

Fall 2018

The Root of Racism: How Slavery has led to the Condition of Discrimination Against Sub-Saharan Africans and Migrants in Morocco

James Artis III
SIT Study Abroad

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection

 Part of the [African Languages and Societies Commons](#), [African Studies Commons](#), [Film and Media Studies Commons](#), [Inequality and Stratification Commons](#), [Peace and Conflict Studies Commons](#), [Politics and Social Change Commons](#), [Race and Ethnicity Commons](#), and the [Race, Ethnicity and Post-Colonial Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Artis, James III, "The Root of Racism: How Slavery has led to the Condition of Discrimination Against Sub-Saharan Africans and Migrants in Morocco" (2018). *Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection*. 3003.
https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection/3003

This Unpublished Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the SIT Study Abroad at SIT Digital Collections. It has been accepted for inclusion in Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection by an authorized administrator of SIT Digital Collections. For more information, please contact digitalcollections@sit.edu.

The Root of Racism: How Slavery has led to the condition of Discrimination Against Sub-Saharan
Africans and Migrants in Morocco

By: James Artis III

Academic Director: Belghazi, Taieb

University of Denver

Hospitality School of Business

The City and Medina of Tangier and Rabat

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for MOR, SIT Abroad, Fall 2018

Abstract

Slavery is the oldest and most central form of discrimination and while most have knowledge on the Trans-Atlantic slave trade that of the Sub-Saharan and Middle Eastern Slave trade in which current day North Africa and Middle East contributed to both sexual and military exploitation of Sub-Saharan Africans is often forgotten. The historical implication that going along with North African and Middle Eastern slave trade contribute to the discrimination dehumanization and otherization of sub-Saharan Africans and their perception in North Africa.

Overview:

My independent study project is on the root cause of racism in Morocco and how it stems from the tragic past of slavery. I argue that discrimination against Sub-Saharan African migrants is an overlooked issue and how most Moroccans refuse to give the issue of race and race relations the time of day. The denial of racism is prevalent and has been going on since sub-Saharan Africans started migrating to Morocco in the 1990's. The narration explains how the denial of racism itself is a form of racism and outlines the reasons as to why it occurs. I chose to do a creative piece with video for several reasons: I wanted to challenge myself and try to use a new form of media that was different from my peers. Also, I felt as if the only way to fully understand the full effects of slavery is to actually see the people it has impacts on. Overall, my video aims to show the audience the pure brutality of slavery, how it differs from that of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and how Moroccans are indeed African and must be more accepting and refuse the anti-black rhetoric that is too often spewed.

Narration:

Morocco is home to over 100,000 migrants, 80% of them from sub-Saharan countries like Nigeria, Senegal, Mali, Cameroon, and other African nations. As of 1995 Morocco has been recognized as a transit state, so that number is rapidly increasing, with 2,000 migrants settling in Morocco every year. (International Organization for Migration, 2018) The influx of immigrants has led to economic, political and social change, resulting in high rising racial tensions and discriminatory acts against sub-Saharan Africans living in Morocco. To fully understand race relations between Morocco and other parts of Africa we must turn the clock back over 2,000 years and look at their historical slave relations.

Typically, in the western view when we think of slavery it's that of the trans-atlantics slave trade which resulted in forced migration of nearly 11 million Africans across the Atlantic to the Americas where they were forced into plantation slave labor. However, another type of slave trade occurred, in the Middle east and in regions of North Africa. This is today known as the Saharan Indian ocean slave trade. (Adi,2012)

According to Jere Bacharach a professor at the university of Washington and specialist in Medieval middle eastern history, "The Saharan-Indian Ocean slave trade lasted significantly longer than the trans-Atlantic trade. from the early 7th century well in the 19th century, the market demand or role for certain slaves was different. While males were favored in the trans-Atlantic trade, females were a higher priority in most Middle Eastern markets." The Islamic rates 2 out of the 3 were women.

That's right women were in higher demand in the middle east because they served as domestic house servants, wives and in the worst but often most common cases concubines. Women at all ages were sold into sex slavery. The middle east trade was brutal, and while women were viewed as sex objects most men weren't seen as necessary in any capacity. Doctor Jay Smith an apologist with his PHD in Theology outlines expands on the issue saying,

Clip of Dr. Jay Smith Plays

The men who survived castration and the journey North through the Sahara were forced to serve in the armed militia and become soldiers in the Calvary for the current Muslim ruler. The man most famous for using black slaves was Moulay Ismail Ibn Sharif, “ the second ruler of the [Alaouite dynasty](#) and the longest reigning Sultan in Moroccan history.” Moulay was hell bent on keeping control in Morocco but had little faith in the traditional military. During his rule he seized slaves from southern and eastern parts of Africa. At age 10, they were trained in certain skills; the girls in domestic life or sexual entertainment, and the boys in masonry. At age 15 those that were chosen entered the army. They would marry and have children and continue the cycle to keep slave numbers up and prospering. Considered more loyal than [Arab](#) or [Amazigh](#) warriors because of their lack of tribal affiliation, Ismail's black soldiers formed the bulk of his standing army and numbered 150,000 at their peak. They were called the ‘Abid Al-Bukhara, and it was his primary tool for imposing central control over his lands. (BABAS, 2017)

After his death the Bukhara dispersed into Morocco and while some predecessors tried to recreate the slave army most of the soldiers were forced back into slavery. And The slave trade continued for another 200 years.

While the trans-Atlantic slave trade is more widely known Slavery in the middle east was just as damaging. mortality rates were 80% for Africans traveling through the Sahara to the north. While many of the descendants of slaves in the Americas are now citizens of those countries, the slaves in the Arab world barely survived, overall leaving a massive rift between north and sub-Saharan Africa. (Garvey Jr., 2012)

Adapting into a society that once viewed you as a property is extremely difficult. In the United States, even after its abolishment in 1865, African Americans were still seen as slaves. A lot worked as share croppers on the same southern plantations that owned them. They were beat, spat on and in the 18 to early 1900's even lynched. And while the actual physical abuse wasn't as brutal, the perception of black Africans in Morocco was one in the same-- and has led to massive amounts of discrimination. (A&E Television Networks, 2018)

In an article, *The skin of a black: Senegalese students and young professionals living in Rabat* written by Laura Menin a post-doctoral fellow at the University of Milano Bicocca, she captures the story of three Senegalese students living in Rabat. Students found themselves persecuted while living their daily lives. "While interviewing Mohammed, a 25-year-old master's student in Rabat she asked if he thought such racial prejudices were linked to his skin color, Mohammed highlighted the extent to which the connection between slavery and blackness is rooted in

Moroccans' imagination. In quote he said, ““Since there was slavery and there were Arabs who owned black slaves, Moroccans think that all blacks are slaves. Also, [throughout history] the King owned black slaves. When they see a black, they think he is a slave””.

“ [The article also outlines] the Subtle forms of discrimination and racial prejudice that are also present in the university. Paul, another student studying medicine in Rabat, sheds light that some Moroccan students' limited knowledge of Africa and its history and culture, along with the stereotypical representations contribute to racial prejudices. Quoting him saying, ' “In schools they don't study the history of Africa, they only associate it war, famine, poverty. Every time they see a black, they identify [him] with it. A student asked me, did you have schools? Do you have roads? Do people live on the trees? This shows that much is to be done on the educational and cultural level””. Discrimination not only lives within schools and in the universities but is also prevalent in the streets. A French news station did a story on the migrant condition in morocco and they had this to say.

Videos of French new station interviewing migrant in Morocco

While those were just a few personal testimonies and shouldn't be seen as the life for every migrant or the perception for every Moroccan, racism and discrimination is still very much alive although some do refuse to acknowledge it'.

The denial of racism in morocco is very popular rhetoric. Throughout my time spent in both Rabat and in Tangier I've had personal experience with locals saying racism doesn't exist or isn't

an issue. This discourse is in many ways' contradictory. Bill Maher an American talk show host on HBO said it best,

Clip of Bill Maher plays

Yes, indeed it is, this has similar connections to supporters of the confederate flag denying its racist ties to slavery. The issue in Morocco is much deeper and has ties to religion. Morocco is an Islamic state with over 90% of Moroccans identifying as Muslim (Majhad,2015). Islam, like most religions, is portrayed as inclusive and throughout the Quran there are verses relaying this message video of

2nd Clip of Dr. Jay Smith Plays

and while these are the teachings of the Quran the testimonies previously shown, display the way things unfold in real life. The contradiction between these two ideals reveals cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance regarding race is most popular in the US where Americans say "I'm not a racist but are then are later found saying and/or committing racist acts.

Clips of D.J.T Play

-- But it's everywhere, and in Morocco some find it hard for racism and Islam to exist in the same space so it's easier to deny it all together. While religion is the primary source as to why the denial of racism is prevalent in Morocco there multiple reasoning. Moroccans want to show their country in the best possible light so it not having racist tendencies makes it more appealing. Also, and this may be an even more pressing issue--the history of north African slavery in Morocco

isn't taught in schools. This breeds an entire new wave on denial. A vital part of Moroccan African history is being ignored children aren't learning it at a young age instead their being fed stereotypical rhetoric continuing the cycle of racial oppression.

Anti-racism activists are fighting against this toxic discourse, trying to implement change and alter the image of being black in Morocco. Organizers and activist both Moroccan and sub-Saharan took to the streets protesting racial injustice, discrimination and violence within Morocco. Social movements like *masymti azzi* or my name is not slave/my name is not negro, and "I am Moroccan I am African" have emerged from these protests in hopes to bring awareness to and unity migrant life in Morocco. El Habto Mawahibi founder and president of the I am Moroccan I am African movement told the Moroccan world news, "just the beginning before the launch of a larger scale campaign to combat racism and hate speech in Morocco" the campaign received worldwide recognition with lawyers, activist and political officials from other African nations pledging their solidarity and support. (Aidi, 2016)

The collaboration and out spokenness of community leaders and activist have led to real change and reform in Moroccan government. In 2014 King Mohammed the 6th put into to place Legislation that guaranteed migrants and asylum seekers identification cards and workers permits. Over the three years over 50,000 migrants living in morocco have been regularized and have access to schools, hospitals and other public resources. and while morocco has yet to pass an anti-discrimination bill the current progress and reconciliation is a step in the right direction to creating a more inclusive and safer place for all.

Bibliography:

(n.d.). Retrieved from <https://blackpast.org/perspectives/african-military-slaves-muslim-middle-east>

Mediterranean Migrant Arrivals Reach 107,583 in 2018; Deaths Reach 2,133 - Spain. (n.d.).

Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/report/spain/mediterranean-migrant-arrivals-reach-107583-2018-deaths-reach-2133>

Adi, D. H. (2012, October 05). History - British History in depth: Africa and the Transatlantic Slave

Trade. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/abolition/africa_article_01.shtml

Babas, L. (2017, November 23). History : Zaydana, Moulay Ismail's manipulative wife. Retrieved

from <https://en.yabiladi.com/articles/details/59607/history-zaydana-moulay-ismail-s-manipulative.html>

Admin. (n.d.). The Arab Muslim Slave Trade Of Africans, The Untold Story. Retrieved from

<http://originalpeople.org/the-arab-muslim-slave-trade-of-africans-the-untold-story/>

(n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/thirteenth-amendment>

Majhad, S. E. (2015, April 15). Une étude explore les croyances religieuses dans le monde: Le Maroc, ses 93% de croyants et ses 320.000 athées. Retrieved from

<http://aujourd'hui.ma/societe/une-etude-explore-les-croyances-religieuses-dans-le-monde-le-maroc-ses-93-de-croyants-et-ses-320-000-athees-117832>

<https://en.yabiladi.com/articles/details/59607/history-zaydana-moulay-ismail-s-manipulative.html>

(Moulay)

<http://originalpeople.org/the-arab-muslim-slave-trade-of-africans-the-untold-story/> (80%)

<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/thirteenth-amendment> (1865)

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/beyondslavery/laura-menin/in-skin-of-black-senegalese-students-and-young-professionals-in-rabat> Skin of a black

<http://aujourd'hui.ma/societe/une-etude-explore-les-croyances-religieuses-dans-le-monde-le-maroc-ses-93-de-croyants-et-ses-320-000-athees-117832> (93%)

<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/03/morocco-slave-negro-160330082904386.html> (my name is not azzi)