diaspora began to make Ireland their home at this time. For instance, African Americans freed from slavery in the United States made their way to Europe to

³ qtd. in. Whitten, Norman E. , and Arlene Torres. *Blackness in Latin America and the Caribbean Social Dynamics and Cultural Transformations*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998. *Google Books*. Google. Web. Apr.-May 2010. <http://books.google.com/books?id=E_IZhY9ZEH4C&pg=PA18&lpg=PA18&dq=%22folarin+shyllon%22+africans+862+blue+men&source=bl&ots=ZYFjGCccDO&sig=fGkdIYZjxUE19dEjxNKlg6pZS4c&hl=en&ei=3C_qS6n-FYOC8gbC79XkDg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CBIO6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=%22folarin%20shyllon%22%20africans%20862%20blue%20men&f=false>, p 18.

⁴ Eji Ofo Annu, Ogu. "African Roots of Ireland – Oguejiofo Annu – Rasta Livewire." *AfricaResource: The Place for Africa on the Net*. Web. 1 May 2010. <<http://www.africaresource.com/rasta/articles/african-roots-of-ireland/>>.

start their new lives of freedom. Also, domestic servants and freed slaves travel to Dublin to raise awareness and support for the abolitionist movement beginning in the United States.⁵

Early Afro-Irish interaction did not only occur in Ireland. The Irish also ventured to the African continent. For instance, it is estimated that in 1904, 20,000 Irish-born citizens lived in South Africa.⁶ Although the Irish did not partake in any direct colonization during the "Scramble for Africa," they participated indirectly as missionaries. The Irish did not intend any harm while they did their missionary work. They believed they were saving the "savages" through religious conversion. In all reality, the Irish were altering traditional African beliefs and practices forever by imposing Western ideology, like religion.

Ireland and South Africa have a unique relationship and a common bond because both countries, at times, were under the rule of the British Empire. This connection made it easier for the Irish to set up communities and obtain jobs in South Africa because they were migrating within the British colonies. They traveled to South Africa for work. This is ironic because years later, the South Africans begin to travel to Ireland for similar purposes. The Irish Diaspora in South Africa served as more than just missionaries and assumed leadership positions in the country. In other parts of Africa, the Irish had more of an indirect involvement with the colonization, but it can be argued that the Irish had more direct influence in the colonization of South Africa. For example, one-third of Cape Town's governors, judges, and politicians were Irish.⁷ The Irish sought professional positions in South Africa including jobs as lawyers, doctors,

⁵ Ejorh, Theophilus. "Immigration and Citizenship: African Immigrants in Ireland." Thesis. University College Dublin, 2008. UCD, 2008. Web. Apr.-May 2010. <http://www.ucd.ie/mcri/immigration_and_citizenship.pdf>.

⁶ McCracken, Donal P. "The Irish in South Africa - The Police, A Case Study." *Irish Times*. IrishTimes.com, 1991. Web. Apr.-May 2010. <http://www.irishtimes.com/ancestor/magazine/articles/uhf_safrica2.htm>.

⁷ McCracken, http://www.irishtimes.com/ancestor/magazine/articles/uhf_safrica1.htm

and dentists.⁸ When the gold and diamond rush occurred in South Africa during the 1890's the Irish flocked to South Africa to fill the miner positions. Furthermore, they were attracted to specific jobs: teachers, retailers, journalists, etc.

The most criticized and famous position that the Irish held in South Africa was as officers in the British police force. These Irish policemen were involved in the beginnings of the political turmoil for South Africa leading to Apartheid. They were participants in both the First and Second Anglo-Boer War and helped the British fight against Germany in the first World War. The Irish and the South Africans obviously have a long-standing history with each other. It is ironic that the Irish were in South Africa when the roots of the Apartheid started and then some South Africans eventually migrated to Ireland to seek political refuge in Ireland.

Throughout Irish missionary history in Africa, Nigeria has been one of its main focal countries. For instance, of the 4,473 Irish missionary institutes established throughout Africa in 1968, 1,449 of those institutes were in Nigeria.⁹ The Irish missionaries had some positive and negative influences in Nigeria. One of the goals of the early missionaries were to evangelize the Nigerians and to spread Christianity. The Irish viewed Nigeria's native religions as pagan. Often times, this was not received well by the Nigerian people who did like practicing the Western religion. The missionaries also helped set up schools and hospitals in Nigeria. These advancements were positive, but at the same time, injected Western ideas like modern medicine into Nigeria's traditional customs. One of the downfalls of these missionaries were that they were very patronizing to the Nigerians, often treating them like children. In addition, instead of

⁸ McCracken, http://www.irishtimes.com/ancestor/magazine/articles/uhf_safrica1.htm

⁹ Hally, Cyril. "A Hundred Years of Irish Missionary Effort." *The Furrow* 22.6 (1971): 335-49. *Jstor-Fordham University*. Web. Apr.-May 2010. <<http://www.jstor.org/avoserv.library.fordham.edu/stable/pdfplus/27679365.pdf?cookieSet=1>>.

incorporating both the Catholic religion into the native, traditional religions, the Irish missionaries tried to replace the original religion with the Catholic religion completely.

Irish missionaries left their mark in both Nigeria and South Africa. Still to this day, landmarks in both countries remind both tourists and citizens of the Irish's historical presence. In Nigeria, Ejorh describes "streets, schools, colleges, hospitals and churches named to celebrate the work of Irish missionaries in the area."¹⁰ Also, in South Africa, similar remnants and tributes to the Irish remain. Belfast and Donnybrook are two cities that reflect the Irish influence. Furthermore, the Biggarsberg Mountains and Sir Henry Lowry's Pass are landmarks that nominally display their Irish association. Scholar Dr. Theophilus Ejorh argues that this type of naming is evidence that the Africans, in general, and the Irish had a positive relationship during colonial times. He says, "Africans esteemed the Irish. This was why important institutions and communal landmarks were named after Irish personages."¹¹ The Irish naming of public places may be indication of a positive relationship, but the Irish still drastically influenced the traditional beliefs of these African countries and ultimately helped Westernize their ideas which can be viewed negatively or positively.

The relationship between Africa and Ireland is vastly understudied, yet fascinating. Traditional Irish stories may reference the Irish's interactions with the Africans since B.C. times. Although the mass immigration of Africans to Ireland may be a new phenomenon, the history between the countries is not. As Diaspora scholar Paul Gilroy says, the study of migration of a group of people should focus on the "routes" and not the "roots."¹² The transmittance of ideas,

¹⁰ Ejorh, http://www.ucd.ie/mcri/immigration_and_citizenship.pdf

¹¹ Ejorh, http://www.ucd.ie/mcri/immigration_and_citizenship.pdf

¹² Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1995. Print.

values, and history between the two cultures can not merely be looked at in strictly Africa and Ireland. The creation of history between the two groups is formed transatlantically and through the countries' people. The process is a transnational exchange of ideas. Knowing the history of interactions between the Africans and the Irish, the analysis of their contemporary relations and exchange of culture and ideas can be continued further.

Chapter 5: The Nigerian Experience

“You should go back to fucking Africa” is the harsh response one Nigerian woman received from a white Irish man outside of a Dublin hospital after conceiving her newborn child.¹ The Nigerian immigrant group is one of the most numerous in Dublin mainly because of a unique immigration strategy. The Nigerians use this strategy to circumvent the Irish immigration system. The Nigerians have many reasons for migrating to Ireland, especially those Nigerian women who use the process to birth their children on Irish soil. There are many reasons for giving birth to the children in Ireland including: the health care system and Ireland’s early citizenship policies. Each individual Nigerian woman’s reason for having her child in Ireland determines whether the migration to Ireland is short or long term. As demonstrated by the quote, these African women face much hostility for their unique immigration strategy. These reactions from the Irish will be discussed later in the chapter along with an analysis of the reasons for migration.

The Nigerian migration to Ireland has been a progressive process. The first wave of migration began after WWII with a large increase after 1960 when Nigeria gained its independence from Britain.² The first group of migrants were typically males seeking jobs as fishermen in Dublin’s seaports. In addition, another group of Nigerian migrants during this period were a group of medical students living in Ireland to attend medical school.³ Another

¹ Shandy, Dianna J., and David V. Power. "The Birth of the African-Irish Diaspora: Pregnancy and Post-Natal Experiences of African Immigrant Women in Ireland." *International Migration* 46.5: 119-42. *Wiley Interscience*. Web. 5 Feb. 2010. <<http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/avoserv.library.fordham.edu/cgi-bin/fulltext/121497788/PDFSTART>>, 132.

² Komolafe, Julius. "Searching for Fortune: The Geographical Process of Nigerian Migration to Dublin, Ireland." Diss. Trinity College. *African Migration*. Web. 5 Feb. 2010. <http://www.africamigration.com/archive_01/j_komolafe_searching.htm>.

³ Komolafe, http://www.africamigration.com/archive_01/j_komolafe_searching.htm.

wave of migration occurred during the Celtic Tiger, 1995-2007, which broadened the reasons for migration and the types of people who migrated. While analyzing the Nigerian experience of migration and reasons for moving, it is important to keep in mind that each experience is unique to each immigrant. For instance, some Nigerian immigrations are permanent, some are temporary, some come from wealthy families and others do not, some have connections in Dublin and others do not.

One of the primary catalysts of the Nigerian migration to Ireland was the state of the Nigerian economy. With any group of migrants, the economic situation of the group's homeland is a determining factor of migration. According to the United Nations World Population Monitoring Report, Nigeria began to experience negative economic growth in the 1980's.⁴ As a result, many Nigerians struggled to find jobs in Nigeria and ultimately began migrating to other countries in order to meet their economic needs. Furthermore, civil wars in Africa account for large migration numbers. The political turmoil combined with economic recessions caused for closure of many Nigerian companies and factories which accounted for many of the jobs in the country.⁵ Around the same time, Ireland was experiencing an economic boom known as the Celtic Tiger which provided many job opportunities. Dublin even recruited internationally to fill job positions and many Nigerians found out about Ireland's booming economy from word of mouth or through British newspapers.⁶ Furthermore, many of the Nigerians involved in their homeland's political turmoil came to Ireland as refugees or asylum seekers, meaning that

⁴ United Nations, World Population Monitoring Report: International Migration, New York: United Nations, 1998b

⁵ Komolafe, http://www.africamigration.com/archive_01/j_komolafe_searching.htm.

⁶ Komolafe, http://www.africamigration.com/archive_01/j_komolafe_searching.htm.

because Ireland signed the United Nations Convention which protects refugees and asylum seekers, these Nigerians were allowed to stay in Ireland.

It can be argued that it is easier for Nigerians to immigrate to Ireland than other African nations because Nigeria was a British colony. The group of Nigerians who fully used this to their advantage are known as the “visa extension-seekers.” These Nigerians would travel to Ireland to apply to extend their visas if for some reason they were denied visas in the United Kingdom. Once granted, they are able to move about freely to the United Kingdom. This group typically moved to Ireland temporarily. Sometimes, the visa extensions would be denied, expire in Ireland, and the Nigerians would continue to live in Dublin as illegal immigrants.⁷

Another reason for migration to Dublin was for educational purposes. Many of the Africans interviewed for this research, ranked education as one of the most important reasons for moving to Dublin. Nigerians believe the Irish school system is significantly better than one in Nigeria and they want to ensure a better future for their children. However, in order to attend school in Ireland, Nigerian students had to come from economically stable families. Many of the temporary students in Ireland are medical school students. For example, as researcher Julius Komolafe demonstrates, “From 1996 to 2001 there was an open policy that allowed Nigerian medical doctors and nurses to apply for employment permits in Lagos, and later, in Abuja, to come to Ireland. These working permits were usually for a period of two years, renewable thirty days before expiration.”⁸ It is very ironic that the Irish hospitals recruit Nigerians to Ireland as doctors especially when Nigerians travel to Ireland for the better healthcare system and doctors which will be discussed later in the chapter.

⁷ Komolafe, http://www.africamigration.com/archive_01/j_komolafe_searching.htm.

⁸ Komolafe, http://www.africamigration.com/archive_01/j_komolafe_searching.htm.

One of the phenomenons of Nigerian migration to Ireland is the migration pattern of Nigerian women. During the Celtic Tiger the number of female migrants rapidly increased. A lot of this type of migration can be attributed to the loophole the women found in the Irish immigration policies. As demonstrated in the chart below, the number of female migrants in 1998 was more than five times of that in 1997. In addition, there was another large increase between 1999 and 2000. This chapter will seek to uncover the reasons for these peaks and to fully explain the reasons for this unique female migration pattern.

Table I: Total number of Nigerian Migrants to Ireland⁹

Year	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Male	3	461	506	426	1006
Female	7	168	898	998	1748
Total Population	10	629	1404	1424	2754

One of the primary groups of Nigerian women who migrate are the temporary health asylum seekers. The typical process of these women is to wait until they are nine months pregnant, board a plane to Dublin, conceive their children, and shortly after return to Nigeria. One of these reasons these women choose Dublin to birth their children is because of the health care services. In 2004, Dublin was voted “the safest European city for a woman to have a baby based on an extremely low maternal mortality rate.”¹⁰ For these Nigerian women, these statistics are very important because as found by UNICEF, “in Sub-Saharan Africa the mortality rate for women in pregnancy and childbirth is 1 in 13. In Ireland it is less than 1 in 10,000.”¹¹ One

⁹ Komolafe, http://www.africamigration.com/archive_01/j_komolafe_searching.htm.

¹⁰ Shandy, 129.

¹¹ qtd. in Shandy, 129.

Dublin hospital doctor suggests another reason these Nigerian women seek maternal help in Dublin hospitals over African hospitals is because Dublin hospitals use epidurals and African hospitals do not.¹² This example demonstrates how African women use the Irish health system's newer and advantageous technology over the less-developed African medicine. One study highlights another issue involved, "there was a large difference between public and private hospitals in Africa, suggesting that care equivalent to what women received in the public hospital in Ireland was available to those who could pay for private hospital services in countries like Cameroon and Nigeria."¹³ Overall, the health care system in Ireland, in the eyes of Nigerian women, is more highly regarded than those in their home country. The reputation and treatment at the Dublin hospitals is orally spread throughout the Nigerian social networks based on referrals of close family and friends; this is typical of African social networks.¹⁴

Often the women who treat this birth process as a temporary "vacation" to Ireland return to Nigeria because they do not have family networks in Ireland. African child-raising is usually done in groups or communities by large, extended family networks. For instance, in a study conducted by anthropologists, Dianna J. Shandy and David V. Power one woman shared her reasons for returning home after the childbirth saying she will have, "100 extended family members eager to help [her] care for the child."¹⁵ For these women seeking a temporary stay in Ireland, their main goal is to receive the best health care they can and to return home to raise their children in their own communities, not in a foreign country where they have no support

¹² Shandy, 130.

¹³ Shandy, 130.

¹⁴ Shandy, 129.

¹⁵ qtd. in Shandy, 128.

system. It is important to keep in mind that these women have the means to have their children in Ireland and this is not typical of Nigerian births because the majority of the population can not afford to travel to Dublin for childbirth. Shandy and Power quote one woman who expressed her feelings on the matter, "If you can afford the best care, why not?"¹⁶ As interviewee, David Leonard recounts, these women show up with suitcases full of Euros for the sole purpose of paying for the medical expenses, sometimes with barely any clothing, having the child, and returning right back to Africa.¹⁷ The hospital workers in Dublin tell similar stories of women paying "cash for their maternity services."¹⁸

Another interesting facet of this childbearing process is why the women chose Dublin over somewhere in the United States. Majority of the women in Shandy and Power's study described complications obtaining visas. It is a much easier process to obtain visas through the Irish government over the United States. Furthermore, the trip to Ireland is a much shorter one than to the United States. This is an important factor accounting for the fact that these women are a couple of days short of childbirth and many will not make the across the ocean. In addition, flights from Nigeria to Dublin tend to be cheaper than flights from Nigeria to the United States, and therefore money becomes a factor in the decision of the birthing nation. It is interesting though, because direct flights from Nigeria to Dublin are very rare. Therefore, many women buy flights from Nigeria to France or England and then either take a plane or take a boat to Dublin depending on the urgency of their pregnancy. Once they have landed in Europe, transportation between European countries is very easy and cheap.

¹⁶ Shandy, 128.

¹⁷ Leonard, David. "Africans in Dublin." Personal interview. 15 Mar. 2010.

¹⁸ Shandy, 129.

“Citizenship tourists” or “asylum seekers” refers to a specific type of Nigerian women who appear to temporarily travel to Ireland to have their children, but in reality have long term goals in mind. In 2002, Ireland experienced its peak of applications of asylum seekers with Nigerians topping the chart at 34.8 percent.¹⁹ Typically, these women save money for the birth, board a plane to Ireland when they are nine months pregnant, have the child, and then challenge the government for Irish citizenship because their child is now an Irish citizen. These group of women have created a political frenzy in Dublin, which has sparked multiple immigration debates. Dianna J. Shandy argues that these immigration debates literally and figuratively were focused on African women’s bodies. By focusing on these Nigerian women’s bodies, they became objectified in the media spotlight and in the Irish public’s eyes. In result, an outpour of hatred from native Irish citizens ensued, creating more problems for these women. Furthermore, in result of all the protest and complications that arose from these unique childbirth circumstances, Ireland ultimately decided to change their immigration policies to no longer allow the African women to use the loophole they found in the system. For instance, as Shandy and Power demonstrate,

The Irish government responded to the situation with a court case in 2003 that determined that non-national parents of children who were Irish citizens could be deported, and subsequently in June 2004 by proposing a national referendum, eliminating an Irish-born child’s automatic right to citizenship when the parents are not Irish nationals. The public passed this referendum on 11 June 2004, with 79 percent in favour, and the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act went into effect on 1 January 2005.²⁰

¹⁹ Shandy, Dianna J. "Irish Babies, African Mothers: Rites of Passage and Rights in Citizenship in Post-Millennial Ireland." *Anthropological Quarterly* 81.4 (2008). Project Muse. Web. 2 Feb. 2010. <http://http://z3950.muse.jhu.edu/avoserv.library.fordham.edu/journals/anthropological_quarterly/v081/81.4.shandy.html, 808.

²⁰ Shandy, "The Birth of the African-Irish Diaspora: Pregnancy and Post-Natal Experiences of African Immigrant Women in Ireland." 120.

Ultimately, this group of immigrant women single-handedly stimulated changes to made in the Irish immigration policies.

In order to understand how the Irish immigration system changed in result of this pattern of childbirth, one must fully analyze the previous immigration policy. Previous to Ireland's current immigration policy contained in, *Irish Citizenship and Nationality Act 2004*, Ireland's immigration policies were dealt with under the *Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1956*. In this document, the immigration policy called for "*jus soli*," meaning a person is given citizenship based on their country of birth. This means that the African children born on Irish soil were then automatically given Irish citizenship. Once the children were given citizenship, the parents are then allowed to appeal to the Irish government for their own citizenship based on the fact that their child is an Irish citizen. As stated in the Constitution, "anyone born on the island of Ireland is: 1. *entitled* to be an Irish citizen and 2. *automatically* an Irish citizen if he or she was not entitled to the citizenship of any other country."²¹ The Nigerians found a loophole in the Irish immigration policy and by having a child born on Irish soil were in turn granted Irish citizenship for themselves. This is a very clever way to "work" the immigration system for their own benefit. The new legislation says, "A person born in the island of Ireland shall not be entitled to be an Irish citizen unless a parent of that person has, during the period of 4 years immediately preceding the person's birth, been resident in the island of Ireland for a period of not less than 3 years or periods the aggregate of which is not less than 3 years."²² Since the policies have

²¹ Ireland. *Bunreacht Na Héireann = Constitution of Ireland*. Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig Dhiolta Foilseachán Rialtais. Sections 6(1) and 6A(2)(a) of the *Irish Nationality and Citizenship Acts 1956 to 2004*. and Section 6(3) of the *Irish Nationality and Citizenship Acts 1956 to 2004*, 1980.

²² Ireland. Department of Justice, Equality, and Law Reform. *Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act of 1956*. Jan. 2005. Web. Apr.-May 2010. <<http://www.inis.gov.ie/en/INIS/consolidationINCA.pdf/Files/consolidationINCA.pdf>>, p. 5.

changed, this system of obtaining Irish citizenship is no longer possible unless the African parents had already been staying long term previous to the birth of their child. Now, in order to apply for citizenship African families must prove that they have legitimate familial connections in Ireland as stated by Irish policy, "Foreign national parents of those children (that is, children born in Ireland on or after 1 January 2005) must prove that they have a **genuine link** to Ireland...On proof of a genuine link to Ireland their child will be entitled to Irish citizenship."²³ Since a large number of Nigerians were able to migrate to Dublin before the policies changed, Nigerians still find ways to migrate to Ireland through this clause. Once again, part of African culture is based on large social networks and these prove to be helpful when trying to affirm connections in Ireland.

Whether these women come for temporary or long-term purposes, one similar characteristic about these births makes for an interesting analysis. More times than not, these women travel to Ireland when they are days away from giving birth. They wait until they are nine months pregnant because then they do not have to worry about arranging living situations or visas. According to the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, thirty-six weeks is the maximum recommended time for a pregnant women to travel by plane. These women tend to disregard these suggestions and travel days before the birth. In the study conducted by anthropologists, Shandy and Power, some women told stories of wearing loose, baggy clothing to deceive the airport security and employees.²⁴ Furthermore, many women mentioned a cash

²³ "Irish Citizenship through Birth or Descent." *Irish Social Networking* & "Meet Irish People Worldwide on *IrishAbroad.com*. Web. Apr.-May 2010. <<http://www.irishabroad.com/travel/irish-citizenship/Articles/irish-citizenship-birth-descent.aspx>>.

²⁴ Shandy, "The Birth of the African-Irish Diaspora: Pregnancy and Post-Natal Experiences of African Immigrant Women in Ireland." 130.

bribery used to persuade airport employees to let them on the plane despite the progress of their pregnancy.²⁵ By paying their way onto the plane, these women knew that they were endangering their own lives and the lives of their children in order to insure better birthing services in Dublin. It is remarkable that these women are able to get around the airport system in order to give birth to their children on Irish soil. In an interview conducted with a Dublin airport employee, David Leonard, he shared his experience with pregnant Nigerian women at the airport. He said, "These women come over literally about to pop their children out on the plane." He continued saying, "I've seen women go into labor as soon as they've stepped off the plane." Mr. Leonard spoke of numerous occasions where the women were not physically capable of getting off the plane and in result stretchers and EMS workers had to board the plane in order to get the female off and to a hospital. From his own judgment, he believes that this type of occurrence happens at least once a week and before Ireland changed their citizenship policy, it happened multiple times a week.²⁶ These circumstances prove the extent these women will go to in order to have their children in Ireland. This group gives a new a whole new meaning to Irish-born African citizenship and childbirth.

One could not fully grasp the social implications of these Irish-born births without understanding the cultural importance of motherhood in African countries, including Nigeria. In general, motherhood is one of the most important and sought after experiences for African women. In African culture, children and childbearing holds a special power in society. A woman is seen to have a certain power when she gives birth to a child. With this in mind, one may now

²⁵ Shandy, "The Birth of the African-Irish Diaspora: Pregnancy and Post-Natal Experiences of African Immigrant Women in Ireland." 130.

²⁶ Leonard, David. "Africans in Dublin." Personal interview. 13 Mar. 2010.

understand the gravity of these Irish-born child-births. These situations are not treated lightly and are sometimes seen as life or death matters. Shandy highlights this power, “the mother of the Irish-born child will experience an upward shift within the overall power structure of relations with family in Africa.”²⁷ Many of the reasons for giving birth to their children on Irish soil also has to do with the love the mother has for her future child. Many women feel that by having their children in Dublin they are ensuring a better future for them than they did themselves. Shandy provides an example of a woman she conducted an interview with, “in Nigeria, when you have a baby there, there is no future for them. I want my children to have a future, free movement. Tomorrow they will have a future.”²⁸

After analyzing the unprecedented migration patterns of Nigerians as a whole and Nigerian females specifically one can see how this group is literally the physical manifestation of a changing Ireland. It is fascinating that political debates and immigration maelstrom can be focused on pregnant Nigerian females’ bodies. By giving birth to their children on Irish soil, Nigerian women are changing the face of contemporary Ireland. Through the loophole of the immigration policy, Ireland is becoming more of a melting pot. The female migration experience is so complex and multi-faceted, but symbolizes many important underlying concepts. For instance, after discussing these women, one gets a sense of transnational motherhood and the importance of motherhood in Nigerian culture. In addition, the Nigerians and their children are literally re-defining what it means to become an “Irish-born citizen.” In a sense, labor in Ireland

²⁷ Shandy, "Irish Babies, African Mothers: Rites of Passage and Rights in Citizenship in Post-Millennial Ireland.", 814.

²⁸ qtd. in Shandy, "Irish Babies, African Mothers: Rites of Passage and Rights in Citizenship in Post-Millennial Ireland." 815.

presents a dualistic reality which changes the future of not only the "Irish-born" child, but also the future of the double-conscious Nigerian mother.

Chapter 6: The South African Population

"Its not as hard for us, because we are white. People do not understand our accents, they just think we are British, so no we do not experience as much racism," one white South African store owner shared when she was asked about her experience in Dublin.¹ One of the most represented African nations in Dublin is South Africa. The South Africans offer a different perspective into the immigration experience to Ireland because not only is this group African, but the majority are white. Their immigration stories offer a comparison to the black African experience and allow for an analysis of differences in immigration based on color. Similar to Nigerians, South Africans have established a population in Dublin rooted in previously established extended network systems.

The South African apartheid is an important factor in the analysis of the relationship between Ireland and South Africa. Ireland strongly opposed Apartheid and this negatively affected the country's relationship with South Africa and its people. As the Department of Foreign Affairs of South Africa declares,

Ireland was the only European Union member country, which did not have full diplomatic relations with South Africa until the dawn of democratic South Africa. The establishment of diplomatic relations with Ireland was announced on 5 October 1993 and the Irish Embassy was opened in Pretoria in 1994. The South African Embassy in Dublin was opened in 1995.²

With the diplomatic relations newly being opened between the two countries, many South Africans began moving to Ireland to explore the new economic and educational opportunities opened to them that previously were not. Furthermore, the establishment of a democratic government in South Africa not only opened South African immigration to Ireland, but it also

¹ Leesa. "Africans in Dublin." Personal interview. 19 Mar. 2010.

² South Africa. International Relations and Cooperation. Department of Foreign Affairs. *Ireland*. 10 May 2007. Web. Apr.-May 2010. <<http://www.dfa.gov.za/foreign/bilateral/ireland.html>>.

presented new opportunities for Irish involvement in South Africa. For instance, as the Embassy of Ireland in South Africa explains, "Following the transition to a democratic, non-racial Government in early 1994, the Irish Aid - South Africa bilateral programme was established."³ Ireland began giving South Africa more monetary aid to help with the aftermath of the apartheid through this Irish Aid program. The program's main objectives are to:

address the needs of previously disadvantaged and marginalised communities. The goal of the current programme is to contribute to the reduction of poverty and inequality, through support for government and civil society. The programme focuses on *HIV and AIDS; pro-poor service delivery in Limpopo Province; and support for tackling Gender Based Violence.*⁴

Through programs like these, Ireland is building a relationship with South Africa and helping the country to re-build after the destruction of the apartheid.

The most common reason for South African migration to Dublin is to find employment. The Celtic Tiger in Ireland began in 1995 and the apartheid in South Africa ended in 1994. Ireland had an excess of open jobs and South Africa had a shortage. Dublin has a relatively low unemployment rate compared to the national average in South Africa. According to Irish government statistics, in 1993, Dublin had a 3.3 percent unemployment rate, whereas in South Africa the unemployment rate was 24.3 percent.⁵⁶ The search for jobs is reflected in the number of work permit applications to Ireland. For instance, one statistic demonstrates this trend, "More South Africans than nationals of other African countries have applied and received work permits.

³ Ireland. Embassy of Ireland. Department of Foreign Affairs. *Irish Aid South Africa*. Web. Apr.-May 2010. <<http://www.embassyireland.org.za/home/index.aspx?id=75042>>.

⁴ <http://www.embassyireland.org.za/home/index.aspx?id=75042>

⁵ United States of America. CIA. *South Africa*. The World Fact Book. Web. Apr.-May 2010. <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sf.html>>.

⁶ "Setting the Context - The Scale and Nature of Unemployment in Dublin." *Dublin Pact*. Web. Apr.-May 2010. <http://www.dublinpact.ie/word/setting_the_context.doc>.

A total of 2,273 were issued in 2002...this increased to 2468 in 2003. The numbers fell to 2031 in 2004 and to 1833 in 2005.”⁷

Another reason for South African immigration to Dublin is the low crime rate. In the interviews, many South Africans said that one of the main motivations behind their migration was for security and safety reasons. They felt that raising their children in Dublin would be better for their safety. One South African woman said that in South Africa, she was afraid to let her children play outside for fear that they would be hurt or kidnapped, but in Dublin she felt much more at ease with letting her children play on their own without supervision.⁸ Statistics support these stories. For instance, in 1998 Dublin was found to have one of the lowest murder rates in the world, with, “1.9 cases of murder, infanticide or manslaughter per 100,000 inhabitants.”⁹ The United Nations Office on Crimes and Drugs in the 1998-2000 national survey concluded that South Africa was number one for rapes per capita and second for assault and murder.¹⁰ When comparing the two countries statistics on crime and murder, it is easy to see why South Africans migrated to Ireland based on safety reasons. South Africa was not very stable post-apartheid and Dublin provided a safer haven for South African families. One blogger provided their reasons for moving to Ireland,

Right now most South Africans are looking at anywhere in the world to live rather than in their own country. They are petrified of the violent crime that is gripping the country. 51 murders A DAY, a rape every 24 seconds, at least 50 armed robberies per day, car hijackings every day...South Africa is the most dangerous

⁷ Ugba, Abel. "African Communities in Ireland." *Shades of Belonging: African Pentecostals in Twenty-first Century Ireland*. Trenton, N.J.: Africa World, 2008. 35-40. Print.

⁸ Leesa. "Africans in Dublin." Personal interview. 19 Mar. 2010.

⁹ Sheehan, Aideen. "Dublin Murder Rate One of the World's Lowest." *Independent*. 19 Aug. 1998. Web. Apr.-May 2010. <<http://www.independent.ie/national-news/dublin-murder-rate-one-of-the-worlds-lowest-436334.html>>.

¹⁰ "NationMaster - South African Crime Statistics." *NationMaster - World Statistics, Country Comparisons*. Web. Mar.-Apr. 2010. <http://www.nationmaster.com/red/country/sf-south-africa/crime&b_cite=1>.

country on the planet right now and that is why I will be arriving in Ireland early next month to start a new life! God Bless Ireland and thanks to all of her people for making us welcome!¹¹

Unsafe conditions in South Africa are a determining factor for migration and Ireland seems to rank supreme over the risk of staying in their homeland.

One fascinating characteristic of the South African population in Dublin is the social networking system. There are two main South African stores in Dublin: Jabula and Zulu Tattoos. Jabula is basically a superstore for everything South African: art, jewelry, food, houseware, etc. Jabula proudly advertises that if they do not have what a customer wants in the store they will order it directly from South Africa. In addition, the crafts come directly from South African craftsmen and all profits on handicrafts go back to these craftsmen. It is interesting to analyze this idea. This store has direct connections to South Africa even after the immigration to Dublin and still supports the South African economy by selling these handicrafts in Ireland. Leeza, store owner of Jabula, said that for some of the craftsmen selling their work in Dublin is the only income they have. Leeza added, "They depend on it. I feel bad sometimes because my store is the only profits they have... It is a shame that they have to sell their beautiful work across the sea to make money."¹² This example demonstrates the communication and network systems that exist between South Africans in Dublin and South Africa even after immigration. The other main South African business in Dublin is Zulu Tattoos. Each store promotes the other and encourages customers to visit each others stores. Jabula store owner explained that these two locations are the places South Africans visit to connect with fellow South Africans and to hear news about the homeland. Even though the two owners did not know each other before they moved to Dublin,

¹¹ "Solo" "Re: South Africans Moving to Ireland." Web log comment. *New to Town*. 7 Feb. 2007. Web. Apr.-May 2010. <<http://www.newtotown.ie/forum/chat/south-africans-moving-ireland-792.html>>.

¹² Leesa. "Africans in Dublin." Personal interview. 19 Mar. 2010.

they have formed a surrogate community for the South African diaspora in Dublin. These stores provide a "little piece of home" for South Africans and provides them with places where they can find like-minded people who have similar immigration experiences.

To fully comprehend the power of the South African community, the social network systems that are created must be explained further. Like the Nigerian immigrant population, the reputation and status of Ireland is passed word of mouth through the South African community. If a South African is thinking about moving to Ireland, he or she reaches out to people already in Ireland for help. One way South Africans do this is through blogs and forums. For instance, Jabula hosts a forum on its website. South Africans can participate in group conversations about immigration or contact someone one-on-one. On these sites, South Africans can seek help on any topic involved with the immigration process including how to obtain visas to how to bring their pets abroad. South Africans can find answers to any part of the immigration process including pre-departure, just arrived, and when they finally settle down. People put a lot of trust in these forums and rely on them heavily to help get themselves established in Dublin. For instance, these sites post job opportunities and help just-arrived South Africans find living arrangements. Jabula hosts a medical discussion and a dating service for South Africans. Each forum provides links to South African newspapers, other useful forums, South African radio stations, and television. Multiple sites post helpful tips if a South African is homesick. Even though the majority of these South Africans have never met before, the level of trust and dependency is indescribable. Looking at the forums, websites, and blogs, one can sense the community among these people. In a way, they have formed surrogate families of South Africans abroad. There is a strong bond among the South Africans and it is incredible that these people help a complete stranger establish themselves in a foreign country.

An example of a typical post on a South African forum displays the sense of community and respect for opinion:

Yes, I think it is interesting to see more South African's being interested in Ireland. I'm a single mum living in South Africa and have realised that there's so much more I can offer my son in terms of life and living. (one of the things being that it doesn't have to be normal to get to the end of a day and think how lucky you are not to have been directly affected by crime). I have always felt so positive about South Africa and proud to be South African but it's sad to see how we're becoming almost too accepting to the way of life). A few of my friends have moved to New Zealand and Australia. A couple to the UK too. Somehow I'm not tempted by any of those options... I loved the country [Ireland] and the friendliness of the people. I feel a bit of a connection somehow....So now I'm doing the research on how to get there. I'll miss Cape Town but life's a journey and we need to enjoy every step of it...If there are any other South African's that are considering the move then maybe we can share our experiences?...I hope to make loads of connections here, and hope that this posting finds you all wonderfilled! :-)¹³

This woman highlights some of the main aspects of South African immigration, Once again, the importance of safety of Ireland and crime in South Africa is a factor she considered when migrating. The blog speaks about the changing South Africa and how people do not like the new lifestyle. It demonstrates that South Africans have other places to migrate including the UK and Australia, but ultimately choose Ireland. She comments that many more South Africans are becoming more interested in Ireland. Furthermore, the woman asks for help and hopes to make connections with other immigrants. Another interesting point the blog raises, is the happiness and satisfaction the South Africans find upon moving to Ireland. Similarly, Jabula store owner, said she has, "never once regretted her decision."¹⁴ It appears that majority of South Africans are appeased by their decision to move to Ireland and find their new lives more than satisfactory.

¹³ "IndigoJane" "Re: Still in South Africa." Web log comment. *New to Town*. 10 July. 2007. Web. Apr.-May 2010. <<http://www.newtotown.ie/forum/chat/south-africans-moving-ireland-792.html>>.

¹⁴ Leesa. "Africans in Dublin." Personal interview. 19 Mar. 2010.

Leeza, white South African store owner in Dublin, adds a personal perspective to migration to Dublin for employment reasons. In 1995, shortly after the end of Apartheid, Leeza moved to Dublin after meeting her Irish-born husband. After being asked why she thought such large numbers of white South Africans were moving to Ireland she replied, "The apartheid... before the black people could not get jobs, but after the end of the segregation, the black people became bitter. The black people had such a hostility to white people, even innocent ones, that it became hard for us white South Africans to find jobs."¹⁵ She went on further to explain that at the same time people began to hear about vacant jobs for males in Ireland. The discrimination against whites for jobs in South Africa and the availability of jobs in Ireland made many white South African families consider the move.

One of the most prominent reasons South Africans initially traveled to Dublin was to seek political refuge, but these two South African businesses prove that the politics of race and ethnic relations of South Africa are evident in Dublin still. The politics of the South Africa immigrants is fascinating. Even though, many people moved to Ireland to be free of political discrimination, many people still hold onto these ideologies in their new lives in Ireland. For instance, Leeza told heart-wrenching stories of problems that these racial and ethnic ideals have caused for her store. Two of the store's regulars, a South African Afrikaner couple, refuse to come into the store if any black customers are in the store. It does not matter whether the black customers are South African or not, they refuse to shop in the store until the black people leave. Not only are there racial tensions in the store, but also ethnic issues. Leeza said that Africans of various nationalities shop in the store. South Africans, black or white, will not socialize or at times even shop if there are other Africans in Jabula. In addition, she spoke of a story that greatly distressed her. Some of

¹⁵ Leeza. "Africans in Dublin." Personal interview. 19 Mar. 2010.

her best costumers speak Zulu. One day they found out she spoke Afrikaans, and since then have never step foot in the store. As a third party, it is stunning to see how the institutionalized ideas of race and ethnicity still affect the South Africans' daily lives in Dublin. It is ironic that these people came to Ireland to be free of these problems, but yet they are solidifying these prejudices in their new "politically equal" lives.

Chapter 8: Identity and the Preservation Of African Culture: Assimilation or Separation

According to Stuart Hall, "Cultural identity...is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being.' It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power."¹ Identities cross borders and oceans and in a sense create transnational ideals of culture within that immigrant groups. The African peoples calling Dublin, Ireland their new home experience this re-organizing and re-defining of their traditional cultures when they are constantly surrounded by the Irish culture. As Hall says, identity is not "fixed" and the African population is forced to confront their changing identities. Intergenerational misunderstandings result from differing identities formed by younger generations. When people sense a lose of traditional identity, there is an attempt to preserve the original culture. This chapter explores how the African population identifies themselves as either Irish, African, a mix of both, or something else and how they deal with these identities within the context of the larger Irish culture. Furthermore, upon analyzing whether this community wants to assimilate into Irish society or preserve traditional culture, the process and ways the group goes about doing either will be discussed. Identity is how a person sees his/herself and how they want others to view them. This is pertinent to the topic at hand because identity and culture are essential aspects of the African Diaspora in Dublin.

¹ Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." *Framework* 36: 222-37. *LWBooks*. Web. 29 Apr. 2010. <http://michelebeverly.com/Documents/hall_culturalid_diaspora.pdf>.

Scholar Dr. Theophilus Ejorh raised interesting questions in an a study he conducted on African identity in Ireland. Dr. Ejorh questioned a control group of 52 Africans from 16 countries. He asked a seemingly basic, yet loaded question: How do you identify yourself or “wished to be viewed by others.”² The vast majority of the group viewed themselves as African over Irish. The riveting results are that before these people identified as African, they first identified with some, “ethnicity, nationality, [or] religious affiliation.”³ After reviewing the results of the study, it appears that the African groups in Ireland do not have problems identifying as either Irish or African, but they have issues separating themselves from the homogeneous “African” group in Ireland. One participant shared, referring to white Irish people, “When they see a black man or woman...they call them Nigerian... They should know that we are different people, even though we come from the same place.”⁴ Many Irish people do not know the difference between the various African nations and therefore assume that every African they see on the street is Nigerian because that is what they have heard about in the media during the birthing scandals. This highlights one of the main identity issues for African immigrants. They are seen in the larger Irish society as “African” meaning one, uniform unit. The Africans lose their unique national identities to the overall “traditionally African” culture.

Being seen as merely “African” creates many identity complications for the Africans. Their nationalities are not recognized for their own unique culture, customs, practices, etc. It is hard to hold onto these national identities if they are constantly being compared to a hegemonic

² Ejorh, Theophilus. "The Imagined African Community in Dublin: Identity and Identification." Diss. University College Dublin, 2008. UCD, 2008. Web. 25 Apr. 2010. <<http://inter-disciplinary.net/ati/diversity/multiculturalism/mcb2/ejorh%20paper.pdf>>, 4.

³ Ejorh, 4.

⁴ Ejorh, 4.

African culture. Another obstacle that arises is that by losing a way to express their national identities, Africans lose their ethnic identities. The Irish people do not even recognize the diverse African nations; there is no way they would be able to distinguish between the different ethnic groups within a nation. For example, in Nigeria, there are three prominent ethnic groups: the Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba. In South Africa, the ethnic groups include the Xhosa, Zulu, and Afrikaners to name a few. Religious affiliation further distinguishes these groups from each other but often gets lost in the umbrella term, african. African immigrants are typically Christian Muslim, or practice an indigenous African religion. The Republic of Ireland is 88.4 percent Roman Catholic and often these other African religions get overlooked.⁵ Religion is a characteristic a person can identify him/herself with but because Africans are viewed as unvarying, religion is just another characteristic of their identities that is rarely explored.

This survey also brings another issue to the surface; Africans in Ireland are automatically viewed as "black." For instance, the Ethnicity and Cultural Section of the 2006 Irish Census lumped all Africans into one category of "black."⁶ The word is so nondescript and so limiting it creates many boundaries for the African immigrants. Once again, by doing this, the Africans lose their national and ethnic distinctions to become "black." This means that not only are all the Africans clumped in one category, but other groups of the African diaspora living in Ireland are also included in this group including African Americans and people from the Caribbean. If being black and African are interchangeable, this creates many issues for the white South Africans. The white South Africans are clearly not black, but by the way Irish society defines blackness this

⁵ United States of America. U.S. Department of State. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. *International Religious Freedom Report 2004*. U.S. Department of State, 2004. Web. Apr.-May 2010. <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2004/35461.htm>>.

⁶ Ejorh, 4

means that white South Africans lose their description as “African.” These classifications alienate the white South African population because by that formula because they are not black, they are not African.

Any person with Irish ancestry knows the historical significance of St. Patrick’s Day and the festivities that comes with the celebration of the holiday including the famous St. Patrick’s Day Parade. The parade is the epitome of Irish culture including floats of Irish dancers, bagpipers, tin whistle playing, etc. Everyone dresses in green, wears Irish shamrocks and flags, and drinks pints of Guinness and Irish Cider. People of all ages join in the festivities and all around everyone has a good “craic” of a time.⁷ If there would be any evidence of assimilation into the Irish culture by the African immigrants, this would be the time to investigate. Interestingly, not only was there participation by the Africans in the Irish festivities, there was a surprisingly large degree of assimilation. Not only were there Africans watching the parade from the sidelines, the various African nations were participants in the parade. It is estimated that 3/5 of the floats in the parade were African affiliated.

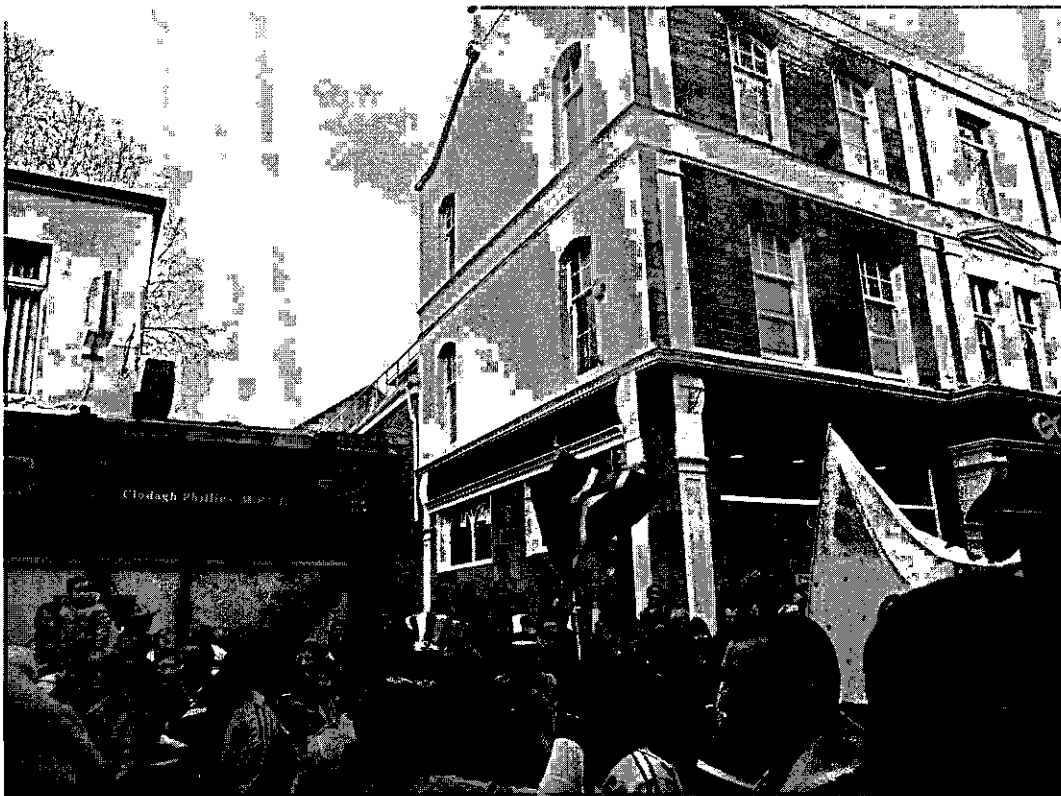


⁷ Walsh, Elaine. "Craic." *Ireland Fun Facts*. Web. May 2010. <<http://www.ireland-fun-facts.com/craic.html>>.

The Zebra Association was one such float that promoted African culture. The Association is a school that teaches students how to play traditional African instruments in Cork. As seen to the right a white Irish boy plays a type of African drum. The group marching with the Association sported traditional African garbs and outfits. The group painted their faces like zebras to represent not only the Association, but an African animal. While at the same time promoting traditional African culture, the participants waved Irish flags as they walked.



It is important to point out that although the Zebra Association represented Africa as a continent and one united culture, each individual population of Africans in Ireland had their own respective float. As discussed before, two of the prominent nations represented in Ireland are the South Africans and the Nigerians. As seen in the pictures, one group represented the Nigerian

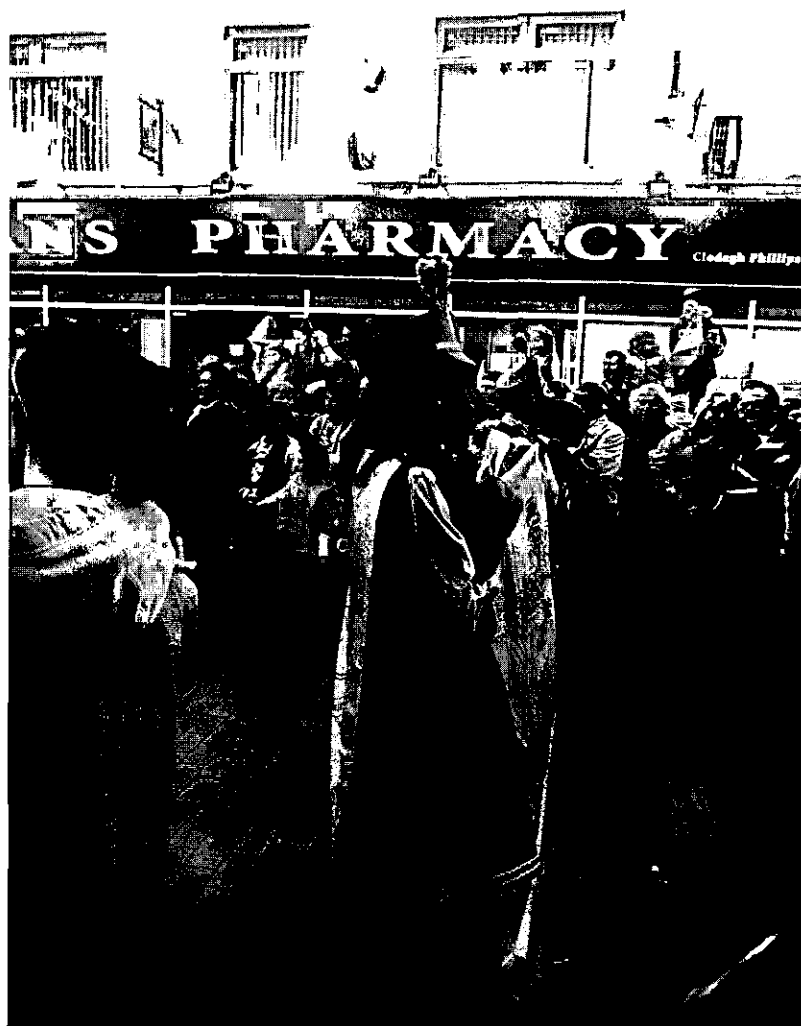


Association of Ireland and another waved South African flags. Each crowd walking with the associations were dressed in traditional African outfits and headscarves.

Children of immigrant parents tend to be the tipping point between the preservation of traditional African culture and the acceptance of the Irish culture. This youth is the group where re-evaluation of identity is going to occur. It is with this generation that evidence of assimilation will be evident. The parade provided a great insight into the identity formation of this youth. Not only were the children wearing shamrocks and massive amounts of green, but they were also involved in the traditional Irish practices. For every school group that passed, playing the tin whistle or Irish dancing, at least three if not four of the students were African. The students who were Irish dancing wore the traditional Irish dancing costumes with wigs included. Even if the float did not involve traditional Irish culture, young Africans were in every school group that

passed as rugby and soccer players or in school bands. It was mind-boggling to see the degree of participation by the African youth.

Not only were the children participating, but so were the African adults. It was not unusual to see Nigerians, South Africans, etc. wearing an Irish flag draped around their shoulder. To add to the complexity of it all, not only were they wearing the flag around their shoulders, but one member of the group always had a radio with them that blared African



music. In order to understand the importance of this scenario, it will be re-iterated. Grown African women and men walked in the St. Patrick's Day Parade with shamrocks on their faces, green on their backs, caped with an Irish flag, while all at the same time playing African music or playing an African drum. This picture says a lot about how these African immigrant groups identify themselves. By participating in the parade and wearing Irish flags, they are obviously to some degree proud of living in Ireland and being a part of its culture. To wear the flag of a

country that they were more than likely not born in is a genuine gesture and a stunning phenomenon. On top of showing Irish pride, they at the same time, were representing their African nation. By playing the African music and instruments, and waving their native



countries' flags they are showing that they also identify themselves as that nationality. This parade was the personification of W.E.B. DuBois' double-consciousness theory.

Music, in general, is an important aspect of any culture and can be evidence of syncretization of two cultures. Both cultures, Irish and African place an emphasis on music and each have unique characteristics to their music. Furthermore, many people look to pop artists and celebrities as role models, especially the youth. Music is a way for a person to identify themselves; it represents who they are as a person. For this reason, the existence of Afro-Irish artists provides an insight in identity formation for the African immigrant population. One

famous artist is pop artist, Samantha Mumba. She was born in Dublin; her father is from Zambia, and her mother is also from Ireland. It is interesting to see how Mumba identifies herself. In an interview with a *Telegraph* writer she was quoted saying, "It's an unusual cultural mix, so people notice me...But it would be stupid to think I could base a career on being black and Irish.

Anyway, I don't think of myself as being half of one thing and half another. I'm just Irish."⁸ Even though, Mumba has both an Irish-born and African-born parent, she chose to identify as Irish. It is possible that she identified as being Irish because she was born in Ireland. This could provide an insight into how future Irish-born African children are going to identify themselves in the future. To compare to the Nigerian children who for example are purposely born on Irish soil, even though they may have African heritage, maybe their birth country weighs more importance in their identity formation. The role of Mumba in this scenario is also fundamental. Mumba is in a role model position by having fame and popularity. Children who may be Afro-Irish like her may look to her as an influence, see that she identifies as Irish over African, and may follow her lead. Having an Afro-Irish celebrity like Samantha Mumba may alter the way Afro-Irish children view themselves as either African or Irish.

Similarly, Laura Izibor, another Afro-Irish pop singer shares a similar sense of identity. Laura's father was Nigerian-born and her mother Irish-born. Growing up Izibor's father was absent so she grew up Irish. Not until recently, did she decide to get back in touch with her African roots. With both of these artists, there seems to be a disconnect from African culture whether intentional or not. Izibor shares an insight into what it is like to interact with other Africans in Ireland, "Me and my brother, when we're walking down the street and see an African

⁸ qtd. in. "Samantha Mumba: Biography." *Answers.com: Wiki Q&A Combined with Free Online Dictionary, Thesaurus, and Encyclopedias*. 2010. Web. 11 May 2010. <<http://www.answers.com/topic/samantha-mumba>>.

person, there's a natural connection that you can't really explain."⁹ Although Izibor was not raised African, she still identifies with African people. The overarching theme of community is once again apparent in this quote. Unlike Mumba, Izibor recognizes her African ancestry and tries to identify with the African community. As a rising star, Izibor may have more influence of Irish-born African children and their identity formation in the future.

Rap, a popular music genre with the youth in Ireland, fuses elements of both cultures' music to create a new unique sound. For instance, one popular rap group is Geneseas Clan whose members have various African ancestry, but now live in Ireland. The group claims they have created a new version of hip-hop called "Dynamic Hip," through the combination of African, Irish and, Dancehall vibes.¹⁰ The members have culminated a new sound of music by combining musical aspects of both of their identities. This band is the definition of Afro-Irish music. Another more famous Afro-Irish rapper is Pop Dogg who has Malawian ancestry and calls Dublin his home. The lyrics of his song make references to both of his identities. For example, in his song, Callabo, sung with Millionaire Boyz (Millaz), another Afro-Irish rap group, his lyrics speak about Irish and African ideas, "ewo!! like nigerian movies/ run d.u.b city why/ why? its an invasion/ expect no magic - illusion/ lyrically supply ammunition to the gardai."¹¹ In this stanza, he refers to "Nigerian movies" and talks about running "Dub City," meaning Dublin City. In addition, he raps, "lyrically supply ammunition to the gardai." The gardai is the Gaelic word for the Irish police. Pop Dogg identifies as both African and Irish, and this can be seen in this song.

⁹ Bangre, Habibou. "Laura Izibor Shines Amid the Stars." *Afrik.com : Africa News, Maghreb News - The African Daily Newspaper*. Foundation 2ie, 7 Mar. 2009. Web. May 2010. <<http://en.afrik.com/article15395.html>>.

¹⁰ "Geneseas Clan on MySpace Music - Free Streaming MP3s, Pictures & Music Downloads." *MySpace*. 15 Oct. 2006. Web. Apr.-May 2010. <<http://www.myspace.com/geneseasclan>>.

¹¹ Popdogg. "Callabo wit Millionaire Boyz lyrics" *Www.bebo.com*. Web. Mar.-Apr. 2010. <<http://www.bebo.com/BlogView.jsp?MemberId=2981181680&BlogId=8500796134>>.

This rapper also brings another interesting aspect to the Afro-Irish rap business. He not only has a brogue, but is also bilingual, and can rap in the official language of Malawi, Chichewa. If music is evidence of syncretization, these artists prove that the cultures have creolized.

African Diaspora scholar Benedict Arnold attributes a person's belongingness to "an imagined community" that represents the community left behind in the homeland.¹² This is exactly what the Africans have done in Dublin, re-created a "Little Africa" for themselves. It is a way for the African communities to claim their own sense of place and identity. "Little Africa" is located on Parnell Street which intersects with one of the most popular and historically famous streets in Dublin, O'Connell Street. The area that belongs to "Little Africa" is about three blocks long and is in a re-habilitated part of the city. Although Parnell Street is located just off O'Connell Street, this area was neglected in decades before and some parts of the block are still sketchy and run-down. Since this area was largely neglected, the new immigrant populations have made it their home. The name "Little Africa" can be deceiving though because not only is the street home to African cultures, but also houses Caribbean and Asian stores and shops. It seems like all ethnically different cultures ended up congregating on the same block in Dublin. Walking down Parnell, there was an unmistakable change in the type of people walking down the block. There are significantly more African people, whereas in other parts of the city one may see not one African. On the other hand, because Parnell is connected to a busy area of the city, many people walking to O'Connell walk through the neighborhood. Although this is not the only area in the city that is home to African shops (another is located on Moore Street) this is by far the largest and most represented. Along with the stores, there are fast food places that boast

¹² Hall, 232.

African and Caribbean food. There are hair salons that advertise African hair braiding. This area in Dublin has become a place the African communities can call their own and offers many insights into their identity formation.

A "place" helps form a person's sense of spatial identity and gives one a feeling of belonging. The stores on Parnell Street serve this purpose for the Africans. As Keith Spiller describes, "The African Shops on Parnell Street are spaces of African identity, they offer a micro narrative of how Africans conduct and live their lives in a Dublin setting."¹³ By entering one of these stores on Parnell Street, one witnesses "the uninhibited construction of African place and identity in contemporary Dublin."¹⁴ These places serve multi-functional purposes. One of these is a store: selling traditional African foods, spices, and hair extensions and wigs. Behind the counter, hair products and personal items are kept. The back of the store serves a completely different function; this is the social area. It can be related to a living room in a store, including couches, pillows, lounge chairs, etc. Africans from all over the city use these areas in the store to catch up with old friends and relate stories about their home countries. The area is used for typical social activities including, drinking, eating, smoking, etc. It is said when an African first arrives in Dublin this is the first place he/she goes to connect with friends, family, or other Africans. Spiller equates this area to a pub and a Guinness for an Irish person; they are the staples of Irish culture and identity. Socializing in Little Africa and eating traditional African food are its equivalent; they are paramount to African culture and identity in Dublin.¹⁵

¹³ Spiller, Keith. "Multiculturalism Ireland Dublin Race Little Africa Parnell Street Cultural Geography Ireland." *UCC home page*. Web. 02 Feb. 2010. <<http://www.ucc.ie/ucc/depts/geography/stafhome/denis/spiller.htm>>.

¹⁴ Spiller, <http://www.ucc.ie/ucc/depts/geography/stafhome/denis/spiller.htm>.

¹⁵ Spiller, <http://www.ucc.ie/ucc/depts/geography/stafhome/denis/spiller.htm>.

Like music, food can be evidence of the syncretization of cultures. One of the main attractions on Parnell Street and in Little Africa is the availability of African food. There is an obvious attempt to preserve African culture through the importation of this food. By selling African food in Dublin, there is a transference of culture from one continent to another. The Africans are bringing African culture to other parts of the world. Since food is crucial to a culture and there are opportunities for Irish and African food to mix, this allows the possibility for the creation of Afro-Irish food and cuisine. Not only does the importation of African food to Dublin represent a transference of culture for Africa, but it also means change for Ireland. By allowing for this food to be sold on a street off of busy O'Connell Street, which gets busy foot traffic, Ireland is leaving room for the emergence of multiculturalism and the re-organizing of traditional Irish food and culture. This area in Dublin is the physical manifestation of the exchanges and changes happening between the two cultures. Little Africa, at the same time, is a place of cultural preservation, but also the physical place of creolization and syncretization of Irish and African cultures.

The African Culture Centre located on Abbey Street Lower in Dublin symbolizes the attempt to preserve the African cultures in Ireland. Two of the Centre's goals are to: "1. Contribute and promote Personal & Community Empowerment of the African Community in Ireland and; 2. Contribute and promote an African perspective within development education on the Island of Ireland"¹⁶ With the first goal, there is a push for community development. Notice the clause mentions the development of an *African* community *in Ireland*, but does not call for the development of community between Africans *and* Ireland. Regardless, through the goal the

¹⁶ "Africa Centre Dublin Ireland - What We Do." *Africa Centre Dublin Ireland - Home*. Web. Apr.-May 2010. <http://www.africacentre.ie/?What_we_do>.

Centre tries to cater to needs of African immigrants in Dublin. It includes many branch programs and resources like: sustainable employment, anti-racism initiative, and African health initiative. Furthermore, the Centre promotes a poverty alleviation project for poverty in Ireland and Africa alike. Many of the programs they have implemented work towards a just and included African community in Ireland. The Centre tries to help all Africans have the most successful and fulfilled lives as possible.

The second priority of the group promotes a unique goal in mind. The Centre leaders try to persuade the Irish school system to be aware of the "African perspective" of their teaching. They want to ensure the typical stereotypes and misconceptions about the African continent and its nations are not taught in the Irish curriculum. This is an honorable intention since many Irish schools now have a significant number of African students in their classes. Also, by educating the younger generations, the misunderstandings of the African nations, spoken about earlier in the chapter, would be eradicated. The leaders emphasize that African culture, history, politics, etc. should be taught in Irish schools. One very interesting goal the center has set for itself is to inform the Irish school teachers about the traditional African ways of learning including storytelling and dance and to one day somehow implement these techniques into the Irish learning process. Even if this goal has not proved very successful yet, it raises issues of cultural preservation. The leaders of the centre believe that by teaching storytelling, dancing, African culture and history, it will be a way for the African cultures to live through the generations and survive in Ireland. It is fascinating that they believe in this ideal so much that they want it to be included in the Irish school system. Not only do they want to sustain this culture, they want the Irish system and tradition to change and incorporate African styles of teaching. Again, in these

school systems there seems to be a conflict of identity. Currently, the younger generation of Africans are not being educated about African history and culture in school, but are learning about Ireland's history and culture. It is obvious that the older generations of Africans fear that their children are not being taught enough about their heritage in school.

The Centre also sponsors cultural events to help build a community amongst the Africans while at the same promoting cultural preservation. One of the most innovative and recent projects the Centre launched is the African Youth Society. In honor of the creation of the Youth Society, the Centre is hosting a concert that features youth bands that play both Irish and African instruments in their bands. The group plans to operate like a youth group as a place for young Africans and Irish alike to congregate and hang out together. The Centre plans to host African drum and dancing classes. The Centre is a place Africans can go to find commonality amongst similar people. If one is ever missing their home in Africa; they go to the Centre to speak with a fellow African about their common experiences. In a way, like Little Africa, this is a home away from home for the African communities in Dublin.

Another way the African Diaspora in Dublin promotes African heritage and culture is through newspapers and television. The most popular newspaper is known as *The African Voice*. This newspaper advocates everything African. There are advertisements for travel agencies that fly to various African nations so that people can return home if they need or like. Each page displays an ad for all the African businesses in Dublin. *The African Voice* keeps the community informed about news from Africa. Some of the features boast African people's accomplishments in Irish society including new promotions or positions. For instance, the newspaper published for the two-week period of March 4-17, 2010 published an article entitled, "Ireland Gets a Swahili

Institute” and “African Marriages: Falling Apart in Ireland?” These articles relay personal stories of how the African community and its traditions are faring in Ireland and also how Ireland is changing to accommodate for the preservation of African culture. Besides the newspaper, there is also an “African Diaspora Network” channel. Through this television program, people are able to receive direct news from Africa quickly. The newspaper and the television channel serve as ways for the community to stay connected with their homelands.

After analyzing the relationship and interactions between the two cultures: Irish and African, it can be argued that both a syncretization and a push for preservation is occurring. It appears that identity, as Hall says, is ever-changing. There is no one uniform description to describe the Irish, African, or Afro-Irish identity and culture. Each individual has her/his own definition of his/her personal identity and culture. This just further proves that African nations, identity, and culture can not be homogenized and are just as unique as Irish culture. It should be interesting to see the cultivation of the two unique cultures into a distinct Afro-Irish culture possibly in the future. In addition, the future shall tell whether the preservation of the African cultures proves successful or whether they become a part of the creolization process.

Chapter 9: Conclusion and Final Arguments

In all honestly, when first researching this topic, I had no idea of the gravity and realness of the African population in Ireland. Traveling to Ireland to see the African immigrants for myself completely changed my perspective on the situation. There are not many scholarly sources on the topic to begin with, but nothing equates to seeing the interactions first-hand. Furthermore, there is still further investigation to be done and more questions to be asked. This paper is just the beginning of my research.

The complexity of the interactions between the Irish and African people and cultures is fascinating. Although many questions were analyzed, many questions were left unanswered, not fully developed, or left me unsatisfied. For instance, at the St. Patrick's Day Parade, it was mind-boggling to see people of various African nations playing the tin whistle, Irish dancing, and wearing the Irish flag around their shoulders. On the other hand, at the same parade, floats promoted traditional African culture and played African drums. It is apparent that the African Diaspora is assimilating in Irish culture somewhat. Again, this can not be generalized for all African nations or all African people. Which aspects of Irish culture do the Africans participate in? Is it a conscious choice? Why? I began to question this after I left the parade feeling that African immigrants are members of Irish society. Then only to have my feelings dashed when I went to a pub afterward to celebrate and found not one black person. I asked a man at the pub why this was and he said, in so many words, that if an African walked into this pub right now, we would tell him to get the fuck out.¹ Maybe this is how the Africans choose which aspects to

¹ "Africans in Dublin." Personal interview. 17 Mar. 2010.

assimilate into Irish society, the ones that the Irish people allow them to participate in? As much as I would hope for acceptance of each other, there clearly is not.

More evidence of this belief is when I was told a story by the man I was staying with named Kevin Leonard. He told me of an African barbershop who had placed a sign in the window that said, "No Whites." As the story goes, the reason for the sign was because a white Irish woman got her hair done at the barbershop and walked out without paying. The barbershop from then on did not trust white people and did not want them in their store. The sign was removed by the time I went to visit the store, but it still got me thinking. The level of distrust in this situation was high and I wondered if this was reflective of all interactions between whites and blacks in Dublin. From my experience, the Africans and the Irish live their own separate lives and interact only when they have to. I asked Kevin what he thought about this and he told me, "I work with some of them Nigerians. I don't mind them working with me, as long as they work."² Kevin, believes that majority of people in Dublin do not mind the Africans being there, except the older generations who believe the Africans are just in Ireland to live off the welfare system. Even in Mr. Leonard's quote there is a subtle hidden statement of *if they work*. It is stories and situations like these that make me question what the future looks like for Africans in Ireland.

To further demonstrate the tension, on April 3, 2010, shortly after I left Dublin, a hate crime was committed. Toyosi Shitta Bey, a 15 year old Nigerian boy, was left victim to a vicious hate crime committed by two white Irish boys. Bey was murdered, stabbed through the heart by the two boys. The murder was racially motivated. The two Irish boys made racial remarks

² Leonard, Kevin. "Africans in Dublin." Personal interview. 13 Mar. 2010.

towards Bey before they killed him.³ I hope this does not reflect a trend in the future for Ireland. Bey lived in Dublin since he was five, played Irish football, and may have considered himself Irish, but he was still not accepted because of the color of his skin. It is sad and I hope Ireland does not turn out like the United States where racism is institutionalized and affects the lives of billions of people on a daily basis. I think it already has though. I do not think it is very ironic that the Welfare office is located on Parnell Street in the center of Little Africa.

Besides these unanswered questions, I have learned a lot through my research on the African Diaspora in Dublin. One random fact I learned is about Guinness. As scholar Theophilus Ejorh says, "Africans consume about one-third of Guinness's total world's production, three times greater than the total North American consumption."⁴ Nigeria is Guinness' third largest consumerist market in the world. I find this fascinating and ironic, because Guinness is said to be the epitome of Irish culture, and Africa consumes 1/3 of all Guinness made. These African immigrants were probably exposed to Irish culture before they even immigrated to Ireland.

The Nigerian population, as a whole, has an incredible story to tell. Not only did they find a loophole in Irish immigration policy and use it to their advance, they ultimately had a significant role in the change of Irish immigration policy. The creative immigration process they developed constantly kept me guessing while doing my research. These Nigerian women and their children represent the physical manifestation of a changing Ireland. These children are the new generation of Irish-born citizens. The white South Africans added an entire new dynamic to my research. The group allowed me to see the racial innuendos involved with the immigration

³ "Murdered Just for Being Black." *Sunday Tribune*. 4 Apr. 2010. Web. 1 May 2010. <<http://www.tribune.ie/article/2010/apr/04/murdered-just-for-being-black/>>.

⁴ Ejorh, Theophilus. "Immigration and Citizenship: African Immigrants in Ireland." Thesis. University College Dublin, 2008. UCD, 2008. Web. Apr.-May 2010. <http://www.ucd.ie/mcri/immigration_and_citizenship.pdf>.

process. Their story is just as captivating as the Nigerians. The political aftermath of Apartheid still affects their every days lives even so far away from home. The development of social networks between fellow South Africans is also applaudable.

There are so many facets of research on the African Diaspora in Dublin that it is hard to make one conclusion about the research. In addition, for me this is just the beginning; I have a lot more research I want to do. I hope through this paper I bring attention to this understudied African population. This population in Ireland not only represents the new faces of Ireland, but also a new sect of the African Diaspora. After talking to people in Dublin, I also heard rumors that there may be a new television program featuring an African family living in Dublin. If the show does air, it would be incredible for my research and providing insights into African life in Dublin. The African Diaspora is making its own niche in Irish society. Their stories and experiences are a history in progress. They work the Irish immigration system, assimilate into Irish culture while at the same time preserving their traditional African culture, and deal with racial tension from Irish society. To end this leg of my journey I want to quote a Samantha Mumba song "Where Does it End Now," because she represents the developing Afro-Irish culture, "I don't remember how it started/But where does it end now?/And it's growing every moment/Where does it end now?"⁵

⁵ "SAMANTHA MUMBA LYRICS - Where Does It End Now." *A-Z Lyrics Universe*. Web. 1 May 2010. <<http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/samanthamumba/wheredoesitendnow.html>>.