Race in the Marketplace (RIM)
Research Forum

...Crossing Critical Boundaries...

June 25 - 27, 2019
Paris Dauphine University

# DYSFUNCTION

Natalia Bobadilla
Université de Rouen Normandie

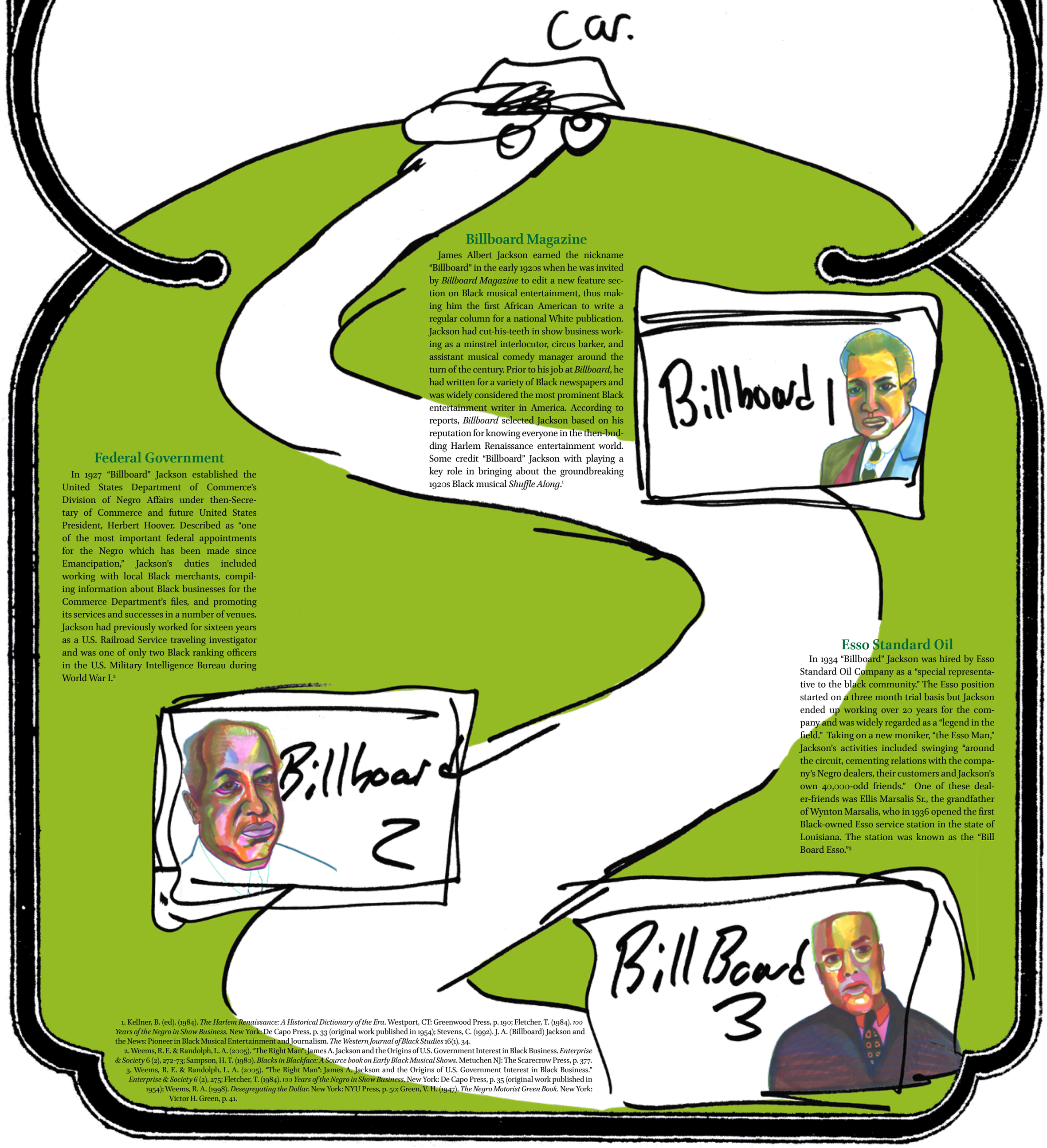
Antoine Lefebvre
Univ. Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne

Philippe Mairesse
Audencia Business School/ICN Nancy

*Rethinking the Aesthetic of Research & Pushing the Boundaries of Art*

# WHITE REIGN

**An issue dedicated to the career achievements of James A. "Billboard" Jackson (1878-1960)**
**By Anthony Kwame Harrison and guests**




## Billboard Magazine

James Albert Jackson earned the nickname "Billboard" in the early 1920s when he was invited by *Billboard Magazine* to edit a new feature section on Black musical entertainment, thus making him the first African American to write a regular column for a national White publication. Jackson had cut-his-teeth in show business working as a minstrel interlocutor, circus barker, and assistant musical comedy manager around the turn of the century. Prior to his job at *Billboard*, he had written for a variety of Black newspapers and was widely considered the most prominent Black entertainment writer in America. According to reports, *Billboard* selected Jackson based on his reputation for knowing everyone in the then-budding Harlem Renaissance entertainment world. Some credit "Billboard" Jackson with playing a key role in bringing about the groundbreaking 1920s Black musical *Shuffle Along*.[1]

## Federal Government

In 1927 "Billboard" Jackson established the United States Department of Commerce's Division of Negro Affairs under then-Secretary of Commerce and future United States President, Herbert Hoover. Described as "one of the most important federal appointments for the Negro which has been made since Emancipation," Jackson's duties included working with local Black merchants, compiling information about Black businesses for the Commerce Department's files, and promoting its services and successes in a number of venues. Jackson had previously worked for sixteen years as a U.S. Railroad Service traveling investigator and was one of only two Black ranking officers in the U.S. Military Intelligence Bureau during World War I.[2]

## Esso Standard Oil

In 1934 "Billboard" Jackson was hired by Esso Standard Oil Company as a "special representative to the black community." The Esso position started on a three month trial basis but Jackson ended up working over 20 years for the company and was widely regarded as a "legend in the field." Taking on a new moniker, "the Esso Man," Jackson's activities included swinging "around the circuit, cementing relations with the company's Negro dealers, their customers and Jackson's own 40,000-odd friends." One of these dealer-friends was Ellis Marsalis Sr., the grandfather of Wynton Marsalis, who in 1936 opened the first Black-owned Esso service station in the state of Louisiana. The station was known as the "Bill Board Esso."[3]

1. Kellner, B. (ed). (1984). *The Harlem Renaissance: A Historical Dictionary of the Era*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, p. 190; Fletcher, T. (1984). *100 Years of the Negro in Show Business*. New York: De Capo Press, p. 33 (original work published in 1954); Stevens, C. (1992). J. A. (Billboard) Jackson and the News: Pioneer in Black Musical Entertainment and Journalism. *The Western Journal of Black Studies* 16(1), 34.
2. Weems, R. E. & Randolph, L. A. (2005). "The Right Man": James A. Jackson and the Origins of U.S. Government Interest in Black Business. *Enterprise & Society* 6 (2), 272-73; Sampson, H. T. (1980). *Blacks in Blackface: A Source book on Early Black Musical Shows*. Metuchen NJ: The Scarecrow Press, p. 377.
3. Weems, R. E. & Randolph, L. A. (2005). "The Right Man": James A. Jackson and the Origins of U.S. Government Interest in Black Business." *Enterprise & Society 6* (2), 275; Fletcher, T. (1984). *100 Years of the Negro in Show Business*. New York: De Capo Press, p. 35 (original work published in 1954); Weems, R. A. (1998). *Desegregating the Dollar*. New York: NYU Press, p. 50; Green, V. H. (1947). *The Negro Motorist Green Book*. New York: Victor H. Green, p. 41.

# WHITE REIGN

## An issue dedicated to the career achievements of James A. "Billboard" Jackson (1878-1960)

By Anthony Kwame Harrison and guests


## Abstract

This issue of *DYSFUNCTION* centers the career of James Albert "Billboard" Jackson as a catalyst for contemplating the conditions and experiences of Black travel in White supremacist America. Jackson, who pioneered Black entertainment reporting for *Billboard Magazine* in 1920, founded the U.S. Department of Commerce's Division of Negro Affairs in 1927, and worked for over 20 years as a "special representative" to the Black community for Esso Standard Oil, has yet to be recognized for his pivotal behind-the-scenes role in creating and supporting the *Negro Motorist Green Book.* Published for a thirty-year period from the mid-1930s to the mid-1960s, the "Green Book" directed Black motorists to accommodating hotels/boarding houses, restaurants, and service stations during the height of Jim Crow segregation. Accordingly, it influenced African Americans' commercial participation outside of local, known surroundings.

A short introductory essay (p. 2-3), exploring Jackson's unacknowledged connection to the Green Book, is partnered with a sketched landscape of roadside billboards spotlighting the three most celebrated trajectories of his varied career (cover). Each billboard features a portrait of Jackson by artist **Kevin Earley**. These historical foundations set the stage for various commentaries on contemporary conditions of Black travel through racialized geographies. Autoethnographic writings by **Anthony Kwame Harrison** (p. 4-11) and **Corey J. Miles** (p. 12) convey different 21st Century experiences of driving while black through spaces of White domination and dominion. The artistic centerpieces for the issue include a musical/lyrical essay, "White Reign," composed by Harrison and longtime music collaborator, **BlakeNine**, as well as three evocative images by Virginia artist, **Asa Jackson** (p. 4, 8 & 11). Harrison's autoethnographic travels take him through the all-White town of New Castle, Virginia. A return trip to New Castle, with colleague and cinematographer **Karl Precoda**, resulted in the short film, *Sundown* (p. 9). Lastly, the unsettling experience of visiting New Castle prompted Harrison to choreograph a photoshoot with photographer **Richard Randolph** (p. 3 & 12).

In line with *DYSFUNCTION*'s mission of raising critical questions about the role of art-based research dissemination in academic spaces, this collaborative project—primarily orchestrated by Harrison around his physical and intellectual journeys to learn more about "Billboard" Jackson and the racist forces he dedicated his career to working against—challenges readers/viewers/listeners to grapple with the complexities of American racism as experienced, symbolized, and imagined by two centuries of Black travelers. These works are meant to evoke critical reflections on experiences of Black (auto)mobility that are at times jarring, at others mundane, and sometimes both simultaneously. Weaving together intricate threads of experience and (re)presentation, the showcased pieces portray a world in motion, characterized by complex transactions involving racialized histories, perceptions of place, agency, citizenship, and enduring White supremacy. The messages filtering through these mediated mindscapes are cohesive yet non-comprehensive. Their intentional incompleteness invites those who witness them to dwell in the ambiguity and to ultimately make their own personal, emotional, and intellectual connections. As an addendum to the 2019 Race in the Marketplace (RIM) Research Forum, this issue of *DYSFUNCTION* opens up space for dialogue by foregrounding complex processes of meaning-making surrounding the relationship between racial identities, structures of power and oppression, and markets.


**Key Words:** Black Automobility, Green Book, "Billboard" Jackson, Race in the Marketplace, Racialized Geographies, White Supremacy

Scan with your phone to listen to "White Reign" a musical/lyrical essay by Anthony Kwame Harrisson

I was tryin' to get outta Kentucky when I made a mistake, Didn't calculate my cash or how much it would take to make the dash

## Introduction

In his 1933 *Opportunity* magazine article, "Through the Windshield," Alfred Edgar Smith lamented the circumstances of African American automobile travel. "Good roads beckon," Smith observed, "[but where] will you stay tonight?"[1] Prior to the Civil Rights Act of 1964—ending segregation in hotels, motels, restaurants, theaters, and all other public accommodations—Jim Crow haunted Black travelers throughout the United States. Even outside of the South, uncertainty about where segregation laws were enforced and observed was often as unsettling as the laws themselves.[2] Black motorists could not simply expect to be seated, served, or allowed to use the restroom in the business establishments they came across while on the road. Each stop brought with it the rising apprehension of possible refusal.

During the opening decades of the twentieth century automobiles transformed American institutions and lifeways. These new "horseless carriages" offered advantages of speed and convenience, lessened rural isolation, and provided city dwellers with unprecedented options for urban escape. In doing so, they expanded possibilities for recreation, business, and residential living.[3] Quite rapidly, motorized vehicles came to be associated with patriotic notions of freedom and individualism. For a growing number of Americans, consumption had become a means of expressing progress, status, and citizenship, and no commodity epitomized this more than the motorcar.[4]

Whereas the benefits to automobile travel were recognized throughout U.S. society, African Americans in particular saw car ownership as an escape from the humiliation of segregated public travel.[5] Throughout the 1920s African American publications such as *Opportunity* and *The Crisis*, and Black newspapers like the *California Eagle*, published regular columns reporting on the road trips of Black automobile travelers and advocating for increased ownership.[6] A 1924 *California Eagle* article, for instance, begins as follows: "There perhaps never has been a time when conditions offered a better opportunity to the person desiring an auto than are obtainable now."[7]

By the 1930s and 40s, Black automobility came to encompass both the traditionally small, well-educated, Black professional class and an emerging and increasingly mobile Black working class, who were exiting the South in pursuit of new opportunities offered by the war-time economy. Those Black Americans who owned cars imagined themselves as well-to-do, or at least well-on-their-way-there. Their prized motor vehicles and the freedoms granted through automobile travel, by and large, signified an embrace of the American dream—the belief that the American system was working for them.

In the face of such optimism, Smith's question of where to spend the night—and related questions about where to eat or where to use the restroom—remained. Some of the greatest humiliations for this budding class of Black motorists surrounded family travel, where the most frequent everyday disgraces had nothing to do with meals or lodging, but concerned restroom use. While on-the-road meals could be packed and relatively long distances could be navigated by persevering and 'driving through,' how did parents, intent on instilling a sense of dignity and equality in their children, explain being turned away from a gas station restroom, being 'sent around back' to a filthy and neglected outhouse, or going to the bathroom on the side of the road like an animal?[8]

In his *Opportunity* piece, Smith expressed the need for "the compilation of an authentic list of hotels, rooming houses, private homes catering to the occasional traveler, tourist camps, and every type of lodging whatsoever, including those run by members of other races and open to Negroes."[9] At the time, to his knowledge, there had been two efforts to make such a list. One was (in all likelihood) *The Hackley & Harrison's Hotel and Apartment Guide for Colored Travelers*[10] —a venture that, the author notes, "resulted in bankruptcy."[11] The second "was compiled by Mr. James A. Jackson... the director of the Small Business Section of the Marketing Service Division of the United States Department of Commerce."[12] Jackson's list—which included hotels and YMCAs/YWCAs spanning 35 states, the District of Columbia, and Canada—came "heartily recommended" by Smith, who concluded his plea with the hope that "some individual, organization, or publication with unlimited publicity at his or its command will attempt a more inclusive and complete list."[13]

Three years following the publication of Smith's article, what became the most comprehensive and inclusive list of hotels, restaurants, and service stations welcoming Black travelers

2

Outta money, outta luck, harassed by passin' bourbon trucks

# I wish I's in the urban but I'm stuck in east Kentucky

# On a rainy day, they're wearin' gray, don't turn your back or...

# Let 'em see you flinch, recall what grandma use to say


first appeared. Conceived of as early as 1932, *The Negro Motorist Green Book* debuted as a local New York City publication in 1936, but in response to overwhelming demand began being distributed nationally the following year.[14] The *Green Book* was put together by an industrious New York City postal worker, Victor H. Green, who was able to use his National Association of Letter Carrier connections—for who would know local areas better than postal workers?—as well as other extensive contacts to compile the necessary information.[15] As the publisher and namesake of the *Green Book*, Victor Green has received the bulk of recognition for its appearance and subsequent success.[16] Yet a thorough exploration of its history reveals that James A. Jackson, throughout his versatile career, contributed as much to establishing the *Green Book* as anyone, including possibly even Green himself.

References to "James A. Jackson," also known by his colorful nickname "Billboard" Jackson, can be found throughout the pages of the first fifteen years of the travel guide—strongly suggesting that Green and Jackson had a productive working relationship. Though the specifics surrounding Green's initial compilation remain lost to history, Jackson, with his "most complete and authentic" list, by all indications, had to be one of Green's earliest informational contacts.[17] During the mid-1930s, both Green and Jackson were living in New York City. Where Green crossed the newly opened George Washington Bridge each day to work as a letter carrier in Hackensack, New Jersey, starting in 1934, Jackson had been hired as a "special representative" of the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey.[18] Aside from customary Introductions and articles on safe driving, the second written piece ever appearing in a Green Book edition was a 1939 article by E. Frederic Morrow titled "James A. Jackson." In the piece Morrow details the latter's historic hiring by Standard Oil, also known by the moniker *Esso*. Morrow concludes his essay by affirming:

*The Standard Oil Company of New Jersey has given every reason for the Negro to look upon the Company and its affiliates with favor. The company accords courteous service, and members of the race have found employment in positions of consequence and responsibility.*[19]

The following year, when the *Green Book* instituted its introductory "Card of Appreciation," "Mr. James (Billboard) Jackson—Special Rept. of the Standard Oil" was the first person thanked; and by 1941 customized covers of the Green Book stated, "This copy presented with the compliments of James A. Jackson, 'The Esso Man.'" Later editions (1947 and 1949) would include photographs of and discussions with Jackson and protégé Wendell P. Alston. Clearly Jackson's featured place in the *Green Book* signals a level of collaboration between him and Green. Indeed, a recently published history of the Black travel guide concludes that "Green's most important partnership was with the Esso gasoline station chain... Esso sold the guides in its service station and advertised in the guide's pages, along with helping Green finance the publication."[20]

This issue of *DYSFUNCTION* spotlights James Albert "Billboard" Jackson's multifaceted career in relation to issues surrounding racialized geographies, (auto)mobility, Black consumerism, and enduring White supremacy. Jackson's instrumental role in the development and promotion of the *Green Book* is but one of the numerous places where he emerges as a pioneer of racial integration and a pivotal figure in the history of Black participation in U.S. marketplaces. The artistic journeys appearing in the pages ahead unfold to showcase Black Americans' historical and contemporary experiences with domestic travel, citizenship, and race-based terror. Although the Jim Crow era is now behind us, recent rises in nativism, hate crimes, and, in the U.S. context, the emergence of the Alt-Right as a significant and visible political bloc, have challenged Black and other visible minority travelers to consider their safety when moving through unfamiliar social spaces. Good ole fashioned racism is in fashion again, ushering in renewed anxieties and fears about the contested terms of social integration. A century after he pioneered chronicling Black musical performances for America's leading entertainment publication, the figure of Billboard Jackson serves as a spring board for examining and questioning notions of progress surrounding race, mobility, and marketplaces.

Anthony Kwame Harrison
Blacksburg, Virginia, U.S.A.

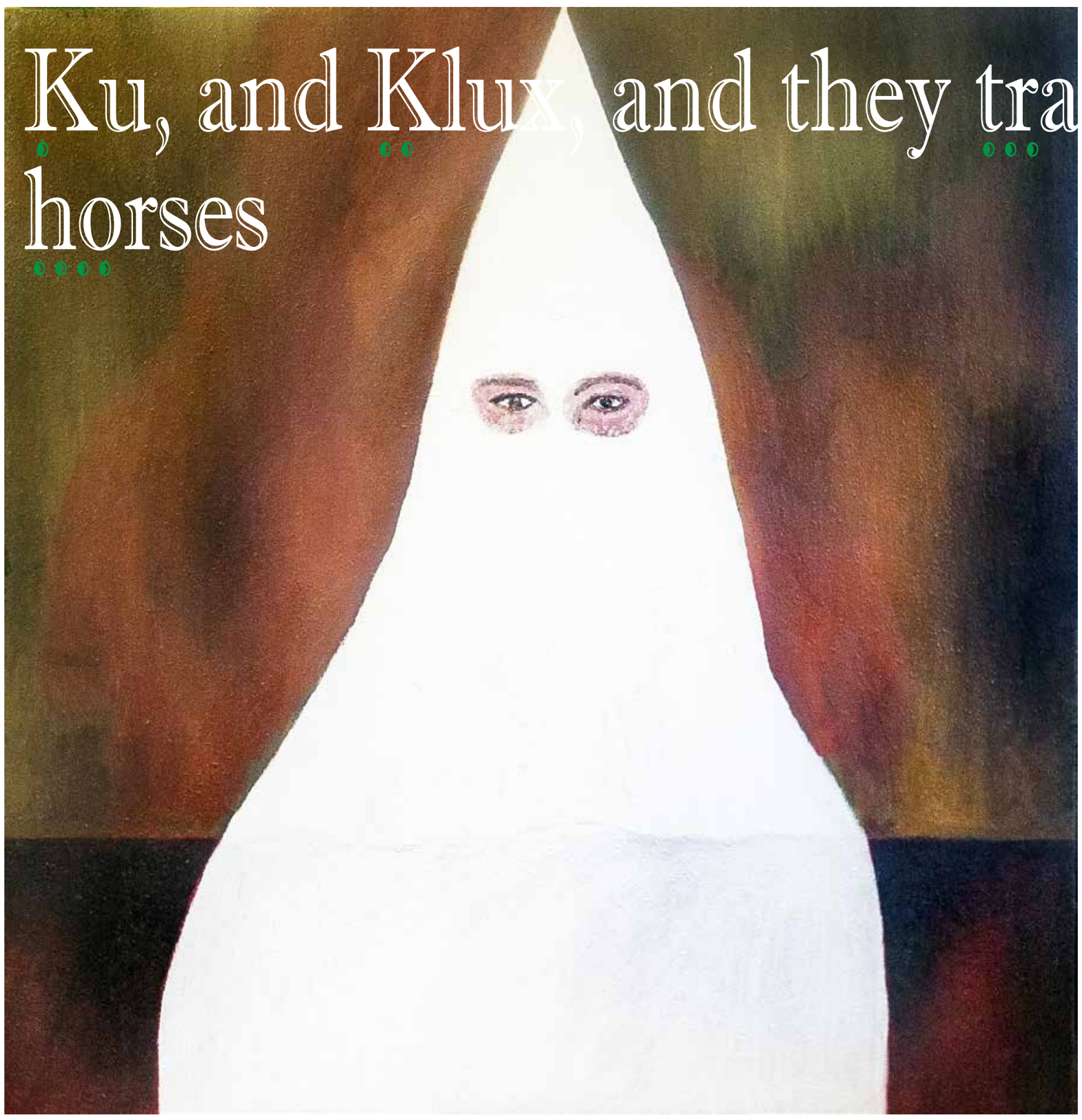
1. Smith, A. E. (1933, May). Through the windshield. *Opportunity: Journal of Negro Life*, 142.
2. Franz, K. (2004). The open road: Automobility and racial uplift in the interwar years. In Daniel Miller (ed.), *Technology and the African-American Experience.* New York: Berg; Williams, C. (2001). The guide for colored travelers: A reflection on the Urban League. *Journal of American Comparative Cultures* 24 (3-4), 71-79.
3. Flink, J. J. (1972). Three stages of American automobile consciousness. *American Quarterly*, 24(4), 451-473.
4. Ward, D. B. (2009). Capitalism, early market research, and the creation of the American consumer. *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing* 1 (2), 200-223.
5. Schuyler, G. S. (1930, August). Traveling Jim Crow. *American Mercury*, 423-432.
6. Franz, K. The open road.
7. "The Owner of the Auto." (1924, July 25) *California Eagle*, 11.
8. Rugh, S. S. (2008). *Are we there yet? The golden age of American family vacations* Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas.
9. Smith, A. E. Through the windshield, 143.
10. Although never named, Clay Williams concludes that Smith was probably referring to *Hackley & Harrison*. See Williams, C. (2001). The guide for colored travelers: A reflection on the Urban League. *Journal of American Comparative Cultures* 24 (3-4), 78.
11. Smith, A. E. Through the windshield, 143. See also Bay, M. (2015). Traveling Black/buying Black: Retail and roadside accommodations during the segregation era. In Mia Bay and Ann Fabian (eds.), *Race and retail: Consumption across the color line.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, p. 24.
12. Smith, A. E. Through the windshield, 143.
13. Ibid.
14. Dashiell, N. C. (1956). Many happy returns. In Victor H. Green (ed.), *The Negro motorist Green Book*, New York: Victor H. Green.
15. "The Green Book" (2013, September). *The Postal Record* (September), 23-24.
16. A recent upsurge in interest in the *Green Book* has surrounded the release of Peter Farrelly's 2018 film by the same title, which won the Academy Award for Best Picture.
17. Smith, A. E. Through the windshield, 143.
18. "The Green Book," 22.
19. Morrow, E. F. (1939) "James A. Jackson." In Victor H. Green (ed.), *The Negro motorist Green Book*. New York: Victor H. Green, 28.
20. "The Green Book," 24.

An Autoethnography of Black Automobility:
The Ongoing Search for James 'Billboard' Jackson

Anthony Kwame Harrison
(Virginia Tech)

# Before they took her house away and chased her off the land to start a Klan

## Ku, and Klux, and they traded in their horses



Asa Jackson, *Ghost of the Confederate Soldier* (*Klansman*), 99 x 104 cm, oil.

"*Ghost of the Confederate Soldier* depicts the ghost of a confederate soldier (also known as a Klansman) standing amidst a burning sky and a blood soaked earth, symbolizing the burning of crosses and the bloodshed caused by racism and bigotry in the United States."

## Now they're drivin' by in 4 X 4 trucks with tiki torches

4

### The T-Shirt

I was thinking of having a t-shirt made that said, "New Castle, Virginia – 100% White"; and on the back it would say, "We're Trying to Keep Politics Out of This. Just the Facts." According to Wikipedia, this is a fact.

The t-shirt idea was inspired by my drive through Craig Country, Virginia—and New Castle, its county seat—at 8:00 on a cold January morning. I was on my way to Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, to photograph the childhood home of James 'Billboard' Jackson and to visit the Centre Country Library and Historical Museum, where I hoped to uncover details about Jackson's elusive personal history and career.

In 1920 *Billboard Magazine* made the unprecedented decision to hire James Albert Jackson to edit a "new feature section... devoted to black performers, artists, managers, and agents."[1] This commitment to Black entertainment occurred during one of the most racially volatile periods in the history of the United States. The years between 1883 and 1923 witnessed the greatest number of anti-Black lynchings in U.S. history, with more than fifty reported lynchings every year except for 1917—the year the U.S. entered World War I. Following the war, an estimated 100,000 African American veterans returned from overseas with newfound claims to citizenship and enlightened views on the possibilities for societal race relations. Their assertive strides and insistences on being respected were met with hostility, violence, and the vicious terror of White Supremacist organizations like the Ku Klux Klan, which had experienced a revival following the 1915 release of D.W. Griffith's film *The Birth of a Nation*. Post-war racial terror peaked during the summer of 1919, dubbed "Red Summer" in observance of the blood that spilled from the approximately two dozen anti-Black race riots occurring between June and September. The timeliness of *Billboard*'s hiring Jackson (the following year) was not lost on its founder and editor, William H. Donaldson, who just a few weeks before Jackson's page was to debut announced:

*Beginning on November 6, 1920, a new feature section, written by a black man and devoted to Black performers, artists, managers, and agents, will appear ...weekly... We feel that the professional artists and entertainers of the race have fairly won this recognition... We are according the representation gladly—even enthusiastically.*[2]

Through this position at *Billboard*, Jackson acquired his lifelong nickname.

In editing "J. A. Jackson's Page," as the section came to be known, Jackson both chronicled and catalyzed the formation of the early Black entertainment industry, helping to legitimize the artistic standing of entertainers such as Bessie Smith, W.C. Handy, Fats Waller, Gertrude Saunders, and Paul Robeson.[3] Jackson used "The Page" to influence national

1. "Announcing a New Department." (1920, October 30). *Billboard*, 4.

2. Ibid.

3. Anand, N. (2006). Charting the Music Business: *Billboard Magazine* and the Development of the Commercial Music Field. In Joseph Lampel, Jamal Shamise, and Theresa K. Lant (eds.) *The Business of Culture: Strategic Perspectives on Entertainment and Media* (pp. 139-154).

# On sale at the Walmart, sing along at the ballpark

# Pack a pistol in your office set to use it when the brawl starts

# #BlackDeath, we've been runnin' outta breath

public opinion on Black show business, to compile and publish voluminous statistical data on the state of the burgeoning industry, to draw attention to the prejudices and discriminations Black performers faced, and to encourage the development of Black entertainment organizations and unions. His role in reporting on and facilitating the progress of Black entertainment during what has been described as "one of the most productive and creative periods in the history of black performance" is unparalleled.[4]

In June 1925, *Billboard* abruptly closed J.A. Jackson's Page. Most reports claim it was discontinued due to a lack of Black advertising.[5] This may have been the case, but it is curious to note that less than two months following The Page's expiration, the man who hired Jackson and by all accounts consistently supported him passed away. One wonders if the "failing health" of Bill Donaldson, a man who was so progressive in his racial views that he once tried to establish a policy "whereby writers were never to identify people by race, creed, or color," contributed to Jackson's expendability.[6]

A decade later, Billboard Jackson would play a key role in establishing the *Negro Motorist Green Book*—published annually between 1936 and 1960—which directed Black motorists to where they might spend the night, get a bite to eat, or even use the bathroom when traveling. The *Green Book* was distributed through Esso Standard Oil stations where Jackson worked as Special Representative to the African-American market beginning in 1934. Jackson was initially hired on a trial basis "to study the Negro market and to conduct promotional work in the field," but he ended up working over twenty years for the company—thirteen years past the customary retirement age.[7]

Reflecting on his lengthy career, "the famous Billboard Jackson," as he came to be known, suggested that his years "on the road, might have been concluded" much earlier had he made more money.[8]

Between his time at *Billboard* and Esso, Jackson established the U.S. Department of Commerce's Division of Negro Affairs under then-secretary of commerce and future U.S. President, Herbert Hoover. Jackson served admirably in this position for six years—even staying loyal to Hoover at time when many African Americans were outraged by his 1932 "Southern" campaign strategy of ousting Black leaders and replacing them with Whites.[9] Still, his tenure in the commerce department was marred by efforts to conceal his identity and gestures of disrespect. This was apparent as early as his "disastrous first day," when Jackson reported in a letter to Associated Negro Press founder, Claude Barnett, that "everybody seemed somewhat chagrined at my presence."[10] Jackson's inauspicious arrival included: learning that he had been relegated (or more accurately segregated) to an auxiliary office space in the old Railway Administration building, being given the title "Assistant Business Specialist" rather than the customary title of "Commercial Agent," and at least once being referred to as "not a Negro but a dark-skinned foreigner."[11] Even as late as 1930, after receiving "numerous hearty endorsements" for his effective work

4. Hill, A. (1994, November 1). A Voice for Black Performance. *Billboard*, 66.

5. Hill, A. (1994, November 1). A Voice for Black Performance. *Billboard*, 64-68; Kellner, B. (ed). (1984). *The Harlem Renaissance: A Historical Dictionary of the Era*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

6. Littleford, W. D. (1994, November 1). Founder William H. Donaldson. *Billboard*, 24.

7. "Appointments." (1934, August). *Opportunity: Journal of Negro Life*, 254; Avery, J. (n.d.). African-American Pioneers in the Corporate Sector. www.black-collegian.com.

8. Capparell, S. (2007). *The Real Pepsi Challenge: The Inspirational Story of Breaking the Color Barrier in American Business*. New York: Wall Street Journal Books, 255-256. "Not only Happy Motoring But Happy Travelling by any method, is obtainable through Green Book Routing Says the ESSO Special Representatives." (1947). In Victor H. Green (ed.), *The Negro motorist Green Book*. New York: Victor H. Green, 10.

9. Weems, R. E. & Randolph, L. A. (2005). "The Right Man": James A. Jackson and the Origins of U.S. Government Interest in Black Business. *Enterprise & Society* 6 (2), 271-272.

10. Weems, R. E. & Randolph, L. A. "The Right Man," 260.

11. Weems, R. E. & Randolph, L. A. "The Right Man," 260-261.

---

# Now they taxin' student loans it keeps me wonderin' what's next

# Is it caste or class when they threatenin' my poor Black Ass

# I gotta get away and get away fast now

promoting the Commerce Department to Black retailers throughout the country, Jackson would be disrespected in a telegram from President Hoover that addressed him as "John J. Jackson."[12]

Given this treatment, it may come as little surprise that despite his impressive career accomplishments—which extend well beyond the scope this piece—Jackson's status as a pioneer of racial integration has been relatively unacknowledged in United States history. His curious absence from African American history seems more perplexing.

My interest in Billboard Jackson started about 10 years ago while researching the history of *Billboard Magazine* for an article on hip hop. In subsequent years, I gave a handful of conference papers and invited presentations, trying to piece together the details of Jackson's intriguing career. So around 2015, when I learned that the Pennsylvania Historical and Museums Society had erected a historical marker dedicated to Billboard Jackson in his home town of Bellefonte, my interest in traveling there was further fueled.

An assortment of published scholarship details Jackson's three major career trajectories. These each deal with one particular career, only briefly mentioning others. For example, Anthony Hill's *Pages from the Harlem Renaissance* exclusively focuses on Jackson's work at *Billboard*.[13] Robert E. Weems and Lewis A. Randolph's "'The Right Man': James A. Jackson and the Origins of U.S. Government Interest in Black Business" details his Commerce Department position.[14] And various books including Juliet E. K. Walker's *The History of Black Business in America*, Stephanie Capparell's *The Real Pepsi Challenge*, and Jason Chambers' *Madison Avenue and the Color Line* briefly mention him as "the dean" of the first generation of "black special-markets men."[15] My long-term project involves putting these different careers in conversation with one another.

Billboard Jackson's indispensable connection to the *Green Book* has never to my knowledge been acknowledged. Yet, a few years ago when I recognized him staring back at me from the PDF pages of its 1949 edition, things immediately fell into place. An important element of Jackson's *Billboard Magazine* work involved steering traveling Black performers towards welcoming businesses, guest houses, and eateries. Thus a service once aimed at facilitating the mobility of Black entertainers by the 1930s got extended to the cultural and auto-mobility of Black travelers in general.

* * *

James Albert Jackson was born in 1878 and died in 1960. Accordingly, we can think of his life as spanning the Jim Crow era. The troubled times of the Trump presidency have ushered in a reinvigoration of visible White supremacy—marked by the August 2017 events in Charlottesville, the NAACP-issued travel warning for people of color in the state of Missouri, and an overall post-Election rise in hate crimes—that, for some of us under fifty, feels closer to how we imagine Jim Crow than anything we've experienced in our lifetimes.

12. Weems, R. E. & Randolph, L. A. "The Right Man," 266, 270.

13. Hill, A. (1996). *Pages from the Harlem Renaissance: A Chronicle of Performance*. New York: Peter Lang.

14. Weems, R. E. & Randolph, L. A. (2005). "The Right Man": James A. Jackson and the Origins of U.S. Government Interest in Black Business. *Enterprise & Society* 6 (2), 254-277.

15. Walker, J. E. K. (1998). *The History of Black Business in America: Capitalism, Race, Entrepreneurship*. New York: Macmillan Press; Capparell, S. (2007). *The Real Pepsi Challenge: The Inspirational Story of Breaking the Color Barrier in American Business.* New York: Wall Street Journal Books; Chambers, J. (2009). *Madison Avenue and the Color Line: African Americans in the Advertising Industry*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 61.

A colleague told me that some of her Black students were concerned about returning to Floyd, Virginia (93.29% White according to Wikipedia), for their leadership retreat after encountering rebel-flag-waving White supremacists on horseback there. When I told a woman I met at an awards ceremony that I would be going to Floyd for a wedding, she advised me to get out of town before sundown.

# They brand me like the cattle try to milk me like the cash cow

The eighty-plus years of Jackson's life also mark a period when White America established thousands of "sundown towns"—defined by James W. Loewen as "organized jurisdiction[s] that for decades kept African American or other groups from living in [them] and [were] thus 'all-white' on purpose."[16] Loewen documents how, even into the twenty-first century, there are towns where Black Americans do not feel safe. Among several examples, he recounts a story of a thirty-year old Black woman stopping at a gas station to ask for directions in then-all-White Mount Sterling, Ohio (now 97.5% White according to Wikipedia), and being told "Girl, you don't know what danger you're in" by the station manager.[17] It wasn't until 1999 that Villa Grove, Illinois, ended its practice of sounding "a siren at 6 PM every evening to tell African Americans to be gone."[18] Even then it was in response to noise complaints rather than transformed racial views. Loewen tempers his listing of contemporary sundown towns by noting that just because the census shows no Black families reside in a town "does not prove that African Americans *cannot* live there. Only continued incidents prove that."[19]

16. Loewen, J. W. (2005). *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 4.

17. Loewen, J. W. *Sundown Towns*, 383.

18. Loewen, J. W. *Sundown Towns*, 384.

19. Loewen, J. W. *Sundown Towns*, 509n11—emphasis original.

While riding with a white colleague to a conference in Greenville, South Carolina, several times large pick-up trucks pulled up behind his liberally bumper-stickered min-van—with stickers reading "Obama-Biden," "Clinton-Kaine," and "Stop the Pipeline"—riding our asses, aggressively passing, and at least once honking. In the Southern United States, the political stakes of driving are ever-present, introducing a new dimension to typically interpersonal and situational expressions of road rage.

**Scan with your phone to watch "Sundown" , a short film by Anthony Kwame Harrisson and Karl Precoda.**

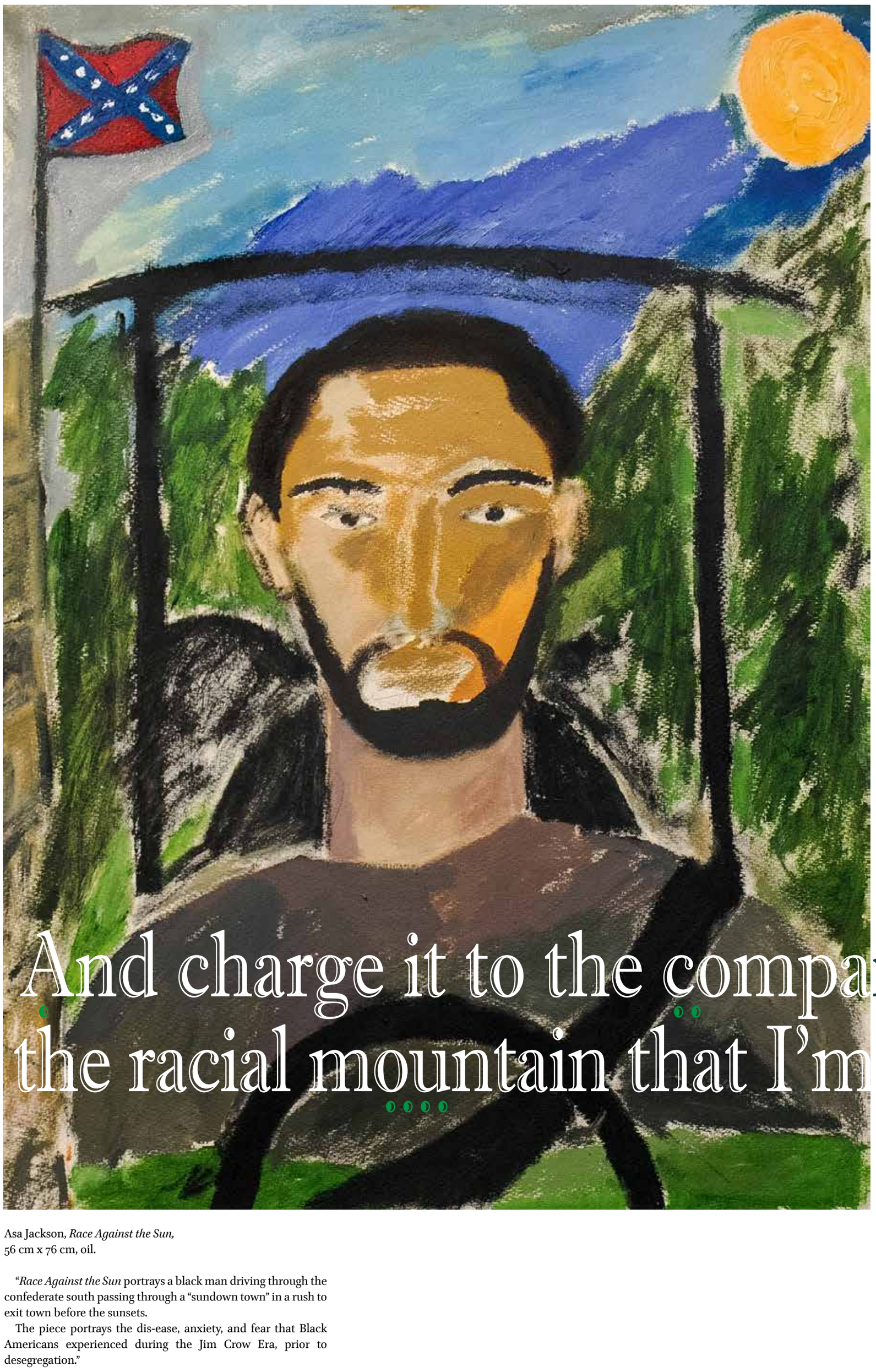

# When it's over, I'm sober on the corner assed out

It was the desire for a holistic inquiry into Jackson's life that inspired my journey from my home in Blacksburg, Virginia, to Bellefonte. Reflecting on what she calls "slow ontology," Jasmine Ulmer challenges researchers to slow down and appreciate those elements of everyday life that get overlooked due to our emphasis on speed: such things as "local places, natural environmental surroundings, and material landscapes."[20] For me, this prompted a shift from the profanity of needing to get to Bellefonte to the sacredness of embracing the journey. This included listening to local radio; affectively mapping how my physical movement across the geographic and political landscape corresponded with feelings, anxieties, and other emotional flows; most importantly, it involved changing course.

20. Ulmer, J. B. (2017). Writing slow ontology. *Qualitative Inquiry* 23 (3), 203.

# And it's not my obligation educatin' fools what that's about

# Some shit you shouldn't ask about, don't make me pull my plastic out



# And charge it to the company account, the racial mountain that I'm

Asa Jackson, *Race Against the Sun,*
56 cm x 76 cm, oil.

"*Race Against the Sun* portrays a black man driving through the confederate south passing through a "sundown town" in a rush to exit town before the sunsets.

The piece portrays the dis-ease, anxiety, and fear that Black Americans experienced during the Jim Crow Era, prior to desegregation."

Rather than taking Interstate-81 two hundred miles North to Harrisburg, then taking US-22 fifty miles Northwest and another fifteen miles on US-322, I chose the secondary route: the slow journey that predates the Dwight D. Eisenhower National System of Interstate and Defense Highways. I did not use GPS. Charting my course via the 2016 Presidential Election results County Map, I chose the reddest route possible:

*US-460 to VA-42 to VA-311 to VA-159 to VA-641 toVA-687 to VA-39 to US-220 to WV-42 to County Highway-5 to US-50 to WV-29 to WV-9 to US-522 to PA-655 to US-22 to PA-26 to PA-150*

The following fieldnote excerpt was written at 6:30AM in the Blacksburg McDonald's on the morning I set out:

*Route 42 takes me into the heart of Craig County. I have been told that Craig County has the highest KKK per-capita population in the state. I have been told that they have a statue of the founder of the KKK in the town hall. None of this is confirmed but it signals the Red America experience that I have decided to go after. For much of the trip, I will be straddling the Virginia-West Virginia state line. Based on my map calculation, once I leave Montgomery County* [*where Blacksburg is located*]*, the trip is completely Red until I reach Centre Country Pennsylvania and Bellefonte.*

* * *

I don't know what it's like to grow up in a 100% White town. But I recall once—only once—spending a night in Craig County, just outside New Castle, and being told by a group of locals that they "like [my] kind of people." When I asked if by "my kind of people" they meant Black people, one of them said, "No. Jamaicans." At the time I wore my hair in dreadlocks.

That was on a Saturday night in a dark field. It was about a dozen of us and a quarter barrel of beer. I had traveled to Craig County to attend a small unofficial music festival hosted by a friend of a friend with strong hippy-like inclinations. The only other Black guy at the festival, a local musician who drummed for two of the afternoon bands, had left around sundown. While the neo-hippies danced to some local jam band at the other side of an enormous field, I had been enticed to the far end by the promise of beer. My local hosts—a few dressed in camo pants and baseball caps, one wearing a Washington Redskins jersey—were clearly out of place at the festival but comfortable enough in the fact that this was their home.

I remember one of the guys showing me a scar on his back as he turned, lifted up his shirt, and in the most casual way possible told me to ignore his rebel flag tattoo. I did.

I also recall one of them pulling me aside and in a hushed whisper telling me that they wanted to *suck* my *dick*. When I told them I wasn't interested, "Come on," they pleaded, explaining that they *really* wanted to and that they could make me feel *so good*.

That was a bad situation to get into. When I shared this story (minus the indecent proposition) with students in my Introduction to African American Studies class they told me I was a fool. But oddly enough, I never felt uncomfortable or in danger. That was another time. I think it may have been 2006. I was different then. Things were different then.



# Climbin' each and every time I'm rhyming while I'm drivin'

## Even Good Ole Boys aren't Looking to Beat Someone Up at 8:00AM on a Wednesday Morning

A childhood friend once told me that he thinks my family was the first Black family in the village of Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts. This is debatable. I know of a few other Black families living there in the 1970s when I was in elementary school. But I didn't know them when I first started school.

In first grade, I was in the same class as this friend's younger brother. The following year, little brother told me, somewhat proudly, that his mother had requested that we not be in the same class. Twenty years later I was in his wedding.

It was also in first grade when I first heard the word *nigger*. "Are you a nigger?" the kid in the urinal next to me asked. I said no. I didn't know what the word meant but it felt like something I didn't want to be.

That word—not the endearing version that Black people say to each other but the racist one that comes out of White lips—echoed in my head as I drove North from Blacksburg to Bellefonte. As I counted confederate flags and tuned in to *John Boy and Billy's The Big Show*—conservative morning radio with its crass ethnic humor like Rabbi Myron Bergstein's movie reviews or the Indian Dog Psychiatrist.

> And the cops pull up behind turn on blue lights I hear their sirens

What are the experiences of Black bodies moving through defiantly White spaces? How do the usual occupants of such spaces react? How does my particular Black subjectivity approach and respond to these situations and interactions (both real and imagined)? And what boundaries—imposed by others and/or ourselves—limit the kinds of journeys we are willing to make?

Some of my most telling experiences occurred prior to setting out. Genuine concerns for my personal safety came up the few times I discussed my project with friends and colleagues. When I shared an abstract for a paper based on this research that I planned on presenting at the 2018 International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, a friend responded:

*This looks like a fascinating trip, and I applaud the risk you are taking both personally and intellectually. I really look forward to hearing about it when you present. Do be careful out there—as you aptly note, this is a troubled time indeed, and the movements of a non-white traveler in those defiantly white spaces will always involve a degree of danger.*

> Flash a flashlight in my eye they ask me where have I been?

When I told my teaching assistant about my planned trip, she asked if I could have a "safety car" follow me to make sure I made it through okay. At times I wondered if it would be better if something happened or nothing happened.

In the end, it was probably closer to the latter—depending on how you define something. My auto-ethnographic journey brought a peculiar kind of autonomy. For much of it, I was alone in my unmarked rental car. The tangible interactions through which I could learn about myself, and about structures of race, class, gender, and political affiliation, notably all occurred with white women service workers and can be counted on one hand. My miscalculation may have been expecting the highways of rural Appalachia to somehow be

active on a cold Wednesday in January.

What was perhaps most notable about all my interactions on this journey were the surprising gestures of kindness shown by service workers, working their service jobs. I cannot know their story but they seem like people that if I knew I would care for.

Just after 11:00AM there was Terry, the chatty cashier at a Sunoco station in Monterey, Virginia, who cupped my hand in giving me my change. The words that passed between us did not go beyond the usual customer-cashier formalities. She mostly talked with her co-worker and the two regulars in the store at the time. But her small, almost imperceptible touch made me feel welcome as I took my change and left.

Around 3:45PM I pulled into the Potomac River Grill, just across the Potomac River in Hancock, Maryland, for lunch. My server, Amy, welcomed me to take a seat anywhere, sheepishly asked if Pepsi was "okay" when I ordered a Coke, gave me courteous and attentive service—not wanting to interrupt my writing but twice checking to see that everything was okay. She also wished me a good evening when I left.

# They know I'm not from round here, and racists in the rear view...

Two hours earlier I had tried to stop for lunch at the Mountain Top Restaurant in Romney, West Virginia. The restaurant was connected to the Exxon Station at the Sunrise Summit Commercial Plaza. Walking towards the door from my car, I noticed two older women approaching from the opposite direction. Just then another woman popped her head out of the adjacent Exxon Station door and with an air of familiarity explained, "Sorry ladies. We're not open yet. We're behind." On the door there was a sign that read "Closed – Reopening on ~~January 2nd~~." I walked past the restaurant and entered the Exxon Station door, thinking that since I had stopped I could at least get coffee. But once inside, I had a hard time locating the coffee station. There was a cooler with soft drinks, racks of chips and candy, but I saw no coffee. When I asked about it, the woman hesitated at first but then said, "Oh, I can get it for you." She went back to the under-construction restaurant, returning a minute later with a Styrofoam cup of coffee: one dollar and fifty cents.

The only moment when I might have had the heart-racing experiences I had imagined, and maybe even hoped for, was back in New Castle at 8:00AM at the crossroads of Routes 42 and 311. The local Gopher Market gas station is clearly a morning coffee spot. The parking lot was full with mostly pickup trucks. A bigger guy with light hair and a baseball cap walked out towards his jeep, coffee cup in hand. A smaller guy, in what seemed like a 1990s sporty car—maybe a late-model Firebird—pulled in, got out, and greeted him. They both looked to be in their mid-twenties, on their way to work. I turned left and kept driving. My coffee from McDonalds was still warm and I didn't need to use the bathroom yet.

# Are closer than they appear, like 1919's the year

CODA: As I was getting set to leave Blacksburg at 7:20AM, sitting in my car in the McDonald's parking lot, it suddenly dawned on me that my biggest challenge might be finding service-station bathrooms on secondary highways—something that I just take for granted on the Interstate. Indeed, two hours later, and a little over an hour past New Castle, I would find myself racing down VA-159, just outside of Crows, Virginia, contemplating pulling over to the side of the road to urinate. The following is a transcript of an audio-journal recording I made at approximately 9:30AM:

*Damn I really need to piss. I didn't think it would . . . that this would be my challenge . . . on this trip. Yeah, I was thinking more about . . . stopping and figuring out where to turn left and right and a little, like the map. But I realize how much of a luxury . . . highway systems are with . . . bathrooms in every . . . gas station and . . . exit signs telling you exactly where to get to it and how far to go. I feel there has to be a gas station around here but I haven't seen one in about . . . thirty, forty miles and the last one I saw . . . it didn't really . . . it was early and it didn't look like . . . a place with a bathroom. It looked more like a general store. So, I figured I would just go on to the next town ten miles farther but there was nothing there, at least not on the main highway that I was on. So, maybe locals know, but I don't know. So,* [*I'm*] *trying to find a bathroom almost at the point where if I don't find one, in this next interchange, I might just look for a place to pull off but . . . how did it come to this? You know? And . . . this is just me, an adult, making my own decisions. If I was with kids saying, "I need to use the restroom . . ." Man . . . Those kids would . . . Yeah I would've been using one probably back in New Castle. But that was early. That just felt too early, but we'll see.*

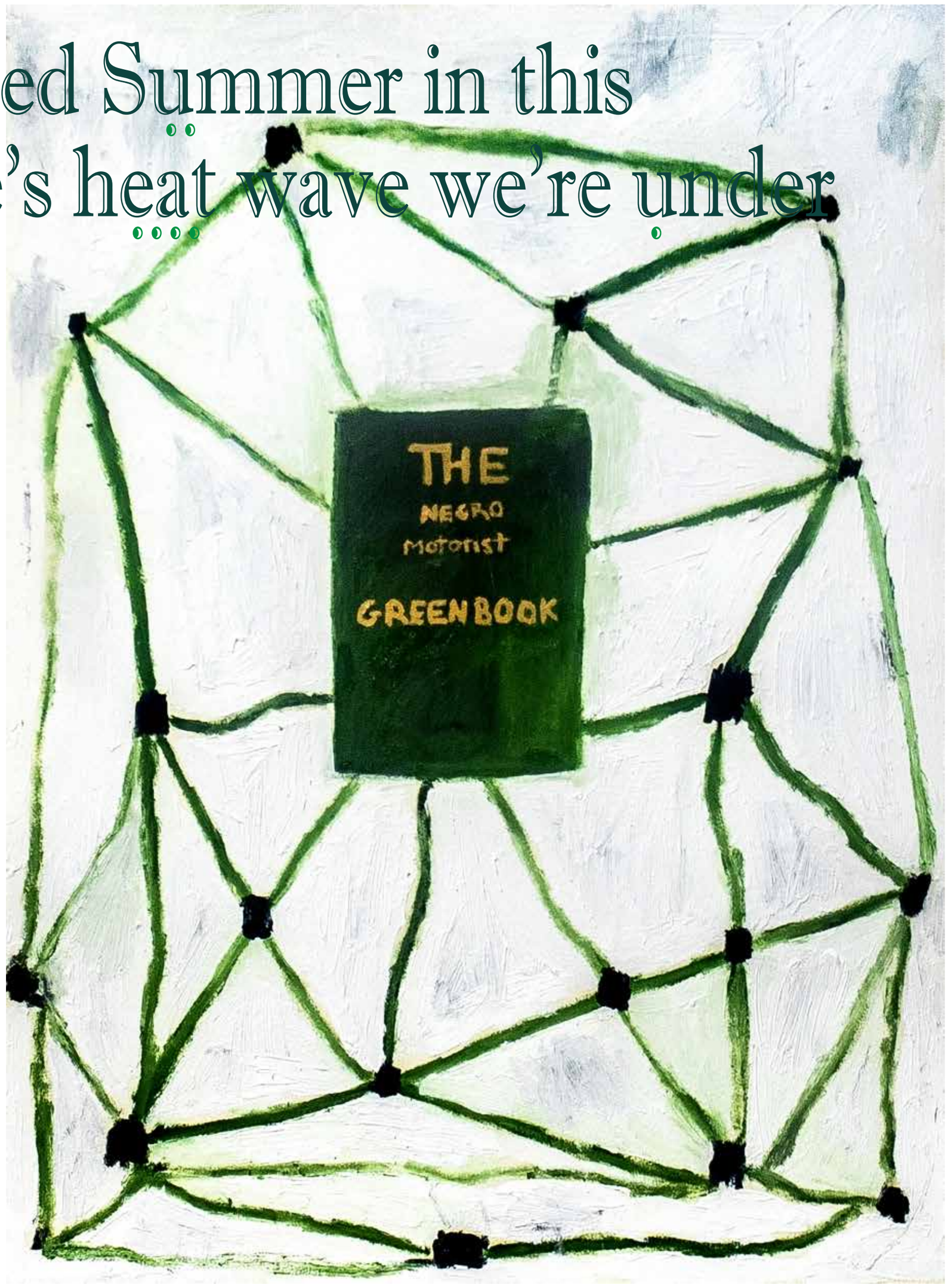
# It's another Red Summer in this southern state's heat wave we're under

A few miles down the road I would thankfully come across a Marathon Oil station, with a polite sales clerk and rebel hats for sale along the back wall. I didn't bother to ask. "I'm going to use your restroom," I informed her after purchasing five dollars worth of gas. "Oh yeah, sure," she replied. Upon leaving, I realized with some disappointment that my secondary highway travels had brought me up against Interstate 64 and that, far from a remote gas station, the Marathon Oil I had found was, in fact, just off the Interstate.

**Acknowledgements:**

Publication of this piece was supported by the Virginia Tech Open Access Subvention Fund.

Earlier versions were presented as part of the Science on Tap (New River Valley) monthly speaker series and at the Fourteenth International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.




Asa Jackson, *Safety Map*,
56 cm x 76 cm, oil.

"*Safety Map* is a depiction of the Negro Motorist Greenbook published by Billboard Jackson providing a map for safe travels for Negroes during the time of segregated America and Jim Crow laws. The black dots represent safe places (hotels, safe houses, gas stations, restaurants) along the road that served as stopping points for traveling Negroes.

The green lines connecting the black dots symbolize the map and pathway taken by travelers. The white represents white America, and all of the untouchable and unsafe places that Negroes were unable to go."

# It's a global warming warning get your work done in the morning


## The Metaphysical Difficulty of Traveling While Black to the Field

Corey J. Miles
(Virginia Tech)

On my ride from Virginia to Raleigh, North Carolina, for the preliminary stages of my fieldwork for my dissertation research, I felt the excitement of being able to take on the role of a researcher. As I drove down the highway I thought about all the connections I would make, all the stories that I would hear, and how I would tell a nuanced narrative of hip-hop in rural northeast North Carolina. While driving and simultaneously preparing myself for the first major research project of my career, my GPS indicated there was an accident ahead with stop-and-go traffic and redirected me to drive through a town called Fancy Gap. As I coasted through this town in a span of 10 minutes, I passed more than 30 confederate flags waving honorably and effortlessly in the wind.

Maybe if I hadn't attended both the Ku Klux Klan and Alt Right counter protest rallies in Charlottesville, Virginia, a few months prior, I would have understood these flags to be symbols and relics of the past that uninformed Americans clung to in search of an identity. Maybe if this wasn't Trump's America, I would have conceptualized these flags as part of the social processes that organize a small southern town and not representative of the way in which we symbolically construct the United States as a whole. After all, I'm a sociologist, and we believe that racism is located within institutions and has become largely covert and even polite. But I did attend those counter rallies and Donald Trump was the president in 2018, so those answers did not ease my anxiousness about the flags that continuously flashed before my eyes.

I wondered, could it be that racism has been normalized and maintained within societal institutions and upheld by racialized ideologies and language to the degree that society has developed rhetorical scripts to justify overt racism as it did in the past? Maybe overt racism never left and contemporary sociologist are blinded by the eyes of presentism in such a way that even anti-racists can't see what chooses not to hide?

Out of all the questions this experience created, "Why hip-hop?" was the most pervasive. At a time where Black and brown people exist in a structure of surveillance alongside a resurgence of overt racism, why am I studying hip-hop? As a self-identified activist why was it important for me at this historical juncture to examine a musical tradition that has its fair share of researchers engaging with it already? That car ride was to physically and ideology move myself from the comforts of the walls of my university to live and work with low-income Black Americans, but my passage was disrupted by symbols of my inferiority being organized physically and conceptually within the space that separated my two worlds. During that car drive I did not have the answer to those questions, but I hoped the stories I would eventually hear would.

**BlakeNine** (aka Bronze Baby Shoes) is CEO of Candlewax Records, founded in 2003. In 2006 he released his first musical collaboration with Anthony Kwame Harrison (together calling themselves "The Acorns") as a Candlewax Records full-length CD. BlakeNine currently produces several artists who have all released recordings on Candlewax Records.

**Kevin Earley** is an artist and mental health advocate based in Northern Virginia. He is a graduate of Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York where he studied fine art. He can be reached through social media at @birdboogie or via his website, www.getthatworm.com.

**Anthony Kwame Harrison** is the Edward S. Diggs Professor of Humanities and the Gloria D. Smith Professor of Africana Studies at Virginia Tech. He is co-editor of *Race in the Marketplace: Crossing Critical Boundaries* (Palgrave Macmillan 2019) and has recorded and released music as a member of the Forest Fires Collective (San Francisco) and The Acorns (Washington DC).

**Asa Jackson** is a visual artist and curator from Hampton Roads, Virginia. Jackson studied sociology at Boston University. In 2015, he and colleagues founded the Contemporary Arts Network, an art advisory and special projects unit that heads municipal and private projects. In 2018, Jackson was appointed to be a state commissioner with the Virginia Commission for the Arts and currently serves on the board of the Peninsula Fine Arts Center in Newport News, Virginia.

**Corey J. Miles** recently completed his Ph.D. in Sociology at Virginia Tech and will soon join the Department of Sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire as an Assistant Professor. He received a 2018-2019 American Sociological Association Minority Fellowship and is an engaged activist for All Black Lives.

**Karl Precoda** teaches cinema studies in the School of Performing Arts and social and cultural theory in the Department of Sociology/Africana Studies at Virginia Tech.

**Richard Randolph** is a photographer and videographer from Washington, D.C. He enjoys shooting portraits, fashion, and lifestyle photography. He ultimately aims to use his photography to impact at-risk youth and to capture life's best moments. Follow his instagram @capitolcaptures for more content.

***DYSFUNCTION #6 — WHITE REIGN*** is published by antoine lefebvre editions in an edition of 1000 copies for the Race in the Marketplace (RIM) Research Forum ...Crossing Critical Boundaries... June 25 - 27, 2019 at Paris Dauphine University.
ISSN (Online) 2650-7854
ISSN (Print) Pending

The publication of ***DYSFUNCTION #6*** was supported by the Virginia Tech Open Access Subvention Fund.

The title is set in StatementfD created by Adrien Vasquez, franckDavid and Philippe Mairesse, and produced by Accès Local/Local Access, the text is set in Brill. The typesetting of *WHITE REIGN*'s lyrics is inspired by the original title of the "Green Book" 1940 edition.



***DYSFUNCTION*** is available for free while stocks last at 本 \hon\ books, 74 Avenue Denfert Rochereau, 75014 Paris. Every issue can be downloaded for free on www.dysfunction-journal.net

***DYSFUNCTION*** is a free artistic and academic journal created by Natalia Bobadilla, Antoine Lefebvre and Philippe Mairesse.

***DYSFUNCTION*** publishes research that trespasses the boundaries between arts & social sciences.

***DYSFUNCTION*** is hybrid, both an artist publication and a research object. Each issue highlights a project that combines art and research in social sciences and humanities, and disseminates research findings through artistic forms.

***DYSFUNCTION*** is financed by research and academic institutions but decisions about the publication are made by the editorial team only.

***DYSFUNCTION*** offers a permanent open call. If you think your work can interest us, write us.

The editorial team
contact@dysfunction-journal.net



Dauphine UNIVERSITÉ PARIS PSL

VIRGINIA TECH

RIM RACE IN THE MARKETPLACE

CANDLEWAX THE ACORNS