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To: Dennis Switzer

From: Margaret Wade-Lewis

THE IMPACT OF THE TURNER/HERSKOVITS  
CONNECTION ON ANTHROPOLOGY AND  
LINGUISTICS

with warm regards

Margaret Wade-Lewis

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That Lorenzo Turner and Melville Herskovits shared scholarly interests is evident from their publications. Turner is best known for *Africanism in the Gullah Dialect* (1949), the first scholarly study of Gullah and the source which established that elements of the African linguistic heritage still survive in North America. Melville Herskovits is best known for *The Myth of the Negro Past* (1941), the first study to demonstrate convincingly that many cultural patterns from Africa have been retained among African people in North America, South America and the Caribbean. Because Herskovits' book appeared in print first and contains quotes from Turner's manuscript,<sup>1</sup> it has been the prevalent assumption that Herskovits exerted significant influence on Turner, but that the reverse was not the case. However, a study of their correspondence and other documents reveals that they knew each other well, having developed over a period of years a mutually supportive and beneficial relationship.

The lives of Turner and Herskovits were parallel in a number of significant respects. Both were born in 1895 of education-conscious parents; both developed an interest in Africa by the 1930s (Turner as linguist and Herskovits as an anthropologist); both became the leading scholars in their specialties during their lifetimes; both adopted the African retentions thesis and developed it in their major works; both served on the faculty of Howard University (Herskovits as an Assistant Professor of Anthropology, 1925-1926, Turner as Chair of English, 1917-1928); both attained higher degrees from the University of Chicago, and both later relocated to the Chicago area, Turner to Roosevelt (1946) and Herskovits to Northwestern (1927); both were instrumental in the founding of African Studies in the United States (Turner served as Coordinator of African Studies at Fisk from 1944 to 1946, and after 1946 became one of the founders of African Studies at Roosevelt; Herskovits

developed the program at Northwestern in 1948); both traveled and conducted research in the South, Herskovits studying African Americans for his physical anthropological research, Turner conducting research in South Carolina and Georgia to study Gullah (1932, 1933, 1942) and in Louisiana to study Creole (1935); both traveled and studied in Africa (Herskovits making the first of several trips to Dahomey, now Benin, in 1931, Turner conducting research in Nigeria in 1951-1952); both were instrumental in the founding of the Negro Studies Committee (NSC) of the American Council of Learned Societies; both were invited to serve on the same panel discussions about African retentions in the New World; and both attended meetings of the same professional organizations, such as the conferences of the Modern Languages Association, and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History.

Turner was born on August 21, 1895, in Elizabeth City, North Carolina, to Rooks and Elizabeth Freeman Turner. He graduated *cum laude* from Howard University in 1914. After working on steamboats to gain funds to graduate school, he entered Harvard University and received an M.A. in English in 1917. He then returned to Howard University, where he served as head of the English Department until 1928. During a leave of absence, he pursued and received a Ph.D. in English from the University of Chicago in 1926.<sup>2</sup> During 1928-1929, with his eldest brother, Arthur, he founded and edited the *Washington Sun* newspaper. When the paper ceased publication, he returned to academia. From 1929 to 1946, he chaired the English Department at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. He coordinated the African Studies Program at Fisk (founded in 1943 and the first such program in the United States) from 1944 to 1946, and was one of its founders. He was the first African American member of the American Dialect Society the Linguistic Society of America, and the International Linguistic Association. The latter portion of his academic career was spent on the faculty of Roosevelt University in Chicago, where he became one of the early founders of an African Studies Program outside an African American university, and director of the Peace Corps Program in 1960. In the mid-1960s, he taught an African culture course at the University of Illinois Circle campus, Chicago. He lectured widely around the United States and was consulted by many dialectologists, among them Mitford Matthews, Raven McDavid, Robert Hall and Hans Kurath. He died in Chicago on February 10, 1972 at the age of 77.<sup>3</sup>

Herskovits was born on September 10, 1895, in Bellefontaine, Ohio, to Herman and Henrietta Hart Herskovits. He studied at the University of Cincinnati and Hebrew Union College. When his studies were interrupted by World War I, he served in the Army

Medical Corps. After his discharge in 1919, he studied briefly at the University of Poitiers in France. Upon his return to the United States, he completed a Ph.B. in History from the University of Chicago in 1920, and a Ph.D. in Anthropology from Columbia University in 1923. That same year he was named a fellow of the National Research Council Board of Biological Sciences, which made it possible for him to conduct research for three years on the physical anthropology of African Americans. During this same period (1924-1927), he taught at Columbia University and Howard University. In 1927, he moved to Chicago to join the faculty of Northwestern University as the only anthropologist in the sociology department. He was instrumental in the creation of the anthropology department, which he chaired, beginning in 1938, and was instrumental in the creation of African Studies.

In 1961, Herskovits became Chair of African Studies, the first such position in a non-African American university in the United States. During his years at Northwestern, he became one of the most influential anthropologists in the United States. He was a member of the American Council of Learned Societies, and many other organizations. He was consulted widely by foundations and organizations both in the United States and abroad, and influenced directions in American anthropology for generations. He died in Evanston, Illinois on February 25, 1963, at the age of 68.<sup>4</sup>

The forces that caused Turner and Herskovits to develop interest in Africa and in African retentions in the New World were socio-cultural, political and academic. First of all, both men came of age during the period of World War I when America became an international power. Secondly, the United States was experiencing the cultural revolution of the Harlem Renaissance, when, to quote Langston Hughes, "the Negro was in vogue." During this era, Black arts flourished. They had been discovered in Europe when jazz and blues were introduced there by the African American bands of the segregated Army. They were encouraged in the United States by the development of Harlem as an African American cultural center, and by the availability of funds for publications by African American writers and recordings by musicians, the staging of theatrical productions, and the presentation of plastic arts. Marcus Garvey's development of the "back to Africa" movement was of inestimable impact in generating interest in Africa among the working class, in giving "new meaning to Africa for American blacks," as well as to concepts such as "black is beautiful," "black pride," and "black nationalism." Another influence resulted from the immigration of African Americans from the American South and the Caribbean to urban areas.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, the new nationalism which had developed among African Americans, encouraged by successful participation in the war abroad, successful "escape" from peonage in the South, and the sense of pride and independence fostered by the Garvey Movement, was further shaped by African American leaders and the middle class. A number of organizations and publications dedicated to political awareness and civil rights were founded.<sup>6</sup>

Segments of the Euro-American population began to work more closely with the African American population and show increased interest in African American subject matter. Euro-Americans participated in the Niagara Conference and the founding of the National Association for Colored People and the Urban League. Euro-American authors such as Ridgeley Torrence (*Simon the Cyprian*, 1917), Eugene O'Neill (*The Emperor Jones*, 1920) and DuBoise Heyward (*Porgy and Bess*, 1927), attempted fresh interpretations of African American life through drama. In folklore and anthropology, Ambrose Gonzales, Elsie Clews Parsons, George Philip Krapp, Charles Jones, and Guy Johnson studies African American culture, collecting materials and writing influential interpretations.<sup>7</sup>

It is significant that a number of African Americans active in the Harlem Renaissance, such as Ralph Bunche, Sterling Brown, Aaron Douglas, Alain Locke and Charles H. Thompson taught at Howard University when Turner and Herskovits were there. Others, such as W.E.B. Du Bois and Carter G. Woodson, were in New York or Washington, D.C., and were outspoken voices at conferences of their respective organizations and in official publications.<sup>8</sup> Turner's dissertation, "Anti-Slavery Sentiment in American Literature Prior to 1865" (1926), was published by the Associated Publishers, a branch of Carter G. Woodson's Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. One of Herskovits' early articles appeared in *The New Negro*, the chronicle of the Harlem Renaissance edited by Howard University philosophy professor, Alain Locke. At least two others were published in journals of his African American colleagues, among them *Opportunity*, edited by Charles Johnson, and *The Journal of Negro History*, edited by Carter G. Woodson.<sup>9</sup>

Turner's work on linguistics began when, in 1930, he responded to a call from Hans Kurath, Chair of the Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada Project to study dialectology at the 1930 Linguistics Summer Institute in New York City. Later that same year, on December 11, 1930, Kurath wrote Turner and a number of other persons, asking them to participate in the data collection for the Project. The letter was a mimeograph to which Kurath attached a personal note to Turner: "The investigation will ultimately be

extended Southward. I hope that you will help us then."<sup>10</sup> Turner's reply was swift. On December 24, 1930, he answered Kurath, telling him that he would forego his plans to spend the summer teaching at South Carolina State College in Orangeburg in order to attend the 1931 Linguistics Institute:

... (S)ince receiving your letter I have decided to attend the Linguistic Institute again to take Professor Jud's course of lectures and possibly some other courses that will help me in my future work on American dialects. . . .

I shall always be happy to take an active part in work on dialects as I am qualified to take. *I enjoy it better than any work I have ever done. . . .*<sup>11</sup>

Trained for his work by the Atlas Project, and armed with its interview and transcription process and an 800-item questionnaire spanning a range of lexical, phonological and grammatical items, Turner collected data in the field in the South. During several summers, he taught at African American universities, among them Alcorn A. and M. College (Mississippi), Tuskegee Institute (Alabama), and South Carolina State (Orangeburg) while he conducted research.

According to Turner's widow, Mrs. Lois Turner Williams, Turner's interest in Gullah had developed during the summer of 1929, when he taught at South Carolina State College in Orangeburg, some sixty miles from the heart of Gullah territory. He observed first hand that the dialect was significantly different in phonology, syntax and semantics from other Southern dialects with which he was familiar. In addition, over time, he learned of the unusual personal names of his students, called "basket names."<sup>12</sup> Although Gullah had been considered a fascinating "relic dialect" and many writers had commented on it, collected Gullah folk tales and written novels, there had been no linguistic studies. Those who commented on Gullah attributed its dialectical differences to archaic English dialect retentions.<sup>13</sup> As Turner listened to his students and others in the community, he became increasingly discontented with the "archaic English" thesis and began to suspect that Gullah was influenced by the languages of West Africa to a far greater extent than anyone had suggested.<sup>14</sup> Samuel Stoney and Gertrude Shelby's *Black Genesis*, which appeared the summer after Turner's observations, was one of the few sources to suggest that Gullah had retained any words from African languages. Their book asserted that Gullah had retained "some twenty or more words of African derivation, of which six or seven are in common use."<sup>15</sup>

By the fall of 1932, Turner had received a grant from the American Council of Learned Societies to conduct the research on Gullah which ultimately led to his famous study. He was the first

American linguist to carry out systematic interviews of creole speakers. He remained on the Sea Islands until late December 1932, and returned again in the summer of 1933 and 1942, at which time he collected another 900 lexical items and completed his manuscript.<sup>16</sup> In addition to the interviews, he collected numerous wire and rubber tape recordings, some of which he played, beginning in 1932, when he made presentations on Gullah for the Linguistic Society of America, the American Dialect Society, and at the Schomburg Library.<sup>17</sup>

Turner followed his Gullah research, in 1933, with a collection of data from Louisiana. He planned to write a study of Louisiana Creole similar to *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*, but the time and clerical assistance he needed for such an undertaking were not available to him. The Africanist in Turner began to take definite shape when he decided that, in order to properly analyze his Gullah data, he needed a background in African languages. Thus, he announced his intentions to Daniel Jones, Secretary of the International Phonetic Association, to study in London:

Next year at the University of London, in addition to pursuing certain courses in phonetics, I should like to study the phonetic structure of certain West African languages with a view to determine, if possible, the nature and extent of African survivals in Gullah.<sup>18</sup>

A fellowship from the American Council of Learned Societies and a grant-in-aid from the Humanities Institute of Fisk University enabled him to spend 1936-1937 at the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London, where he studied under the direction of Ida C. Ward, Head of the Department of African Languages. His concentration was on Kimbundu, KiKongo, Yoruba, Ifik, Ewe, Twi, Fante, Hausa, Mende, Ga and Wolof. During the summer of 1937, he traveled to Paris and interviewed more than twenty Africans from the area formerly called French West Africa, a process which increased his appreciation of African culture.<sup>19</sup>

He had hoped to follow up his study in London with a stay of two years in Africa; however, funds were not available.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, he returned to the United States and spent 1938-1939 as a Research Fellow in Linguistics at Yale University. During that year he studied descriptive linguistics with Edward Sapir, learned Arabic, and learned Umbundu from materials made available to him by Rev. Henry McDowell, a former missionary to Angola.<sup>21</sup>

A major misfortune of Turner's life was that funds were not available to him for all his projects. According to his various grant

proposals and letters, he had planned to write descriptive grammars and dictionaries, and to compile volumes of songs and folklore on many New World African languages and creoles. After completing his work on Gullah and Louisiana Creole, he wished to conduct research on Yoruba in Nigeria, on Nago in Brazil and Caribbean creoles in British and Dutch Guiana, Jamaica and Haiti.<sup>22</sup>

Melville Herskovits' first opportunity to study African data came while he was at Columbia University, completing his Ph.D. under the direction of Franz Boas. In anthropology, scholarly interest in Native American culture was giving way to interest in Africa. Thus, although Herskovits did not visit Africa until almost a decade later, in 1931, his dissertation was *The Cattle Complex in East Africa* (1923). His interest in New World African retentions developed after his stay at Howard University and two summers of research in the Suriname.<sup>23</sup>

When Herskovits was on leave from Columbia University, serving on the faculty at Howard University, he continued the physical anthropological studies of African Americans which characterized much of his research were that African Americans were an assimilated people, both culturally and physically, having given up most of African culture, and having become genetically infused with Native Americans and Euro-Americans. Typical of his position at the time was the article he published in Locke's volume, *The New Negro* (1925). This document serves as the major philosophical source describing "the New Negro" of the Harlem Renaissance. The majority of the articles pointed toward the importance of Africa as a source of the African American's culture and/or inspiration. At that point in his career, though, Herskovits remained unconvinced. In "The Negro's Americanism," Herskovits' contribution to the volume, he described his attempts to find African cultural patterns among African Americans in Harlem, a community he considered representative of a cross-section of African American life:

I met persons who were lawyers and doctors and editors and writers, who were chauffeurs and peddlers and longshoremen and real estate brokers and capitalists, teachers and nurses and students and waiters and cooks. And all Negroes. Cabarets and theatres, drug stores and restaurants just like those everywhere else. And finally, after a time, it occurred to me that what I was seeing was a community just like any other American community. The same pattern, only a different shade!<sup>24</sup>

What there is to-day in Harlem distinct from the white culture which surrounds it, is, as far as I am able to see, merely a remnant from the peasant days in the South. Of the African culture, not a trace. Even the spirituals are an expression of the emotion of the Negro playing through the typical religious patterns of white America. . . .<sup>25</sup>

Acculturation of African Americans continued to be the theme of Herskovits' work through a number of publications, among them "Acculturation and the American Negro" (1927), and his first book, *The American Negro: A Study in Racial Crossing* (1928).<sup>26</sup>

According to his wife and frequent collaborator, Frances Shapiro Herskovits, her husband began to truly alter his thinking after his two summers in Suriname (1928 and 1929) among Sranan and Saramaccan speakers. One particularly telling experience for Herskovits took place when he left Suriname and traveled to Barbados, Antigua, St. Lucia, St. Kitts, and Dominica, where he played the African game "wari" with the dockworkers. Wari was a game he had learned from the African people in the Bush of Suriname. He also relished the African dancing and drumming at the *winti* dances in the city of Paramaribo. Years later, he realized that he had observed, either in the Bush or in Paramaribo, "nearly all of western sub-Saharan Africa represented."<sup>27</sup>

Once Herskovits had experienced for himself African retentions dispersed in the New World, his views began to change. Glen Gilbert suggests that the development of the change can be traced back to comments Herskovits made in book reviews between 1926 and 1929.<sup>28</sup> His new views were nourished by his field work and his association with other persons of similar views. Based on my research, there is much to indicate that one of the most influential was Lorenzo Turner. Turner and Herskovits exchanged a number of letters; they met one-on-one to discuss their mutual interests; they appeared together on panels and in workshops; and they worked together on the Committee of Negro Studies of the American Council of Learned Societies.

The Turner/Herskovits letters were written between 1936 and 1956 and chronicle their development as proponents of the African retentions hypothesis. The first letter of record is from Turner to Herskovits, informing him of the status of his Gullah research, his interest in African speech in "certain parts of South America, Jamaica, Haiti and other West Indian islands," and his impending trip to London to study African languages.<sup>29</sup>

Although the tone of Turner's letter and Herskovits' reply are formal, it is evident from the content that the two men already knew each other. Before closing, Turner welcomed suggestions from Herskovits:

I shall certainly appreciate any suggestions you may care to give me. I have recently read with a great deal of interest and profit your and Mrs. Herskovits' *Rebel Destiny* and *An Outline of Dahomean Religious Belief* and your article in the *Journal of Negro History* for January, 1936.<sup>30</sup>

The *Journal of Negro History* article to which he refers is "The Significance of West Africa for Negro Research." Herskovits responded in a cordial and supportive letter:

I am glad you are going on with your work on Negro speech, and I am sure you will find the leads to African correspondences quite numerous.<sup>31</sup>

Herskovits then offered Turner pages from his and Frances Herskovits' manuscript of what was to be *Suriname Folk-lore*, which contained "a discussion of certain aspects of the linguistic problem."<sup>32</sup>

Although there are several letters of record during the next three years, the next major letter indicating the sharing of information related to the African retentions hypothesis is a Herskovits letter to Turner in which Herskovits requests two papers from Turner, the paper on Gullah, which Turner had read at the Conference of the Modern Language Association in December 1938, and the unpublished *Africanisms* manuscript. Herskovits explains:

The reason I am asking these favors is because I am now faced with the job of summarizing the work that has been done in the whole matter of African survivals in American Negro life for the study being made under the auspices of the Carnegie people. Your papers will give me some very telling ammunition in establishing the invalidity of the position of those who insist that everything in southern speech is derived from European sources, and since the results of this study will, undoubtedly, be important in giving direction to support future projects, I think you will agree with me that it is of the utmost importance that the most forceful presentation possible be made.

Certainly, it would make me extremely happy if anything I write would further the very fruitful line of research you have been following, and I hope that it will be possible for you to cooperate with me by making available to me those materials that have appeared or are ready to appear.<sup>33</sup>

Herskovits had just been commissioned by the Carnegie Corporation to work with Gunnah Myrdal in producing a study of the African background of African Americans. He was a good choice in that his work of the latter 1930s had demonstrated his strong interest in New World African culture. While Turner would have also been an ideal scholar to provide one of the documents in the Carnegie series, apparently it was felt that persons who were non-African American would be more suitable.<sup>34</sup>

The 1938 *Annual Report* of the President of the Carnegie Corporation described its priorities related to the collection of data on African Americans as follows:

The Corporation has for some time felt the need for a general study of the Negro in the United States, not only as a guide to its own activities, but for broader reasons. It appeared to be essential that such a study be made under the direction of a person who would be free from the presuppositions and emotional charges which we all share to a greater or less degree on this subject, and the Corporation, therefore, looked outside the United States for a distinguished student of the social sciences who would be available to organize and direct the project. It is a pleasure to announce that Dr. Karl Gunnar Myrdal has been granted a leave of absence from the University of Stockholm to enable him to accept the invitation of the Trustees to undertake this work.<sup>35</sup>

By the time Herskovits requested Turner's *Africanisms* manuscript, their professional relationship had apparently resulted in enough rapport to make such a request comfortable. Turner responded by return mail, informing Herskovits that he expected to complete *Africanisms* in four or five weeks, and that he would be glad to have him examine it before it was published. Turner also explained Gullah naming traditions, elaborating on the number of semantic items from a series of African languages he had documented in Gullah:

The following figures will give you some idea of the extent of the African words I have collected in coastal Georgia and South Carolina and their distribution: Kongo, 987 (all of these are listed in W.H. Bentley's *Dictionary and Grammar of the Kongo Language*); Mende, 814; Ewe (Togo and Dahomey), 475; Mandinka, 438; Twi, Ga, and Fante, 332; Vai, 226; Bambara, 225; Umbundu, 164; Efik, 180; Wolof, 133; Yoruba, 132; Kimbundu, 93; Fula, 73; Temne, 72; Hausa, 63; and between 10 and 20 from each of the following languages: Gola, Kpelle, Ibo, Djerma, Bobangi, and Bukuba-Lulua. . . . The final list will contain more than 4,000 words.<sup>36</sup>

In closing, Turner suggests that he and Herskovits meet during the final week of November, 1939, to discuss his future linguistic research on African survivals.<sup>37</sup>

Herskovits, in his return letter, invited Turner to visit him at Northwestern and to speak there:

Your letter of October 24 was very exciting, and I shall be eager to talk over your past work and future plans with you when you come. . . . I hope it will be possible to get you to talk about your research to a group of my students who are interested in these problems and taking a course which covers them. . . . I shall arrange my time so as to be entirely free while you are here, as soon as I learn definitely of your plans.<sup>38</sup>

Herskovits' response to Turner's information on the semantic items from specific African languages in Gullah reflected his awareness that Turner's data pointed to more African influence from some ethnic groups and less from others than had been indicated in Elizabeth Donnan (1930-1935) and some other previous documents. . . . It is apparent that you have given us some leads that are going to make revision of earlier hypotheses necessary.<sup>39</sup>

After Turner's trip to Northwestern, the Turner/Herskovits relationship became less formal. Beginning with the Herskovits letter of December 11, 1939, Herskovits referred to Turner as "Dear Turner," rather than "Dear Mr. Turner." Turner responded with "Dear Herskovits." During the trip, Herskovits had entertained Turner at a luncheon with the anthropology department and some humanities faculty members interested in Africa, among them Joseph Greenberg and William R. Bascom (Turner spent time with the latter two); Turner had spoken and played selected tapes; Herskovits had made re-recordings of several of his Trinidad tapes for Turner and agreed to recommend him for a grant for the Brazil trip.<sup>40</sup>

Herskovits' December 11, 1939 letter to Turner underscored the value he placed on having Turner as a colleague and on having another scholar committed to the African retentions hypothesis with whom issues could be debated:

It was a great pleasure to have you and Mrs. Turner up here and to have had the opportunity of talking over the problems in which we are mutually interested as we did. We all hope that we will have another opportunity of seeing you both before your departure for Brazil.<sup>41</sup>

Turner's letter of February 17, 1940, informed Herskovits of his plans to leave for Brazil on June 14, 1940. In the meantime, however, Turner expected to see Herskovits in Washington, D.C. on March 29-30, 1940, for the historic meeting of the American Council of Learned Societies during which the Committee on Negro Studies was formed.

Over the years, the Turner/Herskovits letters focused increasingly on discussion of mutual interests as their bond became more supportive. They could call on each other for favors and feel secure that the other would respond positively. When Turner requested that Herskovits recommend him for a grant for the trip to conduct research in Brazil, Herskovits wrote Waldo Leland, Director of the American Council of Learned Societies, advocating for Turner beyond the level Turner had requested. Herskovits was careful to point out, for example, that Turner had been studying Portuguese in preparation for the trip. He also advocated that

Turner should receive a larger budget than the request suggested so that he could purchase a reliable tape recorder which operated on gasoline (for occasions when the power supply might be inadequate):

You may remember that the Carnegie people gave me a budget for the trip [to Trinidad] that permitted me to acquire one of those machines.<sup>42</sup>

Further, Herskovits registered strong support for Turner's proposed linguistic research:

Turner is a linguist, and it will be on the linguistic level that his research will be significant and that it will be significant. I do not doubt.<sup>43</sup>

During 1940-1941 when Turner was in Brazil, he wrote Herskovits from Bahia, informing him that "the field here is rich in African material and I am having no difficulty finding it."<sup>44</sup>

Turner and Herskovits were both secure proponents of the African retentions hypothesis by the 1940s. They were gratified when other colleagues conducted field work which made them converts, and sometimes commented to each other about them. For example, on one occasion, Turner, writing Herskovits from Brazil, informed him that he had seen E. Franklin Frazier in Bahia. Frazier was the first well-known African-American sociologist and a mutual colleague from the Howard University days and from the first meeting of the Committee on Negro Studies. Frazier's ideas provided counterpoint for those of Turner and Herskovits, as is evident in the transcript from the American Council of Learned Societies Conference on Negro Studies, March 29-30, 1940.<sup>45</sup>

When Turner and Frazier saw each other in Bahia, Frazier had just spent four months there and was headed for Haiti. Turner noted to Herskovits:

He is no longer in doubt about African survivals in New World culture. From now on he will observe the American Negro through different but wiser eyes. This trip to Brazil has indeed been a revelation to him.<sup>46</sup>

When Herskovits responded, he expressed enthusiasm over Turner's success in locating Africanisms in Brazil.

Naturally, this is an extremely important job and it will be a great help to have so much material of this kind available when your data will achieve publication.<sup>47</sup>

Herskovits then commented on the establishment of the American Council of Learned Societies' Committee on Negro Studies which he, Turner and Ralph Bunche had recommended be created. Herskovits, who became Committee chair, viewed the establishment of an on-going committee as an opportunity for proponents of the African retentions hypothesis to unify their efforts.

I think it will give all of us a great opportunity to further the work we are interested in, and I am delighted that it has finally been authorized.<sup>48</sup>

The support they demonstrated for each other's research and publications became a regular feature of their relationship. In an October 4, 1942 mailing, Turner informed Herskovits that he was sending him a reprint of his article, "Some Contacts of Brazilian Ex-Slaves with Nigeria, West Africa," (1941) and thanked Herskovits for having sent him a copy of *The Myth of the Negro Past* (1941). Turner subsequently reviewed the book in the *Journal of Negro Education* (1942). Herskovits later informed Turner that he was referring to the Brazilian article above (1941) in a document for Lawrence D. Reddick's series on African Americans. Reddick was director of the Schomburg Library in New York. After *Africanisms* (1949) was published, Turner suggested to Paul Corbett, the sales manager at the University of Chicago Press, that Herskovits be the person to review it in either the *Journal of American Folklore* or *American Anthropologist*.<sup>49</sup>

Furthermore, Turner and Herskovits served as the pivotal figures giving support to other scholars of the African retentions school. On one occasion, for example, Herskovits wrote Turner, requesting that he serve as host to a Dr. Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, a scholar from Mexico whom they had both met previously. Beltrán had in common with Turner and Herskovits the study of African retentions.

Dear Turner:

I am asking Dr. Gonzalo Beltrán, of whom I believe you already know, to give you this letter of introduction when he gets to Nashville May 3rd, and with it my best regards.

I shall be more than grateful to you for anything you can do for him in the way not only of letting him see the work that is being carried out at Fisk, but perhaps something of Negro life in nearby rural areas. I know you will be fascinated with the materials he had uncovered in the Mexican archives on the Negro in early Mexico.<sup>50</sup>

By 1945, Herskovits had visited Turner at Fisk during several Spring Fiestas dedicated to the celebration of African culture. Consequently, he had been able to observe first hand Turner's work as Director of African Studies.

Turner invited Herskovits to speak on African retentions during the Spring Fiesta at Fisk at least twice between 1938 and 1945.<sup>51</sup> One such occasion was the April 14-16, 1943 Seminar on Africa sponsored by the Social Science Institute at Fisk. Among the other featured speakers were Suzanne Comhaire-Sylvain of the University of Haiti, whose topic was "The Influence of African Languages on Haitian Creole Speech." Herskovits' topic was "Patterns of Music in Africa and the New World." His lecture was illustrated with records.<sup>52</sup>

Turner and Herskovits traveled in the same circles of linguists, anthropologists, and intellectuals, many of them African American, of various fields. For a number of years, Turner served on the board of *The Journal of Negro History* (one of the official journals of Woodson's Association for the Study of Negro Life and History) and referred articles for the journal. In 1949, he served as its editor.<sup>53</sup> He also attended and delivered papers at a number of annual conferences of the Association. He and Herskovits were often on the same panels. Among those meetings were the 26th Annual Conference (October 31-November 2, 1941 in Columbus, Ohio); the 30th Annual Conference (October 26-28, 1945 in Columbus Ohio); and the 39th Annual Conference (October 29-31, 1954) in St. Louis, Missouri).

On other occasions, they were together in the Chicago area. For example, Turner organized a conference called "Africa Today: A Midwestern Inquiry," which convened at Roosevelt on September 28-29, 1956. Its purpose was to acquaint the public with current issues in African Affairs. Among the topics were: "America's Policy Toward Africa," "The United States, the United Nations and Africa," and "Political Non-violence in Africa." Among the seven featured speakers were Turner and Herskovits.<sup>54</sup>

Sometimes they were present at the same social events. Typical of this pattern was the reception held for Kwame Nkrumah, President of Ghana, on July 31, 1958. Mayor Daley of Chicago had requested that Roosevelt host the reception. Roosevelt agreed, inviting persons from the University of Chicago, Northwestern and Roosevelt. Among the thirty guests were Herskovits and Turner.<sup>55</sup>

The historic Conference on Negro Studies held at Howard University (March 29-30, 1940) and sponsored by the American Council of Learned Societies was attended by twenty-three men, two of whom were Turner and Herskovits. (The one invited

woman, Elsie Clews Parsons, was unable to attend. She died later that year.) A number of those in attendance delivered papers on topics related to Africans in the New World or the status of research on New World Africans. A final session was held at which there was general consensus that there was need for "a continuing body which should act as a center for the advancement of... [African American] research.<sup>56</sup> Such a center would make possible "further work in the field of... [African American] studies," provide scholars in the field stimulation resulting from the opportunity to discuss together their mutual problems" and to make possible a discipline of African American studies. In order to accomplish these goals, the center would focus on five important priorities:

... aid in making possible greater facilities for Negro students by breaking down or circumventing social barriers that make their work difficult; ... arrange for the setting up of microfilm centers where copies of documents important in the study of Negro History... could be made available to qualified scholars; ... direct the publication, either in periodical form or as memoirs, of significant studies in the field, giving particular aid where such studies fall between two disciplines; ... [encourage] dignified popularization of valid scientific materials concerning Negroes; and finally, act as a clearing house for research projects and thus bring about increased coordination and at the same time provide a logical channel through which funds available for Negro research might eventually flow.<sup>57</sup>

The Conference then named a Special Committee on Recommendations to "transmit to the American Council of Learned Societies the consensus of the Conference that the appointment by the Council of a permanent Committee on Negro Studies... would be of great advantage to scholarship."<sup>58</sup> The Committee on Recommendations was comprised of Herskovits (chair), Turner, and Ralph Bunche, who was a professor at Howard University at that time. Acting on the recommendations made by these three, the American Council of Learned Societies established a standing Committee on Negro Studies, with Herskovits as chair. The Committee held its first meeting in Washington, D.C. on June 6, 1941. Turner was one of the eight members of the standing committee. Among the other notables on the Committee were Otto Klineberg of Columbia University, Sterling Brown of Howard University, L.D. Reddick, Director of Schomburg Library and later librarian at Atlanta University, and Donald Young of the Social Science Research Council. Herskovits and Turner worked together to develop the Committee and both served from 1940 to June 1950, when Turner's term expired. Herskovits continued as the Committee chair.<sup>59</sup>



Brought together by their research interests in a professional relationship which lasted for thirty years, Turner and Herskovits were not always embraced by their peers, as is evident from the transcript of the Conference on Negro Studies. However, they always supported each other, and used each other's data, "as ammunition,"<sup>60</sup> to prove that African culture was alive in the New World.

On November 7, 1955, Turner wrote to inform Herskovits of his plans to apply for a Ford Foundation Fellowship to gain the funds and time to process his research data from the trip he made to Africa in 1951-1952. Herskovits answered on November 15, 1955, that he would be happy to recommend him. Their final letters of record are from May, 1956. Turner wrote Herskovits to let him know that the Ford Foundation had rejected his application because he was older than 55 years.<sup>61</sup> Herskovits answered on May 15, 1956, expressing his hope that Turner would find another funding source and would feel free to ask him for a recommendation.<sup>62</sup> Turner's research would have to wait for four years, until he received the grant to direct the Peace Corps Training Project at Roosevelt which trained volunteers to Sierra Leone. The outcome of his research was the two publications: *An Anthology of Krio Folklore and Literature: with Notes and Inter-Linear Translations in English* (1963), and *Krio Texts: with Grammatical Notes and Translation in English* (1965).

As linguist and anthropologist, the work of Turner and Herskovits was complementary. Turner believed that the study of semantic retentions ultimately required an understanding of other aspects of the culture, particularly the folk songs, tales and interaction patterns among members of extended families. Therefore, he collected semantic items, representative stories, songs, and data on family histories. Often his linguistic/anthropological data were published first, since the linguistic data required a great deal more preparation time for the transcription of tapes and the accurate transferring of data to a final manuscript. Herskovits believed that linguistic retentions were an extension of cultural retentions and made reference to language as further evidence of cultural survivals. Neither Herskovits nor Turner was a proponent of Black English, each preferring to concentrate attention on areas manifesting deeper creoles. They had a major impact on their disciplines, influencing generations of linguists and anthropologists.<sup>63</sup>

Turner's meticulous research on retained linguistic Africanisms caused a re-examination of the assumptions about dialect in the American South and African linguistic retentions, in North America, thereby initiating the field of Gullah Studies. His work

remains the most detailed and comprehensive, with Gullah Studies presently gaining momentum as an important research area, as a result of the continued and increased interest in pidgin and creole languages. Herskovits caused a re-evaluation of the assumptions about New World cultural continuities. Because he was able to travel widely and observe retentions in many African-influenced cultures, he was able to write with authority about the numerous cultural similarities which had survived transplantation. Pioneers in their respective fields, their ground-breaking research brought to light issues which, with renewed interest in African retentions theory, we continue to debate today.

#### NOTES

1. M. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1941), pp. 37, 191, 276-279, 316 (hereafter referred to as *The Myth*).
2. M. Wade-Lewis, *Lorenzo Dow Turner: First African American Linguist (A Monograph)* (Philadelphia: Temple University Institute of African and African American Affairs, 1988b), p. 6. See also M. Wade-Lewis, "Focus on Creolists No. 15: Lorenzo Dow Turner," *The Carrier Pidgin*, 14, No. 2, pp. 1-3.
3. Interview of Mrs. Lois Turner Williams in Chicago by M. Wade-Lewis, May 26, 1986. See also Wade-Lewis, 1988b, p. 14.
4. See description of the Herskovits Collections, Herskovits Papers, Herskovits Library, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois.
5. L. Hughes, *The Big Sea* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1940); and M.A. Peplow and A.P. Davis eds., *The Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975), pp. xv-xxxi; xxxiii.
6. Among the organizations founded during this period were The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (1908); the National Urban League (1911); the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (1925), and the Nation of Islam (1930). Some of these organizations developed their own periodicals, including *The Crisis* (1910) of the NAACP; *The Messenger* (1918) of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; the *Negro World* (1917) of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association; and *Opportunity* (1923) of the Urban League. Some prominent daily and weekly news organs were the *Baltimore Afro-American* (1892); *Montre Trotter's Boston Guardian* (1901); the *Chicago Defender* (1905); and the *Pittsburgh-Courier* (1910). The publications helped set the tone for the American political scene (Peplow and Davis, 1975; xxiv).  
A.E. Gonzales, *The Black Border* (Columbia, South Carolina: State Publishing Company, 1922); E.C. Parsons, *Folklore of the Sea Islands, South Carolina* (New York: American Folklore Society, 1923); G.P. Krapp.

- "The English of the Negro," *American Mercury*, 2, 1924, pp. 190-195; C. Jones, *Negro Myths from the Georgia Coast* (Columbia, South Carolina: State Publishing Company, 1925); G. Johnson, *Folk Culture on St. Helena Island, South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1930).
8. Du Bois founded and edited *Crisis* from its inception in 1910 until 1938 in New York; Woodson founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in 1916 and edited both its publications, *Negro History Bulletin* and *Journal of Negro History* in Washington, D.C., for many years. Both the NAACP and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History held annual conferences which students of African American life attended. Among those who attended over time were Turner and Herskovits.
9. Among the others who published scholarly studies in *Opportunity* were Ira De A. Reid, E. Franklin Frazier, Ralph Bunche and Franz Boas. See N. Huggins, *The Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 28-29. Two of Herskovits' early articles which appeared in African American publications are: "A footnote to the History of Negro Slaving," *Opportunity*, 2 (1933), pp. 178-181; and "The Significance of West Africa for Negro Research," *Journal of Negro History*, 21 (1936), pp. 15-30.
10. Kurath letter to Turner, December 11, 1930.
11. Turner letter to Kurath, December 24, 1930, emphasis mine.
12. Telephone interview of Mrs. Lois Turner Williams by M. Wade-Lewis, March 25, 1986.
13. See L.D. Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1973), pp. 5-11. *Africanisms* originally appeared in 1949 and was published in Chicago by the University of Chicago Press.
14. Telephone interview of Turner Williams by Wade-Lewis, March 25, 1986.
15. S. Stoney and G. Shelby, *Black Genesis* (New York: Macmillan, 1930), p. xv.
16. Turner letter to Herskovits, October 4, 1942.
17. Wade-Lewis, 1988b, p. 15; *Fisk News*, 6, No. 5 (January 1933), p. 14.
18. Turner letter to D. Jones, April 6, 1936.
19. 1.1). Turner, "Proposal by Lorenzo Turner for a Study of Negro Speech in Brazil" (January 1940), p. 1 (hereafter referred to as "Proposal").
20. Turner was vigorous in his pursuit of grants for research and travel. Over time, he applied for a Guggenheim (1930); a Fulbright Fellowship (1950); a Ford Foundation Fellowship (1956); two Rosenwald Fellowships (1940, 1945-1946); various grants from the American Council of Learned Societies (1932, 1933, 1937, 1940, 1949, 1951), an American Philosophical Society Fellowship (1945-1946), and grants from the universities where he taught. While the majority of his proposals were successful, the grants were usually small. The smallest was \$300; another was \$750. The grant from the Rosenwald Fund for his year in Brazil was \$3,100. He received an additional \$300 from the American Council of Learned Societies and a

grant-in-aid from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare for the Peace Corps Project he sponsored at Roosevelt College. One outcome of the project was two books on Sierra Leone Krio. (See text of article. See also Wade-Lewis 1988b, p. 23).

21. L.D. Turner, "Proposal," p. 1; and "Profile of a Scholar: Lorenzo Turner," *Negro History Bulletin*, 21, No. 2 (November, 1957), pp. 26, 47.
22. Eventually, Turner did collect data in several of the areas above, but he did not survive to see the bulk of these materials into print. His research on Louisiana Creole collected in 1935, most of his Brazilian data collected in 1940, and his Yoruba data collected in Nigeria in 1950, are still in manuscript form. Among the manuscripts are *A Dictionary of the Yoruba Language*, a Yoruba language course, notes of Freetown Creole (Sierra Leone), and grammatical notes on the Temne and Mende languages. An opportunity for Turner to travel and study in the Caribbean never materialized. Among his important published articles are the following: "Linguistic Research and African Survivals," *American Council of Learned Societies Bulletin*, No. 32 (1941), pp. 68-89; and "Some Contact of Brazilian Ex-Slaves with Nigeria, West Africa," *Journal of Negro History* (January 1942), pp. 55-67. For a bibliography of Turner's published work and unpublished manuscripts, see Wade-Lewis, 1988b). For a further assessment of his contribution, see M. Wade-Lewis, "The Contribution of Lorenzo Dow Turner to African Linguistics," *Linguistic Sciences* (forthcoming).
23. For a discussion of Herskovits' career and other forces which shaped his interest in the African retentions hypothesis, see G. Gilbert, "Historical Development of the Creole Origin Hypothesis of Black English: The Pivotal Role of Melville J. Herskovits," from *The International Roundtable on Africanisms in Afro-American Language Varieties* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1988) (manuscript). For the most comprehensive biography of Herskovits' life, see G.E. Simpson, *Melville J. Herskovits* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973).
24. M.J. Herskovits, "The Negro's Americanism," Alain Locke ed., *The New Negro* (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, Inc., 1925), p. 353.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 359.
26. M.J. Herskovits, "Acculturation and the American Negro," *The Southwestern Political and Social Science Quarterly* (1927), 8, pp. 212-224; and *The American Negro: A Study in Racial Crossing* (New York: Alfred Knopf, Inc., 1928).
27. F.S. Herskovits ed., *The New World Negro: Selected Papers in Afroamerican Studies, by Melville J. Herskovits* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966), pp. vii-viii.
28. See Gilbert, "Historical Development of the Creole Origin Hypothesis of Black English."
29. Turner letter to Herskovits, September 9, 1935, p. 1.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

31. Herskovits letter to Turner, September 23, 1936.  
 32. *Ibid.*  
 33. Herskovits letter to Turner, October 17, 1939.  
 34. If Turner had received a Carnegie Commission, his *Africanisms* would have appeared almost a decade sooner, thus launching his career as a linguist ten years earlier. In addition, he too, would have had Carnegie funds to travel elsewhere in the New World to collect data, and to purchase recording devices, tapes, pay informants, as well as pay for typing and other clerical costs associated with his research. In short, more of his life's work would likely have been published.  
 35. See "Foreword" to M.J. Herskovits, *The Myth*, pp. ix-xi.  
 36. Turner letter to Herskovits, October 24, 1929.  
 37. *Ibid.*  
 38. Herskovits letter to Turner, October 27, 1939.  
 39. *Ibid.* See also E. Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the Slave Trade to America*, 1-4 (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution Publication, No. 409, 1930-1935).  
 40. Herskovits letter to Turner, November 22, 1939; and Turner letter to Herskovits, December 9, 1939. W.R. Bascom subsequently explored some threads of the Gullah life experience. See "Acculturation among Gullah Negroes," *American Anthropologist* (1941), pp. 43-50.  
 41. Herskovits letter to Turner, December 11, 1939.  
 42. Herskovits letter to W. Leland, March 12, 1940.  
 43. *Ibid.*  
 44. Turner letter to Herskovits, February 4, 1941.  
 45. *Bulletin: American Council of Learned Societies* (1941), pp. 85-89 (hereafter referred to as *Bulletin of ACLS*).  
 46. Turner letter to Herskovits, February 4, 1941. Turner and Herskovits no doubt viewed Frazier as a logical convert to the African retentions hypothesis since he studied and analyzed the Black family, the strongest of the Black institutions, and one manifesting many African retentions, as well as syncretism of African and European forms. Interestingly, during the course of his career, Frazier's work hardly wavered from his original hypothesis that "the Middle Passage" had severed the African past, resulting in New World Africans being the sum of their adaptive experience under American slavery. See, for example, Frazier's best known work, *The Negro Family in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939). For a recent interpretation of Frazier's hypothesis, particularly resulting from his Brazilian research, see David J. Hollwig, "E. Franklin Frazier's Brazil," Elba Birmingham Porkorny ed., *Proceedings of the Conference on the Black Image in Latin American Culture*, 2 (Slippery Rock, Pennsylvania: Slippery Rock State University, 1990), pp. 208-229.  
 47. Herskovits letter to Turner, February 17, 1941.  
 48. *Ibid.*

49. See L.D. Turner, "Review of *The Myth of the Negro Past* by Melville Herskovits," *Journal of Negro Education*, 11 (1942b), pp. 185-187. Herskovits letter to Turner, May 9, 1945; and Turner letter to P. Corbett, June 15, 1949.  
 50. Herskovits letter to Turner, April 13, 1945. G.A. Beltrán had conducted substantial research on the African presence in Mexican culture. Among his best known publications are "Tribal Origins of Slaves in Mexico," *The Journal of Negro History*, 31 (1945), pp. 269-282; and *La Población Negra de Mexico: 1519-1890* (Mexico City: D.F., 1946).  
 51. Telephone conversation between Mrs. Lois Turner Williams and M. Wade-Lewis, April 24, 1989.  
 52. Fisk University Program for Seminar on Africa, April 14-16, 1943. S. Comhaire-Sylvain initiated research on the retention of Africanisms in North American culture with her study, *Le Créole Haïtien* (Port-Au-Prince: L'Auteur, 1936), in which she described the morpheme classes and noun and verb phrases of Haitian Creole. At the end of each section, she outlined "la base française" and "la base africaine." Her careful evaluation led her to conclude that Haitian Creole was comprised of largely French vocabulary with the syntax and morphology from Ewe-Fon (pp. 177-178).  
 53. *Progress: A Report from Roosevelt University*, 4 (1949), p. 8.  
 54. *Progress: A Report from Roosevelt University*, 11 (December, 1956), p. 7.  
 55. *Progress: A Report from Roosevelt University*, (November, 1958), p. 2.  
 56. *Bulletin of ACLS* (September, 1941), pp. 6-7.  
 57. *Ibid.*  
 58. *Ibid.*, p. 7.  
 59. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8; and Letter from L.D. Reddick to Turner, September 27, 1949.  
 60. Herskovits letter to Turner, December 17, 1939.  
 61. Turner letter to Herskovits, May 6, 1956.  
 62. Herskovits letter to Turner, May 15, 1956.  
 63. For example, A. Lomax, *Folksongs of North America* (New York: Doubleday, 1960); R. Abrahams, *Deep Down in the Jungle: Negro Narrative Folklore from the Streets of Philadelphia* (New York: Aldine Press, 1963); J. Greenberg, *The Languages of Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966); C. Mitchell-Kernan, *Language Behavior in a Black Urban Community* (Monographs of the Language-Behavior Research Laboratory), No. 2 (Berkeley: University of California, 1971); J.L. Dillard, *Black English: Its History and Usage in the United States* (New York: Montgomery and G. Bailey, eds. *Language Variety in the South: Perspectives in Black and White* (University of Alabama Press, 1986); P. Muysken and N. Smith eds., *Substrata Versus Universals in Creole Genesis* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1986); F. Vaughn-Cooke, "Lexical Diffusion: Evidence from a Decreeolizing Variety of Black English," M. Montgomery and G. Bailey, eds., *Language Variety in the South: Perspectives in Black and White* (University of Alabama Press, 1986).

Press, 1986), pp. 111-130; W. Labov, "Are Black and White Dialects Diverging?" (Papers from N/WAVE XIV Panel Discussion), *American Speech*, 62 (1987), pp. 5-12; R. Butters, "Linguistic Convergence in a North Carolina Community," K.M. Denning, S. Inkelas, F.C. McNair-Knox, and J. Rickford eds., *Variation in Language* (Stanford: Department of Linguistics, Stanford University, 1987a), pp. 52-60; G. Bailey and N. Maynor, "The Divergence Controversy," *American Speech*, 64, No. 1 (1989), pp. 12-39.