

Not unlike other immigrants to America, Africans send a good portion of their earnings to struggling family members in their homeland. In total, Africans send approximately \$1 billion to the continent annually. They also routinely embrace negative stereotypes of American-born blacks, whom they often consider lazy and prone to "bellyaching," even as so-called native-born black Americans routinely ridicule black immigrants as inferior, smug, and ungrateful for the opportunities that they enjoy as beneficiaries of the black American freedom struggle. Such stereotypes, combined with competition for jobs, economic resources, housing, and educational opportunities, create tensions within America's heterogeneous African American communities. African immigration promises to alter the nation's longstanding definition of what constitutes an African American. Such immigrants embody and underscore the salience and relevance of ethnicity and culture among African Americans.

Black Feminism and Gay and Lesbian Rights

Like African and Caribbean immigrants, the black feminist movement and the gay rights movement have contested conventional notions of racial identity during the close of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries. Both movements sprang forth from the civil rights movement, but, in addition to race, each emphasizes distinct facets of a person's identity, namely their gender and sexual orientation.

A new wave of feminism emerged on the American political landscape in the 1960s and 1970s, transforming gender relations in the United States. The 1964 Civil Rights Act outlawed sexual as well as racial discrimination in employment, but the elimination of sexual discrimination was not an explicit goal of the civil rights movement at the time; in fact, congressional leaders who opposed the Civil Rights Act included mention of sexual discrimination in an effort to reduce the law's chances of passage. Nevertheless, the inclusion of gender-specific language helped broaden discussions of civil rights to include the gender discrimination that had oppressed women for generations. Many white female activists in SNCC and other civil rights groups assumed leading roles in the emerging feminist movement, often employing the same strategies and tactics that had worked in the struggle against white supremacy.

The so-called second wave of feminism, which occurred during the 1960s and 1970s, achieved many important changes during the height of its influence. Whereas first-wave feminism strived to overturn legal bar-

riers to gender equality, second-wave feminism also attacked unofficial gender inequality. The National Organization for Women, cofounded in 1966 by black activist Pauli Murray, fought employment discrimination; advocated for safe, effective, and legal forms of birth control; lobbied for federal- and state-supported child care; and promoted women's privacy and abortion rights. One of the movement's most important early victories was Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, which required colleges and universities to ensure equal access for women. The movement also hailed the Supreme Court's ruling in *Roe v. Wade*, which legalized abortion, as one of its victories.

While the feminist movement went far toward liberating American women from the clutches of male domination in the social, legal, political, and, to a lesser extent, economic spheres, it had its critics. Conservative men and women had bitterly opposed the ultimately unsuccessful Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution, which sought to guarantee equal rights under the law for Americans regardless of sex, and to promote equality of the sexes. Further, tension and conflict developed between second-wave feminists and the third-wave feminists who succeeded them after 1980. The latter generation criticized their second-wave predecessors for their unwillingness to acknowledge the differences among women due to race, ethnicity, class, nationality, and sexual orientation. Moreover, disagreement between feminists and their conservative detractors endures. Black feminists helped give life to modern feminism, yet, unlike their white counterparts, they also called attention to the inextricable link between patriarchy, racism, and economic oppression.

To the chagrin of most black women, leading white feminists routinely ignored racism as a legitimate and urgent problem, and black male leaders proved to be hesitant at best on matters of gender equality. Elaine Brown, a former Black Panther leader, revealed, "A woman in the black power movement was considered at best irrelevant. A woman asserting herself was a pariah."³³ Most white feminists regarded sexism as their leading nemesis, while most black men believed that racism was African Americans' chief adversary. These attitudes failed to acknowledge, or to respond accordingly to, the dual nature of black women's oppression. Some black men, in their zeal and haste to affirm their own manhood and self-worth, even argued that black feminists, as they fought for their rights and dignity, were complicit in the emasculation of black men. "It is true that our husbands, fathers, brothers and sons have been emasculated, lynched, and

brutalized," black feminist Frances Beale has responded. "They have suffered from the cruelest assault on mankind that the world has ever known. However, it is a gross distortion fact to state that black women oppressed black men."³⁴ Black feminist scholars, writers, entertainers, and activists fought within and outside the civil rights, black power, and feminist movements to fight the sexism and racism prevalent in each one.

Black feminists continued their organizing throughout the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO), founded in 1973, advocated on behalf of black women and confronted a range of issues, including the sexual harassment and violation of black women; intraracial conflict over skin tone, facial features, and hair texture; interracial dating and marriage between black men and white women; and economic inequalities between black and white women. The NBFO also rejected the myth of the black matriarchy, as well as condemning racist and sexist depictions of black women in popular culture. The organization had a brief life span, dissolving by 1975. Nevertheless, it played a key role in promoting spirited dialogue and activism among black feminists. Thanks to the activism and organizing efforts of their predecessors, black feminists today speak widely about racism, sexism, domestic violence, sexual harassment, and rape, and also about political representation and economic empowerment. They continue to educate those who will listen, explaining that, as UCLA law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw argued, "When feminism does not explicitly oppose racism, and when antiracism does not incorporate opposition to patriarchy, race and gender politics often end up being antagonistic to each other and both interests lose."³⁵

In addition to feminism, the civil rights movement also motivated gays and lesbians to emerge from the margins of American society to combat homophobia as well as the suffering and violence it generated. Gay and lesbian people had been persecuted and had lived in seclusion throughout U.S. history; the gay and lesbian movement exploded in New York's Greenwich Village on June 28, 1969, when a multiracial gathering of gays and lesbians at Stonewall Inn, a local hotel turned nightclub, defended themselves physically against local police officers' longstanding efforts to exploit and terrorize them. By 1980 the movement that grew out of the Stonewall riots had pushed cities and states throughout America to pass legislation that decriminalized homosexual activity and forbade discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in places of public accom-

modation and employment. Though tensions existed between gay men and lesbians within the movement, these activists were largely effective at working jointly to fight for recognition and equal treatment, even in the face of staunch conservative opposition, which was particularly fostered by the conservative Christian right.

Black members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and queer (LGBTQ) community, however, were often marginalized and discriminated against by white members of this demonized population, as well as by heterosexual Americans. As within the feminist movement, the gay and lesbian movement was dominated by members of the white middle class. Although virulently racist members of the gay and lesbian communities existed, the movement itself did not embrace the prevailing racism of the era. Rather, white members of the gay and lesbian movement tended to subordinate antiracism, or to ignore race altogether, in their overall fight for gay and lesbian rights. In other words, black gays and lesbians found themselves forgotten in the struggle against homophobia. To address this problem, grassroots organizers Billy Jones and Delores Berry formed the National Coalition of Black Gays (NCBG) in 1978. The NCBG gave rise to local organizations in Washington DC and Baltimore, Maryland. In 1979 the NCBG was the leading organizer of the first March on Washington for gay rights. In the 1980s the NCBG added *Lesbian* to its name to become the National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays (NCBLG).

Many African American leaders and organizations, including John Lewis, Jesse Jackson, Eleanor Holmes Norton, and executives of the NAACP, championed the NCBLG's goals and efforts. These leaders, like many black people, believed that the rights of gay and lesbians were fundamentally linked to the rights of everyone, and, therefore, rallied to their cause. Those within the gay and lesbian movement, as well as more mainstream civil rights activists, called for an end to employment discrimination, education, health care, housing, and places of public accommodation for any reason, including sexual orientation. In 2002 Coretta Scott King, in a speech before the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, argued that the fate of black gays and lesbians, feminists and nationalists, and all who hunger for a nation and world free from discrimination and persecution, were bound in a single garment of destiny: "I believe very strongly that all forms of bigotry and discrimination are equally wrong and should be opposed by right-thinking Americans everywhere. Freedom from discrimination based on sexual orientation is surely a fundamental human