

Four

Africanisms in African American Names in the United States

Joseph E. Holloway

African Names in Colonial America

The purpose of this chapter is to make available a comprehensive list of linguistic Africanisms drawn from a wide range of domains. The focus is on names and words borrowed from African languages and found in Ebonics and American English.

Scholars searching for linguistic Africanisms in African American names have not been successful establishing a direct relationship between African and black American naming practices. Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* (1949), is the exception. Other scholars who have searched for Africanisms and focused on the phonology, morphology, semantics, and syntax of Black English in relation to African languages include Herskovits (1941), Stewart (1969), Baratz and Shuy (1969), Labov (1970), Wolfram (1969), and Dillard (1972).

This chapter explores the historical relationship between African and African American naming practices and the search for Africanisms in black names. It begins by examining runaway slave advertisements for possible Africanisms. The focus is on African names in Colonial America, Africanisms in black naming practices, and African American nicknames.

At the end of this chapter is a list of African lexicon found in American English compiled from a number of word lists, including Turner (1949), David Dalby (1972), and Holloway and Vass (1990). This chapter does not duplicate their works but seeks to correct the mistaken as-

sumption that only West African languages contributed to the linguistic varieties found in American English. This essay demonstrates that both West and Central African languages contributed to the diversity of linguistic Africanisms found in American English.

In the colonial period, African linguistic survivals were numerous because the memory of the African past was still very much alive. Planters were aware of African ethnicity and attempted to prevent a continuation of African culture and customs on the American plantations they controlled. This actually accelerated the acculturation process among house servants, who were forced to learn English as the only medium of communication with one another and the planters.

The level of English proficiency among enslaved Africans was generally related to the slaves' jobs. House servants, because of their close contact with the planters in the "Big House," learned English more rapidly than field slaves, who had little contact with European American culture and remained unacculturated for a longer period. African acculturation in South Carolina took place at two levels, in the house and in the field.

The first Africans in North America were not completely unaware of English and other European languages. For instance, Africans arriving in South Carolina from the coastal communities of Africa generally spoke some form of pidgin or Creole English prior to coming to America. Many Angolans coming from the Congo-Angola areas spoke Portuguese. Le Jau reported in 1710, "I have in this parish a few Negro Slaves . . . born and baptized among the Portuguese,"¹ and an account in 1739 declared that "amongst the Negro Slaves there are people who spoke Portuguese."² Some "Spanish Negroes" were mentioned among the runaways in the *South Carolina Gazette* as heading toward Spanish Florida, while others attempted to seek out other Spanish-speaking slaves.³

Peter Timothy's "Negro Named Pierro" could speak "good English, Chickasaw, and perhaps French."⁴ A runaway mulatto, Antoine, could speak "very good French and English," whereas Clase spoke "good English, and a little Spanish." Phobe spoke "French and English" and Jupiter could speak "good English and some French."⁵ In 1772 Fenda Lawrence, the Gambian slave trader in West Africa who came to the American South as a tourist, must have had some knowledge of English to move around the South as she did.⁶ Obviously these Africans who spoke multiple languages had prior contact with Europeans on the western coast of Africa.

A brief survey of advertisements of runaways' slaves revealed that in

some cases Africans were speaking Creole or pidgin learned on the coast of Africa. An advertisement read that he or she spoke "good English," a sign of acculturation. If the enslaved African spoke "bad English" it was a sign the African had been in the colony for only a brief period and was probably an adult at the time of arrival.

During the colonial period, African ethnicity played a strong role initially in the development of plantation life. The *South Carolina Gazette* revealed that the majority of "New Negroes" arriving in South Carolina spoke little or no English unless they had been imported from the West Indies or central Africa. A sale advertisement in the *Gazette* read as follows: "A likely Negro Boy about 13 years of Age and speaks good English to be sold."⁷ That he spoke good English meant that he was probably "country-born"—raised in the colony and acculturated. Africans born and raised in the colony had little trouble learning the language. For example, a fourteen-year-old Angolan spoke "pretty good English,"⁸ a seventeen-year-old Angolan spoke "broken English,"⁹ and a nineteen-year-old spoke "good English."¹⁰ An Angolan woman, two Gambian men, and an Igbo man could speak "pretty good English."¹¹ Obviously, acculturation and the learning of English among younger Africans were quite rapid, whereas older Africans learned English with greater difficulty.

An example of older and unacculturated Africans can be found in this advertisement: "Ran away from the Plantation farm belonging to Capt. Douglas, near Dorchester, a tall Negro fellow named Tower-hill and talks bad English."¹² Many of the Charleston newspapers revealed this slow progress in learning English. Four new Negro men were reported in the *Gazette* of January 22, 1737, out of the ship *Shepherd* from Angola in the beginning of November as "speaking no English and not knowing their master's name." Four other could speak "no English," and an Ebo runaway could "speak no more English other than his name is Jack."¹³

Thomas Wright advertised that his slave Paul "had been one year in my plantation near Silk Hope" and still spoke "little English."¹⁴ Another African could not speak any English when he ran away almost a year earlier,¹⁵ and three Angolan men had been in Carolina three years and still spoke "little English."¹⁶ But "country-born" Africans such as Jacob could speak only English.¹⁷

African cultural and linguistic acculturation into the American culture took several generations. In each generation less and less of the African culture was retained. After about eight generations of country-born Africans, successful Americanization had taken place. But the linguistic exchanges were mutual and reciprocal: the process also brought about

the Africanization of the South. Generations of interaction with African speech patterns produced the distinct white Southern accent. Edward Kimber, a traveler in the South in 1746, noticed the impact of Black English on white Southern speech, writing that "one thing they are very faulty in, with regard to their Children, which is, that when young, they suffer them too much to prowl amongst the young Negroes, which insensibly causes them to imbibe their Manners and broken speech."¹⁸ In other words, the English of Southerners resembled the African version.

Africans arriving in Colonial America, especially South Carolina, continued to give their children African names well into the nineteenth century. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, African American slaves had retained Africanisms in their naming practices. The greatest percentage of African names occurred among male slaves in the eighteenth century, when the majority of the black population was still unacculturated. African names gave them a sense of cultural integrity and a link to their African past and heritage.

The Africans did not forget their traditional naming practices at first. During the colonial period, the practice of naming children after the days of the week, months, and seasons was retained. In some cases the African Americans retained the original African version of their day names, but as generations passed they substituted the original African name for their English equivalent. The following table lists Akan day names found in the *South Carolina Gazette*.¹⁹

DAYS OF THE WEEK WITH CORRESPONDING AFRICAN NAMES

<i>Day</i>	<i>Male Names</i>	<i>Female Names</i>
Monday	Cudjoe	Juba
Tuesday	Cubbenah	Beneba
Wednesday	Quaco	Cuba
Thursday	Quao	Abba
Friday	Cuffee	Phibba
Saturday	Quamin	Mimba
Sunday	Quashee	Quasheba

Temporal names such as January, April, May, June, September, November, March, August, Christmas, and Middy are also found in the *Gazette* and other publications. There are numerous examples of English equivalents of African day names such as Monday, Tuesday, or Friday. According to Cohen, male names derived from the season are Spring

(Ebo or Calabar) and Winter. Moon and Thunder are names connected with the state of the weather at time of birth. Other names which are probably English equivalents of African words are Arrow ("of the Pappa country"), Boy (Guiney), Huntsman (new), Little One (Ebo), Plenty (Gambia and Mandingo), and Sharper (Bambara).²⁰ This Akan naming was practiced in the Sea Islands of Georgia and South Carolina until the 1930s.

After the first and second generation, Africans began to substitute African day names for the English translations. Paul Cuffee, a wealthy shipbuilder, came from this African naming system. Cuffe, the seventh of ten children of Paul and Mary Slocum, was born on January 17, 1759, on Elizabeth Island near New Bedford, Massachusetts. When he was nineteen years old, nine of the children dropped the slave name Slocum (the surname of their father's master) and adopted their father's slave name, Cuffe.²¹ This word is Ashanti, meaning "male child born on Friday," and comes from Kofi. Linguist Joel Dillard points out that female day names followed practices similar to the male day names and that Cuba was among the most common names given to female children born on Wednesday. The name often given to a female child born on Friday was Phibba, which later transformed into Phoebe. Abby came from Abba, the female day name for Tuesday. According to Dillard, the name Benah, from Gubena (Tuesday), was frequently misanalyzed as "Venus." Cudjoe, the male day name for Monday, might be Cudjoe in the first generation, Monday in the second generation, and Joe in the third generation.²²

The Georgia Writers' Project during the 1930s found that among the Georgia coastal blacks, a number of people had been named for weekdays or the month in which they were born. One ex-slave who was interviewed in regard to this practice, Thursday Jones, explained:²³

Dey name me dat way jis cus uh happen tuh be bawn on Tuesday, I guess. Sech things seem tub be in our famby. I had ah uncle who name tis Monday Collins. It seem tuh come duh fus ting tuh folks' mine tuh name duh babies fuh duh dey is baw on.

Here we see how the English equivalents of African day names were being used. By the nineteenth century, the African day names often had lost their meaning, but African Americans continued to give their children African day names.

Quaco, the male day name for Wednesday, was also commonly found during the colonial period. But, later, Quaco became Jacco, Jacky, and Jack. Martin Jackson of Texas decided to become Jackson because one of his relatives had a similar African name:

The master's name was usually adopted by a slave after he was set free. This was done more because it was the logical thing to do and the easiest way to be identified, than it was through affection for the master. Also, the government seemed to be in an almighty hurry to have us get names. We had to register as someone, so we could be citizens. Well, I got to thinking about all us slave that was going to take the name Fitzpatrick. I made up my mind I'd find me a different one. One of my grandfathers in Africa was called Jeaceo, and so I decided on Jackson.²⁴

By 1734, when the *South Carolina Gazette* was established, names of African origin included Bowbaw, Cuffee, Ebo Jo, Ganda, Quaquo, Quomenor, and Quoy for males, Africans and Auba, Bucko, Juba Mimba, Odah, and Otta for females. African names common in the eighteenth century were Sambo, Quash, Mingo, and Juba. The most widely used day names were Cuffee (Kofi) and Cudjoe for males and Abba and Juba for females.²⁵

According to Cohen, African day names and their English counterparts existed side by side. Two male slaves named Friday, one of them "this country born" and the other from the "Angola Country," and two male slaves named Monday, one from "Bomborough" (Bambara?) and the other "A Barbian (Bambara) Negro," are mentioned in the *Gazette*.²⁶

Blanche Britt supplied Mencken with this list of African names taken from Southern newspapers from 1736 to the end of the eighteenth century: Annika, Boohum, Boomy, Bowzar, Cuffee, Cuffey, Cuffy, Habella, Kauchee, Mila, Minas, Monimea, Pamo, Qua, Quaco, Quamina, Quash, Warrah, and Yonaha.²⁷

Cohen gives a list of African names found in the *Gazette* between 1732 and 1775 (table 1).²⁸

A list of slave names from a 1656 land patent record suggest that these slaves came from the "Bight of Guinea" to Virginia on a Dutch ship, the *Wittepaert*, by way of New Netherlands. The Virginia importer was Edmund Scarburgh. The names are given in table 2.²⁹

TABLE 1. African Names from *South Carolina Gazette*, 1732-1775

Male Names		
Ankey	Folee	(Kuamania)*
Assam (Asane)*	Footbea	Quaow
Assey (Ase)*	Gamone(Ngamone)	Quash
Bafey (Bofe)*	Goma (Ngoma)*	Quaw

Continues on the next page

Balipho	Gunnah (Kuna)*	Rente
Banjoe	Haloe (Halue)*	Saffran
Beay (Mbiya)*	Homady	Sambo
Beoy	Hughky (Huki)*	Sandico
Bobodandy	Jamina*	Sango
Boo (Mbo)*	Jellemy	Santry
Boswine	Jobny	Saundy
Bram	Ketch	Savey
Bury	Mahomet	Sawney
Chopco (Tshikapu)*	Mallay	Serrah
Claes	Mambee (Muambe)*	Shampee
Clawes	Mamena (Maminu)*	Sirrah
Chockcoose	Manso	Sobo
(Tshikusa)*	Marmillo	Sogo
Congo	Massery	Stepney
Crack	Mingo	Tokey
Cudjoe	Mobe	Tomboe
Cuff	Mollock	Wabe (Webe)
Cuffee (Kofi)	Monvigo (Muvinga)*	Whan
Culley	Morrica	Wholly (HOLA)
Cumin (Kumina)*	Musce Jack	Woolaw
Dago	Mussu (Musue)*	Yanke
Dembow (Ndembu)*	Okree	Yanki
Dibbie	Pherco	Yonge
Donas	Fouta (Fula)*	Zick (Tshika)*
Doney	Quacoe (Kuaka)*	Zocky (Nzoko)
Easom	Quammano	Zoun

Female Names

Aba (Aba)*	Camba (Kamba)*	Juba
Abey	Choe (Njo)*	Juda
Affrey	Cuba (Nkuba)*	Mabia
Agua	Dye (Ndaye)*	Mamadoe
Arrah	Eley (Elayi)*	Mawdlong
Banaba	(Ban' Aba)*	Embros (Walongo)*
Binah (Bena)*	Famtime (Patane)*	Minda (Minda)
Body (Mbudi)*	Fortimer	Nea (Neaye)
Plaebv	Rynah	Sibby
Quant (Kamu)	Sack (Seka)*	Tinah
Rino	Sard	Windy (Wende)

*Luba words identified by Vass

TABLE 2. Names Listed on the Dutch Slave Ship *Wittepaert*

Tony	Tubuno (Tubu'enuk, your hole)*
Ufoler (uhola-harvest)*	Tabortha
Aiquera	Janna (Tshiana, fat child)*
Ambe (let him tell)*	Ommo
Aura	Jihur
Assone (Asunc, let him bring water)*	Curmer
Ay (Aye, let him send)*	Dondo (Ndondo, ritual term, depths)*
Monafunke (Mona nfunke, see I'm pointing)*	Taryi
Eare	Jonara
Messon (Mesu-eyes)*	Jomora
Roundells	Sango (Sanga, unite)*
Wortells	Croila
Johney	Jurna
Angora (A'Ngola)*	Rommo
Margarretta	Wingoe
Monque	Elloren
Veco	Corle
Ogombe (Ngombe-cow)*	Murrom
Werrye	Agoe (Angue, let him seek)*
Otonco	Dony

*Luba words identified by Vass

Africanisms in African American Names

Names are of great importance in West and Central Africa. Names are given as stages in an individual's life and, as among all people for whom magic is important, the identification of a real name with the personality of its bearer is held to be so complete that this real name, usually the one given at birth by a particular relative, must be kept secret lest it come into the hands of someone who might use it in working evil magic against the person. That is why, among Africans, a person's name may in so many instances change with time, a new designation being assumed on the occasion of some striking occurrence in the person's life. When the person goes through one of the rites marking a new stage in his or her development, a name change also occurs to note the event.³⁰

Stuckey, in *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America* (1987), noted that black naming practices were African in origin, in that African Americans changed their names just as Africans

did, corresponding to major changes in the life of the individual. The name shifting is clearly demonstrated by the experience of Frederick Douglass, who, soon after escaping slavery, began a series of name changes.³¹

On the morning after our arrival at New Bedford, while at the breakfast-table, the question arose as to what name I should be called by. The name given me by my mother was Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey. I, however, had dispensed with the two middle names long before I left Maryland so that I was generally known by the name Frederick Bailey. I started from Baltimore; I found it necessary again to change my name. . . . I gave Mr. Johnson, Mr. Nathan Johnson of New Bedford, the privilege of choosing me a name, but told him he must not take from me the name of "Frederick," I must hold on to that a sense of identity.

Sojourner Truth, a crusader for black emancipation and feminine equality, was known as Isabella until about the age of twenty, when she was freed and left her master's plantation. She had a vision in a dream that told her about her new name and her mission to free her people. And Malcolm X, through various stages of his life, was known as Malcolm Little, Homeboy, Detroit Red, Big Red, Satan, Malcolm, El-hajji, and Malik El Shabazz.³²

Such name shifting is common throughout West Africa and particularly Central Africa. In many parts of Africa every man who leaves his traditional setting and family is given or takes a new name when he turns or walks away from home. This situation parallels that of enslaved Africans who were brought to the Americas, away from their ethnic groups, but who remained in contact with others who shared a similar ethnic background.³³

Nowhere is this tradition as vivid as in the jazz world, where name shifting is common, signaling a major event in the life of the musician: Jelly Roll Morton (Ferdinand La Menthe), Satchmo (Louis Armstrong), Yardbird (Charles Parker), Lady (Billie Holiday). The story of these name changes follows the African pattern of using a new name to adapt to new circumstance and changes in the person's new life.

Africanisms in African American Nicknames

A more direct African survival is the use of nicknames. Almost every black person is known by two names: a given name and a name used only within the family circle. Lorenzo Dow Turner found a dual naming system among the Gullah in the Sea Islands of South Carolina. This

system consists of an English (American) name given at birth and a more intimate name used exclusively by the family and community.

Turner was surprised that previous scholarship had failed to note this practice or the importance of Africanisms in Gullah nomenclature. Slaveholders recognized this dual naming practice among enslaved Africans in the eighteenth century. In their advertisements of runaways in the *South Carolina Gazette*, owners always included "proper" (given) names and "country names," the African names retained.³⁴

This naming practice still exists among the Gullahs and in the general African American population. In black naming practices, every child receives a given name at birth and a nickname that generally follows the individual throughout life. Some examples of these nicknames are Jo Jo, June, Tiny Baby, O.K., John John, Mercy, Baby Sister, "I," Sunny Man, Main, Bo, Boo, Bad Boy, Playboy, and Fats.³⁵

Among enslaved Africans this practice also was evident in names used by slaves, such as Pie Ya, Puddin'-tame, Frog, Tennie C., Monkey, Mush, Cooter, John de Baptist, Fat-Man, Preacher, Jack Rabbit, Sixty, Pop Corn, Old Gold, Dootes, Angle-eye, Bad Luck, Sky-up-de-Greek, Cracker Jabbo, Cat-Fish, Bear, Tip, Odessa, Pig Lasses, Rattler, Pearly, Luck, Buffalo, Old Blue, Red Fox, Coon, and Jewsharp.

Turner found that Gullah-speaking people preserved their language and nicknames by what they called basket names or day names. Their children always had two distinct names, an English one for public use and an authentic African name for private use by the extended family alone.

Here are a few examples of Gullah basket names which are also straight, unchanged, present-day Tshiluba names: Ndomba is the name given a Gullah child whose hand protrudes first at birth. It means "I am begging (with my outstretched hand)." Mviluki has a Gullah meaning of "a penitent." Its Luba source word is Mvuluki, a rememberer, one who doesn't forget his sins. The basket name Siungila means "to save, help, deliver," while Kamba, a very common Luba name, comes from Munkamba, meaning "ancestor." The Gullah meaning of Kamba is "a grave." Anyika, a Gullah name meaning "to praise the beauty of." Sebe, a Gullah name meaning "a leather ornament," comes from the Mesu (eyes), Kudima (to work or hoe), and Kudiya (to eat) are all Gullah day names, exactly the same in Gullah and Luba.³⁶

In the Sea Island of South Carolina, children sometimes have not only their given names but also community names. The community gives the child a name that characterizes or is characteristic of the individual, that is, Smart Child, Shanty (showoff).³⁷ This practice parallels Bantu naming practices in Zaire. Net's basketball center Dikenibo

Mutumbo from Zaire illustrates this point. His full name is Dikambe Mutumbo Mpolondo Munkamba Diken Jean-Jean Jacque wa Mutumbo. In order, these names are his uncle's name, his family surname, his grandfather's name, his nicknames given by his village, his name given at birth, and his hometown village, wa Mutumbo (which means "from the village Mutumbo").³⁸

Other creolized Gullah pet names (nicknames) so typical of Bantu practices are names of animals or fish: De Dog, Doggie, Kitty, Fish, Yellowtail, Croker, Frog Spider, Boy, Gal Jumper, Tooti, Crocki, Don, Cuffy, Akebee, Dr. Buzzer, and Dr. Eagle.³⁹

In Gullah naming practices, as in African naming practices, children are named after parents because they are believed to be the parent spirit residing in the children. The same name might appear in several generations in a family. In the Sea Islands, the name Litia appeared in four generations of female children.⁴⁰

An integral part of Bantu culture is the unchanging secret "spirit name," something that the individual has which is uniquely his or her own from the past and is carried on to the next generation, given to a new baby so that it may remain incarnate. Thus, by a strange interweaving of religion and language, the "inner soul" of the speech of a cultural group is preserved. As Munday reported:⁴¹

Investigation brings to light the fact that the Africans of these parts, whether man or woman, have two classes of names: (a) spirit-names and (b) names of manhood or womanhood. Each has one (a few have two) of the names of the first class, and one or more names from the second class. It is by these names of manhood or womanhood that they prefer to be called; some are traditional African names of these parts, some are debased European words, some are European given or family nicknames, some are nicknames, given owing to some peculiarity, some are names given at baptism. All of these names of manhood and womanhood (except the last) can be, and are, changed for any and no reason, and according to who is changed, once it is finally given. It is of this spirit-name that the Lala aphorism says: The name is the Spirit.

Officials now prefer the African to be registered under his spirit name, because it is never changed, but there are two practical disadvantages which weigh against its being used for registration purposes. A Bantu with which we are concerned is exceedingly shy of using it for himself or another, and in some parts, the spirit names are so few in

number that the majority of persons in one area may share half a dozen. However, for the Bantu the spirit name is never changed from the mother's back to the grave.

The giving of the spirit name (literally, "of birth" or "of the navel") is regarded as an event of the greatest importance. Every child born is regarded as the "come back" of some dead person, either of the same or of the opposite sex. The person has to be given the spirit name of the dead person.

Munday points out that the spirits of the dead are immortal only as they become incarnate again in another human being that bears their name. If a name is forgotten so that it cannot become incarnate, it wanders through the world as a ghost.⁴² This naming practice of spirit names and given names still exists with the African mother continent and African Americans in the North American Diaspora:

AFRICANISMS IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN ENGLISH

adobe ⁴³	Twɪ (Akan) a palm tree, leaves or grass used for roof covering.
ananse ⁴⁴	Twɪ (Akan) and Ewe, spider; Bambara <i>nansi</i> , chameleon.
bad ⁴⁵	Very good, used esp. in emphatic form, <i>baad</i> . Cf. Michael Jackson's "I'm baad!" Similarly are <i>mean</i> , in the sense of satisfying, fine, attractive; <i>wicked</i> , in the sense of excellent, capable. Cf. African use of negative terms, pronounced emphatically, to describe positive extremes: Mandingo (Bambara) <i>a ka nyi ko-jugu</i> , it's very good! (lit. "it is good badly!"); Mandingo (Gambia) <i>a nyimatu jaw-ke</i> , she is very beautiful! Also West African English (Sierra Leone) <i>gud baad</i> , it's very good!
bad-eye ⁴⁶	Threatening, hateful glance. Common African-African American colloquialism. Cf. Mandingo <i>nyejugu</i> , hateful glance (lit. "bad eye") and similar phrases in other West African languages.
bad-mouth ⁴⁷	In Gullah, slander, abuse, gossip; also used as v. Cf. Mandingo <i>da-jugu</i> and Hausa <i>mugum-baki</i> , slander, abuse (in both cases, lit. "bad mouth").
bambi ⁴⁸	Bantu <i>mubambi</i> , one who lies down in order to hide; position of antelope fawn for concealment (cf. Walt Disney, Bambi).
bamboula ⁴⁹	African drum used in New Orleans during the nineteenth century. Also, a vigorous style of dancing there, early twentieth century. "Drum" in early jazz use. Cf. <i>bambula</i> , beat, hit, or strike a surface, a drum. Similar terms in other West African coastal language groups.
banana ⁵⁰	Wolof word for fruit and was first recorded in 1563, and en-

tered British English in the seventeenth century via Spanish and Portuguese.

- banjo⁵¹ Kimbundu *mbanza*, stringed musical instruments, whence also Jamaican English *banja* and Brazilian Portuguese *banza*.
- be with it⁵² Mandingo expression, to be *a la* (lit. "to be with in, in it") to be in fashion.
- bidibidi⁵³ Bantu *bidibidi*: a small bird; a small yellow bird. Ebonic: "a little biddy bird."
- biddy⁵⁴ Baby chick, chicken, fowl.
- big eye⁵⁵ Igbo *anya uku*, covetous, greedy (lit. "big eye"). Cf. West African and Caribbean English *big jay*, *big eye*. Same in Gullah and Black English.
- bo⁵⁶ Temne and Vai (Sierra Leone), friend; informal term of address for an equal. West African and Caribbean English *bo*, *ba*.
- bogue, bogus⁵⁷ Hausa *boka*, *boko-boko*, deceit, fraud, West African English (Sierra Leone) *bogo-bogo*, Louisiana French *bogue*, fake, fraudulent, phony. The ending of bogus has an analogy with *hocuses pocus*.
- booboo⁵⁸ Bantu *mbuku*, stupid, blundering act; error, blunder. Common nickname found in black English.
- boody⁵⁹ Bantu *buedi*, act of emission, sex. Cf. black American slang: "give me that booty."
- booger⁶⁰ Bantu *mbukku*, divination, consultation of the spirits; ghost, spirit.
- boobaboo⁶¹ Bantu *buka lubuk*, conjure, enchant, divine; consult a medicine man; imaginary cause of fear, worry; nemesis.
- boogie (woogie)⁶² Bantu *mbuki-mvuki*, to take off in dance performance. Hausa *buga* (*bugi* after n. object). Mande *bugs*, to beat, to beat drums. West African English (Sierra Leone) *bogi*, to dance. To dance fast blues music, eight beats to a bar; *boog*, to dance.
- bowdacious⁶³ Bantu *bolesha*, pulverize, grind to powder; extremely, exceedingly, to the ninth degree. Cf. Uncle Remus usage.
- bozo⁶⁴ Bantu *boza*, knock things over in passing; a strong, stupid person, a stumblebum. Common in black American slang: "Don't be a bozo!"
- brer, buh⁶⁵ Mandingo *kckc*, elder brother; title used before animal names in fables, tales. Cf. Uncle Remus usage.
- bronco⁶⁶ Term of Ibibio origin, used centuries ago to denote Spanish and African slaves who worked with and cared for cattle.
- buckaroo⁶⁷ Ibibio *buckra*, poor white man; a white person bucking a bronco. See *Buckra*.

- buckra (1)⁶⁸ Efik and Ibibio *mbakara*, master. Used by enslaved Africans to refer to and address their masters. By 1730s, enslaved Africans and colonists used it to mean "white man." Often pronounced and spelled *buccara* and *bocera*, by 1775 it had come to mean "gentlemen" and even, by 1860s, the color "white."
- buckra (2)⁶⁹ Poor or mean white man, now rare in the United States, except in the South Carolina Sea Islands. Still current in Jamaican English. Convergence with Spanish *vaquero*; hence *buckaroo*, *bucker* (cowboy).
- bug⁷⁰ Mandingo *baga*, to offend, annoy, harm (someone); Wolof *bugal*, to annoy, worry. Note also West African and Caribbean English *ambog*, to annoy; this form; pronounced in eighteenth century with stress on second syllable, may reflect the nominal prefix m-in Wolof *mbugal*, hindrance, annoyance. The same element may be contained in British and American English *humbog*, to hoax, impose upon.
- cat⁷¹ A person, man, fellow, just a "cool dude." Same as *hipi cat*.
- chance⁷² Bantu *tshianza*, hand, handful; a certain number, several.
- chick⁷³ Girl, pretty young woman, one especially "hip," or attractive. Cf. Wolof *jigen*, woman. Note convergence with English chicken.
- chigger⁷⁴ Wolof *jiga*, insect, sand flea. First recorded in 1743, via Caribbean. Originally pronounced and spelled *chigo*, *chego*, or *chiego*.
- cowboy⁷⁵ Originated in Colonial period when African labor and skills were closely associated with cattle raising. Africans stationed at cow pens with herding responsibilities were referred to as "cowboy," just as Africans who worked in the "Big House" were known as "houseboy." As late as 1865, following the Civil War, Africans whose livestock responsibilities were with cattle were referred to as "cowboys" in plantation records. After 1865, whites associated with cattle industry referred to themselves as "cattlemen" to distinguish themselves from "cowboys."
- coob⁷⁶ Bantu *kuba*, care for, take care of, watch over, a hutch, pen, or coop for fowls or small domestic animals: a chicken "coob."
- cool⁷⁷ Mandingo cool, slow, and *gone not*; hence fast. Terms applied to music and dancing: calm, controlled, slow tempo and the opposite, hot, fast, and energetic. Corresponding terms found in other African languages.
- cooter⁷⁸ Kongo *nkuda*, a box turtle. Also West African *kuta*, turtle, use recorded 1832. Came into southern U.S. dialect via Gullah heard mainly in Georgia, South Carolina, Alabama, and Louisiana.

- daskiki Yoruba *danshiki*, a loose, colorfully patterned, bottomless pull-on shirt. Garment and word were introduced during the civil rights movement of the 1960s, when young black men wore dashikis to reassert their identity with African culture. Made famous by (Ron) Maulana Karenga in the 1960s.
- day-clean⁷⁹ Bantu *kutoka kulu*, dawn, "clean sky"; Wolof *ba set na*, it has dawned (day is clean); Mandingo *dugu jera*, it has dawned (day has become clean, clear). Found in Gullah, West African and Caribbean English *do-kin*, day-clean, and black Caribbean French *ju netye* (lit. "day-cleaned").
- diddle⁸⁰ Bantu *dinga*: deceive, trick, cheat; cheat, swindle.
- diddy-wa-diddy⁸¹ Bantu *madid-madid*: you eat and eat; legendary place of plenty to eat.
- dig⁸² Wolof *deg, dega*, understand, appreciate, pay attention to. Convergence with Black English to "dig," understand.
- dinge⁸³ Mandingo *den, din*, child, young person, younger than the speaker, *den-ke*, male child, young man. A black person, *dinkey*; a black child, *dinke*.
- dirt⁸⁴ Akan *dote*, earth, soil. Common in U.S., as in "dirt road" or "dirt track." West African and Caribbean English *doti*, dirty, earth. Convergence with British English in its original sense of "filthy."
- doll-baby⁸⁵ Yoruba *omo langidi*, little child; *oyedeji*, wooden images. Southern dialect idiom common in black English, distribution mainly along Atlantic Coast.
- do one's thing⁸⁶ Mandingo *ka a fen ke* (lit. "to do one's t'ing"), to undertake one's favorite activity or assume one's favorite role.
- done⁸⁷ Wolof *doon*, past completive marker, "he done go"; Mandingo *tun*, past completive marker. Cf. also black West African English *don*, as past completive marker. Convergence with English *done*.
- fat-mouth⁸⁸ Mandingo *da-baa*, excessive talking (lit. "big, fat mouth"). Same as *bad-mouth*.
- foo-foo⁸⁹ Akan *foforo*, new, fresh, strange. An outsider, a newcomer, one who does not belong or is not accepted, a fool, a worthless person. Convergence with English fool. Cf. black Jamaican English *foo-foo, fool-fool*, credulous, easy to take advantage of, stupid.
- fuzzy⁹⁰ Wolof *fas*, horse (*fas wi*, the horse, *fas yi*, the horses). "Horse" in two specialized senses: "range horse" and "sure bet at a horse race." Hence, perhaps, *fuzz, fuzzy*, policeman,

- from an earlier use of horse patrols. Convergence with English *fuzzy-tail*.
- gam⁹¹ Hausa *gama*, boastfulness, showing off.
- geechee⁹² Originally meant an African from the Guinea coast. Later, it meant a black not yet fully acculturated during slavery. In 1789, applied to Africans brought to Ogeechee River plantation under coercion.
- goober⁹³ Bantu *nguba*, peanut; use recorded 1834. Another word for peanut is *pinder*, or *pinal*, from Congo *mpinda*, peanut; use first recorded in Jamaica 1707, South Carolina 1848.
- goofer-bag⁹⁴ Bantu *kufina*, to die; v. common to all Bantu languages. A charm to protect from death.
- goofer-dust⁹⁵ Bantu *kufam*, to die. Refers to grave dirt. In Congo (Zaire), earth from a grave is considered at one with the spirit of the buried person. Used by "root workers" on American plantation.
- goose⁹⁶ Wolof *kus*, anus. To nudge someone in the anus. "Your goose is cooked." (Originally from Arabic?)
- gris-gris⁹⁷ Object worn as protective charm against evil, or used to inflict harm. An amulet in place of and with the power to remove voodoo curses. Associated with voodoo rites in Louisiana. Used by Marie Laveau, noted voodoo queen. She concocted a *gris-gris* of salt, gunpowder, saffron, and dried dog dung. A *gris-gris* that protected from evil or brought good luck was a dime with a hole in it, worn about the ankle. Mende in origin, via Hausa.
- gullah⁹⁸ Bantu *Ngola*, an ethnic group in Angola. Refers to African Americans living in the Sea Islands and regions of South Carolina, Georgia, and northern Florida. Also refers to their language.
- guy⁹⁹ Wolof *gay*, fellows, persons. Used as a term of address, including "you guys," addressed even to a single man or woman. Convergence with English personal name Guy.
- he¹⁰⁰ Undifferentiated third-person sing. pron., he or she. Similar usage is found in most West African and in all Bantu languages, as well as in most forms of black West African and Caribbean English. In Gullah, he remains undifferentiated, referring to either a male or a female. For reverse African influence in differentiation between second-person sing. and pl. pron.
- hear¹⁰¹ Mandingo *n mu a men*, I didn't understand (lit. "I didn't

hear it”), hearing in the sense of understanding. Cf. similar application of *v.* meaning “to hear” in other West African languages.

hep hip¹⁰² Wolof *hepi, hipi*, to open one’s eyes, to be aware of what is going on. Hence *hipi-kat*, someone with eyes open, aware of what is going on.

honkie¹⁰³ Wolof *hong*, red pink; color used to describe white people in African languages. Cf. also *pink*, a white man, and *redneck*, a powerful white farmer in the U.S. In Ebonics *honkie* referred to whites who would come to the black community, park and honk their horns for their black dates. This term was used before the 1960s.

hoodoo¹⁰⁴ Hoodoo, as opposed to voodoo, is less centrally organized as part of voodoo religious practices. It generally connotes the mystic and magical aspects, usually evolved for negative purpose. “To hoodoo someone” implied that an individual was made to do something against his will by the use of various concoctions, which could be drunk, eaten, or worn, in order to make someone fall in love or to cause a death.

hulla-ballo¹⁰⁵ Bantu *halua balualua*, when those that are coming arrive. Hence noise, uproar, racket of greeting.

hully-gully¹⁰⁶ Bantu *halakala*, compare (the hands, to ascertain the one holding the rock). A child’s game.

jam¹⁰⁷ Informal gathering of jazz musicians, playing for their own entertainment. Same element may be contained in *jamboree*, noisy revel, celebration, a full hand of cards, first recorded in 1860s. Possible convergence of Mandingo and black West African English *jama* (from Arabic), crowd gathering, and Wolof *jam*, slave (in U.S., a gathering of slaves or former slaves for their own entertainment). A related Wolof term is *jaambuur*, freeman, freed man.

jamboree¹⁰⁸ Celebration by emancipated slaves made famous with *June-teenth* celebrations.

jazz¹⁰⁹ Bantu *jaja*, to make dance. Obsolete forms *jas, jasy*. The numerous applications of this term center on basic *v.* sense of “to speed up, excite, exaggerate, act in an unrestricted or extreme way.” Note corresponding use as *n.* and as *adj.*, “jazzy.” Applied to copulation, frenzied dancing, fast music, exaggerated talk, gaudy patterns and colors, excessive pleasure-seeking. Cf. Mandingo *jasi*, to become abnormal or out of character, either diminished or excessive. Cf. similar Wolof *yees* and Temne *yas*, to be lively or energetic to an extreme degree, ap-

plied to exaggerated styles of dancing or music, excessive love-making, etc.

jelly, jelly-roll¹¹⁰ Mandingo *jeli*, minstrel, who often gained popularity with women through his skills in the use of words and music. A virile man who curries sexual favors of women. Epithet applied in U.S. to several black musicians, including “Jelly Roll Morton” (piano), “Jelly” Williams (bass), and “Jelly” Thompson (guitar). Convergence with English items of food, jelly and jelly-roll.

jenk¹¹¹ Bantu *njika*, reserve, reticence, inhibition. “To spread my jenk”: relax, have a good time.

jiffy¹¹² Bantu *tshipi*, short. In a second, in a moment.

jigger¹¹³ Bantu *njiga*, sand flea, insect.

jiggaboo¹¹⁴ Bantu *tshikabo*, they bow the head docilely. Derogatory term for black person. In black English a *jiggaboo* is someone who is extremely black, with strong African features, as opposed to high yellow, or light-skinned.

jitter-(bug)¹¹⁵ Mandingo *ji-to*, frightened, cowardly, from *ji*, to be afraid. *Jitobaga*, a frightened, cowardly person. To tremble and shake, have “the jitters”; nervousness, fear, cowardice. *Jitter bug*: an excited swing addict, who shakes and trembles in dancing.

jive¹¹⁶ Wolof *jev, jem*, to talk about someone in his absence, esp. in a disparaging way. Misleading talk; to talk in a misleading or insincere way. Applied to sexual and musical activity. Ct. semantic range of *jazz*. Convergences with English jive, jibe, to sneer at, disparage.

john¹¹⁷ Mandingo *jon*, slave, a person owned by someone else. An average man, esp. one who can be exploited or easily taken in; a male lover, a prostitute’s client. Also used in black American folklore, as in John Henry, name of hero-slave frequently in conflict with “massa.” The term *massa* provides a convenient convergence of English master and Mandingo *massa*, chief. That Mandingo speakers in U.S. were conscious of this convergence is suggested by the cycle of black American tales involving John-versus-Massa, which corresponds to a similar genre of Mandingo tales in West Africa involving *jon*, the slave, versus *massa*, the chief.

juba (1)¹¹⁸ A group dance with complex rhythmic clapping and slapping of knees and things, as done by plantation slaves (1834). Both dance and word are of African origin.

juba (2)¹¹⁹ One of the earliest records of the term *juba* dates to American minstrel days. Both Juba and Jube consistently appeared

as names of enslaved Africans who were skilled musicians and dancers.

- juba (3)¹²⁰ Bantu *juba*, *jiouba*, or *diubu*, to beat time rhythmically. Used to describe an African dance step, the Charleston; recorded particularly in South Carolina and West Indies. Juba is also the Akan female day name for a child born on Monday.
- juba (4)¹²¹ Traditional slave food. Refers to the food that enslaved Africans working in the plantation house collected from the massa's leftovers. Such leftovers were called *juba*, *jibba*, or *jiba*. On Saturday or Sunday the leftovers were thrown together; no one could distinguish the meat from the bread and vegetables. This juba was placed in a huge pot and those working in "de big House" shared it with those working in the fields.
- juba (5)¹²² Bantu *nguba*, *kingooba*, peanut, groundnut, "goober," from which an old African melody is derived. The Juba dance was originally performed on plantations but became so popular that whites gave it the name Charleston, after the southern city and major slave port. The dance was introduced in 1926 to the American stage in an all-black production by E. F. Miller and Aubrey Lyles entitled *Runnin' Wild*, and as the "Charleston" it became the dance craze of the 1920s.
- juke¹²³ Wolof *dzug*, to misbehave, lead a disorderly life; Bambara *dzugu*, wicked. Brothel, cheap tavern, low dive. Mainly Gullah and black use in South. To *juke* (1939), to make the rounds of taverns and low dives, go drinking; used mainly by Southerners. By early 1940s *juke* came to mean "to make the rounds drinking and dancing to jukeboxes." (1939) *Juke joints*, taverns or roadhouses that featured jukeboxes. *Juke Juke-joint*, a hand-out bar. Cf. also Bantu *juka*, rise up, do your things.
- ju ju¹²⁴ Bantu *njiu*, danger, harm, accident. A charm or fetish against such.
- kakatulu¹²⁵ Bantu *kukatulu*, to take off, remove; vi., to be still, immobile. Name of a large bird, mockingbird.
- kelt, ketch¹²⁶ Bantu *keleja*, filter, strain; catch the drippings, pale stuff. A light-skinned black person.
- kickeraboo¹²⁷ The Americanisms "to kick the bucket" evolved from *kickeraboo* and *kickatavoo*, killed or dead. Term has two African sources: Krio (the English-based Creole of Sierra Leone) *kek-rebu*, *kekerabu*, dead, to wither (as leaves or fruit); Ga (West Africa) *kekre*, dry, stiff; and *bo*, to befall, end. "Kicking the bucket" was used in American blackface minstrel songs, re-

- garding the death of a black person, until about the mid-nineteenth century, when it moved into Standard American English.
- ki!¹²⁸ To affect strongly, as in "you kill me!" Similar usage in a number of West African languages, including Wolof and Mandingo, or verbs meaning lit. "to kill."
- kook, kooky¹²⁹ Bantu *kuku*, dolt, blockhead. A strange, peculiar person.
- kong¹³⁰ Bantu *nkongo*, mixture, conglomeration. Bootleg whiskey.
- lubo¹³¹ First used in America in 1732 to identify slaves from Niger Delta. Use of African name indicated a first-generation African or a newly arrived "saltwater" African.
- mahoola¹³² Bantu *mahula*, secrets, divulged matters, indiscretions. Silly talk.
- man¹³³ Mandingo *ce*, man, the man; power, authority. Term of address.
- massa¹³⁴ Mande (Mandingo) *masa*, chief.
- mat¹³⁵ Hausa *mata* or *mace*, woman, wife.
- mean¹³⁶ Similar to bad, as "don't be mean to me."
- mojo¹³⁷ Fula *moca*, to cast a magic spell by spitting. Hence *mocore*, magic spell, incantation uttered while spitting. Originally, magic spell, charm, amulet, spell cast by spitting. Mainly used today in sense of something working in one's favor: "I got my *majo* working!" Also, narcotics. Cf. Gullah *moca*, witchcraft, magic. Black Jamaican English *majoe*, *majo*, plant with renowned medicinal powers.
- moola, mula¹³⁸ Bantu *mulambo*, receipts, tax money. Money, wealth. Cf. black English "give me some moola!"
- mother yo'
mama¹³⁹ West African, esp. Wolof; used as term of severe abuse or of jocular abuse between friends. Includes use of explicit insults, such as "motherfucker."
- mouse¹⁴⁰ Mandingo *muso* and Vai *musu*, woman, wife. Attractive girl, young woman, girlfriend, wife. Convergence with English mouse. Of several terms for "woman" taken over into black English from major West African languages.
- nana¹⁴¹ Bantu *nana*: grandmother; Akan: *nana*: grandmother or grandfather.
- ofay¹⁴² White man. Extended form: *ofaginzy*. Occurs as a nominal/adjectival prefix in many West African languages. Term for "white," beginning with "f," also occurs widely: *Bama fe*, *Gola sua*, *Ndoh fome*, etc. It has been suggested that ofay represents a rearrangement of the letters of the English word *foe*

into pig Latin, but from its form, the word is more likely to have an African origin.

okay (1)¹⁴³ Mandingo *o-ke*; Dogon *o-kay*; Djabo *o-ke*; Western Fula *eyyi kay*; Wolof waw *kayk*, *waw ke*, all meaning "yes, indeed!" "That's it, all right." Note widespread use in languages of West Africa of *kay* and similar forms as confirmatory markers, esp. after words meaning "yes." Recorded use of *oh ki*, indicating surprised affirmation, in black Jamaican English 1816; predates by over twenty years the popularization of OK in white speech of New England. Affirmative use of *kay-ki* in black speech in U.S. is recorded from as early as 1776. Early attempts were made to explain OK as initial letters of misspelling of English words "all correct" or as French words *au quai*, on the quayside. Subsequent attempts have been made to derive term from German, Greek, Scots, English, Finnish, and Choctaw, but little consideration has been given to possibility of origin in black speech.

okay (2)¹⁴⁴ Mandingo *o-ke-len*, after that (lit. "that being done"). Use of this syntactic construction is widespread in West African languages. "After that" serves as link between sentences in running narrative or discourse, serving to confirm the preceding and anticipate the following sentence.

okra¹⁴⁵ Bantu *kingombo*, okra, main ingredient of gumbo. Food plant indigenous to Central Africa and brought to New World by enslaved Africans. Known to most Southerners by 1780s.

palooka¹⁴⁶ Bantu *paluka* (tshiseki), to have a fit, spasm, convulsion. A stupid person; an inferior prizefighter.

pamper¹⁴⁷ Bantu *pamba*, be worried, upset, afraid, disquieted. To scold or "bless out" someone.

peola¹⁴⁸ Bantu *peula*, peel off outer skin. A light-complexioned black girl.

pharaoh¹⁴⁹ Kanuri *fero*, girl. Girl, girlfriend, blues term.

phoney¹⁵⁰ Mandingo *fani*, *foni* (to be) false, valueless; to tell a lie. Counterfeit, sham, something false or valueless. Note also *bogue*, *bogus*.

pin¹⁵¹ Temne *pind*, to stare at, see. Black West African English (Sierra Leone) *pin*, staring, as an intensifying adv. After v. denoting "to see." Convergence with English *pin*.

pinto¹⁵² Temne (*a-*) *bentho*, bier for carrying corpse. In South Carolina and Georgia, means "coffin."

plat-eye¹⁵³ Bantu *palatayi*, scratch like a dog at the door. Malevolent, su-

pernatural being thought to haunt Georgetown area of South Carolina. Female, animal-like ghost, feared in South.

poke¹⁵⁴ Bantu *-poko*, deep bag, socket, cavity. A sack, bag, wallet. Cf. "a pig in a poke."

poon tang,
puntang¹⁵⁵ Bantu *mu ntanga*, under the bed. Sexual intercourse with a black person. Sexually attractive (black) woman, vagina. Cf. Lima *puntuu*, vagina. Convergence with French *putain*, prostitute.

poop¹⁵⁶ Wolof *pup*, to defecate, of a child. Convergence with similar forms in European languages, including Dutch. Cf. black English *pup pup*.

poor jo¹⁵⁷ Vai dialect work of Liberia and Sierra Leone (1736), heard mainly in Georgia. Colloquial name for great blue heron.

rap¹⁵⁸ West African English (Sierra Leone) *rap*, to con, fool, get the better of someone in verbal play. Descriptive of a variety of verbal techniques: to speak to, greet; flirt with, make a pass (at a girl); speak in a colorful way; tease, taunt; con, fool. Used also as n. Recently popularized black American usage of *rap* is, in fact, old. Note *to rap*, meaning "to speak or talk."

rooty-toot¹⁵⁹ Wolof *rutu-tuti*, rapid drumming sound. Old-fashioned music. Also *rootin-tootin*, noisy, boisterous.

ruskus¹⁶⁰ Bantu *lukashi*, sound of cheering and applause. Informal, noisy commotion, rumpus.

sambo¹⁶¹ Bantu *-samba*, to comfort, cheer, console. Cf. Also widespread West African personal name: Wolof *Samb*, *Samba*; Mandingo *Sambu*; Hausa *sambo*; similar names among Bantu. Black man, male child, popular Southern use of the name. "Little Black *Sambo*" story appears to be a corruption of a West African folk tale.

say, says¹⁶² Mandingo *ko . . .*, say. Similar use of items meaning lit. "Say" found in numerous West African languages, black West African, and Caribbean English. Term used to introduce reported speech, "that . . ." "he tell him, say. . ." Cf. black speech "say, man . . ." "he say this, and he says that."

shucking¹⁶³ Bantu *shikuka*, hold the head high, be willful, be obstinate. Lying, bluffing, faking.

skin¹⁶⁴ Temne *botme-der*, put skin; Mandingo *I golo don m bolo*, put your skin in my hand. Cf. black speech "give me some skin, man!" (shake hands with me!). Used in 1960s by African Americans before it moved into white American speech.

tabby¹⁶⁵ Bantu *ntaba*, muddy place from which mud for building walls is taken. Building material composed of oyster shells, lime,

sand, and saltwater, commonly used in building slave houses in Georgia and South Carolina.

Bantu *tullualua*, we're coming! Words of a song.

Kikongo *tota*, to pick up; Kimbundu *tuta*, to carry, load. Black West African English (Sierra Leone) *tot*, Cameroon *tut*, to carry. Similar forms meaning "carry" found in a number of western Bantu languages.

Uh-hum, yes; *mhm*, no. Cf. widespread use throughout Africa of similar responses for "yes" and "no." Scattered use of such forms occurs elsewhere in the world esp. for "yes," but nowhere as regularly as in Africa, where, in many languages, they constitute regular words for "yes" and "no." Note also occurrence of intonational variants of these forms to indicate differing intensities and situations of response, both in African languages and black American English, as well as in black African and Caribbean English. African origin of these items is confirmed by their much wider use in American than in British English.

Fon (Dahomey) *vodu*, *vodun*, fetish, witchcraft; to bewitch. Entered English via black French of New Orleans.

Mandingo epithet for a bad but powerful chief. Arabic *Yaqub*, Jacob. Also Yacub, described by Malcolm X as creator of white race. A white racist.

Crebo *ya*, used after commands; Temne *yo*, used after statements or commands. An emphatic concluding particle: "Indeed!" Often said in endearing tone, thus softening a statement or command. Also black West African and Caribbean English *ya*, said after statements or command.

Wolof *nyam*, taste; Serer *nyam*, eat; Fula *nyama*, eat; black West African and Caribbean English *nyam*, to eat. Also Bantu *nyambi*, to eat.

Bantu *ya ntata ya ntata*, of the passing moment only temporary. Idle chatter, monotonous talk.

You pl.; similar use of you-all. Regular differentiation between second-person sing. and pl. pron. in African languages undoubtedly played a part in introduction of comparable differentiation in American English, esp. in South. Reinforced perhaps by differentiated pron. of French and Spanish. Cf. esp. Wolof *yow*, you sing., versus *yeen*, yena, you pl. Hence convergences with you in sing. And *you* + *one* as new second-person pl. form. Note first-person *we-uns* by analogy. Cf. black West African and Caribbean English *yu*, you sing. versus *una*, *unu*, you pl. used in Sierra Leone, Cameroon, Ja-

too-la-loo¹⁶⁶

tote¹⁶⁷

uh-huh¹⁶⁸

voodoo¹⁶⁹

wyacoo¹⁷⁰

Yah (yo)¹⁷¹

yam¹⁷²

yackety-yak¹⁷³

you-uns¹⁷⁴

maica, and elsewhere. In Gullah, *yu* versus *une*, and in black Guyana English, *you* versus *you-all*.

Someone extremely dark in skin color.

ziggabo¹⁷⁵

zombie¹⁷⁶

Tshiluba *Nzambi*, God, and *mujangi*, spirit of the dead; Kimbundu *nzumbi*, ghost, phantom. Supernatural force that brings a corpse back to life. Cf. black Haitian French *zombi*, black West African and Caribbean English *jombi*, Sierra Leone and Cameroon *jumbi*, Guyana and Jamaica *zombie*.

Notes

1. Francis Le Lau to Sec. S.P.G., Aug. 30, 1712, S.P.G. MS.A, no. 27 (Propagation of Gospel).
2. "An Account of the Negro Insurrection in South Carolina," p. 234, in Newton D. Mereness, *Travels in the American Colonies*. Edited under the auspices of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1916), p. 223.
3. *South Carolina Gazette*, Sept. 17, 1737.
4. *Ibid.*, June 14, 1740; Sept. 22, 1737.
5. *Ibid.*, Feb. 8, 1748; Feb. 25, 1749; May 28, 1750; Feb. 18, 1751.
6. Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, *American Negro Slavery: A Survey of Supply, Employment and Control of Negro Labor in the Old South Plantation* (New York: D. Appleton, 1941), 20; also in Mechal Sobel, *Trabelin' on the Slave Journey to an Afro-Baptist Faith* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), 37.
7. *South Carolina Gazette*, July 8, 1732.
8. *Ibid.*, Dec. 21, 1738.
9. *Ibid.*, Oct. 3, 1743.
10. *Ibid.*, Feb. 1, 1746.
11. *Ibid.*, Nov. 8, 1751; June 14, 1742; Jan. 17, 1743.
12. *Ibid.*, Jan. 17, 1743.
13. *Ibid.*, Oct. 26, 1734.
14. *Ibid.*, Feb. 9, 1738.
15. *Ibid.*, Mar. 16, 1738.
16. *Ibid.*, Mar. 30, 1734.
17. *Ibid.*, Jan. 22, 1734.
18. Quoted in "The Speech of Negroes in Colonial America," *Journal of Negro History* 24(3) (July 1939).
19. Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica* (New York: Arno Press, 1972; reprint of 1774 ed., publ. by T. Lowndes, London), 427; Henning C. Cohen,

- "Slave Names in Colonial South Carolina," *American Speech* 27 (1952), 102-107, here p. 105.
20. Cohen, "Slave Names," 105.
 21. Whittington Bernard Johnson, "Negro Laboring Classes in Early America, 1750-1820." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Georgia, 1970.
 22. J. L. Dillard, *Black Names* (The Hague: Mouton, 1976).
 23. Guy Johnson, *Drums and Shadows: Survival Studies among the Georgia Coastal Negroes*. Savannah Unit, Georgia Writers' Project, Work Projects Administration. Foreword by Guy Johnson, photographs by Muriel and Malcolm Bell Jr. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1940).
 24. Norman R. Yetman, ed. *Life under the "Peculiar Institution."* Selections from the Slave Narrative Collection (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), 13.
 25. Inventories 1732-1736 of Charleston, S.C., Probate Court.
 26. Cohen, "Slave Names," 104.
 27. H. L. Mencken, *The American Language: An Inquiry into the Development of English in the United States* (New York: Knopf, 1936), 524.
 28. Cohen, "Slave Names."
 29. Land Patent Book No. 4, 23.
 30. Dillard, *Black Names*.
 31. Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960; originally published in 1845), 147-48.
 32. Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Grove, 1965).
 33. Dillard, *Black Names*, 25.
 34. Lorenzo Dow Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949).
 35. Carl Lamson Carmer, *Stars Fell on Alabama* (New York: Farmer and Rinehart, 1934), 96.
 36. Winifred K. Vass, unpublished materials.
 37. Joseph E. Holloway, personal interview with the Rev. Ervin L. Greene, Jr., in Beaufort, Jan. 18, 1984.
 38. "A Mutombo by Any Other Name," *USA Today*, March 1989.
 39. Joseph E. Holloway, interview with Mrs. Etta Williams (age eighty-six), St. Helena Island, Jan. 18, 1984.
 40. Joseph E. Holloway, field notebook.
 41. J. T. Munday, "Spirit Names among the Central Bantu," *African Studies* 7(1) (Mar. 1948), 39-40.
 42. *Ibid.*, 44.
 43. Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*.
 44. *Ibid.*
 45. David Dalby, "The African Element in Black English," in Thomas Koch-

- man, ed., *Rappin' and Stylin' Out: Communication in Urban Black America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 171.
46. *Ibid.*
 47. *Ibid.*
 48. Harold Wentworth and Stuart Berg Flexner, *Dictionary of American Slang* (New York: Crowell, 1967), 18; Dalby, "African Element."
 49. Source: Winifred K. Vass, linguist of Bantu languages.
 50. *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, 1988), 127.
 51. Dena J. Epstein, "The Folk Banjo: A Documentary History," *Ethnomusicology* (Sept. 1975), reprint 33; Dena J. Polachek Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 120-22, 147; John A. Holm and Alison Watt Shilling, *The Dictionary of Bahamian English* (Cold Spring, N.Y.: Lexik House Publ., 1982); Dalby, "African Element."
 52. Dalby, "African Element," 177.
 53. Betsy Fancher, *Lost Legacy of Georgia's Golden Isle* (New York: Doubleday, 1971), 45.
 54. *Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, unabridged ed., 145; Zora Neale Hurston, *Mules and Men* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 64, 132.
 55. Holm and Shilling, *Dictionary*; Dalby, "African Element."
 56. Dalby, "African Element," 177.
 57. *Ibid.*
 58. *Ibid.*
 59. *Random House Dictionary*, 169.
 60. Wentworth and Flexner, *Dictionary*, 69.
 61. Bradley, "Word-List," 12.
 62. *Random House Dictionary*, 169; Dalby, "African Element," 178.
 63. Stoney and Sheby, *Black Genesis*, 177.
 64. *Random House Dictionary*.
 65. Dalby, "African Elements," 77.
 66. Texas newspaper article.
 67. Julian Mason in *American Speech* 35 (1960), 51-55, gives a detailed discussion of the etymology of *buckaroo*.
 68. Holm and Shilling, *Bahamian Dictionary*.
 69. Dalby, "African Element."
 70. *Ibid.*
 71. Wolof in origin: cf. *hip-kat*.
 72. C. M. Woodward, "Word List," 9; Johnson, *Folk Culture*, 44.

73. Dalby, "African Element," 174.
74. Holm and Shilling, *Dictionary*.
75. Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: Knopf, 1974), 32.
76. Frank A. Collymore, *Barbadian Dialect* (Bridgetown, Barbados: Advocate, 1957), 26.
77. Dalby, "African Element," 179.
78. Harold Courlander, *Negro Folk Music U.S.A.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 191.
79. Holm and Shilling, *Dictionary*; Dalby, "African Element," 179; Joseph E. Holloway, "Africanisms in Gullah Oral Tradition," *Western Journal of Black Studies* 13(3) (1989), 119.
80. Wentworth and Flexner, *Dictionary of American Slang*, 125.
81. Stetson Kennedy, *Palmetto Country* (New York: Duell, Sloan, 1942), 154-55.
82. Dalby, "African Element."
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid.
85. Holm and Shilling, *Dictionary*.
86. Ibid., 180.
87. Ibid.
88. Ibid.
89. Ibid.
90. Ibid.
91. Ibid., *Random House Dictionary*, 582.
92. Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*, 194.
93. *Random House Dictionary*, 609.
94. Hurston, *Mules and Men*, 241, 281.
95. Robert Farris Thompson, this volume, chapter 10.
96. Dalby, "African Element," 180.
97. Jessie Gaston Mulira, this volume, chapter 5; N. W. Newell, in *Journal of American Folklore* 2 (1889), 44.
98. Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*.
99. Dalby, "African Element."
100. Ibid.
101. Ibid.
102. Ibid.
103. Ibid.
104. Mulira, "Case of Voodoo," 56.
105. Thomas, "South Texas Negro Folk Songs"; Vass, correspondence with Madge B. MacLachlan, Jackson, Fla., regarding terms used by her childhood playmate on the turpentine "flats."

106. Newbell Niles Puckett, *Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1926), 18-19.
107. Dalby, "African Element," 178.
108. Ibid.
109. Ibid., 181.
110. Dalby, "African Element," 181.
111. Source: Winifred K. Vass.
112. *Random House Dictionary*, 767.
113. Ibid., 768.
114. Ibid.
115. Dalby, "African Element," 182.
116. Ibid.
117. Ibid.
118. Beverly J. Robinson, this volume, chapter 12; Mitford McLeod Mathews, *Some Sources of Southernisms* (University: University of Alabama Press, 1948), 145; Winifred Kellerberge Vass, *Bantu Speaking Heritage of the United States* (Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Studies, UCLA, 1979).
119. Robinson, "Africanisms and the Study of Folklore."
120. Ibid.
121. Ibid.
122. Ibid.
123. Dalby, "African Element," 182.
124. Source: Winifred K. Vass, linguist; informant.
125. Ibid.
126. Ibid.
127. J. L. Dillard, *All-American English* (New York: Random House, 1975).
128. Dalby, "African Element," 182.
129. *Random House Dictionary*, 794.
130. Vass, *Bantu Speaking Heritage*.
131. Ibid.
132. Wentworth and Flexner, *Dictionary of American Slang*, 331.
133. Dalby, "African Element," 182.
134. Ibid.
135. Ibid.
136. Ibid.
137. Ibid.
138. *Random House Dictionary*, 929.
139. Dalby, "African Element," 182.
140. Ibid.
141. W. A. B. Musgrave, "Ananci Stories," *Folk-Lore Record* 3(1) (1880), 53-55.

142. *Ibid.*, 183.
 143. *Ibid.*
 144. *Ibid.*
 145. *Ibid.*
 146. *Random House Dictionary*, 1040.
 147. Collymore, *Barbadian Dialect*, 63.
 148. Wentworth and Flexner, *Dictionary of American Slang*, 382.
 149. Dalby, "African Element," 184.
 150. *Ibid.*
 151. *Ibid.*
 152. *Ibid.*
 153. Smith, *Gullah*, 28.
 154. *Random House Dictionary*, 112.
 155. Wentworth and Flexner, *Dictionary of American Slang*, 401; Vass, *Bantu Speaking Heritage*, 113; Dalby, "African Heritage," 184.
 156. Dalby, "African Element," 184.
 157. *Ibid.*
 158. *Ibid.*
 159. *Ibid.*
 160. *Random House Dictionary*, 1250.
 161. Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*; Dalby, "African Elements," 184.
 162. Dalby, "African Element," 184.
 163. *Ibid.*
 164. *Ibid.*
 165. *Random House Dictionary*; Vass, *Bantu Speaking Heritage*, 114.
 166. *Random House Dictionary*; Vass, *Bantu Speaking Heritage*, 114; Dalby, "African Element," 185.
 167. Bradley, "Word-List," 67.
 168. Dalby, "African Element," 185.
 169. William A. Read, *Louisiana-French*, rev. ed. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1963).
 170. Dalby, "African Element," 185.
 171. *Ibid.*
 172. *Ibid.*
 173. *Random House Dictionary*, 1652.
 174. Dalby, "African Element."
 175. See *jiggabbo*.
 176. *Random House Dictionary*, 767; Read, *Louisiana-French*, 128; Dalby, "African Element," 186.

Five

 The Case of Voodoo in
 New Orleans

Jessie Ruth Gaston

This essay provides insight into African religious retentions among blacks in New Orleans. Such survivals include beliefs, activities, cults, deities, and rituals that can be traced directly back to Africa.¹ In particular we are concerned here with voodoo. The Dahomean religion of *vodu*, as it is referred to in many parts of West Africa, is a highly structured religious and magical system. This system is both complex and functional, with duties, symbols, rituals, and faithful adherents.² After giving a brief history of *vodu* in North America, I will describe the African religious system with special reference to Dahomey, then investigate cult initiations among the voodoos of New Orleans and the role of songs and prayers in voodoo worship in West Africa, Haiti, and New Orleans. Finally, I will present a chronological review of voodoo practices and practitioners in New Orleans.

 Voodoo in North America

The word *voodoo*, which is Dahomean in origin and means "spirit" or "deity" in the Fon language, generally produces one of three responses from most Westerners: fear, laughter, or respect. The response of fear is based on exaggerated negative views of the supernatural world and of Africa. The laughter response is often motivated by an ignorance that associates voodoo with "mere superstition." Respect comes with one's knowledge that voodoo is a functional religious system in West Africa.

The word and the system arrived in North America when the first