

2. Alchemy of the *Fuqara*: Spiritual Care, Memory, and the Black Muslim Body

YOUSSEF CARTER

Dhikru-llāh or remembrance of Allah, is any practice that is intended to bring the memory of Allah back to the recollection of the rememberer, or the *dhākir*. The remembrance of Allah is therefore assumed to be about something that the *dhākir* already knew, but has forgotten. It only stands to reason that you remember what you already knew, not something you have never known. —Imam Fode Drame, *Illuminated Remembrance of God*, 2017

Mikhail Abdullah, an African American Muslim from South Carolina, is an integral member of the *zawiyah*-mosque (Masjidul Muhajjirun wal Ansar) of Moncks Corner, South Carolina.¹ He is a devoted student of Shaykh Arona Faye, who is a trusted and charismatic spiritual guide of the Mustafawi Sufi order in the United States. Mikhail had performed music in a secular context before becoming enveloped in the Mustafawi tradition and has since decided to engage himself in a West African Sufi training regimen that emphasizes bodily discipline and inward mindfulness through *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah). To achieve this manner of growth, he uses his body as a vehicle for mobilizing spiritual transformation to produce a consistent sense of attentiveness in remembering God. However, the performance of remembering for African-descended Muslims in Moncks Corner includes a reconnection to lost ancestors and an imagined homeland that is deployed through reciting the Mustafawi odes in a space that has been purposefully devoted to spiritual care. Through the guidance

of their teacher, Shaykh Faye, African American *fuqara* like Mikhail transform their lives for the better by subjecting their bodies to daily Muslim devotions and arduous Sufi observances.² Moreover, the majority of the training that Mikhail and others have undergone has occurred at the *zawiyah*, which is situated in a location that contributes directly to reconnecting themselves to Muslim ancestors.

This chapter centers on a Sufi Muslim community composed primarily of African-descended Muslims who practice their religion in and around the mosque, which is situated on land that was formerly a slave plantation. Relying on Mikhail as emblematic, this chapter discusses how Black diasporic Muslim identities are shaped through bodily performances within the framework of a West African Islamic pedagogy, which, in turn, is impacted and enlivened by its African American initiates. This analysis aims to understand precisely the manner in which particular Muslim subjectivities are shaped within the bounds of a specific practice of spiritual cultivation. Spiritual cultivation is informed in this case, as I show, through the medium of *tarbiyah* (moral training/alchemy of the human being)—of which the religious poetry of Shaykh Mustafa Gueye Haydara is a part—and the call to actualize a return to the *fitra* (the original state of humanity, inclined toward God-consciousness and cleansed of negative or harmful experiences). Remembrance of Allah involves, and is contingent on, an intimate knowledge of one's inner self that is achieved through attending to cleansing the body and spirit. African American *fuqara* seek to reconnect themselves to a West African Sufi practice because the process of *tarbiyah* allows them to be cleansed of trauma and to reassert their full humanity in ways that, they believe, would otherwise be impossible. In so doing, they enact an entirely different route toward resisting racial oppression that emphasizes inward spiritual mastery and bodily discipline. This analysis of *dhikr* performance in the Moncks Corner *zawiyah* draws in many ways on work on Muslim ethical cultivation via embodiment in Muslim-majority contexts (Mahmood 2011) and in the diaspora (Eisenlohr 2018; Jouili 2015). However, my own analysis extends beyond these studies by examining how ethical cultivation operates as a work of self-healing in the context of racial violence and oppression.

The Mustafawi *tariqa* is a transatlantic Sufi order that originated in Senegal through the efforts of the late Shaykh Mustafa Gueye Haydara (d. 1989) and established a presence in South Carolina in 1994 through the efforts of Shaykh Arona Faye, leader of the *fuqara* in the United States, and Umm Aisha Faye, an African American Muslimah (Muslim woman) and the local matriarch of the Moncks Corner *zawiyah*. *Dhikr* within the Mustafawi Order serves as an ave-

nue through which transatlantic solidarities are configured in this small blue-collar town and beyond. To discuss the cultivation of religious selves among Muslims of African descent in that space, I analyze remembrance in two major ways: I illustrate how African-descended Muslims use their bodies to perform and internalize specific knowledges that result in the emergence of those diasporic identities (Connerton 1989; Kugle 2011; Ware 2014), and I explore how those bodily performances play a part in forging and maintaining transatlantic religious relationships (Clarke 2004; Cohen 2008; Garbin 2013; Griffith and Savage 2006; Holsey 2004; Lovejoy 1997; Matory 2005). To interrogate how remembrance is activated through bodily dispositions and performances, this analysis highlights how and by what means a long-established West African Sufic tradition of moral-ethical training is deployed to address the needs of African American Muslims in the United States. What most interests me here is the multiple ways that remembrance operates. Dhikr is both a form of bodily practice (a corporeal form of memory) used as a device for religious instruction and a form of social memory among and between two distinct groups of diasporic Africans that possess variant relationships to the American South. I offer, therefore, that through dhikr African and African American Muslims access spiritual and historical reconnections that are grounded in affective diasporic relationships between the American South and coastal Senegal—a discursively imagined homeland as it emerges in the Moncks Corner mosque (Alpers 2000; Clarke 2004; Ho 2006; Kane 2011; Yamba 1995).

Ethnographic research conducted in the zawiya of Moncks Corner from late 2014 to early 2016 has revealed to me the manner in which African American Mustafawi Muslims participate in dhikr as a means of remembering Allah while simultaneously engaging in a process of healing. The zawiya is also the only mosque in Moncks Corner and is named *Masjidul Muhajjirun wal Ansar*—translated roughly as “place of worship for migrants and their (Indigenous) assistants.”³ The aptly named mosque is situated on Old U.S. 52 highway adjacent to Gippy Plantation—land where enslaved Africans were forced to labor before the American Civil War. In my talks with other members of the mosque, they reflected quite openly on the likelihood that enslaved Africans had been forced to labor and were abused in the vicinity. Furthermore, they noted the incongruity between how African American Muslims understand the sheer anguish of the enslaved in that space and how that history is presented in the Berkeley County Museum and Heritage Center, located nearby.⁴ That Muslims who are descended from enslaved Africans, some of whom are believed to have been Muslim, are reciting the *qasidas* (odes) of a Senegalese spiritual master, which are incorporated into their dhikr sessions to activate healing

and protection from harm, is significant.⁵ By performing the poetic supplications of Shaykh Mustafa, the tariqa's founder, believers in the Moncks Corner mosque access a tradition through which Black transatlantic Muslim identities are fashioned and mobilized. Of course, these identities are also built from participating in other activities, such as studying the writings of Shaykh Mustafa, attending lectures provided by Shaykh Faye, and traveling to the Senegambian region of West Africa. However, I focus here on how those identities relate to the performance of Shaykh Mustafa's *qasidas* in that space.

Dhikr and Alchemy in Moncks Corner

In 1996 Mikhail Abdullah was attending an art institute in Atlanta, where he was pursuing a music career and owned an independent record label. Engaged in a life of public performance and entertainment, he had yet to become acquainted with the life of devotion that Sufism had to offer. He was already a practicing Muslim and had agreed to accompany his father-in-law from a prior marriage in visiting the Moncks Corner mosque for the Eid al-Adha that year.⁶ The robust camaraderie and lively atmosphere evinced by the Moncks Corner community (at Masjid Muhajjirun wal Ansar) contrasted with the dullness of Mikhail's home mosque back in Charleston, South Carolina. In fact, it was while visiting the *zawiyah* of Moncks Corner that day that Mikhail first experienced *dhikr*. After the Eid festivities ended, Shaykh Faye sat down with some of his followers and led the group in singing the *qasidas* of Shaykh Mustafa:

That evening they sat down in the *zawiyah*. . . . We actually had a place that was designed just for worshipping God outside of the obligatory worship that we do inside the mosque, where we do *dhikr*. . . . I didn't understand any of that. I had never even heard of *dhikr* before then. Well, that night, [Shaykh] pulled out a big red book, and he began to *dhikr*. And everyone at that time was just going over refrains. So we would go over refrains. He would read the *qasida*, and we would do the refrain. That was the icing on the cake for me because I was a musician and I was at a crossroads. And this sounded more and more like music, but it was music for God. At that point, I told him that I'm moving to Moncks Corner. (Mikhail Abdullah, interview, August 28, 2016)

While, in general, *dhikr* can be done rather randomly, the Mustafawi circles in which the *qasidas* of Shaykh Mustafa are performed tend to be well ordered. During the many instances during my fieldwork in which the *fuqara* sang the Mustafawi *qasidas* at the *zawiyah* of Moncks Corner, I always witnessed such

collective performances enacted in a ritualized manner, and they were always led by Shaykh Faye. The proper way to formally initiate a dhikr session, according to Shaykh Faye, was to always recite the first chapter of the Qur'an (Surat-Fatiha) and then recite "Laa ilaha illa Allah" ("There is no deity except God") one hundred times before uttering the words of Shaykh Mustafa. While one was in the circle, the intent was to use the body to activate mindfulness (and remembrance). Those in the circle needed to ensure that their bodies were ritually clean and that their clothing was tidy. In line with the social norm of Islamic religious space, men sat in circles separately from the women in attendance, who formed an adjacent circle. We were always expected to maintain a dignified posture while seated—we danced with our hearts rather than our bodies. It is not that voices were simply utilized to match rhythms and achieve a collective melody; the participants also tended to sway back and forth as if the upper body was relied on as a metronome to keep pace with the group. In my experience, this melodic rocking while seated seemed to occur naturally and was less a predetermined act than the result of witnessing other bodies in motion and following their method. In fact, rocking my upper body during my performance seemed to naturally force me to keep the established rhythm—even when I had not memorized enough of the qasida to avoid making noticeable mistakes. Regarding the embodiment of West African Islamic training and the programmatic disciplining of Muslim bodies in the American South, I find Rudolph Ware's notion of *incorporation* instructive in order to describe how performance and rituals work to apply or embed a specific manner of knowing (and, by extension, remembrance) onto and into the body.⁷ Therefore, as Muslims of African descent in Moncks Corner use their voices to utter the words of Shaykh Mustafa and their bodies to perform his poetry in concert with other Mustafawi Muslims, they join in a process of incorporating into (and onto) themselves a West African Sufi technique of disciplining the self.

In the moment that Mikhail first experienced dhikr, he decided that he would actually relocate to Moncks Corner to be a part of the community and study with Shaykh Faye as his teacher. The performative nature of dhikr, introduced through a West African tradition, animated Mikhail's choice to pursue a life of such dedication to spiritual expansion. This moment marked the beginning of Mikhail's path to personal transformation, which occurred in the context of a broader collective effort on the part of his fellow fuqara to improve themselves. His initiation into a life of intensified Islamic devotion also marked the beginning of a profound connection to a tradition of corporeal pedagogy mediated through West African Sufism and a reconnection to the worship of and strategies of spiritual care for imagined ancestors.

In describing how West African religiosities are embodied by Muslims of African descent in the American South, I use the term *alchemy*—a popular term among Sufi groups—not only to refer to the programmatic, scientific transformation of objects that carries with it connotations of spiritual growth and expansion but also to highlight the very nature of the relationship between African American students and the West African Sufi tradition of spiritual care.⁸ Therefore, I deploy this term to suggest the transformative relationship that emerges as African American Muslims, in particular, learn to dissolve their egos (*tazkiyyat-ul-nafs*), seeking to move beyond the residues of racial trauma, and attain a higher sense of Islamic piety. Moreover, this process of transformation includes, according to the ethnographic data I have collected, the cultivation of African diasporic religious identities via the application of secret prayers, devotional performances in concert and in solitude, and journeys taken to pay homage to their *shuyukh* (Arabic plural of *shaykh*) in an imagined spiritual homeland. If alchemy is the transformation of matter, the goal here is to transform hearts. This transformation is achieved, however, through disciplining the body.

When I think back on witnessing various performances of dhikr throughout my time conducting ethnographic research in Moncks Corner, what I find most compelling is the combining of African American voice and West African tradition. The way in which American Muslims (predominantly African American) in the southern United States perform communal invocations, participate in religious instruction, and consume and circulate artifacts such as religious texts, recorded sermons, and poetry signals a relationship between communal religious practices and the construction of social identities. The repetitive nature of dhikr and qasidas works to embed the various spiritual formulae for praise and supplication into the memory and consciousness of the practitioner. It is not a requirement that the performer have achieved a heightened piety per se—it is believed that the performance of the composition itself at once is a pious act and paves the way for the development of piety (or at least a heightened sense of awareness of piety), whether through the training of the body and spirit to bend to the rhythm of righteousness or through the willingness to be supervised and corrected by Shaykh Faye directly. Such performances are done mostly in congregation as the fuqara collaboratively engage in spiritual care, and thus remembrance—in both senses—is largely intersubjective (Beliso-De Jesús 2015; Covington-Ward 2016; Jouili 2015; Ware 2014) insofar as the engagement in dhikr performance overwhelmingly relies on a deeply held bodily relation among the fuqara.⁹

Following others who have studied the religious practices of Muslims, I believe strategies of bodily care among Muslims in Moncks Corner and what Ware calls an “embodied knowledge” are best understood via analysis of participation

in dhikr circles and other religious performances. In other words, approaches to knowledge gathering and religious study are dramatically shaped by a tradition of embodiment whereby certain corporeal practices (Qur'an memorization, mimesis, repetitive phrasings, ritual prayer, travel for scholarship, and even domestic chores) cultivate postures of piety. The entire community is commonly invited to gather weekly (generally on Fridays or Saturdays) after Maghrib prayer to sing the qasidas composed by Shaykh Mustafa so many years ago.

The path of inward transformation—of alchemy—occurs through training the physical body toward mindfulness, which is provided through the recitation of dhikr and through acts of attentive listening. Therefore, an emphasis on embodiment is the key to understanding processes of *knowing* in (and beyond) the West African Islamic context. “Human ‘bodies of knowledge’ are made, not born. Islamic learning is brought into the world through concrete practices of corporal discipline, corporeal knowledge transmission, and deeds of embodied agents. Knowledge of Islam does not abide in texts; it lives in people” (Ware 2014, 9). Such emphasis on the embodiment of knowledge—in other words, the *performance of knowing*—is similarly exemplified in the Mustafawi tradition. To be considered knowledgeable, one must embody piety and display righteous behavior. Attentiveness to Islamically ethical behavior and mindfulness toward etiquette (*adab*) with regard to interpersonal relationships and worship are assumed to be a primary step in the pathway to knowing. Just as in Ware’s characterization of West African religiosity as a backdrop to Qur’anic memorization that emphasizes embodying through upright behavior the principles that one memorizes, Muslims in Moncks Corner are expected to embody, or perform, the knowledge that Shaykh Faye gives them. Following the mode of West African spiritual pedagogy, the Mustafawi tradition similarly necessitates an inseparability between knowledge and action. The mode of spiritual training analyzed in this chapter involves rectifying behavior and requires a corporeal modeling of piety learned from both the living and the dead.

Expanding the Ocean: Social Memory, Transatlantic Connections, and Ancestors

Whereas social scientific literatures and religious studies have both found the body to be central to understanding how religious subjects extract meaning from faith traditions and how it shapes their experiences, I have sought to take this approach further in order to bring to bear how Black Muslim practitioners engage in specific rituals and performances as they perform remembrance of the past and activate healing. Works that have used the Black Atlantic (Gilroy 1993)

as a device for better understanding the flows and migrations of peoples and the traditions that circulate around this space have placed much emphasis on “traditional” African religiosity (e.g., Matory 2005; Routon 2006).¹⁰ However, some argue that the focus on *trance-nationalism* (Routon 2006) has perhaps overstated the presence of traditions like Santeria and Candomblé in the exchange between Luso-America and continental Africa.¹¹ For my own purposes, however, I situate the religion of Islam, particularly in its West African configuration, as central to my own usage of the Black Atlantic in describing the circuits of exchange and transmission that take place between Muslims of African descent on either side of the ocean.¹² When built on other works (Curtis 2009; Diouf 2013; GhaneaBassiri 2010; Gomez 2005; McCloud 2014), such analyses help to concretize the analytic ground for understanding the long historical religious presence of West Africans in the Americas. Hence, the analysis here centers on the project of gathering ground for discussing how Sufism in a transatlantic context creates pathways for diasporic mobility regarding the migration of peoples and identities-in-motion. In fact, it is the *interrelatedness* between varying kinds of Black Muslimness that is of interest in the quest to apprehend the very nature of how and why Mustafawi members on either side of the Atlantic are drawn to each other so profoundly, beyond mere religious commonalities.

By analyzing exactly how African American fuqara mobilize a West African Sufi tradition for the purpose of addressing the past and present, I interrogate a conception of diaspora that has automatically included African Americans in a larger global African diasporic body.¹³ As Edward Curtis (2014) asserts, a rigorous study of the religious dimensions of the African diaspora is vital to extend our collective understanding of the diasporic concept. Much as scholars have studied how African-descended people have incorporated themselves into diasporic networks via religion (Clarke 2004; Garbin 2013; Griffith and Savage 2006; Matory 2005), this discussion aims to ground this inclusion via analysis of religious observances that have animated Black religious identities. The motive here, then, is to analyze how and by what means Muslims of African descent living in Moncks Corner and beyond engage a West African Islamic pedagogical tradition that coheres the politics of Black Muslimness in an American context and among diasporic subjects.

Like the chapters by Elyan Hill and other contributors to this volume, this analysis of bodily performance relies on an approach that emphasizes memory not solely as a process of individual cognition but, more important, as a social process that contextualizes past events as devices for the expression and transmission of transatlantic identities. Therefore, such processes, in which

the individual Muslim of African descent is situated, are collectively shaped and inform particular kinds of belonging while they also animate specific religious discourses seen in the Moncks Corner zawayah in South Carolina and beyond.¹⁴ Paul Connerton (1989) has argued that the past is constructed, or “remembered,” via collective envisioning and that *performances* provide the glue through which shared knowledge of the past is attained. Therefore, ceremonial practices transmit collective vision by way of performance, which allows the individual to embody a shared envisioning of the past. Bodily practices, moreover, provide a pathway beyond two types of memory (personal and cognitive) into a third type: *habit-memory*. This third type has less to do with actively remembering how to perform an action by relying on cognitive recollection and more to do with a kind of interiorized memory—an embedded, more automatized process of embodying the past. I relate this notion to the manner in which Islamic conversion in Moncks Corner is collapsed with narratives of return to a lost religious tradition as a consequence of the transatlantic slave trade (i.e., reversion).¹⁵ During interviews and informal conversations, all of my interlocutors displayed some vital connection between their own path to the religion of Islam and the likelihood that many of their own ancestors were Muslims when they were forcibly transported away from West Africa. Once again, this mobilization of identity does not involve tracing actual genealogies through time and space. Rather, it is a process that encourages the *faqir* (singular of *fuqara*) to locate himself in a tradition that spans continents and centuries by engaging the body in an appropriation of an already established spiritual network that affixes present students to past teachers through Shaykh Faye.

Protection Is in the Performance

The Moncks Corner *fuqara*, like most Muslims, utilize *dhikr* as a means of maintaining a heightened awareness and mindfulness of Allah. This can include the meditative repetition of phrases such as “*Laa ilaha illa Allah*,” done in quiet solitude or in collaboration with others, and is performed to elicit a general piety. However, the weekly collective performance of Mustafawi odes (*qasidas*) is done to achieve more than this. The odes written by Shaykh Mustafa were composed to provide the student with a heightened spiritual vocabulary with which to praise Allah and His Prophet, beg for forgiveness, and ask for mercy, protection, and sustenance. Indeed, such performances are done with the intent of raising the station (*maqam*) of the performer also and stand as their own kind of formalized *dhikr*, insofar as one is in the act of remembering Allah.

Ritual action is a meaningful and transformational exercise whereby the training and disciplining of the body provide a means of achieving sainthood (Kugle 2003). However, beyond rote action, the repetitive nature of Sufi training aims to produce inward and outward transformation. That is, the task is to change the body into a pious entity through the consistent and intentional observance of a particular ritual act. While the performance of a Sufi ritual can lead one to conclude that intent and purpose are embedded within the ritual itself, repetitive or not, it does not automatically follow that we should find meaning solely within the act of performance. In fact, it is not merely the act itself that produces change. Without intention and an orientation toward being changed, words are but words, and gestures are only gestures. As the body becomes more apt and routinized in its performance of a pious behavior, the disposition becomes aligned with the bodily act. As the disposition becomes more inclined toward that particular mode of conduct, the body then is more exacting in its performance of pious conduct (see Mahmood 2001).

During weekly gatherings at the zawiya, Shaykh Faye usually took the opportunity to “unfold knowledge” about the particular qasida we had just finished performing as we prepared to transition to the next one. He consistently provided those who surrounded him with an intimate awareness of the finer benefits of reciting specific lyrics, with the intention that they would practice the qasidas in order to master them. After all, mastery of the spiritual poetry lay not in committing it to memory but rather in gaining a deeper knowledge of its spiritual advantages by embodying a love of the Prophet and strengthening *taqwa* (consciousness/mindfulness of Allah). At the same time, however, I argue that the aspects of spiritual cultivation encouraged by the Mustafawi training regimen are combined with prescriptions for healing racial trauma through the performance of the Mustafawi odes.

Shaykh Mustafa’s ode “Al-Bahrul Muhit” (The Vast Ocean) was conceived as resistance to religious repression and a source of spiritual power for his students. When the ode was composed in the late 1960s, Senegal had recently achieved its independence from colonization (in 1959) and was still grappling with the impact of French policies that favored secular modernization while imposing a Eurocentric approach to (disembodied) education on West African Muslims.¹⁶ Shaykh Mustafa’s religious poetry was meant to combat this trend by inscribing spiritual efficacy into the hearts and onto the bodies of those he led. Performance of “Al-Bahrul Muhit” was therefore, in that context, simultaneously an act of Islamic piety and an act of resistance to colonial shifts toward secularization—in spite of Senegal’s fairly recent independence. In the present-day American South, where the legacy of political and economic repression

of Black people is pronounced, African and African American Muslims collectively find solace and healing in Shaykh Mustafa's qasidas.

By reciting "Al-Bahrul Muhit," the Moncks Corner fuqara send praises and salutations to the Prophet Muhammad and use a formulaic approach to utter a comprehensive supplication for health, protection, wealth, and continued spiritual growth. Through elevating Muhammad, the supplicants hope to elevate themselves. The alternative title of the ode, which comprises 288 verses, is "Leave Me with My Love of the Prophet," and it begins by thoroughly praising his attributes. Its opening page includes the Qur'anic recommendation for Muslims to continually send blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad for their own sake: "Indeed, Allah sends His Blessings on the Prophet and also His Angels too ask Allah to bless him. Oh you who believe! Send your Salat on him and salute him with peace" (Qur'an 33:56—as it appears in "Al-Bahrul Muhit"). This Qur'anic verse shares the first page with the special prayer of the Mustafawi, the "Salaatul Samawiyah," placed below it.¹⁷ The poetic framing of the entire "Al-Bahrul Muhit," drenched in ecstatic applause, hinges on the following refrain, which was sung repeatedly in concert before each verse:

Ahmaduna Mahmada Nabiyyuna Tabiibuna Mughhiithuna
shafii'una shamsul huda fil 'Aalami.

Our Ahmad, Our Mahmud, Our Prophet and Our Doctor, Our Helper and
Our Intercessor. The Sun of Guidance in the realm of the Universe.¹⁸

The lyrics of the celebratory ode provide a specific language that allows the fuqara to pray for protection from external harms and internal shortcomings. In addition to praying for physical healing, the verses seem to request alleviation of oppressive forces described as "enemies." In addition to "Al-Bahrul Muhit," Shaykh Mustafa composed another qasida, entitled "The Cloak of Protection and the Soldiers of Divine Care."¹⁹ It differs from the former insofar as it more directly provides the fuqara with a supplication for protection.²⁰ In this sense, protection from the lower self and the repelling of enemies are the central foci of this ode as Moncks Corner Muslims rely on it to ensure their bodily security as well:

12. And I will never fear my enemies as You are my protection from all of creation.
13. With the cutting sword of Your name on my breath, I am protected from every type of enemy.
14. Repel evil and treachery from me by Your great soldiers of divine care. . . .
23. Repel anyone who wants to harm my physical body by Your sword which is broad in its scope. . . .

50. O you who can work paper with your knowledge [transforming and transferring it], put it into action at the French mint.

We should consider that Mustafawi odes were written with the intent of also providing a regimen for future students not yet present and unknown in the time of the odes' composition. Thus, supplication for intimate knowledge (*'irfan*) and protection would apply to recently decolonized Senegal as well as the present-day United States. My own experience of participating in the dhikr circle and reciting the *qasidas* of Shaykh Mustafa while living at the *zawiyah* of Moncks Corner afforded me the opportunity to view these performances as part of a broader process of alchemy. In all of the instances in which I participated in the circle, dhikr participants were always instructed or guided directly by Shaykh Faye in terms of how to engage in the recitation of dhikr, or the performance of the *qasidas*, with the aim of providing a systematic and practiced methodology for spiritual care.

West African Sufism and the Black Body

I do not highlight the role of African-descended Muslims in the process of sharing and transmitting knowledge simply because the *fuqara* I discuss here are Black and Muslim. I read these particular *qualia* of recipient bodies as significant. The linkages between present Black Muslim learners in the American South and supposed African Muslim ancestors are also meaningful. Black Muslims (whether American-born or not) can see their own selves as profoundly connected to the enslaved African Muslims who are believed to have been present in and around South Carolina before emancipation. It is not lost on them that before the American Civil War, those who now inhabit the Moncks Corner mosque would have been rendered chattel property, and therefore unapproved religious gatherings and at-will travel would have been impossible a century and a half ago. Such realities are quite apparent as we consider the significance of the Moncks Corner mosque's role as a space for worship, spiritual healing, and the dispensation of knowledge. Therefore, the act of reciting Islamic formulations of supplication and remembrance in that space is imbued with a specific politics of Black Muslimness, which is grounded in a broader transatlantic region.

As observed in Moncks Corner, the performance of Islamic rituals is fused with the sociopolitical realities of Blackness insofar as the politics of Black Muslimness includes what one does with the body, what one puts on the body, and where one places one's body. The ideal body of the Black Muslim, although

in the context of the Nation of Islam, became a symbol for racial uplift in the mid-twentieth century (Curtis 2006; Taylor 2017). Consequently, ritualization emerged as a vital demarcation of disciplined Black Muslims who would be protected from racial and economic dispossession. Throughout my research, national discourses surrounding racial violence and police brutality made their way into the homes of community members. During community dinners held at the houses of the Moncks Corner Muslims, discussions about the latest instances of violence seemed to repeatedly explode onto the tablecloth as Shaykh Faye, and those surrounding him, identified the United States as a place that would eventually worsen with regard to its social-political difficulties. Dhikr has therefore provided them with a strategy of self-care and healing that has the potential to undo both the pronounced and the subtle effects of race-based trauma.

Other zawayah members have intimated to me how they have been affected by witnessing Ku Klux Klan parades in Moncks Corner in the past and instances of police brutality, and more recently they have had to deal with the psychological impact of events like the racially motivated massacre of Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) churchgoers in Charleston in 2015. Rather than immediately turning their attention outward to combat racist violence, which seems at times too large and too deeply embedded in the sociopolitical landscape, the fuqara first turn inward to heal themselves by relying on an otherworldly power and praying for change—and protection from their enemies. They do this because they understand quite thoroughly that any true and lasting change begins inside.

In recounting his own experience with the Mustafawi dhikr, Mikhail highlights how in spite of being intimately aware of racial oppression, being naturally drawn to the qasidas of Shaykh Mustafa provided him with a pathway toward shifting his outlook to find empowerment through spiritual cultivation. By choosing to address himself rather than the behaviors and attitudes of others, placing inward transformation over and above undoing racially motivated discrimination, Mikhail takes an alternative approach to uplift:

As an African American, [dhikr] was something . . . that I could put in the place of music, because the people that I had been around and the lifestyle that I was living, scripture was not what guided their life—it was music. The music and the lyrics was the scripture of the African Americans that I was around. So . . . I guess that the [equivalent] to that would be the Qur'an, but outside of the Qur'an, something that I can walk around with and contemplate on was that dhikr . . . that “*laa ilaha illa Allah*” . . . and

knowing what it meant . . . and keep saying it over and over again, it affected me in a way where when the things that would make my parents upset or make the people that I was around upset, dealing with police brutality or the way the police was dealing with the African Americans inside the environments that I came from, it kind of softened my heart in a way where I started to understand that those were problems that they were dealing with within themselves . . . and the dhikr actually uplifted me in a way where I felt sorry for them even though they were attempting to oppress me. (interview, August 28, 2016)

As a result of his participation in the Moncks Corner zawiya, performance of the Mustafawi qasidas seems to have alleviated the more acute impacts of racism for Mikhail. He uses his body to perform the protective and curative odes of Shaykh Mustafa, but through this act he acknowledges that power does not lie within or around oppressive forces. True power, in fact, lies with Allah. Through using the body to recite these odes, one acknowledges this truth that empowers the believer. This re-placement of power becomes evident as one sits to listen to the impromptu lectures of Shaykh Faye. Dhikr, the remembrance of Allah, is a lived practice that Mikhail takes seriously as part of his spiritual regimen. This includes both recitation of the Mustafawi qasidas, in which corporeal movement is a part, and connection to a perceived lost religious tradition; Islamic practice is thought of as reconnection with African Muslim ancestors as well as a present-day West African Muslim tradition of healing. Through collective recitation of the Mustafawi qasidas, African American Muslims in Moncks Corner, like Mikhail, access a tradition of spiritual cultivation and call on the curative power of prophetic salutation in order to overcome trauma.

During my observations of Mustafawi performances of the qasidas, I noted that Shaykh Faye imparted to his students that the compositions had the capacity to transform those who consistently recited them. Like Kathryn Linn Geurts's (2003) analysis of how listening practices configure the ethical grounds on which listeners use their bodies as receptacles for the consumption of moral guidance, this study proposes that Moncks Corner Muslims enact a bodily discourse in a twofold manner. On the one hand, they perform the religious poetry of Shaykh Mustafa in concert to enliven the knowledge he offers by using their voices. Animating a West African Sufi tradition through the medium of Black American Muslim voices in collaboration with West African ones marks a specific mode of ethical and moralizing performance that brings one closer to the other—or, rather, *incorporates* one in the other. On the other hand, inclusion of the witness (as in listening), impacted by the articulation of dhikr performance

as an ethical behavior (discourses often initiated by Shaykh Faye), provides an opportunity for even the novice to participate in observances that lead to the embodying of historical religious memory on both sides of the Atlantic. Such listening practices, as described in Charles Hirschkind's (2006) work, deployed in conjunction with consistent practice, produce an affective power that leads to a cleansing, or vital transformation, of the heart in which the trauma of persistent racial hierarchy is addressed.²¹ And this process of alchemizing bodies, through performative discourses, envelops Black American Muslims within an interconnected social world—a broader Atlantic intersubjectivity that operates across time and space.

Conclusion

As a result of Mikhail's dedication to transforming himself and abiding by the prescriptions of his teacher, Shaykh Faye has honored him with a mantle by which other fuqara may recognize him as particularly knowledgeable of Qur'an and hadith.²² This also indicates that Shaykh Faye has entrusted Mikhail, now referred to as Shaykh Mikhail, with carrying on the tradition of the Mustafawi in Dakar, Senegal, on his behalf. According to Mikhail, consistent recitation of the Mustafawi qasidas and constant attentiveness to the guidance of Shaykh Faye contributed heavily to raising Mikhail's station. Through the story and words shared here, I bring attention to how the fuqara of Moncks Corner use their bodies as receptacles for knowledge transmission in such a way that piety is pronounced while the impacts of racism and historically embedded trauma are addressed. Not only are Muslim bodies alchemized in relation to other bodies, but they are also altered in relation to the space in which corporeally transformative religious practices take place. Masjidul Muhajjirun wal Ansar, the zawiya-mosque of Moncks Corner, represents the reorientation of a physical space where Black people were historically disembodied (or rendered as *only* bodies) into a refuge for Black Muslim selves who desire healing and care. In this space dhikr simultaneously operates as a spiritual technology of remembering Allah and remembering the past. The fuqara use the qasidas of Shaykh Mustafa to engage their selves in a process of bodily cultivation and in a project of psychic healing and liberation. Accessing the past through a West African Islamic pedagogical tradition, moreover, provides the African American fuqara with a historical connection to the Islamic traditions of their imagined Muslim ancestors.

Sufi odes in the context of the Mustafawi regimen provide the African American participants a means to transform themselves into more disciplined and

mindful Muslims who are empowered to envision themselves as having been cleansed of race-based trauma. In so doing, the Muslims living in Moncks Corner simultaneously envelop themselves in the vision for spiritual expansion that Shaykh Mustafa held as he composed his *qasidas* many decades earlier in Senegal. The performance of Shaykh Mustafa's *qasidas* by these particular American *fuqara* marks a desire for such growth; however, this willful, bodily engagement of Black Muslims in a West African Sufi program of spiritual disciplining is more than a mere religious observance. Certainly, the yearning for spiritual mastery and the rectification of the lower ego is a central motivation for the performance of remembering. Yet, against the backdrop of the political realities of navigating Black Muslimness in the American South, I read the structure and participation of Black adherents in this context as indicating the desire to protect the self from both spiritual decay and other kinds of cultural harm—corporeal and psychological. As well, collective ritual performance provides for an intersubjective experience of healing and mindfulness of the body in which performance is the result of a textual transmission from West Africa to the American South. Thus, such performances become infused with a politics of Black Muslimness whereby the diasporic collaborations—the animation of West African Sufi technologies via collective Black Muslim performance—present in such a way that they provide routes for inward transformation and bodily discipline. On a practical level, the knowledge of how to pray for protection, funds for travel, and spiritual expansion via specific religious formulae is embodied as a West African religious approach to alchemizing the self. Remembrance, as the words that open this chapter remind us, is an exercise that involves regaining what was lost or forgotten.

NOTES

1. While the word *zawiyah* in Arabic literally means “corner” or “nook,” it refers more specifically to a place of retreat and reflection, particularly for those in a Sufi brotherhood. Moreover, there are strong connotations of community and mutual assistance.

2. Conceptually, the term *fuqara* (“the impoverished” is sourced from the Qur’an and is used by Shaykh Faye to express an utter and complete dependence on God. For example, the Qur’an states, “If they are poor, God will provide for them from His bounty: God’s bounty is infinite and He is all knowing” (Qur’an 24:32). Shaykh Faye has taken this as a name to recognize his own dependency in relation to God and has named his students/followers in a similar fashion to signify their respective dependence.

At the same time, the name *fuqara* is extended to the entirety of a community which, in the context of Sufi tradition and in spite of the difficulty of finding regular employment in the blue-collar town of Moncks Corner, actively chooses to reside there with the aim of renouncing the world while realizing its members’ utter dependence on Allah.

3. Shaykh Faye named the Moncks Corner mosque in honor of the relationship between the companions of the Prophet Muhammad, who fled to Medina from Mecca, and the original inhabitants of Medina, who welcomed them as refugees.

4. The museum, located in Moncks Corner, less than three miles away from the Masjidul Muhajjirun wal Ansar, is a modestly sized structure that houses a number of quaint exhibits that display various aspects of the area's early history. One of those displays includes a historical showcase that discusses the nearby plantations and their owners. Less focus, however, is placed on any intimate knowledge of the enslaved African Americans who labored on those plantations. Thus, the presence of white wealth is emphasized and framed as an aspect of Southern heritage—with little attention to Black dispossession.

5. There is a distinction between dhikr (remembrance) and qasidas (odes): while dhikr are public or private observances that involve the repetitive chanting of one or more of the ninety-nine names of Allah (*asma al-husna*), for example, or religiously inflected phrases, qasidas are religious poems or odes, usually composed by spiritual masters (*shuyukh* or *murshidun*) for the purpose of praising Allah and the Prophet Muhammad.

6. Eid al-Adha is a Muslim holiday that commemorates Abraham's sacrifice.

7. In the concluding chapter of his text on Islamic education and embodied knowledge in West Africa, Ware (2014, 239) discusses how "incorporation" provides a language that brings to bear two ways in which knowledge becomes inculcated into the body through techniques of discipline as well as how forms of knowledge become embodied through practices of sharing and collective study.

8. Literature on Sufism and works by notable Sufi masters are replete with references to alchemy. For example, see *The Sufi Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan: The Alchemy of Happiness* (Khan 1960) or M. Waley's (1993) *Sufism: Alchemy of the Heart*. In fact, Shaykha Maryam Kabeer Faye, a devoted companion of Shaykh Arona Faye, has penned a memoir of her own spiritual journey, entitled *Journey through Ten Thousand Veils: The Alchemy of Transformation on the Sufi Path* (2009).

9. Yolanda Covington-Ward and Jeanette S. Jouili provide a succinct review of inter-subjectivity in the introductory chapter of this volume.

10. In spite of this focus, the aforementioned studies of diasporic religious communities are instructive in that they lead us to consider how both African American practices within a Senegalese Sufi tradition and the Senegalese institutions in which African Americans participate are reciprocally shifted by their combined presence.

11. Ramon Sarró and Ruy Llera Blanes (2009) depart from this trend by firmly placing African Christianity, particularly in its postcolonial formations (e.g., prophetism), as more central to the discussion of circuitous African traditions around the Atlantic.

12. At the same time, Jeffry Halverson (2016) urges us to rethink how the role of trance and lively formations of worship might also signal the historical presence of Islam in the coastal American South, the Caribbean, and beyond, as he argues that Gullah praise houses in colonial South Carolina served as spaces where West African Muslim forms of worship that were informed by a Sufi orientation were practiced.

13. I do not assert that studies that automatically include African Americans in a broader African diaspora need to be undone or invalidated. A valuable body of analysis

has pushed the field to recognize that diasporas have as much to do with identity and imagination as they do with actual dispersal—perhaps even more so. I argue, however, that there exists an opportunity to further illuminate how inclusion in religious networks has deepened and complicated the Black religious identities of African American Muslims in particular.

14. As David Berliner (2005) suggests, memory has been utilized in a multitude of ways in social scientific scholarship for the past few decades. Therefore, it has swiftly become a placeholder for referring to processes of continuity and transmission that have become transcultural through wide use and the word risks becoming emptied of meaning. I use memory as a lens through which to elaborate on the collective processes of memorialization that result in specific discourses of liberation and religious recollection (“reversion”) embedded within distinct interpretations of sacred text and enacted via recitation of Sufi odes and other forms of learning.

15. Unlike *conversion*, which describes a fundamental transition from one religious tradition to another or the adoption of beliefs and attitudes that inform devotional practices, *reversion* connotes the regaining of a religious heritage that was previously forgotten or lost by the religious practitioner or by ancestors. Reversion therefore includes the rediscovery of a prior religious worldview or the reclaiming of a tradition imagined to be somehow lost by the adherent.

16. Ware (2014) juxtaposes the French system of education in colonial West Africa with the traditional Islamic approach to learning. While the French system emphasizes the mental faculties in what Ware characterizes as a “disembodied” approach, traditional Qur’anic schooling values the spiritual integrity of the body in which knowledge is placed.

17. Translated into English, the Prophetic salutation of the Mustafawi reads: “Oh Allah send blessings upon our Master Muhammad, the one who precedes all others, the one whose brilliant light radiates and fills the heavens. May Allah bless him and his Family and companions in the amount of every grain of sand and every star in the sky.”

18. Shaykh Mustafa Gueye Haydara, excerpts from “Al-Bahrul Muhit (The Vast Ocean),” translated and printed by Shaykh Arona Faye al-Faqir, Zawiyyah of Moncks Corner.

19. Shaykh Mustafa Gueye Haydara, “The Cloak of Protection and the Soldiers of Divine Care,” translated and printed by Shaykh Arona Faye al-Faqir, Zawiyyah of Moncks Corner, August 2014.

20. The introductory page of “The Cloak of Protection and the Soldiers of Divine Care” briefly discusses its author and intent: “This qasidah was written by Shaykh Muhammad Mustafa Gueye Haydar, who was the son of Shaykh Sahib Gueye, may Allah Ta’ala be pleased with both of them. With this qasidah he beseeches Allah to draw towards him all forms of goodness. He titled it ‘The Cloak of Protection and the Soldiers of Divine Care.’ He said that it would be exactly as the title suggests, in the open and in secret, for those who recite it morning and evening for the sake of Allah and with the intention of attracting all goodness and blessings repelling harm.”

21. See Hirschkind’s (2006) *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics*. Hirschkind’s study of cassette-sermon listeners in Egypt is quite instructive

about the power of moralizing discourses that have the capacity to shape individual and collective ethical behavior.

22. Hadith are the documented sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad as directly narrated by and transmitted through his companions. In combination with Qur'an scriptures, Muslims around the world generally rely on direct accounts of the Prophet's decision-making to explicate appropriate behaviors and etiquette and to determine how specific kinds of worship should be enacted.

REFERENCES

- Abdullah, Zain. 2009. "African 'Soul Brothers' in the 'Hood': Immigration, Islam, and the Black Encounter." *Anthropological Quarterly* 82 (1): 37–62.
- Alpers, Edward A. 2000. "Recollecting Africa: Diasporic Memory in the Indian Ocean World." *African Studies Review* 43 (1): 83–99.
- Beliso-De Jesús, Aisha M. 2015. *Electric Santería: Racial and Sexual Assemblages of Transnational Religion*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Berliner, David. 2005. "The Abuses of Memory: Reflections on the Memory Boom in Anthropology." *Anthropological Quarterly* 78 (1): 197–211.
- Clarke, Kamari. 2004. *Mapping Yorùbá Networks: Power and Agency in the Making of Transnational Communities*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Cohen, Robin. 2008. *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
- Connerton, Paul. 1989. *How Societies Remember*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Covington-Ward, Yolanda. 2016. *Gesture and Power: Religion, Nationalism, and Everyday Performance in Congo*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Curtis, Edward E., IV. 2006. *Black Muslim Religion in the Nation of Islam, 1960–1975*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Curtis, Edward E., IV. 2009. *Muslims in America: A Short History*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Curtis, Edward E., IV. 2014. *The Call of Bilal: Islam in the African Diaspora*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Diouf, Sylviane A. 2013. *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*. New York: New York University Press.
- Drame, Imam Fode. 2017. *Illuminated Remembrance of God*. Vancouver, BC: Tasleem.
- Eisenlohr, Patrick. 2018. *Sounding Islam: Voice, Media, and Sonic Atmospheres in an Indian Ocean World*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- Faye, Maryam Kabeer. 2009. *Journey through Ten Thousand Veils: The Alchemy of Transformation on the Sufi Path*. Clifton, NJ: Tughra Books.
- Garbin, David. 2013. "The Visibility and Invisibility of Migrant Faith in the City: Diaspora Religion and the Politics of Emplacement of Afro-Christian Churches." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 39 (5): 677–696.
- Geurts, Kathryn Linn. 2003. *Culture and the Senses: Embodiment, Identity, and Well-Being in an African Community*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ghanea Bassiri, Khambiz. 2010. *A History of Islam in America: From the New World to the New World Order*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Gilroy, Paul. 1993. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gomez, Michael. 2005. *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Griffith, R. Marie, and Barbara Dianne Savage, eds. 2006. *Women and Religion in the African Diaspora: Knowledge, Power, and Performance*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Gueye Haydara, Shaykh Mustafa. 2013. "Al-Bahrul Muhit (The Vast Ocean)." Translated by Shaykh Arona Faye al-Faqir. Moncks Corner, SC: Zawiyah of Moncks Corner.
- Gueye Haydara, Shaykh Mustafa. 2014. "The Cloak of Protection and Soldiers of Divine Care." Translated by Shaykh Arona Faye al-Faqir. Moncks Corner, SC: Zawiyah of Moncks Corner.
- Halverson, Jeffrey R. 2016. "West African Islam in Colonial and Antebellum South Carolina." *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 36 (3): 413–426.
- Hirschkind, Charles. 2006. *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Ho, Engseung. 2006. *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Holsey, Bayo. 2004. "Transatlantic Dreaming: Slavery, Tourism, and Diasporic Encounters." In *Homecomings: Unsettling Paths of Return*, edited by Frank Markowitz and Alex Stefansson, 166–182. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Jouili, Jeanette. 2015. *Pious Practice and Secular Constraints: Women in the Islamic Revival in Europe*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Kane, Ousmane. 2011. *The Homeland Is the Arena: Religion, Transnationalism, and the Integration of Senegalese Immigrants in America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Khan, Hazrat Inayat. 1960. *The Sufi Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan: The Alchemy of Happiness*. Vol. 1. Ashland, OH: Library of Alexandria.
- Kugle, Scott A. 2003. "The Heart of Ritual Is the Body: Anatomy of an Islamic Devotional Manual of the Nineteenth Century." *Journal of Ritual Studies* 17 (1): 42–60.
- Kugle, Scott A. 2011. *Sufis and Saints' Bodies: Mysticism, Corporeality, and Sacred Power in Islam*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Lovejoy, Paul. 1997. *The African Diaspora: Revisionist Interpretations of Ethnicity, Culture and Religion under Slavery*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Mahmood, Saba. 2001. "Rehearsed Spontaneity and the Conventionality of Ritual: Disciplines of *Ṣalat*." *American Ethnologist* 28 (4): 827–853.
- Mahmood, Saba. 2011. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Matory, J. Lorand. 2005. *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- McCloud, Aminah Beverly. 2014. *African American Islam*. New York: Routledge.
- Routon, Kenneth. 2006. "Trance-Nationalism: Religious Imaginaries of Belonging in the Black Atlantic." *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 13 (3): 483–502.
- Sarró, Ramon, and Ruy Llera Blanes. 2009. "Prophetic Diasporas Moving Religion across the Lusophone Atlantic." *African Diaspora* 2 (1): 52–72.

- Taylor, Ula. 2017. *The Promise of Patriarchy: Women and the Nation of Islam*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Waley, M. 1993. *Sufism: The Alchemy of the Heart*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books.
- Ware, Rudolph, III. 2014. *The Walking Qur'an: Islamic Education, Embodied Knowledge, and History in West Africa*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Yamba, C. Bawa. 1995. *Permanent Pilgrims: The Role of Pilgrimage in the Lives of West African Muslims in Sudan*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.