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Black Arabs and African migrants: between slavery and racism in North Africa

Stephen J. King

Government Department, Georgetown University, Washington, DC, USA

ABSTRACT

The popular uprisings for democracy, socio-economic justice, and dignity commonly referred to as the Arab Spring encompassed mobilisation against oppression by groups that have long experienced discrimination in the region. In North Africa, those groups included native Blacks that are mainly descendants of slaves (Black Arabs and Berbers) and tens of thousands of Black African migrants that have sought better life-opportunities in the Maghreb or clandestine passage to Europe via North Africa in the last two to three decades. This article traces the results of the largely novel mobilisation for equality by Blacks in North Africa during the Arab Spring. Progress towards racial equality has been uneven at best. In some areas, slavery and virulent racism have been reinvigorated. In others, Maghrebi white majorities have taken tentative steps to, for the first time, acknowledge their countries' legacies of racial slavery and oppression. This is most evident in the civil society associations, that include white members, which emerged to confront racism and slavery during the Arab Spring.

KEYWORDS North Africa; racism; slavery; Maghreb; Black Arabs; African migrants

In a largely authoritarian region in which secret police, intelligence agencies, security sectors, and judicial systems have been used to impose state terror and control in the service of ruling cliques and narrow patronage networks, nearly all Maghrebis are discriminated against. Still, it is important, at this time in history, to zero-in on discrimination in North Africa because the Arab Spring mass uprisings for democracy, dignity, and socio-economic justice, which began in late 2010 in Tunisia, also mobilised oppressed groups into struggles for equality.

This article contributes to a relatively sparse literature about the political lives of black minorities born in North Africa, an under-the-radar group who represent 10–30% of the population in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya, and the majority of the population in Mauritania (Sanchez-Quinto 2012). In addition, an influx of tens of thousands of Black African migrants in the last two decades into North Africa, most hoping to reach European shores, has

complicated and worsened race relations in the region. Ultimately, despite the novel emergence of associations denouncing discrimination against black minority populations in the Maghreb in the early period of the Arab Spring (the first extensive mobilisation of this sort in Maghrebi history), the disappointing outcomes of the uprisings – one fragile democracy in Tunisia and instability, violence, and widespread bloodshed everywhere else – have increased the lure of authoritarianism and stability among many whites in North Africa and contributed to a reinvigoration of racism and slavery in some parts of the region. Most notably, black people were being sold as slaves in at least nine markets in Libya in late 2017 (Karasapan and Shah 2018).

Some history is necessary to understand the contemporary reality of racism and slavery in the Maghreb. The following sketches that history before turning to depictions of current race relations in North Africa. The paper concludes with a discussion of various forms of resistance to racial discrimination in the region and policy suggestions to address the failure of post-Independence North African regimes and governments to react in a helpful fashion to the marginalisation and exploitation of their country's black minorities.

Racism and slavery within Arab-Islamic civilisation

Despite the abhorrent and obvious reality of slavery and virulent anti-black racism in contemporary North Africa, it occurs within an Arab-Islamic civilisation generally viewed – in comparison with Western Civilisation and its history of slavery and racism – as relatively absent of racial discrimination. Notably, not all of the tendency to view the history of slavery and racism within Arab-Islamic civilisation as 'comparatively' benign is unjustified.

In the view of many historians, prior to the rise of Islam, Arabs did not discriminate against Blacks in a notable way (Lewis 1979; N'Diaye 2008; Akande 2012). In addition, as delivered by the messenger Mohammad, Islam promoted racial brotherhood, and the humanisation if not end of the institution of slavery practised in the region at the time, which was not based on race. Also, Muslims of the Middle East never practised the kind of institutional racial discrimination, segregation, and oppression (Apartheid, Jim Crow) that was practised in South Africa and the United States until relatively recently (Hunwick 1999).

Evidence suggests that in the Pre-Islamic period Blacks and Arabs treated each other largely without prejudice (Lewis 1979; N'Diaye 2008; Akande 2012). None of the major Arab, Greek and Roman written sources attest that Blacks were less well regarded by Arabs than whites (N'Diaye 2008). There seemed to have been no particular discrimination among the various nations and races of non-Arabs who made up the vast majority of the subject as well as the servile population of pre-Islamic Arabia (Lewis 1979).

Race and skin colour among pre-Islamic Arabs were perceived in a complex manner. Human beings, the people near them with whom they had regular contact – Persians, Europeans, Blacks (mainly Ethiopians) – were described by Arabs by words which we might translate as black, white, red, olive, yellow, and two shades of brown, one lighter and one darker (Lewis 1990; Akande 2012). The terms were descriptive; nothing in the scheme suggested Blacks were an inferior group (Lewis 1990).

The white–black binary in pre-Islamic Arabia was also complicated because Arabs would at times utilise *abayd* (white) to refer to a person's 'good' character, not their skin colour. An acclaimed Arab linguist of the thirteenth century, Ibn Manzu, asserted that 'When the Arabs says a person is *abyad*, they mean that he has a pure, clean, faultless character, they do not necessarily mean that he has white skin' (Akande 2012).

Al Jahiz, a renowned Black Arab prose writer, author of works of literature, theologian, and scholar born 776 AD in Basra Iraq, wrote,

The Arabs take pride in black skin! This might seem surprising given that their compliments typically include epithets like fair, bright, spotless, and lily white. However, it is not the whiteness of a man's skin to which these refer but his integrity. (Akande 2012)

The historical evidence for the relative lack of prejudice between Blacks and pre-Islamic Arabs includes the Arabian peninsula's folklore and poetry. The exploits of a number of Black Arabs, freed or mixed (most of Ethiopian origin), were long glorified in Arab contes and legends (N'Diaye 2008). For example, Antara, a great warrior and poet who heroically participated in Arab battles against Persians, Christians, and Byzantines, was the son of an Ethiopian concubine, Zabiba, and a father from the Arab tribe 'Abs (N'Diaye 2008).

The Antara example also reveals the type of unequal treatment that Blacks did endure at times in the Pre-Islamic era. Despite his heroics, due to his skin colour, Antara's uncle refused his request to marry his cousin, with whom he was very much in love.

After synthesising all of the sources, Tidiane N'Diaye concluded that in the pre-Islamic period Arabs had a mixture of admiration and respect for Black Africans (N'Diaye 2008). However, a radical change in attitude toward Blacks coincided with the debut of big Arab conquests and the amassing of black slaves in the early Islamic era. The discovery of African people very different from Ethiopians and reduced into slavery during the Arab-Muslim conquests of early Islam led to the degradation of the image of the black man in the eyes of Arabs (N'Diaye 2008).

Despite inspiring an Empire that gradually stigmatised and victimised black people as inferiors and slaves, the religion of Islam itself had emerged partially to combat slavery and racial, ethnic, and tribal prejudices of all kinds. The

Quran and the Prophet Muhammad established Islam partly as a bulwark against anti-black racism. Black Africa has an elevated status within Islam (Akande 2012). A number of the Prophet's companions, the 'First Muslims', including several who fought to protect his life and to defend Islam at its inception, were black (Akande 2012). Bilal ibn Rabah a freed slave and esteemed Ethiopian companion of the Messenger of Allah was given the honour of calling 'the first' Muslims to prayer. During the Prophet's lifetime, Abyssinia (Ethiopia) and its Christian king, the Negus, welcomed and protected Muslims fleeing from pagan Meccans seeking to destroy Islam before it began.

Verses of the Quran provide evidence that Islam emerged to teach racial equality, among other benefits to mankind. The Quran says, 'Among his signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the variety of your languages and colours. There are certainly signs in that for every being' (Akande 2012). The other explicit passage in the Quran that has a direct bearing on Islam's stance towards race and colour supports the same message,

Do you not see that Allah sends down water from the sky and by it we bring forth fruits of varying colours? And in the mountains there are streaks of white and red, of varying shades, and rocks of jet black. And mankind and beasts and livestock of varying colours. (Akande 2012)

Within verified hadith literature, in the Prophet's final sermon in 632, he is said to have said,

All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab over an Arab; also a white person has no superiority over a black person nor a black person over a white person except through piety and good deeds. (Afsaruddin 2007)

In general, Islam's message sought to improve the lives of slaves, women, and minorities. It also eschewed a racial slavery by establishing unbelievers, non-Muslim pagans, as the only possible slaves on earth. Since the seventh-century emergence of Islam, there has been a consensus among Muslim jurists that the perversion of unbelief (kufr), not skin colour, provides the only justification for enslavement within Arab-Islamic civilisation (Marmon 1999). The Quran itself, the Prophet Muhammad's most validated teachings, deeds and sayings, and interpretations of Shari'a (God's Law in Islam) from different schools of Islamic jurisprudence across more than 13 centuries, all conclude, with few exceptions, that a Muslim cannot enslave another Muslim – regardless of skin colour.

Moreover, Islam validated conquests – opening countries to the message of Islam, *foutuhaat* – partly in terms of the elevation of the word of God, for the benefit of all people, through the establishment of governance under

the Shari'a (Hunwick 1999). From the standpoint of Muslim jurists, this implies that conquered people should have the opportunity to convert, in order to obtain the benefits of living according to God's law(s), including becoming invulnerable to enslavement (Hunwick 1999). Islamic law asserts that the natural condition of human beings is freedom but enslavement is sanctioned by God as a punishment for unbelief (Marmon 1999). Converting to Islam, or paying the poll tax in the case of people of the book, places one under Muslim governance and in terms of the religious law – regardless of race – secures one's perpetual freedom in the wake of the Arab-Muslim conquests that vastly expanded Arab-Islamic civilisation geographically (Hunwick 1999).

In addition to limiting enslavement to pagans, manumission is a priority so high in the Quran, that some argue that the ultimate divine objective was the abolishment of slavery (El Hamel 2008). Manumission often led to the Islamic institution *wala'*, a patronage relationship in which freed slaves adopt the name of their former masters and his tribe (Scaglioni 2016). The *mawla* in these patron-client relations, in contemporary times, has often maintained labour and social relationships with former masters that include some degree of subservience (Scaglioni 2016).

Still, the broader point here is that early Islam eschewed a racial slavery. Unfortunately, however, beginning in early Islamic history, some Muslim individuals and communities negotiated, interpreted, and at times blatantly violated the principles of Shari'a, in order to enslave black people based on their race – and nearby accessibility – instead of their status as unbelievers, Islam's only acceptable prejudice (Marmon 1999). John Hunwick ties the two ideas together by pointing out that 'Black Africans were the single fairly clearly identifiable group whose presence in Mediterranean Muslim society was largely attributable to slavery, and thus to former unbelief. Racial prejudice there thus has within it an undercurrent of religious coloration' (Hunwick 1999). Or as Shaun Marmon put it, 'Black skin thus became equated with the sin of unbelief and the status of slavery' (Marmon 1999).

In sum, both pre-Islamic Arabian society and Islam itself, at its emergence, eschewed a racial slavery and notions of black inferiority, for the most part. However, the first century and a half of Islam, as the Arabs went forth from the Arabian Peninsula to conquer half the known world, was marked by an overwhelming sense of Arab superiority over all other peoples, especially black people (Hunwick 2006). As a result, Arab-Islamic civilisation – defined as what Arabs have done, not what they believed or were expected to believe about race and colour – has, from virtually the beginning, been at odds with the racial equality that generally held within pre-Islamic Arabia and the Islamic Shari'a (Lewis 1990).

Prevailing attitudes toward race in the expanding Arab-Islamic world were not shaped by religious figures, but by the conquerors and slave owners who formed the ruling group in Islamic society (Hunwick 2006). The resulting

attitude of contempt – towards dark-skin people in particular, and non-Arabs in general – is expressed in a thousand ways in the documents, literature, and art that have come down to us from the Islamic Middle Ages (Hunwick 2006).

In 652, only a few decades into the Islamic era, a specific focus on Blacks and slavery within Arab-Islamic civilisation began when Emir and General Abdallah ben Said concluded an agreement with a Nubian King guaranteeing hundreds of male and female black slaves per year (N'Diaye 2008). Within the seventh century, Arab-Muslim armies also occupied North Africa and Black Africans were traded across the Sahara. The slave trade of Black Africans by Arab and Berber 'white Muslims' was widely practised into the twentieth century, a 13-century legacy that dwarfs the 4 centuries of the trans-Atlantic slave trade in terms of duration and the number of lost Black African souls. Only a few centuries after the advent of Islam, the word 'abd (slave) was used to refer solely to Blacks (Akande 2012). The oddly under the radar centuries-long horrors of the Arab-Muslim conquest of Black Africa and resulting devastating slave trade has been called 'The Veiled Genocide' by Tidiane N'Diaye (N'Diaye 2008).

The growing racial prejudice of Arabs towards Blacks, under the influence of a rapidly expanding Arab-Islamic civilisation, was reflected in the art of the era, especially poetry, the quintessential Arab method of artistic expression (Hunwick 2006). Black poets of the Arabs, called Black Crows or Ravens (The Crows of the Arabs or The Ravens of the Arabs) with negative undertones of bad omens, defended themselves from racism, or bemoaned their situation, though many seemingly accepted the inferior status resulting from African ancestry (Lewis 1990). Others, feeling the rise of Arab contempt towards black skin, took great pride in their blackness and in the history of black people and the lands they came from, including arguing for the superiority of black over white (Hunwick 2006).

The Arab poet of African origin, Suhaym, born a slave (d. 660) lamented in one poem:

She points with her comb and says to her companion,
'Is that the slave of Banu I-Hashas, the slick rhymester?'
She saw a threadbare saddlebag, a worn cloak,
A naked negro such as men own.
These girls excite other men and turn away from my shock of hair,
despising me as I can clearly see.
If my colour were pink, women would love me
But the lord has mired me with blackness
Yet it does not diminish me that my mother was a slave-woman who tended the
udders of she-camels. (Lewis 1979)

In another:

Though I am a slave my soul is nobly free
Though I am black of color my character is white.

The black poet, Nusayb ibn Rabah, one of the best known and respected of the Black Crows, responded to a satirical attack by a famous white Arab poet, Kuthayyir, with these words:

Blackness does not diminish me, as long as I have this tongue and this stout heart.
Some are raised up by means of their lineage; the verses of my poems are my lineage!
How much better a keen-minded, clear-spoken black than a mute white! (Lewis 1990)

However, a different statement attributed to Nusayb that was reportedly made during a meeting with the Umayyad Caliph 'Abd al-Malik, was much more self-deprecating, a reflection of the worsening condition of Blacks in Arab-Islamic society:

My colour is pitch-black, my hair is woolly, my appearance is repulsive. I did not attain the favour which you have vouchsafed me by the honour of my father, or my mother, or my tribe. I attained it only by my mind and my tongue. I adjure you by God, O Commander of the Faithful, do not cut me off from that by which I have attained my position with you. (Lewis 1990)

As noted, not all of the Black Crows meekly accepted the growing association of blackness and ugliness with inferiority within Islamic society. Al-Hayqutan, in the eighth century, in response to the racial insults of a white Arab poet wrote:

Though I be frizzle-haired, coal-black of skin,
My generosity and honour shine yet brighter.
Blackness of skin does not harm me
When in battle's heat my sword is flailing.
Would you claim glory where there is none?
The Ethiopians are more glorious than you. (Hunwick 2006)

Al Jahiz, the Black Arab humanist mentioned earlier, wrote the book, *The Superiority of Blacks to White*. By Blacks he meant mainly Abyssinians (Ethiopians) and Zanj (Bantu people of East Africa). After remarking on the increasing tendency of pure Arabs to condemn those of mixed (black-white) heritage, passages in the book include verses of the more militant Black Crows of the time:

The Blacks continue: Coming from Abyssinia, we were Masters of the country of Arabia up to Mecca, and on all the country our law reigned. We put to route Du Nawas, killed by the 'Aqyal Himyarites. You, never dominated our country.

The (Zanj) say: The Ethiopian, Akym ibn Akym, was more eloquent than Eli-Ajjaj. It is from him that the Syrians learned the sciences and also from El Montagi ibn Nabhan, who was a native of Negroland and had a pierced ear. He had come to the Arabian desert as a child and left it with a complete knowledge of Arabic.

To those who despise the color black, we would reply that the excessive lanky, thin, and reddish hair of the Franks, Greeks, and Slavs, the redness of their locks and beards, the whiteness of their eyelashes, are uglier and more loathsome. There are no albinos among blacks, but only among you.

The poet says: Are you not a member of the Kulayb Tribe? Isn't your mother one of those sheep? Your fat sheep are both your pride and your shame. It is rumoured that the kulayb tribe is having intercourse with their sheep just like the tribes of el-Araj and Sulaym. And the people of the Ashja are rumoured to have intercourse with goats.

Everybody knows that the Zanj are among the most generous of mortals; a quality that is found only among noble characters. These people have a natural talent for dancing to the rhythm of the tambourine, without needing to learn it. There are no better singers anywhere in the world, no people more polished and eloquent, and no people less given to insulting language. All other peoples in the world have their stammerers, those who have difficulty in pronouncing certain sounds, and those who cannot express themselves fluently or are downright tongue-tied, except the Zanj. Sometimes some of them recite before their ruler continuously from sunrise to sunset, without needing to turn round or pause in their flow. No other nation can surpass them in bodily strength and physical toughness. One of them will lift huge blocks and carry heavy loads that would be beyond the strength of most Bedouins or members of other races. They are courageous, energetic, and generous, which are the virtues of nobility, and also good-tempered and with little propensity to evil. They are always cheerful, smiling, and devoid of malice, which is a sign of noble character.

The Zanj say to the Arabs: You are so ignorant that during the jahiliyya (the times of ignorance) you regarded us as your equals when it came to marrying Arab women, but with the advent of the justice of Islam you decided this practice was bad. Yet the desert is full of Zanj married to Arab wives, and they have been princes and kings and have safeguarded your rights and sheltered you against your enemies.

As the Arab-Islamic empire expanded and hunger for black slaves grew, Arab and later Arab-Berber white slavers in North Africa sought justifications to enslave Blacks, whether they were Muslims or not. They turned to the biblical curse of Noah, who punished his son Ham for observing his nakedness as he bathed, by making Ham's descendants black and condemning them to perpetual slavery (Hunwick 2006).

In order to establish the inferiority of Blacks and their naturalness as slaves, Arabs also adopted a Greek theory of the climatisation of the known world and the relationship of climate to intelligence (Hunwick 2006). This theory divided the world north of the equator into seven latitudinal zones, the ideal one being the fourth, or middle, zone, corresponding to the Mediterranean area (Hunwick 2006). The equatorial regions inhabited by Blacks supposedly made them dumber, uglier, and the most suitable for slavery as one proponent of the theory and its prejudices notes:

The equatorial region is inhabited by communities of Blacks who are to be numbered among the savages and beasts. Their complexions and hair are burnt and they are physically morally deviant. Their brains almost boil from their sun's excessive heat. The human being who dwells there is a crude fellow, with a very black complexion, burnt hair, unruly, stinking sweat, and an abnormal constitution most closely resembling in his moral qualities a savage, or animals. (Hunwick 2006)

The rise of an Arab-Islamic empire was the context for the emergence of virulent Arab racism with an intellectual façade. In the early centuries of the spread of Arabic Islamic civilisation, Arab historians, geographers, travellers and traders, some of world renown, explored and wrote about Black Africa and trans-Saharan trade. They aimed to respond to the needs of Muslim ruling classes who were interested in acquiring information that would assist them in handling commercial and political relations within all the areas where Islam had established itself (Lewis 1979). Unfortunately, rather than empirical research, these Arab scholars relied heavily on the stereotypical views of uniformed ancient Greeks and Romans.

When discussing Black Africans Arab intellectuals emphasised, paganism, nudity, malodorous bodies, kinky, woolly, frizzy, hair, laziness, and stupidity. The Arab historian and geographer Abu al-Mas'udi mentions 10 specific attributes of the black man, which are found in him and no other (Lewis 1979):

frizzy hair, thin eyebrows, broad nostrils, thick lips, pointed teeth, smelly skin, black eyes, furrowed hands and feet, a long penis and great merriment ... merriment dominates the black man because of his defective brain, whence also the weakness of his intelligence.

On at least two occasions, the celebrated North African historian, Ibn Khaldun, described black people as more beasts than humans (Lewis 1979):

The only people who accept slavery are the negroes [Sudan], owing to their low degree of humanity and their proximity to the animal stage.

To the south of the [Niger] there is a Negro people called Lamlam. They are unbelievers. They brand themselves on the face and temples. The people of Ghana and Takrur invade their country, capture them, and sell them to merchants who transport them to the Maghrib. There, they constitute the ordinary mass of slaves. Beyond them to the south, there is no civilization in the proper sense. They are humans who are closer to dumb animals than to rational beings. They live in thickets and caves and eat herbs and unprepared grains. They frequently eat each other. They cannot be considered human beings.

In sum, across the centuries of the development of Arab-Islamic civilisation, the idealism of Shari'a in race relations and the relatively mild racial inequality on the Arabian Peninsula in the pre-Islamic era became more discordant with prevailing racist social attitudes and practices that developed with the increasing power of Arabs and their growing appetite for black slaves. Historians,

geographers, merchants, adventurers, and Arab-Berber slavers took on the role of 'intelligence' gathering about Black Africa in order to aid Arab-Islamic domination and exploitation of the continent. The intelligence relied heavily on un-informed, stereotypical, and derogatory descriptions of Black Africa by Ancient Greeks and Romans who were as ignorant as the Arabs about the civilisations, kingdoms, dynasties, crafts, etc., of the Black African interior. By the sixteenth century, the notion of the permanent slave status of Black Africans was already deeply engrained in the Maghreb. Many common-folk in North Africa believed that the reason for being enslaved according to the Holy Law is merely that a man should be black in colour and come from the 'Region of the Blacks', Bilad al-Sudan (Hunwick 1999; Marmon 1999).

Black Africans and white Africans: slavery and racism in the Maghreb

If there are lessons to be learned about the ways in which men of various times and cultures have reacted to differing skin colors then Northern Africa is one of the most important places to look. (Brown 1967)

Mass Arab enslavement of Black Africans began in the seventh century, soon after the founding of Islam and the beginning of Arab-Islamic civilisation. It lasted at least until the early part of the twentieth century. Roughly 4,820,000 Black Africans were taken into slavery in North Africa between 650 and 1600 AD alone (Harich et al. 2010). Approximately 14 million Blacks were wrenched from their homelands and forced into slavery in the Muslim World as a whole from the seventh to twentieth century (Harich et al. 2010).

Prejudice and contempt towards black people, that emerged with the ascent of an Arab-Islamic empire eventually led to a racial slavery in the Arab world after many centuries of the enslavement of people of any colour (Lewis 1979). Notably, however, the deracinated Blacks forced into slavery within the Arab-Islamic world did not necessarily have the same experience as the ancestors of contemporary African-Americans. Chattel slavery, as practised in the United States, treated slaves as the owners' property, beasts of burdens without the personhood of human beings. Anything that belonged to the enslaved was passed to the master, including the right to life. Slaves could be killed by their masters for no reason at all if the master wished to do so. All offspring of slaves became slaves. Children, wives, husbands, brothers, and sisters could be sold and split apart at the whim or economic advantage of the slave owner.

Slavery in the Americas was linked to the plantation system – the exploitation of large numbers of unskilled slave labourers in vast agricultural projects (Brown 1967). Slaves were worked to death as they did the main and hardest work in the economy – without any pay – and under work conditions based

on extracting the maximum amount of human labour possible. The system was maintained through violent domination: torture (the whip), the threat of death, lynching, and the generalised racial terror inflicted by a majority-white society and coercive state apparatus indifferent to black victimisation. This is the agricultural slavery of the American South cotton plantations and Caribbean sugar plantations. It was a racial slavery virtually from start to finish. Only Blacks were enslaved, white superiority was tied to denial of black humanity.¹

Largely because the aridity of North Africa and the Middle East could not support big agricultural plantations, the brutal plantation slavery of the American South was rare in the Muslim world. However, something similar to the harshest forms of agricultural slavery did occur where conditions permitted in the region. In the ninth century, in southern Iraq, masses of black slaves were used to make land arable for an agricultural plantation economy, by clearing away nitrous topsoil (salt) to grow sugar cane. A slave (*Zanj*) rebellion took place in the region from 869 to 883 and claimed hundreds of thousands of lives before being defeated. The revolt brought an end to one of the few cases of mass rural exploitation based on slave labour in Muslim history (Gordon 1998). There were also large-scale plantation-style clove operations in nineteenth-century Zanzibar that were highly dependent on masses of black slaves. The American civil war, by creating great demand for cotton, triggered the growth of slavery for cotton production in Egypt. In smaller numbers, black slaves in North Africa have been used for fieldwork on small farms and oases as well as herding activities.

Overall, in contrast to the slaves of the Americas, the slave ancestors of black people in the cotemporary Arab-Islamic world were not typically employed in large-scale agriculture or outdoor work. The most common and enduring purpose for which slaves – black and white – were acquired in the Arab world was to work as domestics and concubines in Arab households (Gordon 1998). The human booty of the conquests of the early Arab-Islamic era brought large black slave populations to the region even when there was little for them to do in terms of economic production. Female slaves fulfilled household chores – chambermaids, cooks, seamstresses, wet nurses – and served as concubines (Gordon 1998). Within households, male slaves were used as servants, gardeners, watchmen, and all-around household help. Slave children became confidants to their master's sons and daughters (Gordon 1998). In oases areas and other places with arable land, black people were forced into harsh and difficult agricultural slavery, sometimes on a small-scale.

In addition to the high proportion of domestic household slavery, slavery in the Arab-Islamic world differed from trans-Atlantic slavery in that some slaves were made into armed guards and soldiers, something unthinkable in the history of the Americas. As a constant, Muslim-rulers, who depended on

family, kin, and social networks for protection and political support, had to confront similarly well-connected rivals who could sway the rulers' supporters to join rebellions. To overcome this dependence and vulnerability, some rulers turned slaves into trusted guards and loyal soldiers by rewarding and training them. These *mamluks*, totally dependent on the rulers in societies in which they were strangers, increased the robustness of the rulers' power by helping them dominate and control rivals without fear of betrayal by their armed forces. They also contributed to state power by serving as administrators, and on rare occasions, transitioned from king-makers to kings themselves. Eunuchs, castrated to guard and manage the masters' harems, also could amass considerable power. In some places, the memories of black soldiers as the sultans' enforcers contribute to contemporary hostility toward Blacks in the region.

It is also worth highlighting the plight of black concubines within Arab-Islamic civilisation. The striving for survival and the tragic drama of black female slaves entailed emotional and sexual bonds via concubinage (El Hamel 2008). Concubinage was legal and socially accepted. Conventionally, but not always, the progeny of female slaves inherited their fathers' legal status, i.e. free if fathered by Arabs. By subjecting themselves, to what amounted to rape in most cases, enslaved black women could secure a better social position for their children and themselves as mothers of free children (*umm al-walad*). Notably, however, some slave masters ignored convention and prided themselves on producing offspring with black slave women in order to sell them in slave markets (Gordon 1998).

In another contrast with slavery in the Americas, miscegenation, usually through concubinage, was more socially acceptable and practised much more often in the Arab world, producing a contemporary population in the Maghreb on a colour continuum as opposed to sharp breaks between black and white. Recent DNA analysis has determined that $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ of contemporary North Africa's female gene pool is made of typical Black sub-Saharan lineages (Gordon 1998). Black lineages in North Africa increase as geographic proximity to sub-Saharan Africa increases (Gordon 1998).

The indigenous people of North Africa, conventionally known as Berbers, usually self-identify as white. However, there are black/brown-skinned Berbers in Libya and southern Algeria. Darker-skin Tuaregs, who make up part of the Berber nation, inhabit the Sahara. Berbers were conquered by Arabs beginning in the seventh century. The vast majority converted to Islam and many Arabized over time as well.

In Mauritania and in the Saharan zone of the other Maghrebi countries, Berbers and Arabs, many nomadic, merged to jointly enslave and exploit nearby sedentary black communities. Arab conquerors, deemed warrior tribes, installed themselves on top of the political and socio-economic hierarchy. Berbers took on the associated role of religious leaders, *ulema*, and

gradually adopted Arabic as their mother tongue. Arabs and Berbers became one in these areas of the Maghreb and became known as Beidane (Whites) or Moors. The White Moors' enslavement of black people, over centuries, produced an Arabized and Islamised black population, sometimes called Black Moors or Black Arabs by other nearby black populations. More often, these black members of Arab-Islamic civilisation are referred to as Haratines, with the connotation of being newly freed from slavery, though large percentages of this group remain enslaved. In the northern parts of all the Maghrebi states except in Mauritania, a similar Arab-Berber alliance to exploit Black labour did not occur. In those areas, Berbers are discriminated against by dominant Arabs and in recent decades they have mobilised in protest of their oppression.

White (Arab-Berber) enslavement and exploitation of Black Africans was a gradual process. The Sahara, the biggest desert in the world, separates sub-Saharan or Black Africa from North or White Africa. However, the separation has never been complete. Some number of ambitious traders, explorers, and rulers have always been willing to risk the harsh desert crossing. Desertification has been a gradual process, increasing the gulf between the two regions. There is also some evidence that Black Africans were indigenous inhabitants of the Saharan and oases' parts of all five-member countries of the Arab Maghreb Union.

Historically, when the region received more rainfall, white North Africans – Berbers and later Arabs – interacted with Black Africans most on the southern edge of the Sahara. Blacks in the area were settled agricultural peoples living near the Senegal and Niger rivers. Berbers and Arabs were pastoralists: nomads raising their livestock and roaming between oases and other desert sources of water. For centuries, the balance of power in this interaction between Blacks and Whites was dominated by Black African mediaeval states based in the south of the desert, especially Ghana, and the settled black agricultural populations they ruled (Hall 2005). By dominating trans-Saharan trade, mainly of salt and gold, Ghana, in the tenth century, became one of the richest countries on earth (Hall 2005).

Gradually, dominance of trans-Saharan trade shifted from black mediaeval Kingdoms to white rulers in the North. Desiccation of the southern Sahara reduced the viability of agriculture and created greater competition between white herders and black farmers over relatively scarce pastures and fertile land (Hall 2005). Increasing aridity gave pastoral groups tactical advantages in competition for control over resources with sedentary communities in the Sahara (Hall 2005).

Under White dominance, in addition to the salt and gold that had made mediaeval Ghana wealthy, trans-Saharan trade grew to include ivory, wild animals, coral, ambergris, seal skins, and black slaves. White (Arab-Berber) traders specialised in black slaves and maintained that vocation well into the nineteenth century (Hall 2005). By the tenth century, Maghrebi markets

(Kairouan, Tripoli, Marrakech, Sfax, Tunis, Gabes) became known for black slaves (Hall 2005).

The new Arab-Berber white aristocracy in the Sahara orchestrated an economy within which most production (work) was done by black slaves. In many ways, slavery in the Sahara, in Mauritania and in the southern oases and Saharan communities of the Maghrebi countries, came to resemble the harsh chattel slavery of the Americas. Arabs and Berbers, white Africans, utilised their dominant position to engage in a racial slavery, targeting nearby black communities and ranging deep into sub-Saharan West Africa to take slaves, whether or not they were Muslims. The black slaves of slave-holding nomads engaged in agriculture at oases and in other places with arable land where they cultivated dates, millet, barley, and wheat (Gordan 1998). They also performed household chores and cared for cattle, sheep, and camels (Gordan 1998). This left Arab-Berber white pastoralist to fight, raid, govern, and roam hundreds of miles from their homes (Gordan 1998).

Many Black Africans in the Sahara, who had lost much of their farmland to desiccation, were forced to depend on Whites who controlled the water sources and the oases of the desert. In a cruel symbiotic relationship, the settled work of black slaves complemented the nomadic pastoral ways of their owners (Gordan 1998). Blacks who attempted to escape slavery faced the real risk of dying of thirst or starvation in vast desert areas. Because of the symbiotic relationship between white pastoralists and black farmers in the Sahara, contemporary slavery in the Maghreb, is found most often in Mauritania, the Maghrebi country that is covered most by desert, and in the oases of southern Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, and Libya (Brown 1967).

In sum, progressive desiccation allowed white Arab-Berber pastoralists to decisively attain a dominant position vis-à-vis Black African agricultural peoples in the area, who were forced to migrate even further to the south, or to enter into subordinate relationships with pastoral overlords. To an extent white-black relationships in Saharan areas are different from the behavioural patterns and the outlooks of the white and black populations in the non-desert regions of North Africa. Contemporary slavery is rare outside of Saharan regions. Slavery and racism are probably weaker forces in the northern areas of the Maghrebi countries.

Historically, in addition to the slavery and racism of the Sahara and domestic slavery of the northern Maghreb, the elite slavery of soldiers, bureaucrats, and eunuchs was practised in North Africa. The dynamics of the implementation of mamluk slavery in the Maghreb in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries revealed the tensions between Islamic ideals of racial equality and the restriction of slavery to non-Muslims versus dominant social attitudes that equated black skin with slavery.

Slave soldiers were most prominent in Morocco. Sultan Ahmad al-Mansur (1578–1603) assembled a slave corps by rounding up black residents of

Morocco (Hunwick 1999). In a letter to the ulema of Egypt seeking their approval for his enslavement of Moroccans who considered themselves Muslims, he justified the need for their forced servitude by claiming that he came to the throne without a well-trained army and faced difficult challenges due to the country's location near to infidel enemies (Hunwick 1999). He also declared that he lacked a tribal base strong enough to fulfil the needs of a burgeoning Sa'dian state and asserted that most 'free men' in Morocco were unsuitable for military service because they were lazy, weak, greedy, and overwhelmed by sensual desires (Hunwick 1999). In contrast, Al-Mansur described his black targets as inherently servile, obedient, brave, and willing to put up with primitive conditions (Hunwick 1999). To put an Islamic veneer on the project he claimed that the Blacks were runaway slaves that had been lawfully purchased, i.e. they were pagans when captured (Hunwick). Beneath the veneer, al-Mansour's letter indicates the identification of blackness with slavery in Morocco of his time. For him, there was no possibility of free Blacks: all Blacks in Morocco were nothing more than runaway slaves (Hunwick 1999).

A century after the reign of al-Mansur, the Alaouite Sultan of Morocco, Moulay Ismail (reigned 1672–1727), the second sultan of the Alaouite dynasty which still rules in Morocco today, copied the al-Mansur model and assembled an even bigger Black Guard ('Abid al-Bukhari or slaves to the government) that numbered at least 150,000 at their peak (Ennaji 1999). To form his black-dominated army and national guard, Sultan Moulay Ismail enslaved all Black Moroccans and raided and traded in West Africa for the rest. In brutal fashion,

he pursued the goal of a black slave army with relentless efficiency, draining the cities and tribes, and sending expeditions deep into the Western Sahara. He not only rounded up men, but also purchased black women to whom he eventually married the men in order to produce a second generation of males who could be trained for military service in the royal household ... Once again the hapless blacks of Morocco were denied their chance to become integrated into the wider society and to live as free men and women. (Hunwick 1999)

Like al-Mansur, Moulay Ismail conveyed the belief that Black Africans are inherently slaves (Hunwick 1999). It did not matter that many had lived free for generations – as Muslims. Moulay Ismail also sought religious approval for his black slave army. However, the North African ulema, on religious grounds, weighed in against the enslavement of free black Muslims for state military reasons. In Moulay Ismail's case, citing Shari'a, the Moroccan ulema protested – in vain – against the project that enslaved men that were both free and Muslim. One of their number, Sidi 'Abd al-Salam b. Jasus paid for his principles with his life (Hunwick 1999).

Moulay Ismail's black soldiers were considered more loyal than Arab or Berber warriors because of their lack of tribal affiliation. In addition to

serving as the Sultan's personal guards, they crushed rebellions, collected taxes, and patrolled Morocco's unstable countryside. They were well-respected, trained, well paid, loyal, and politically powerful and likely were responsible for Moulay Ismail holding power for more than 50 years, despite numerous civil wars (Ennaji 1999). Successors to Ismail did not sustain the Black Guard. Some reduced them to ordinary slaves and passed them on to allied elites. Others allowed their murder, putting them at the mercy of a Moroccan population that had feared and resented the black praetorian guards.

Moulay Ismail's army was dominated by black slave soldiers. Black slaves were also turned into soldiers during the Fatimid Empire (909–1171) that emerged in Tunisia and parts of Algeria to control Egypt and much of the Middle East. The Fatimids had white slave soldiers as well. Notably, however, the Berber and Turkish white slave soldiers received preferential treatment and on occasion joined local citizens who rose up against the black *Abid al-Shira* (purchased slaves). On a smaller scale than Moulay Ismail's slave-soldier project, historically, other sultans in the region utilised black slave soldiers.

Beyond the region's sultans, other slave-holding and slave-trading North African white elites, at times questioned the enslavement of Black Muslims. A celebrated Timbuktu jurist, Ahmad Baba, in response to a Moroccan slaver wondering if all Blacks could be enslaved, confirmed the Sharia principle that only non-Muslims – people in a state of unbelief – could be enslaved (Hunwick 1999). Ahmad Baba also identified the Black West African societies that had long ago converted to Islam, which on religious grounds made their population off limits to slave raiders and slave traders (Hunwick 1999). While admirable, the position taken by Ahmad Baba and other ulema of North Africa did not halt the enslavement of black people in the Maghreb – Muslims or otherwise.

Black people of West Africa have paid a high cost for this flouting of Islamic religious principles. The black populations of West Africa, Islamized or not, became the targeted slave pool for North Africans. Arab-Berber white Muslims in the Maghreb have utilised a number of arguments – racist and religious at the same time – to justify the enslavement of Blacks, even converted Blacks. They forged a racial slavery from the centuries of writings of the Maliki school of Islamic jurisprudence that reigns in North Africa (Ould Ciré 2014). They exploited the Hamatic myth to justify the eternal slavery of black people (Hunwick 1999).

Many West African Blacks died in the trek across the Sahara. Arab-Berber slavers treated them cruelly and with a contempt that seems especially egregious when inflicted upon fellow Muslims. Travel writers witnessing the trans-Saharan slave caravans tell stories of a black baby being twirled and his head shattered against a tree in order to settle a dispute between two slavers

(N'Diaye 2008). Another writer walked upon an eerie scene of a circular campfire of Arab-Berber white slavers surrounded by a mass of human bones; when questioned the slavers laughed and said they are just black slaves (N'Diaye 2008).

In parts of North Africa, in the Sahara mainly, slavery – the chattel, plantation-style, outdoors agricultural work, vicious racial slavery of the American south – operates today. Black slaves are considered animals that white masters can force to submit to all sorts of work and services (Ould Ciré 2014). They are forced to work without pay. They are bought and sold, rented, given away, or loaned. They need permission to marry and families are routinely broken up to the economic advantage of slave owners. They can literally be worked to death without consequences for their masters, and barely receive enough nutrition to survive. One meal a day is typical and usually comes in the form of the leftovers from a master's meal; they get to clean his bowl (Films Media Group 2012). Given a history of Arab-Berber rule in Spain, some claim that the origin of the Spanish word *paella* comes from the Arabic word for leftovers, *baqiyyah* (the remainder in the bowl that is given to slaves).

In addition to chattel and mamluk slavery, the face-to-face, household/domestic slavery and concubinage that is most associated with slavery within Arab-Islamic civilisation was practised well into the twentieth century across the northern regions of the Maghreb. Alarming, black slave auctions have been held in recent months in chaotic, war-torn Libya.

In addition to remnants of slavery, Black Maghrebis are contemporary victims of a racial oppression and exploitation that is, in some places, nearly as onerous as slavery. In every country in the region, slavery lasted well into the twentieth century. The Arab-Berber white aristocracy took over the state after the departure of European colonisers. They have used their control of the state apparatus to maintain political and economic dominance over black minorities.

Outside of Libya, no serious affirmative actions have been taken by Maghrebi states to assist black descendants of slaves or newly freed slaves. Victims of slavery have not been specifically targeted to benefit from economic projects, food support, education, or psychological or socio-cultural assistance. An outlier, Libya under both King Idriss and Qaddafi, witnessed some social mobility for Blacks with support from the policies and relationships of the country's post-independence leaders. Under King Idriss, many Blacks, especially in the south and among Toubou tribes, attained and enjoyed good social standing. One of King Idriss's nephews, Idris Ibn Abdullah Senussi, who has claimed headship of the Sanussiyyah movement and the monarchy, is black. Qaddafi also sometimes favoured loyal Blacks among southern Libyans over white Libyans. Abdullah Senussi, number two in his regime and his intelligence chief and brother-in-law, is black.

In much of North Africa, especially in the southernmost areas, emancipated slaves remain associated with their former slave masters' families. They do not attain equal status and typically lack access to land or other resources needed to survive. The paternalistic wala institution that binds freed slaves and their former masters often keeps them between slavery and freedom. Without state assistance to help them emerge from servitude, some freed slaves have to return to their former masters to avoid starving to death. Without state support to counter current racism and past discrimination and slavery, Blacks in North Africa today rarely break out from the lowest rungs of the socio-economic ladder.

Between slavery and racism in contemporary Mauritania

Mauritania is often cited as the country currently with the highest percentage of enslaved people within its borders in the world: out of 4.5 million citizens approximately 450,000–900,000 Black Arabs are enslaved today in Mauritania (Sutter 2012). Overall, the Haratin community in Mauritania (black slaves and freed slaves of the white Moors) make up 40% of Mauritanian citizens. The Arab-Berber Moors make up 30% and the non-Arabized black community in Mauritania (Toucouleur, Poular, Bambara, Wolof, Soninke, and Serer) compose the final 30%.

White people, the Berbers and Arabs of Mauritania (*Beidane*, Moors, Arab-Berber), ripped Blacks from their homelands in neighbouring sub-Saharan west African communities, consigned them to slavery, and continue today to submit many Black Mauritians within their cultural sphere – Arab-Islamic civilisation – to a 'traditional', chattel, form of slavery despite its abolition multiple times. Unlike the domestic slavery most common historically in the northern parts of the Maghreb above the Sahara, slavery in Mauritania is characterised by mostly harsh agricultural work imposed on black people with the support of the state, including its coercive security and judicial sectors. In addition, an ideological method of subjugation, anchored in a twisted interpretation of Islam, helps to sustain slavery and white supremacy in Mauritania.

Slaves in Mauritania herd animals, collect dates and gum Arabic, and work the oases and cultivable fields in the country. They also fetch water and firewood in the difficult desert environment, in addition to performing all domestic tasks such as cooking and cleaning. Black female slaves are forced to become concubines – they are repetitively raped – and their offspring are born unfree, even when white 'masters' are the fathers of their children. Concubines cannot improve their own status through intimate ties with slave masters. The enslaved in Mauritania work constantly and are fed one meal a day, the leftovers from the white family for whom they toil. In Arab-Berber society in Mauritania black slaves can be sold, rented, exchanged,

given away, lynched, beaten, castrated, raped, and exported into slavery in other countries (Ould Ciré 2014). There are current slave markets in Mauritania, most notably in the city of Arar (Ould Ciré 2014).

White Arab-Berbers in Mauritania do relatively little work inside or outside of their homes. In the use of their slaves, they have adapted to a gradually modernising economy. In addition to traditional fieldwork and domestic slavery, white Moors deploy their slaves in the Mauritanian administration. These slavers help Haratins get posts within the bureaucracy (with the assistance of their kin and allies in government), then they take most, if not all of the government salaries for themselves (Ould Ciré 2014). Black slaves that historically worked in the fields now also occupy other occupations: mechanic, chauffeur, factory worker, day labourer in construction, etc. (Ould Ciré 2014). For this work, they are usually not paid, as the white slave masters collect and keep their salaries. Some slaves work in their masters' stores and shops, again without pay; these slaves also do all of their master's domestic work as well (Ould Ciré 2014).

There is even a political aspect to slavery in Mauritania: at the time of elections (legislative, presidential, municipal) slave masters gather their slaves and transport them to polling stations in order to cast the ballot preferences of their masters (Ould Ciré 2014). At most 30% of the population, Mauritania's white moors could not dominate the Mauritanian state and government without the political support of black moors, the largest community in Mauritania. A feeble tokenism has scattered a few Hartani into government, though usually as members of pro-Arab-Berber parties.

As an indication of the white moors attitude toward racism and slavery, today a large percentage of the contemporary Mauritanian state elite (virtually all white) – government functionaries, presidents, diplomats, ministers, mayors, governors, senators, judges, religious leaders – own black slaves themselves (Ould Ciré 2014). Local authorities, especially governors and mayors, refuse to register and address complaints filed by slaves (Ould Ciré 2014).

Though widely and obviously practised, slavery is illegal in Mauritania. France, Mauritania's coloniser, abolished slavery by decree in the country in 1905. Mauritania's first constitution in 1961 established the principle of equality among all Mauritanian citizens (Ould Ciré 2014). Slavery was abolished again in 1981. In 2007, under international pressure, Mauritania passed a law allowing slaveholders to be prosecuted for the first time. In 2015 Mauritania adopted a law declaring slavery a crime against humanity punishable by up to 20 years in prison. However, Slavery continues largely unabated today in Mauritania because the state does not enforce abolition or prosecute slaveholders. As late as 2015, only one slave owner had been convicted of 'slaving' in Mauritanian history (Esseissah 2015). As an added cruelty, the abolition codes arrange to pay slaveholders for their loss of property, while giving

nothing to the newly freed slaves. In addition, anti-slavery activists in Mauritania are prosecuted far more often than slaveholders (Ould Ciré 2014).

Slavery is tied to other forms of racial oppression in Mauritania. The white Arab-Berber elite utilises their control of the Mauritanian state to advance their material interests (Ould Ciré 2014). They treat the country's treasury as their personal bank account (Ould Ciré 2014). Due to virulent racism, Black Mauritians are harshly discriminated against in terms of education and economic opportunities – the only real routes to overcoming slave legacies. Haratins are nearly completely locked out of the country's land market, working on farms as slaves or sharecroppers (who, in addition to giving white Moors the largest portion of the harvest, have to pay the Islamic tax for the poor, *zakat*, 'to their masters').

State violence in support of the oppression, exploitation and enslavement of black people helps to sustain slavery and racism in Mauritania. The Arab-Berber dominated military, national guard, and police act to sustain the status quo. Revolt against any of the multiple forms of slavery in Mauritania leads to Haratins being dragged to police stations and national guard offices, where they are beaten into submission (Ould Ciré 2014). There are cities, villages, and desert encampments in Mauritania where torture and lynching take place on a regular basis (Ould Ciré 2014). In 1999, in Guerrou, a city in South-Central Mauritania, white senators and judges participated in the collective lynching of numerous Haratins (Ould Ciré 2014).

In addition to state coercion and the lack of other economic opportunities (leaving masters in desert environments where whites own almost all cultivable land and water resources is potentially a quick route to death), ideological assets are weaponized to oppress Black Mauritians. Like in the rest of North Africa, the Maliki doctrine of Islamic law holds sway in Mauritania. In addition, Mauritania is an 'Islamic' Republic in which all laws are based on Islamic *Sharia*, which gives the country's *ulema*, including its traditional judges, significant powers.

To develop slave mentalities among Haratins that last from birth to grave, white religious leaders in Mauritania have developed an Islam from books within the Malekite rite that legitimises their continued enslavement (Esseis-sah 2015). Mauritanian religious leaders interpret Islam as permitting slavery and based on that reason many slave owners refuse to free their slaves (Ould Ciré 2014). Many Haratines, enslaved and free, continue to accept their servitude because it's endorsed by God (Ould Ciré 2014). They are taught that their salvation depends upon their masters; that their access to paradise is linked to obeying their masters will (Ould Ciré 2014). For Islamised and Arabized Black Mauritians, submission to Arab-Berber slavery is a religious obligation (Ould Ciré 2014). Obedience to God, but disobedience of their Arab masters – from whom the Prophet Muhammad emerged to

spread the word of God in their language, Arabic – still leads black slaves to an eternity in hell.

A number of books of the Malaki rite that were written between the ninth and sixteenth century have been utilised to construct the theological basis of racial slavery within the Mauritanian Arab-Berber community (Esseissah 2015). The Mauritanian abolitionist, Birame Ould Abeid, has summarised the resulting slave code or slave laws: (Ould Abeid in Esseissah 2015)

These laws authorize the owning of black people. They decree that the black race is inferior. They allow for the selling of black people, the castration of black people, the rape of black women ... These books are currently being used to train the Imams, the police forces, and the judges. These books are recognized by the Mauritanian Constitution as the only correct interpretation of the Quran. In the Constitution of Mauritania, they are the primary sources of law.

In sum, white Moors in Mauritania have utilised their Islamic knowledge and credentials and have traced their own heritage to prominent Islamic figures and lineages in order to glorify whiteness and assume their rightful role as masters in the tutelage of Blacks in matters of Islam and life in general (Hall 2005). In their instrumentalisation of Islam, slavers in Mauritania rely on weak and unreliable *hadith* (alleged sayings of the Prophet Muhammad during his lifetime) such as (Hall 2005): 'Dissention lies dormant: Allah (God) curses the one who awakens it' and more sickeningly, 'Paradise is at the feet of the mother', has been changed to 'Paradise is at the feet of Your Master'. Other common Mauritanian sayings are also designed to maintain slaves in a state of mental dependence that renders them easily exploitable (Hall 2005): 'Obedient slaves ascend to heaven; Unruly and runaway slaves will be chastised by Allah in the hellfire for disobeying masters' and 'Where there are slaves; the Bidan's reputation will never get tarnished', i.e. no self-respecting white Moor would do cheap or manual labour when a Hartini is around. Partly due to this ideological warfare, far too often, black slaves think of themselves as members of their master's family (Esseissah 2015). In addition, as devout Muslims, many slaves believe that that they were placed by God into their masters' households and that to leave would be sinful (Esseissah 2015). Unfortunately, far too often, these tactics have succeeded at disciplining Haratins, rendering them reluctant to claim their rights and vulnerable to heinous exploitation.

Between slavery and racism in contemporary Morocco

The first black slaves were brought to Morocco by the commerce that the most enterprising Fassi merchants conducted with the nearest African countries. Even if they shared the same continent they never considered themselves like Africans. Fassis were white therefore superior to Blacks wherever they came from. (Ben Jelloun 2017)

Morocco was the largest slave-owning society in the Maghreb at the end of the nineteenth century (Ben Jelloun 2017). At the turn of the twentieth century, large numbers of black slaves, several hundred each, were owned by the Moroccan elite – governors, *caïds* (Muslim tribal chiefs, judges, or senior officials), officers, merchants, etc. (Ben Jelloun 2017). In addition to domestic slavery, a substantial portion of slaves continued to perform menial and harsh labour in oases, small farms, mines, or ports (Ben Jelloun 2017).

It would not be completely shocking if rare instances of slavery linger in Morocco today, especially near the edges of the Sahara and in the households of the wealthy and powerful – including the monarch – due to the legacy of the Abid al-Bukhari. There was never a clear historical end of slavery in Morocco despite its oral abolishment by French colonial authorities in 1923 (Goodman 2012). No law ever eliminated slavery. The protectorate merely adopted administrative measures against its most shocking aspects: from the beginning, it forbade the public sale of slaves. A regulation which passed in 1922 confirmed this prohibition, and gave slaves wishing to free themselves the possibility to do so. However profound the effects of these measures were though, they did not absolutely forbid slavery, which continued to exist as a legal institution. Moreover, the passion for the acquisition of black slaves by Moroccans did not result in criminal prosecution.

Well into the colonial era, domestic slavery and concubinage continued in Morocco but came to be redefined – falsely – by government officials and slave owners as a ‘voluntary’ condition (Goodman 2012). During their dominance of the Moroccan state, 1912–1956, the French very rarely prosecuted slave owners and gave tacit consent to slavery where slaves were already owned and used primarily for domestic purposes (El Hamel 2008). An official French report in 1950 concluded that male slavery continued to exist in isolated parts of Morocco, with an implication that domestic slavery and concubinage were more widespread:

Today we can no longer point to the existence of male slaves except among certain categories of the Sultan’s servants and in the service of certain great lords of southern Morocco, among whom are both manual laborers and confidants. Their kind is disappearing. One can imagine that with the death of this present generation, they will be replaced with free men.

The French administrator just quoted, Lapanne Joinville, was astute, in that the enslavement of black people in Morocco gradually ended in the decades after independence in 1956; it ended at a staggered pace, and amid social, familial, and personal changes within households and across generations (Goodman 2012). Certainly, the Moroccan nationalist movement did nothing to oppose Moroccan domestic slavery (Goodman 2012). Domestic slavery and racism never became a feature of the political agenda of the

Moroccan left and labour movements either (Goodman 2012). Probably due to their vulnerability, no organisation of Black Moroccans emerged to confront racism and the legacy of slavery until the Arab Spring erupted in 2011.

The post-Slavery era in Morocco has been difficult for Black Moroccans as well. The Moroccan social scientist, Maha Marouan, baldly states that 'Talking about slavery in contemporary Morocco is a taboo' (Marouan 2016). Denial of slavery and racism blocks efforts to combat the twin ills. Despite Morocco's intimate role in centuries of the trans-Saharan slave trade, slavery is not included in educational curricula. Slavery is actively ignored in Morocco partly because Morocco is a Muslim nation who enslaved other Muslim nations – a practice that is strictly forbidden (Marouan 2016). In a more personal disclosure of Moroccan reluctance to face slavery's legacy, Ms Marouan reveals the story of her black great grandmother, a slave taken from Senegal, and her own family's refusal to engage the implications of her servitude for their household, her great-grandmother's humanity and dignity, and Morocco as a whole (Marouan 2016):

There are no pictures of her in our family albums. Nobody knew anything about her except that she was from Senegal, that she was 'gifted' to my family and had one daughter with my great grandfather, my great aunt. But what about who she really was? What was her real name? Which part of Senegal did she come from? Which language did she speak? Who were her parents? How was she separated from her family? How was she brought to Morocco? How did she end up in our family's household? And how about her and my great grandfather? Did she choose to marry him? Did she have the luxury of choice? Did she despise him for divorcing her [after one year under pressure from his mother]? How did she manage by herself, alone and pregnant?

The only response Marouan received to her natural curiosity was that her great grandmother was given to her family as a gift (Marouan 2016). Gifting a slave was a way to solicit favours from those in high positions, like her great grandfather, a judge (Marouan 2016). Deep into the twentieth century, owning slaves in Morocco was a sign of prestige. Women were taken as concubines and domestics and men worked in the fields or as domestics. These black slaves adopted their masters' last names and tribal allegiance and their children and children's children continued to be part of the household (Marouan 2016).

Well-known contemporary Moroccans have broken the taboo by discussing slavery within their own families. Fatima Mernissi, the Moroccan sociologist and pioneering Islamic feminist, who recently passed (1940–2015), wrote about a black female slave in her household as she grew up, in addition, her grandfather owned a black concubine (Marouan 2016). Tahar Ben Jelloun, the renown Moroccan writer of fiction and winner of the prestigious Prix Goncourt, grew up in a household with black slaves (El Meknessi 2016). When he was four or five years old, in the 1950s, his uncle brought home two black

female slaves from sub-Saharan Africa. His black cousins from a union between his uncle and one of the two slave girls shared his family name, but ate separately with kitchen staff (El Meknessi 2016).

The national and family silences about slavery and its aftermath – racism – in Morocco does further damage to Black Moroccans. As noted by Marouan, ‘the silence is part of a larger national discourse that does not acknowledge the magnitude of the trans-Saharan slave trade and the presence of a marginalized population whose stories have not been told’ (Marouan 2016). Denial in both state and society of the magnitude of the trans-Saharan slave trade and the existence of Morocco’s marginalised black community reflects a country defined by colour lines and strict social hierarchy (Marouan 2016). Moroccans frantically distance themselves from blackness by all means: ‘whitening creams, facial scrubs, hair straighteners, and a careful construction of ethnic and cultural identity that excludes a large number of [their] descent: the tens of thousands of sub-Saharan Africans brought to Morocco through the trans-Saharan slave trade’ (Marouan 2016). In terms of state policy this denial means that no economic programmes have been devised and implemented by the Moroccan state in its post-independence history to address the country’s marginalised, slave descent, black community.

The oases in the Sahara of southern Morocco operate socially in a fashion similar to Mauritania. An Arab-Berber elite dominates the descendants of their former black slaves, Haratins. Much of their existence is dissimilar from that of a free people. Most remain dependent on their former slave-owners’ families. They work in the fields of palm groves and as herdsmen. Women and less often men carry out domestic work. Concubinage may continue discretely. Those who can migrate north are often employed in menial jobs attached to the soil. Symbolic of the plight of all Black Moroccans, Haratins in Morocco face diverse forms of discrimination – administrative, in access to land, education, justice, and employment (and even taxis as Blacks in Morocco struggle to hail rides) (Ait Akdim 2014). Even when interactions with white Moroccans is relatively positive, intermarriage is deeply frowned upon (De Saint Perier 2014).

In addition to descendants of slaves (Black Moroccans), in recent decades a Black sub-Saharan African migrant community has come to ‘reside’ in Morocco. Most are seeking passage to a Europe that does everything possible to thwart them. Some come for education or for better life-opportunities in general in Morocco. The Moroccan government places their numbers at 25,000–40,000 souls, most without paperwork supporting their right to live and work in Morocco (Lamlili 2014). Black Moroccans and the Black African migrant community both face discrimination. Hostility toward black migrants – blamed for a number of social ills: taking jobs from Moroccans, delinquency, disease (AIDs especially), prostitution, drug-dealing, rape and kidnappings of Moroccan women, low levels of education and behaviour like savages –

unfortunately, has been transferred to Black Moroccans as well. Native or migrant, Blacks in Morocco are the targets of an unnamed contempt manifested by various forms of discrimination, daily harassment, and verbal abuse (De Saint Perier 2014).

Between slavery and racism in contemporary Algeria

In the northern regions of pre-colonial Algeria, black slaves were common and exploited for domestic work and as concubines (Brower 2009). In the Algerian Sahara, slavery took the typically harsher form found in Mauritania and in the Moroccan Sahara. Arab-Berber whites constructed an economy that relied on black slave labour from their Haratins (enslaved or recently freed Islamised and Arabized Blacks, who are still susceptible to forced labour practices). Today Haratins, mostly sharecroppers, work under labour conditions similar to slavery, they 'dig and tend wells, excavate and maintain the underground channels of foggara, irrigate gardens, tend to flocks, and cultivate dates' (Brower 2009).

As in Morocco, slavery died a slow death in Algeria. Colonised in 1830, slavery was legally abolished in Algeria by the French in 1848. In 1906, the French took firmer steps to abolish the practice, though practical considerations of colonial rule led to some acceptance of the institution (Brower 2009). French ambivalence about slavery extended to the point that colonial officials considered importing black slaves themselves to work on state-established large agricultural enterprises. Poor climatic conditions to replicate Caribbean sugar cane plantations and American cotton plantations halted the effort (Brower 2009).

The French, rulers of Algeria from 1830 to 1962, accommodated slavery in the Algerian Sahara more than anywhere else. Slave masters and merchants were given permission to trade in slaves and keep those they owned well into the twentieth century (Brower 2009). In exchange, slavers and merchants provided intelligence on far-off regions to colonial authorities (Brower 2009).

While agricultural and domestic slavery gradually ended in the twentieth century in Algeria, the state has never utilised directed-policies to help their black community emerge from the impact of generations of servitude and brutalisation. In fact, even recognising racial and ethnic diversity has been anathema to the post-Independence Algerian state, which fears national unity conflicts (Ouazani 2004). Thus, the Algerian state has never taken a survey to ascertain the number of Algerian black citizens in the country, most of whom are concentrated in the Saharan South. Black Algerians have also established black communities in northern cities like Algiers and Oran. Estimates suggest 2.5 million Black Algerians out of a population of 38.6 million (Ouazani 2004). Similar to Morocco, in addition to the indigenous black community in the Sahara and in urban areas, tens of thousands of

black migrants have made their way, legally or illegally, to Algeria. Some are students, others come to seek economic opportunity and security in Algeria, while a large number hope to eventually migrate to the European Union.

Due to discrimination and a lack of targeted government support to overcome slavery's legacy, Black Algerians find it difficult to work their way up from the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy. Outside of less than one handful of tokens, Blacks are absent from top positions in the military, government, and economy (Ouazani 2004). Interracial marriages are frowned upon, especially between black men and white women. For older generations of Algerians, the role of black soldiers and guards in the French colonial enterprise – accused of rape, stealing crops and animal herds, and shooting Algerians without a thought – has led to hostility towards anybody with black skin (Ouazani 2004).

Algerians have struggled to accommodate the tens of thousands of Black African migrants that have entered the country in recent decades. Their presence seems to have increased racism towards migrants and Black Algerian natives. Heinous insults in the streets and a number of violent clashes between white Algerians and black migrants have led the Algerian government to forcibly remove migrants from wherever they live, sometimes in makeshift housing or squatting – to encampments in the Sahara prior to expulsion to their home countries (Ouazani 2004).

Black migrants in Algeria are accused of all the same negative habits as their confreres in Morocco: taking jobs, delinquency, disease (AIDs and Ebola especially), drug-dealing, rape and kidnappings of women, low levels of education, behaviour like savages, and constant begging in the streets. The general vision of Blacks in Algeria held by whites has changed from inferiors that should be discretely ignored to the violent rejection of those with black skin (Ouazani 2004).

Young black migrants to Algeria, there for their education, have been shocked by the anti-black racism they encounter, from verbal insults, to physical aggression. A Malian student complained, 'I cannot believe that I'm in a Muslim country, Algerians consider us as animals' (Ouazani 2004). Black women are targeted in particular. One female student left Algeria months into her academic programme because she was treated like a prostitute in the street and was sexually harassed by her professors and fellow students, in addition to suffering the humiliation of a range of insults such as being called a monkey, a servant, and a slave to her face (Ouazani 2004).

Between slavery and racism in contemporary Tunisia

It's notable that unlike in Mauritania, Morocco, and Algeria, the formal abolition of slavery in Tunisia was not achieved by French colonial authorities, or under the influence of Western European pressure for abolition alone.

Ahmed Bey, the largely independent (from the Ottoman Empire) ruler of Tunisia issued edicts that abolished the slave trade in 1841 and slavery itself in 1846, all decades before French colonisation in 1881. Ismael Montana argues that Ahmed Bey decided to abolish slavery due to his desire to obtain British protection and safeguard his independence in the face of two major threats to his rule: the French military push in Algeria and political pressure from the Ottomans (Montana 2013). The Bey of Tunisia also likely had cultural and personal reasons to end slavery. In the 1846 edict abolishing slavery, he relied on the Islamic legal principle of *maslaha*, or the preservation of the community's general and public interest (Montana 2013). To justify his stance, Ahmed Bey argued that slavery fostered widespread human rights abuses, threats to the political order when slaves appealed to foreign consuls, and the illegal capture and enslavement of Muslims by Muslims (Montana 2013).

While the forces for abolition and the relatively early formal end of slavery is unique to Tunisia within the Maghrebi context, the gradual end of slavery in practice in Tunisia – stretching into the second half of the twentieth century – mirrors the patterns in other north African countries. Slavery was still widespread enough that the French abolished it again in 1890. In terms of black slaves, domestic slavery, rather than the needs of economic production, dominated in the northern parts of the country. However, in the Saharan south, at the oases, in addition to domestic work, black slaves were utilised in agriculture, especially for irrigation projects. Central to production, it was a harsh life of servitude that was still widespread in the area at independence in 1956.

In the Tunisian Sahara, where the descendants of the thousands of Black Africans imported through the trans-Saharan slave trade to Tunisia are concentrated, an ambiguity between freedom and slavery, continues to exist. Freed slaves often found it so difficult to feed and clothe themselves that they returned to their former masters (Dali 2005). Thus, in the rural south of Tunisia, slavery slowly morphed into patron-client, 'wala' arrangements in which former slaves continued to work for their former masters as domestic servants or in other capacities (Scaglioni 2016).

In southern Tunisia, contemporary relations are maintained between certain white Arab-Berber families and the descendants of their former slaves (Dali 2005). The lives of sharecroppers, *khamessat*, differ little from slaves (Dali 2005). In virtually the entire South of Tunisia – including Mareth, Douz, and especially the Island of Djerba – descendants of some of the slave-owning Arab-Berber families of the region, share the same name, and retain ties to the descendants of their former slaves, including the expectation that slave descendants will work for them in some form or another (Dali 2005). Blacks continue to serve white families as needed, without an expectation of reciprocity (Dali 2005). For example, in Djerba, patisserie makers and other white merchants, employ the same black families their ancestors formerly

owned, and it is inconceivable that they work anywhere else (Mosbah in Lutyens 2015b).

Of course, Tunisia is the one qualified success story of the Arab Spring. It is an emerging democracy. The more open environment has brought racism more out in the open. In the Tunisian south, some Blacks still have birth certificates that include a line for 'freed by' whatever white family owned their ancestors (Lutyens 2015a).² While not a widespread contemporary practice, cemeteries and classrooms and occasionally buses in the south, can be segregated (Lutyens 2015a). White students receive advantages, tutoring help for example, not available to black students, who attend school far less frequently than their white counterparts (Dahmani 2005).

Still, despite the long odds, some Blacks in the Tunisian south have worked hard enough and been talented enough to progressively break the chain of dependence and climb the social ladder, despite the harsh oppression and discrimination they face. To improve their living conditions and provide decent education for their offspring, others emigrated to the capital Tunis or migrated to Europe. Parenthetically, much of the same, success despite overwhelming odds, can be said for a minority of Black Arabs in all five of the Maghrebi countries.

Material dependence, lack of economic opportunity, has kept Blacks in general, in a servile status in Tunisia, especially in the Tunisian South, yet Tunisia's post-Independence governments have never taken specific measures to lessen inequality and discrimination against Black Tunisian citizens.³ When the Tunisian activist against racial discrimination, Saadia Mosbah, attempted to form an organisation to combat racism prior to the Arab Spring, she was told that racism doesn't exist in Tunisia and her application to form an NGO was denied twice on that basis (Mosbah in Lutyens 2015b).

While complaints about slavery and slave legacies often focus on southern Tunisia, northern cities are notable for recent episodes of modern-day slavery/slave conditions involving principally West African Black women lured to the region to perform domestic work (Inkyfada 2017). Once in Tunisia, traffickers take advantage of Tunisian visa policies – visa renewal every three months and hefty penalties to stay beyond that – to guide these women from Senegal and the Ivory Coast into overwhelming debt, which they must pay in full in order to be able to leave the country (Inkyfada 2017).

The attitude of contemporary white Tunisians towards Blacks were also revealed when the African Development Bank moved its headquarters to Tunisia (2002–2014) following a civil war in the Ivory Coast, the bank's traditional home. Well-off black professionals in the bank and their families were surprised by the depth of racism they confronted in Tunisia (Levine-Spound 2016). For their part, white Tunisians felt that Ben Ali protected and provided privileges to workers in the African Development Bank that they would never receive (Levine-Spound 2016). The perceived privilege of Black

Africans provoked anger among the wider population, a frustration that contributed to a spike in racism and violent attacks against Blacks once Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia in early 2011 (Levine-Spound 2016).

Across Tunisia, South and North, Blacks have been disappointed by the lack of progress toward ending racial discrimination since the Arab Spring began. As an indication of this, the famous Black Tunisian singer, Salah Mosbah once widely praised by 'white Tunisia' has publicly admitted that he has given up on his native country, and is seeking a home where minorities are more powerful (Dahmani 2005). Mr Mosbah's public denunciation of racism, provoked former Tunisian Minister of Culture and distinguished scholar of North African Studies, Abdelbaki Hermassi, to assert that, 'You will suffer like your ancestors' (Dahmani 2005).⁴ Salah Mosbah's son, Sabry Mosbah, also a singer, has experienced demoralising racism as well.

In addition to Black Tunisian citizens, similar to Morocco and Algeria, tens of thousands of Black sub-Saharan African migrants seeking a passage to Europe or educational and economic opportunities in Tunisia, reside within the country's borders. Their presence seems to have worsened race relations in an already racially stratified society.

Recent black migrants in Tunisia suffer the sting of racial discrimination as well. As a group of black students from sub-Saharan Africa studying in Tunisia recount, 'As soon as we go outside in the streets, we suffer humiliation. We are freely greeted with racial insults' (Ghorbal 2004). There is racism in every society, but

what astonishes [us] is the silence of the majority. The absence of reactions of people in the bus or in the metro, when we are insulted by children. Their parents are not bothered at all when their children hurl racial epithets. To the contrary, they laugh. This would never happen in our African societies. (Ghorbal 2004)

Related to the verbal violence hurled at black people in Tunisia and elsewhere in the region, many have suffered the humiliation of having white Maghrebis pinch their nose when they encounter black people to signify that they smell bad. In one case, a teacher accused a black student of being the source of a bad smell, in front of her classmates (Ghorbal 2004). Some white Tunisians refuse to sit next to black people in public transportation, and taxis frequently ignore black potential passengers. Native Blacks in Tunisia have recounted painful and unforgettable stories of being forced to sit in the back of the class in primary school by teachers who are disturbed by the colour of their skin (Ghorbal 2004).

Probably because authoritarian regression has been largely held-off in Tunisia, mobilisation against racism at the outset of the Arab Spring has been more sustained than in other Maghrebi countries. There are several active civil society associations committed to combatting racism. Still, the

reaction of the post-Ben Ali Tunisian state has been one of either denial – there is no racism in Tunisia – or the claim that Tunisians need to wait until democracy is more consolidated in order to address it. Consider the experience of Yahdh Ben Achour, the lawyer and legal scholar who led the commission that shepherded Tunisia’s democratic transition. As soon as the work on the new Tunisian constitution began, an association devoted to the defence of Black Tunisians’ rights attempted to introduce constitutional measures to combat racial discrimination. However, the deputies in the Constitutional Assembly reacted negatively, claiming, ‘You’re looking to create a problem that doesn’t exist’ (Ghorbal 2004). Witnessing this, Ben Achour concluded that in a second stage of the Tunisian revolution, problems like racial discrimination will be addressed (Ghorbal 2004):

With the latest progress on the rather liberal Constitution that has been developed, the first doors have been opened, but it will remain after its adoption many projects, including that of the fight against racism. With the emergence of activism to address this problem and the liberation of expression, I am optimistic: in the medium term, a real debate will take place and measures will be taken to combat this insidious discrimination.

Between slavery and racism in contemporary Libya

Slave markets of black people in Libya returned during the chaos of state collapse that followed the death of Qaddafi. Powerful militias and criminal gangs profit from slavery in an environment in which some are more powerful than any national army. The renewal of Libya’s slave trade has led to rebukes and repatriation efforts across sub-Saharan Africa.

In Libya, slavery was officially abolished in 1856 by Ottoman rulers under pressure from growing European power, though in practice it faded away gradually, with remnants remaining at Libya’s independence in 1951. Black slaves had diverse jobs in the caravan trade, which ended around 1930, with some highly experienced and skilled workers taking leadership roles in this commerce (Al Taleb 2015). Female slaves performed difficult domestic tasks such as fetching water from the springs and wells to the houses, cleaning clothes, cooking, and grinding grain (Al Taleb 2015). They also babysat, cooked, and cleaned and served as concubines. Male slaves undertook the hard-physical labour within households and farm work: sowing seeds, watering plants, digging earth, pollinating date palm trees, and so forth (Al Taleb 2015). As elsewhere in the Maghreb, black slaves worked in the fields most often and slavery was at its harshest in the areas of Libya covered by the Sahara Desert.

In another common Maghrebi pattern, emancipated slaves in Libya often retained ties to and continued to work for their former masters (in addition to taking their last name in most instances), typically due to a lack of any

other economic opportunities. Sharecropping and the emergence of wage labour in the immediate aftermath of emancipation frequently provided fewer material benefits than enslavement (Al Taleb 2015). Slaves remained dependent on their masters and socially inferior to them in order to fit into the socio-economic world they inhabited post-enslavement.

Notably, the politics of race were at the centre of the Qaddafi regime and also played a part in the uprising against him (Al Taleb 2015). Even though Blacks experienced discrimination under Qaddafi, and many Black Libyans never supported him, in the view of some white Libyans, Black Libyans who had descended from the country's enslaved population, profited greatly from Qaddafi's social and civil rights policies.

During the revolution, Qaddafi tried to leverage the support of Black Libyans and Black Libyans feared (rightfully) that if the rebels won, their position in society would deteriorate (Al Taleb 2015). Post-Qaddafi, the vulnerability of Black Libyans and the tens of thousands of migrants from Black Africa seeking a path to Europe, has been more than evident, most ostentatiously by the return of black slave markets.

In conflict with the assumption that Qaddafi favoured Black Libyans, the Toubou people, who occupy the oases of southern Libya and across the border into Chad and Niger, often felt marginalised under Qaddafi, and rose up and formed militias to combat him (Boisbouvier 2012). Since Qaddafi's fall, the Toubou have been violently attacked by Arab militias leading to hundreds of deaths on both sides. The Toubou view it as attempts at eradication via genocide and have threatened to claim their independence and control over all of southern Libya (Boisbouvier 2012). The Toubou have also been attacked by Tuaregs, the Berber nomads who have enslaved and trafficked Blacks across the Sahara for centuries.

The Toubou are not the only black community who have suffered greatly since Qaddafi's fall. The Tawerghans, Black Libyans of slave descent from a town 40 kilometres south of coastal Misrata, were sharply accused of supporting Qaddafi during the revolution and before it. During the revolution, Misrata's powerful 'white' militia targeted the Tawerghans ('Tawergha: Le Martyre Des Libyens Noirs,' 2014). On 11 August 2011, an attack by the Misratan militia killed more than 1200 Tawerghans and used rape widely as a tool of war, violating more than a 1000 Tawerghan women and girls ('Tawergha: Le Martyre Des Libyens Noirs,' 2014). With Misrata's militia's power and influence post-Qaddafi, the Tawerghans have been *de facto* stripped of citizenship ('Tawergha: Le Martyre Des Libyens Noirs,' 2014). Tens of thousands of Tawerghans fled and they remain refugees throughout the country. According to a Tawerghan elder, 'Libya has become a dangerous prison for us, in which we can be killed at any moment' ('Tawergha: Le Martyre Des Libyens Noirs,' 2014).

For many white Libyans, Blacks in their country are traitors who supported Qaddafi or mercenaries who killed for him. The black migrants from sub-

Saharan Africa, seeking a path to Europe, are stigmatised as former slaves who can still be treated as such. According to a report by the United Nations, human trafficking, slave trading, rose rapidly in post-Qaddafi Libya ('Libye: Augmentation Du Trafic D'Êtres Humains, Selon Les Nations Unies,' 2018). Maxime Nadong a black migrant describes his experience in Libya ('Libye: Augmentation Du Trafic D'Êtres Humains, Selon Les Nations Unies,' 2018):

It was a hell in Libya. I would not advise my worst enemy go there. Libyans have no consideration for black people. They treat us like animals. They raped us. We were stuck in warehouses. They beat us. We didn't eat well. There was no water to wash. There is a commerce of black people there. There are people who want black slaves as they had in the past. They come to buy them. If you resist they shoot you. There were some murders.

Nadong spent eight months in Libya with his pregnant wife. He has not seen or heard from her in three months and does not know if she is dead or alive ('Libye: Augmentation Du Trafic D'Êtres Humains, Selon Les Nations Unies,' 2018).

Verbal violence

Racism in my country, is not an institutional racism ... it is social. It awakens in the streets. It spreads with attitudes and looks. It chuckles in mockery. It is both a glob of spit to the face and camouflaged. (Lutyens 2015a))

There is an ambient racism across the contemporary Maghreb. Both native Blacks and black migrants are constantly subjected to verbal reactions by white Maghrebis that range from simple mockery to outright hostility, with the common sentiment of contempt towards black skin. The number and range of terms to express repugnance and white supremacy is startling for the uninitiated. The most damning are the most common terms that serve as the collective nouns for black people in the Maghreb. As noted, long ago in the Maghreb, the Arabic word designating slave – '*abd*, pl. '*abid* – in daily language, took on the meaning of a black person or black people. To attack the humanity of Black Maghrebis, the Arabic word for servant, *khadim* pl. *khuddam*, also became a common collective noun for black people, especially black women.

Blacks in the Maghreb are also peppered with more country-specific racial insults. *Haratine*, signifying the slaves and 'freed slaves' of Arab-Berber whites in Mauritania, is a general pejorative that connotes subordination in Morocco. Moroccans also utilise the slur, *Azzi*, which is equivalent to Nigger. In Mauritania *Jambour* means unruly or runaway slave. *Kahlouch*, a pejorative for black is most frequently hurled at the innocent in Algeria. In southern Tunisia *chaouachine* is a term for black people forged to designate an immediate category between the free and the enslaved. As a racial epithet, white Tunisians utilise *oussif*, meaning servant, maid (equivalent of Nigger). The opposite of

oussif is Horr, which means free and designates a white person in the south. In Libya and parts of Tunisia, to injure black people, they are called *abd*, literally slave and an equivalent of nigger in English.

Even the generic term for the colour black in Maghrebi Arabic, *Akhal*, when referred to a person, is often used as a pejorative in North Africa. *Khal* is used for the same purpose in Algeria and Morocco. *Nigrou* is used in a similar way. Across the region, black people are frequently called, to their faces *qird* (monkey), *khanzir* (pig), *akul lahmi albashar* (cannibal), and *hayawan* (animals). They may be greeted by the sounds monkeys make, *guera*; *guera*. The colour of some olives inspires the racial insult *zeitoun*. The colour of the candy bar snickers, has turned the word 'snickers' into a racial epithet.

Racial mockery in the region can be more developed than single words. The question in French, what time is it, (*quelle heure est-il?*) asked with a smile, means look at your wrist watch and remember that you are black. Likewise, *wena kalouche*, and me, am I black? Is said when whites jest about being asked to do something unpleasant. Other petty acts of racial humiliation have also been reported. After a soccer match between Algeria and Mali, an Algerian Islamist newspaper, *Echourouk*, published a picture of Algerian fans holding up a sign, 'Neither hello nor welcome, AIDS behind you, Ebola in front of You' (Daoud 2016). In Morocco, a young black college student who gave money to an older beggar was met with this response, 'Oh my God, what did I do to deserve such a fate: a black man, a slave's son, who gives me alms?!' (Bâ 2012).

Worse still, a nine-year-old Black Tunisian girl was ordered to sit in the back of the class in front of the other students because her skin colour bothered the teacher ('Racisme En Tunisie: «On Nous Donne L'Impression D'Être Des Sous-Hommes», 2016). In high school, the same student was called *oussifa* (slave) in front of the class ('Racisme En Tunisie: «On Nous Donne L'Impression D'Être Des Sous-Hommes», 2016). A different middle school student in Tunisia was humiliated in front of her classmates when the teacher accused her of smelling bad because she was black ('Racisme En Tunisie: «On Nous Donne L'Impression D'Être Des Sous-Hommes», 2016).

In sum, there is a weaponized racial discourse in North Africa. Negative stereotyping and a near-daily onslaught of race-based verbal insults by whites feeds a form of ordinary racism in the Maghreb that contributes to maintaining Blacks in an inferior socio-economic position and sustaining a connection between black skin and a servile past. This verbal violence may also be accompanied by physical violence.

Violence

The long-standing and generalised belief in white supremacy in the region, along with the growing presence of Black African migrants and the civil war

in Libya, have made it increasingly dangerous to have black skin in the Maghreb. In late December 2016, three black students from the Democratic Republic of the Congo were attacked by a stranger armed with a knife in the centre of the Tunisian capital, Tunis ('Trois Jeunes Congolais Agressés Au Couteau À Tunis: "Ce N'Est Pas Un Cas Isolé",' 2016). Two of the women's throats were cut, and the lone male was stabbed in the arm in the racially motivated incident. All three survived, one barely. That incident and other acts of physical aggression against Blacks in Tunisia contributed to a campaign by Blacks in the country, which included the dissemination of a haunting photo of a young black man in a hoodie against a black background with the words 'I don't want to die in Tunisia because I am a black foreigner' ('Tunisie: Mobilisation Et Réaction Du Gouvernement Après L'Agression De Trois Personnes D'Origine Congolaise,' 2016).

On a Moroccan campus a young black man, a Malian student, was savagely beaten by several thugs, spat upon, and called *qird* (monkey), *k'hal* (black), and *a'abd* (slave). He would be dead if his strident cries had not alerted campus guards (Bâ 2012). On the same campus, a Liberian student was attacked by several white Moroccans and stabbed in the stomach. As they fled, one shouted, 'Next time, we will kill you! And that's true for all your comrades, send them that message dirty nigger' (Bâ 2012). Squatter sites of black migrants have been attacked leading to beatings and murders in Morocco, especially in and around Tangiers (Bâ 2012). More benignly, rocks have been thrown at black people by kids in Morocco while their parents laughed (Wallen 2017).

In Algeria, a Cameroonian migrant was gang-raped while menaced by a dog. When she complained to the authorities her case was rejected because she did not have 'papers' and she wasn't a Muslim (Daoud 2016). In the Algerian Sahara, after a Nigerian assassinated an Algerian, black migrants were attacked in the streets, leading to tens of injured Blacks and an attack on a refugee camp (Daoud 2016).

The violence used to sustain slavery in Mauritania – police and security agent beatings when Haratines file complaints, lynchings in discreet settings – have already been discussed. The attacks by militias and criminal gangs against Black Libyans and Black African migrants in lawless Libya have led to accusations of genocide. Militias in Libya force Blacks into both slavery and sex work.

Resistance

As an African-American who has lived several years of his life in North Africa, I can attest that many white Maghrebis are not racist at all and many Maghrebis of every social class exhibit the hospitality and warmth toward strangers, including black strangers, for which they are world renown. Still, racism in

the region is widespread (a fact that I can attest to based on personal experience as well), apparently always has been, going back at least to the early Arab-Islamic era, and seems to be increasing along with the appalling slave conditions in contemporary Mauritania and Libya. Silence about this taboo topic (racism and slavery in the Maghreb) needs to be broken as often as possible in order to begin to robustly address the harm suffered by black minorities confronting a history and contemporary reality of dehumanisation, exploitation, virulent racial animosity, and steep discrimination in North Africa. In other words, overt discussion and action is needed to contest how race has been used to naturalise inequality in the Maghreb (Hall 2005).

Resistance to racism and slavery can – and has – taken a multitude of forms in the Maghreb. While Islam has been instrumentalized to support racism and slavery in the region, Islam has also served as a potent form of resistance to both. In the contemporary Maghreb, many appalled pious Muslims, black and white, have reacted strongly to growing racism in the region. To confront the scourge, they turn to humanistic aspects of Islam, including verses from the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad that establish racial equality as an Islamic ideal. The life of Bilal ibn Rabah, the former black slave, who became one of the most trusted and loyal companions of the Prophet and Islam's first *muezzin* (voice of the call to prayer in Islam) is often evoked as a symbol of racial equality within the Islamic faith.

In addition to the values of Islam and pious Muslims, states and governments in the Maghreb can act to hinder slavery and racism. However, the current white-dominated Mauritanian state and government under Ould Abdel Aziz and those of his predecessors have been utilised to protect the continued enslavement of Black Mauritians and the maintenance of white supremacy. Mauritania's state-allied ulema has done the same. Currently enslaved Mauritians that revolt can count on the hostility of their country's religious leaders, the police, the national guard, and other security institutions that use violence to keep them in their place (Ould Ciré 2014). Victims often prefer slavery to being in the hands of the police (Ould Ciré 2014). When black activists burnt *maliki* rite books in Mauritania that support their enslavement and racial discrimination, the government vowed to use all its power to punish the activists who dared to attack 'Islam', a version of Islam which supposedly unifies the Mauritanian people.

Outside of Mauritania, an influx of 'clandestine' Black African migrants in the Maghreb since the early 2000s raised racial tensions and increased the racism and discrimination already facing the regions' black minorities. Across the board, the states' initial reactions were to condemn all Black African migrants and accuse them of bringing delinquency and disease, especially AIDs and Ebola, to North Africa. To address this perceived challenge, states typically arrested anyone with black skin, including black citizens, with the assumption that some undocumented migrants would be captured in the

process (Khouja 2016). After rounding them up, these migrants would typically be interned in the countries' desert regions before being deported.

The Moroccan state became the first to change attitudes towards black migrants. Beginning in 2014, after a number of brutal and widely publicised murders of sub-Saharan African migrants and under pressure from civil society associations, the Moroccan monarchy changed policies and undertook an initiative to recognise refugees and regularise and formally integrate Black African migrants into the Moroccan political economy (Khouja 2016).

The monarchy's campaign has been a partial success, with complaints that too small a percentage of migrants seeking visas have been granted the privilege and the application process can take years; in addition, the visas, usually of short duration, do not guarantee that migrants will have the right to work in Morocco (Khouja 2016). Still, there has been some relief in Morocco for migrants and by association Black Moroccans. Morocco also benefits regionally and internationally for a more humane policy than current practices in neighbouring and rival Algeria.

Given its progressive history – leadership in the third world movement, socialism – it's somewhat surprising that the Algerian state and government have done less to protect Black Algerians and migrants from discrimination than the Moroccan government has for its minority population. The general posture of the state has been to view black migrants negatively, push them into desert camps after raids and mass arrests, and deport them as soon as possible. However, in 2017, the Algerian Prime Minister and the minister of interior announced that the government would conduct a census to screen migrants, after which they promised to grant residency rights and job permits (Dahir 2017).

Under Ben Ali 1987–2011 and since Tunisia's democratic transition the dominant state and government position on race relations had been to question the existence of racism. However, attacks against black migrants and Black Tunisians and the emergence of anti-racism associations since the Arab Spring revolt freed expression and association in Tunisia, has led to positive government reactions.

Laudably, and in line with the prediction of the architect of Tunisia's democratic transition, Ben Achour, after the implementation of Tunisia's democratic constitution, debate emerged in Tunisian governmental circles that culminated in October 2018, with a near unanimous parliamentary vote to adopt an anti-racism law. The law criminalised racist speech, incitement to hatred, and discrimination. It allows prison sentences of up to three years for convictions and fines up to 1000 Euros. The law originated from the case of a Black Tunisian, Sabrina N'goy, who had been verbally abused on Habib Bourguiba Avenue in downtown Tunis in 2016 (Grewal 2018). She attempted to report the crime, but the police station turned her away due to the 'lack of a specific law' against racism (Grewal 2018). After three Congolese students

were stabbed near the tramway station in downtown Tunis later that year, amid demonstrations by civil society organisations, Prime Minister Youssef Chahed immediately expressed support for the law (Grewal 2018). The law has been welcomed by Black Tunisians and African migrants in Tunisia, though it is too early to measure the law's full impact.

The state broke-down in Libya during the Arab Spring uprisings and the civil war that followed. The state does not monopolise the use of violence in the country. Militias based on town, region, ideology, tribe, etc. are more powerful than any pretend national military. There are three governments who each claim to represent the Libyan people. In the chaos and violence of Libya, possible genocide against Black Libyans and black migrants has emerged, along with the slave trade of black people. Armed groups are more powerful than the Libyan security services that have been authorised to supervise detention centres filled with tens-of-thousand black migrants ('Libye: Augmentation Du Trafic D'Êtres Humains, Selon Les Nations Unies,' 2018). The Islamic state, still active in parts of Libya, has become particularly active in human trafficking ('Libye: Augmentation Du Trafic D'Êtres Humains, Selon Les Nations Unies,' 2018). Notably, despite the weakness of the state and government(s), Libya's Government of National Unity has launched a study of the renewed slave trade and promised to punish any participants ('Libye: Augmentation Du Trafic D'Êtres Humains, Selon Les Nations Unies,' 2018).

Despite the commendable anti-racism law implemented in Tunisia, overall, states and governments in the Maghreb have done little to nothing to address racism and slave legacies. The general posture is to question their existence or serve as vehicles to maintain them. These are countries where racial slavery ended at the earliest in the mid-1900s, yet white Maghrebis mostly deny the existence of racial discrimination and none of their states, outside of the Libyan partial exception under King Idriss and Qaddafi have been proactive in implementing affirmative actions to address slavery and racism's socio-economic, cultural, and political impact on Black Arabs in North Africa.

Of course, black people themselves, and the civil society organisations they have founded, have been the leading edge of resistance to Maghrebi slavery and racism. In Mauritania, articulate and determined black activists, especially Haratines, have been brave and daring in their challenges to the status quo. The Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement (IRA Mauritania) was founded by 2013 UN Human Rights winner Biram Dah Abeid in 2008. Abeid began his activism as a member of SOS Esclave, an organisation currently led by Boubacar Ould Mesaoud. Both Abeid and Mesaoud have served time in prison for their challenges to Mauritanian slavery and racism.

In Tunisia, black activists and the organisations they lead made major contributions to the pressure that culminated in the 2018 anti-racism law. Saadia Mosbah, part of a black activist family mentioned earlier, founded one of the

most potent civil society organisations against racism in the country and region. The group's name, M'nemty in Arabic and D'ou viens-tu in French, which means where are you from? refers to a common and largely intentional insult toward Black Tunisians whose families have been in the country for generations (Lutyens 2015b). Ms Mosbah attempted to form her organisation under Ben Ali, but, as noted, was told by state officials that racism didn't exist in Tunisia and Blacks are welcome there. Ms Mosbah was rightly disappointed by the state's reaction and the assumption that white Tunisians could welcome her – or not – to her own country. Instead Tunisia is her home as much as anyone else's and she wants a Tunisia that accepts its diversity and does not discriminate based on the colour of a person's skin (Lutyens 2015b). Without a doubt, Ms Mosbah's passion, persistence, and leadership of M'nemty played a role in her country's adoption of an anti-discrimination law.

Tragically, Ivorian activist Falikou Coulibaly was killed in a knife attack on 23 December 2018 enraging the entire Black African community in Tunis. This led to large protests on iconic Habib Bourguiba Avenue. In January 2019, civil society activism was also instrumental in bringing to trial a white Tunisian woman to trial for verbally and physically abusing a Black Tunisian teacher in Sfax.

In Morocco, La Plateforme des Associations et Communautés subsahariennes au Maroc, emerged to defend sub-Saharan African migrants. In 2014, a coalition in Morocco, *Papiers Pour Tous* (Papers for Everybody), staged the country's first ever campaign against the daily racism experienced by sub-Saharan Africans and Black Moroccans (Lamlili 2014).

Despite harsh discrimination against Black Algerians and black migrants, Algerian civil society associations against racism have been less active than those in Morocco and Tunisia. A coalition of human rights organisations, *Plateforme Migration Algérie* (PMA), has recently emerged to address black migrants and the tendency of the Algerian state security forces to harass and arrest all black people regardless of their nationality or administrative status (Rondeleux 2014).

Regional NGOs have also responded to the toxicity and oppression in Maghrebi race relations. The same *Papiers Pour Tous* coalition that emerged in Morocco, expanded and launched a Maghreb wide campaign in 2016. The coalition's 2016 slogans and signs included *J'ai un nom!* (I have a name), *Je ne m'appelle pas Azzi/Masssiytich Azzi* (I'm not named Nigger!/I'm not a Nigger!) ('Une Campagne Transmaghrébine Pour Lutter Contre Le Racisme,' 2016). This first ever Trans-Maghreb campaign against racism seeks to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination in the region, against both migrants and Black Maghrebi citizens ('Une Campagne Transmaghrébine Pour Lutter Contre Le Racisme,' 2016).

While black people themselves have taken on the major burden of mobilising and organising to combat racism and slavery after the Arab Spring

erupted, some white Maghrebis have participated as well – despite, as one white activist noted, ‘neither our education at home, nor our formal education prepared us to accept diversity’ (Lamlili 2014).

For the most part, journalism contributes to the ambient racism in the Maghreb. An assessment by the Algerian journalist Yassine Temlali generally fits the media environment in all the Maghrebi countries: Journalism contributes to xenophobia and virulent racism (Temlali 2014). Another journalist characterised it as a press devoted to stigmatising and victimising black migrants who are viewed across the board as criminals who bring diseases to the country.

There is an international component to racism and slavery in the Maghreb as well. All of the Maghrebi countries have signed on to international agreements prohibiting discrimination of any kind. Human Rights Watch and other international NGOs concerned with human rights and social justice regularly raise the alarm about slavery in Mauritania, the renewal of slave trading in Libya, and the increase in racism in the region.

For their part, Black African leaders have all reacted with outrage at the return of the slave trade to Libya. Many have mobilised resources to bring their compatriots home. Fewer Black African students are choosing to pursue their studies in the Maghreb. Finally, Western powers and their citizens, including the US government and its citizens, have done little to raise awareness about and to counter the abomination of slavery and racism in the contemporary Maghreb.

There are some obvious measures that North African regimes and governments could take to lessen the marginalisation of their black minorities. First, of course, there should be a zero-tolerance policy for slavery. Every slaveholder and slave trafficker should be immediately prosecuted and given long prison terms.

Broadly, North African governments need to break the culture of silence, which has long prevented these countries from engaging with, and overtly discussing questions of race, slavery, and colour (El Hamel 2013). The history of the trans-Saharan slave trade, and its aftermath for Black Arabs could and should be taught in school. Islamic education in the region could be improved by state initiatives to emphasise the racial equality that was core to the Prophet’s message combined with history lessons explaining how Arab-Islamic civilisation came to identify slavery with black skin.

Other Maghrebi states should follow Tunisia’s lead and implement (and enforce) anti-racial discrimination laws. The laws should address the diverse forms of discrimination Black Arabs of North Africa face – administrative, in access to land, education, employment, and justice. Affirmative action – education, land, and employment policies that benefit the region’s black minorities – is desperately needed to bring more Black Maghrebis out from the ‘shadows of slavery’.

African migrants should be treated much better in the Maghreb as well. The Moroccan monarchy moved in the right direction when it changed policies and undertook an initiative to recognise refugees and regularise and formally integrate Black African migrants into the Moroccan political economy. The Moroccan experiment in this regard can be improved within Morocco, and improved upon by other Maghrebi countries.

Notes

1. Initially, small numbers of native Americans as well.
2. The author interviewed Saadia Mosbah, an important Black rights' activist, on these topics in spring 2015.
3. Tunisia's October 2018 anti-racial discrimination law will be discussed in the conclusion.
4. The author of this piece must note that as an African-American undertaking dissertation fieldwork in Tunisia, I was treated with much kindness by Abdelbaki Hermassi, who gave me refreshments and flowers from his garden, while he helped me identify areas in Tunisia the most amenable to my study.

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