



HIP HOP UKRAINE

music, race, and
AFRICAN
migration

Adriana N. Helbig

HIP HOP UKRAINE



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MUSIC, RACE, AND AFRICAN MIGRATION

Adriana N. Helbig

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DEDICATED TO MY MOTHER,
Marijka Stadnycka Helbig,
AND IN LOVING MEMORY OF MY FATHER,
Omelan Helbig

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I am very grateful to the many people and communities in different parts of the world that expressed an interest in this project and extended a helping hand to me every step of the way. Though it is not possible to name everyone who has contributed to the development of this research project and to the writing of this book, I feel it is best to thank people in the order that I met them, since this project has grown through so many layers since 2004 when I first came across the ethnographic data that led me down this path. My first meetings with African musicians in Ukraine came while I was working as a travel guide for my mother's tour groups through Scope Travel Inc. At that time, I was working off the "debts" I had accumulated with my parents following eight years of graduate school in ethnomusicology spent researching the impact of international development aid on Roma (Gypsy) music traditions in Ukraine. My goal was not to launch into another research project without having completed the previous one, but political upheaval in Ukraine made it complicated for me to publish my dissertation at that time. Though my

dissertation remains a book to be written, I took with me into this project the excellent training I had received from my ethnomusicology professors at Columbia University, especially Dieter Christensen, Aaron Fox, Ana Maria Ochoa, Christopher Washburne, and historian Mark von Hagen, and applied it to the study of hip hop.

When I began this project, I had no intention to publish a book or to engage in as much research as I did. Thus, while the hip hop project essentially began in 2004, I did not begin working on it with a relative amount of seriousness until 2007, when I was a visiting professor of ethnomusicology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. It was in long conversations with my colleagues Donna Buchanan, Gabriel Solis, Thomas Turino, Gayle and Jeffry Magee, and Bruno Nettl that I conceptualized the theoretical frameworks that provided the foundations for my understandings of global hip hop, the relationships between Africa and the USSR, the role of music in the Cold War, and the politics of migration in the European Union and the former USSR. Richard Tempest, director of the Russian and East European Center at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, provided me with numerous insights into Russian popular music and culture. My first fieldwork on hip hop in Ukraine preceded my year in Urbana, and I followed up with fieldwork in Ukraine in the summer of 2008. With the financial assistance of a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities Collaborative Fellowship Program, I worked with Olya Kolomyjets, lecturer at the Faculty of Culture and Arts at the Lviv National University, and Yaryna Romaniuk, an ethnomusicologist affiliated with the Kharkiv Conservatory of Music, in conducting interviews with hip hop musicians, graffiti artists, producers, and policy workers addressing issues of migration. We synthesized comparative information from three different parts of Ukraine—Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Lviv—that reinforced many of the ideas I had garnered during my fieldwork the previous summer. In the fall of 2008, I began my job as an assistant professor of music at the University of Pittsburgh, where I taught undergraduate courses on global hip hop and took time to further explore theoretical thinking on race in the United States. A diversity seminar for faculty led by Jean Ferguson Carr and Valerie Carr Copeland at the end of my first teaching year further solidified my thinking on how we talk about race, gender, and class in the classroom. In the fall of 2009, I received a course release and was one of the inaugural fellows at the University of Pittsburgh's Humanities Center, directed by Jonathan Arac and Todd Reeser. Invited lectures at various

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INTRODUCTION

Just as popular music from the United States has had a major impact on the development of popular music throughout the world, so its philosophies have inspired social and political movements worldwide. Hip hop, in its historical association with African American culture, has had a profound influence on cultural changes, civil rights movements, social developments, political situations, and globalizing cultural processes throughout the world. Numerous books, journals, internet articles, blogs, and social media sites reinforce the now commonly accepted notion that hip hop is a global genre that serves as a voice for youths of different backgrounds. Hip hop's roots grow more complex along the routes of its appropriation. The technology available, the political climate, and the ethnic, racial, and class relationships among musicians and their audiences add to the vibrant developments and multitude of meanings "hip hop" has come to hold in the world today. In the United Kingdom, Afro-Caribbeans use the genre to stand up to police brutality and racial profiling. In France, rappers such as MC Solaar and groups including Suprême NTM and IAM are from former colonies who bring postcolonial politics, police brutality, Islamic identity, and equality to the foreground (Durand 2002). In similar socially conscious fashion, hip hop in Germany helps bring race to the forefront when post-Nazi politics are silent on the issue (Rollefson 2009). Rap on the African continent has begun to shed American influences and incorporate local languages and local issues (Charry 2012). Bringing attention to racial inequality, urban culture, power, materiality, and violence, hip hop in its global forms has cachet as a commodity through its association with the United States that is reshaped through local contexts and identities.

Recent research into the genre's racial complexities in the United States has reinforced notions of hip hop's ability to reach across racial and class

boundaries. Bakari Kitwana, author of *Why White Kids Love Hip-Hop: Wankstas, Wiggers, Wannabes, and the New Reality of Race in America*, argues that white youths seek out hip hop as a way to reject old racial politics and incorporate the inclusive rhetoric that “all men are created equal” (2006). Kitwana draws on themes of alienation across class lines and points to a changing racial climate in the United States that allows for more contact between white and African American cultures. Political rhetoric has embraced such interracial blurring during the presidency of Barack Obama. Obama, dubbed by the music industry as the first “hip hop president” for his public affinity with black music culture, has embraced certain representatives of hip hop, like Jay-Z, while rejecting others, for instance, calling Kanye West a “jackass.” During his first run for the presidency, members of the U.S. hip hop community responded to Obama’s outreach and released songs in support, including Nas’s “Black President” and Young Jeezy’s anthem “My President Is Black.” At a pre-inaugural event for Obama’s second term in office, however, Lupe Fiasco was escorted offstage for his anti-Obama rap. Such instances point to the political nature of hip hop and to the ways in which the genre has reached the mainstream while attempting to keep hold of its rhetoric of free speech.

In *Thug Life: Race, Gender, and the Meaning of Hip-Hop*, Michael Jeffries warns against overemphasizing the political cachet of hip hop, asserting that it is not rap-as-resistance as much as it is a resistance against white patriarchy (2011). Jeffries argues that white young men enjoy hip hop because of how it sounds, while for black young men, the music is intertwined with racial identity. Drawing on ethnographic research in New York City public and private schools, linguist Cecelia Cutler identifies middle-class white youths who mark their affiliation with hip hop culture through adopted speech practices that have their roots in African American English (2007). Yet hip hop is no longer an issue of black or white. Today, ethnic hip hop among Asian Americans (Wong 2004) and South Asian Americans (Sharma 2010) illustrates immigrant stories and diasporic sensibilities.

Hip hop offers ways for relatively silenced populations to push past reductive representations and to offer agency in various frameworks, whether capitalist, postcolonial, socialist, or post-socialist. Initially viewed with suspicion by the Cuban government, hip hop has been embraced as a revolutionary form and funded by the government since the late 1990s (Fernandes 2006). The government formed the *Agencia Cubana de Rap* (Cuban Rap Agency)

that runs a state-sponsored record label, issues a hip hop magazine, and supports the annual Cuban hip hop festival. The documentary film *East of Havana* (2006) highlights the challenges that rappers in Cuba face regarding inconsistent funding and censorship in light of the socialist government's sponsorship of the music. This is in contrast to the situation in Senegal, where the documentary *African Underground: Democracy in Dakar* (2009) represents underground hip hop musicians as uncensored "musical journalists" who serve as the voice of antigovernment resistance. Ethnomusicologist Patricia Tang views such Senegalese rap artists as "modern griots" who advocate for political change and, like traditional griots, praise and critique individuals with their oratory skills (2012).

Whether in the United States, Cuba, or Senegal, hip hop's relationship to local power dynamics, resistance, and representative agency is crucial to understanding the complex ways the genre has adapted to on-the-ground situations by people across the world. Even when discourses of race, class, and gender are not readily apparent to those on the outside of hip hop scenes, in places where "blackness" is not necessarily a physical manifestation of practitioners' identities, analysis in such spaces points to the even deeper layerings of hip hop's influences. In *From Jim Crow to Jay-Z: Race, Rap, and the Performance of Masculinity*, Miles White argues that much of hip hop culture in Europe derives its sense of American black masculinity via mediated and live performances of hip hop by African American rap artists who have toured Western, Central, and Eastern Europe in the last twenty or so years (2011, 127). In his description of a 50 Cent concert in Prague in 2007, White compares the "racially monolithic" (presumably white) audience dressed in hip hop garb to a theme park crowd. White assumed the age- and gender-diverse crowd was unable to understand the English-language lyrics because they did not readily engage in call-and-response exchanges with the singer. In so doing, he dismissed localized forms of behavior as invalid or not informed (inadvertently reinforcing an often-repeated Western European stereotype of Slavic people as uneducated and backward). White notes that there were no black people in the arena other than those on stage, promoting the notion that physical blackness acts as the primary legitimizing factor in global relationships to hip hop. He posits, "The kind of inner-city desolation, gang violence, and street-level drug hustling that produced 50 Cent was half a world away and almost unimaginable in post-communist Prague even after nearly twenty years since the fall of the Berlin Wall" (128).

While formerly socialist countries that lie behind the Iron Curtain may appear to have little in common with inner-city issues in the United States, my book charts the complex webs of similarities in these seemingly disparate places. Delving deeper into the global circulation of blackness and the myriad interpretations it has taken on in formerly socialist societies, I offer interpretations of hip hop's popularity in Eastern Europe as closely tied to a history of African American and African involvement in shaping race rhetoric under socialism. I also analyze post-socialist relationships to African American culture as validations of new class identities in formerly classless societies. I further position myself within this rhetoric as the granddaughter of Ukrainian immigrants who were forced to abandon their ancestral home amid war and social and political upheaval and to forge new life paths in relatively impoverished urban conditions in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on my mother's side and in Newark, New Jersey, on my father's side. Both families established new roots in Ukrainian American diaspora communities, physically positioned amid African American urban spaces. I draw on my own experiences living in the United States in physical proximity to African Americans but having little cultural contact with them. I acknowledge the reasons behind my personal interest in hip hop and reggae as popularized by African musicians in Ukraine in the last twenty years as being strongly rooted in my own limited opportunities to connect with African American culture because the ethnic community in which I grew up was so insular. That is not to say there weren't any Ukrainian/African American interactions in Newark. Numerous interviews with community elders make mention of an African American shoe salesman who spoke Ukrainian and worked at a Ukrainian-owned shoe store, Howerla (named after the highest peak in Ukraine's Carpathian Mountains), in Newark. The salesman, Benny Goldstein, exemplifies the complexities with which new immigrants related to "Americans," as even U.S.-born Ukrainians call non-Ukrainians, around them (Lemekh 2010). The community elders did not seek to change but rather drew select outsiders in, "Ukrainianizing" Benny and Irish and Italian sons-in-law. Benny learned Ukrainian because language allowed him to cross community boundaries and helped alleviate fears of difference.

Following Guthrie Ramsey's frame of musical autobiography to bring to light the theoretical and intellectual pursuits of my project, I find it fruitful to share the musical boundaries of my personal life as it informed my intellectual pursuits (Ramsey 2003). My second-generation diaspora experience

served as a focal point of reference throughout my research, because it played an important and often impenetrable role in my upbringing. Ukraine gained independence in 1991, when I was in the eleventh grade. The actual declaration of Ukrainian independence, however, made a minimal impression on me, because Ukrainian American diaspora communities had for decades been “performing the nation,” to borrow anthropologist Kelly Askew’s term (2002). In my mind, Ukraine had already existed, in books, maps, culture, community, church life, and historical and family narratives. I spent my childhood wearing embroidered costumes, attending folk dance concerts, performing classically arranged versions of folk songs on piano, waving the Ukrainian flag at meetings with U.S. diplomats to draw awareness to the plight of non-Russian republics in the USSR, and celebrating anniversaries of short-lived declarations of Ukrainian independence. Many in our community had famous last names that identified them as pre–World War II western Ukrainian intelligentsia. The community had its splits, between Catholic and Orthodox, intelligentsia and those with village roots. The personal and national aspirations blurred, and as diaspora youths, we burdened ourselves with an imagined responsibility to a nation-state that seemed immediate yet incomprehensible. I realized that researching ethnic Ukrainian music would not shed light on the types of questions I had. I had to break out of anything familiar to me and reconstitute my relationship to my own ethnic identity, which I did by conducting research among Roma (Gypsy) communities in Ukraine. My research among African immigrants has pushed me not only to reconstitute a sense of my Ukrainian identity but also to think deeply about my own sense of being an American. Having thought of difference predominantly in terms of ethnicity, my research on global hip hop has forced me to crystallize my thinking on race. Growing up, whiteness for me signified Anglo-Saxon culture, toward which I felt no connection. Even today, many of my diaspora friends divide people into two groups—Ukrainians and Americans. In working on this project, it became clear to me that ethnicity rather than race was my first boundary of difference. Though physically white, I knew that I was “white of a different color” (Jacobson 1999).¹ This project pushed me to think critically about the unarticulated goal of middle-class “whiteness” toward which Slavs strived (Roediger 2006), alongside Jews (Brodkin 1998) and Irish in America (Ignatiev 2008).

Following the 1967 Newark riots, many Ukrainian Americans began to move away from urban Newark and the community’s center to the suburbs. As

an adult, I acted in reverse of the “white flight” and purchased a multifamily house in the part of Newark where I grew up. A year after buying my house, on the night of August 5, 2007, four college-bound students were attacked at the Mount Vernon School that adjoins my backyard. A gang lined them up against the schoolyard wall, forced them to kneel, and shot them in the head at point-blank range. Three died; one survived. Such senseless violence, poverty, and discrimination has reinforced my sense of responsibility to engage with and get to know communities alongside which I live but with which I had never interacted. I am indebted to my Haitian and Dominican tenants for broadening my thinking on race, migration, and the politics of blackness and ethnicity in the United States. My Russian-speaking neighbors from Ghana, who studied in Moscow at the time of the USSR, offered perspective on African experiences in Eastern Europe. My older family members in Ukraine surprised me with their lucid ideas about racial equality and their staunch support for U.S. activist Angela Davis. Younger collaborators in Ukraine disappointed me with their fears of conducting interviews with African musicians. Members of the Ukrainian American community firmly supported my research by inviting me to present initial findings at community gatherings in New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago. Academic forums, conferences, and feedback from colleagues in popular music studies, ethnomusicology, anthropology, and Slavic studies sharpened my theoretical thinking about my project. My undergraduate students in courses on global hip hop have been a tremendous help, as we have discussed meanings of race at a time of great political change in the United States, during and after the election of the first black president. Though this research has progressed through more than half a decade of experiencing, thinking, interviewing, and analyzing, it seems as if it is only a starting point for deeper analysis of the complexities hip hop brings to the fore.

As a case study, this book broadens research on global hip hop to include Eastern Europe. It augments the growing scholarship on African American and African experiences in the USSR by elucidating the ways global discourse on black music influenced race ideologies during the Cold War. It analyzes notions of whiteness in post-socialist societies and probes the ways U.S. music industries circulate ideas of blackness through analyses of how these ideas are embodied through global appropriations of hip hop. While not an exhaustive study, this book serves as a framework for studies of hip hop that do not see the genre merely as a transplanted music form from the United States but as a polysemous conduit for intercultural and interracial exchange.

HIP HOP UKRAINE

This book challenges global hip hop scholarship to account for the politics of musical culture within a community's ethnic, political, and economic contexts through a case study of hip hop in relationship to issues of race and migration. It positions hip hop as a central musical language and cultural expression of polyvalent voices and sheds light on hip hop's relationship to changing understandings of racial, class, and ethnic identities influenced by global media and increased population movements. Through ethnographic research in Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, as well as Kharkiv, an industrial city in eastern Ukraine, and various smaller towns and villages in western, central, and southern parts of the country, this book brings forth a narrative from a variety of people, including music producers, fans, and musicians of various ethnic, class, and racial backgrounds.

Focusing on a period from 2004 to 2010, this book incorporates research gathered from a number of extended summer research stays in Ukraine and encompasses information regarding hip hop infused with local folk music, jazz, reggae, Ukrainian- and Russian-language rock, and hip hop from the United States and Africa. A two-week trip to Uganda to meet with families of immigrant musicians in Ukraine offered perspective on their understanding of musical developments in Ukraine and approaches toward establishing popular music careers there. Political videos addressing migration, music videos and concerts, and popular magazines and newspaper articles featuring interviews with immigrant musicians offered broader context to hip hop's association with global circulations of African, Afro-Caribbean, and African American notions of black identity.

Over the course of this book, it will become clear that hip hop, in its African, Afro-Caribbean, African American, and local Ukrainian and Russian fusion forms, carries many meanings and serves multiple purposes. As a worldwide language of social consciousness, hip hop offers ways for musicians to address issues that affect them and their listening public in post-socialist society, particularly racial discrimination, political corruption, economic marginalization, ethnic discrimination, and gender inequality. For certain segments of Ukraine's youth population, hip hop serves as a medium through which they negotiate socioeconomic status. Individual and collective processes of representation are mediated through rap competitions, hip hop parties, breakdance classes and competitions, and hip hop recording studio culture.

Most thoroughly explored in this book, however, is how hip hop allows newcomers to Ukraine to express ties to their homeland, create new senses of community, and negotiate similarities and differences among immigrants and local populations. Hip hop scenes offer local and immigrant participants nuanced ways to address racism and processes of social, economic, and political integration. Several musicians originally from Africa have used their access to media and status as musicians and pop culture figures to draw attention to the challenges African immigrants face in Ukraine.

In Europe, hip hop took root by the early 1980s and immediately attracted the attention of music scholars. Increasing attention to the role of African musicians in European music scenes has shed light on the dynamic impact that postcolonial migration from the African continent and closer engagements with African American expressive culture have had on black identity formation. The emergence of black European studies in the last decade, focusing on what Stephen Small calls “the Black diaspora” in Europe, questions the very premise of “Europe” in the twenty-first century (2009, xxiii). With an increasing number of formerly socialist countries joining the European Union, it behooves us to address the specific engagements “Eastern” Europe has had with African identity and to define aspects of “the Black diaspora” in European and former Soviet countries restructuring themselves after communism’s fall (Blakely 2012). This study uncovers the visible and invisible borders of exclusion and inclusion materialized in laws and practices (Balibar 2004; Balibar and Wallerstein 1991). A study of black music-making in Ukraine offers new perspectives on “the Black diaspora” through discourses of post-socialist migration, nationalism, and citizenship (Penrose 2002; Stolcke 1995). It examines hip hop’s sociopolitical impacts on the relationships between Africans and non-Africans beyond the borders of the European Union, namely in countries of the former Soviet Union where hip hop culture took hold a decade later, in the early 1990s.

AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSIC AND POST-SOCIALIST SIGNIFICANCE

This book positions hip hop as a foray into nuanced analyses of African experiences in diaspora and looks to music to understand how performances of personhood and acceptance are shaped by local policies and global media. It builds on scholarship that elucidates how the consumption of Western

cultural products constitutes identity and status among performers and listeners in countries outside the West. Anthropologist Marvin Sterling, in his ethnography *Babylon East: Performing Dancehall, Roots Reggae, and Rastafari in Japan*, argues that reggae and Rastafari represent productive lenses through which to view gender, class, ethnicity, and nationhood in Japan (2010). Sterling posits, “Blackness in consumerist, information-age Japan is a commodity that is largely divorced from its human referents, to be enjoyed through, for example, the playful consumption of dancehall music” (4). For Sterling, consumption is a means of asserting cosmopolitan identities. The consumption of blackness invokes cosmopolitanism and concurrently validates the notion of a universal whiteness. Blackness, as it is set up for consumption, is, however, severed from any real black people. It is imagined and used by practitioners of reggae in Japan for localized performances of identity. The difference between “blackness as symbol and blackness as lived” (28) begs us to look deeper at how blackness is fetishized for its own sake and how it is used to validate other forms of identity.

In the summer of 2006, Nokia, which controls a significant share of the cell phone market in Ukraine, promoted its new cell phone/MP3 player with the Ukrainian-language slogan “I am my music” (“Ja—Moia Muzyka”). This advertising campaign featured recognizable figures such as Sviatoslav Vakarchuk, leader of the rock group Okean Elzy (Elza’s Ocean) and advisor on youth affairs to former president Viktor Yushchenko (2005–10). The campaign reached out to cosmopolitan youth who viewed themselves as part of the upwardly mobile, Western-aware, growing middle class. Though Vakarchuk was the most prominent figure participating in this ad campaign, some billboards featured a dark-skinned man with no public name recognition. The representation of an African American within this advertisement series indexes what ethnomusicologist Cheryl Keyes identifies as the aesthetic significance of African American sound culture (2003). Keyes argues that the radio and the expansion of the recording industry contributed to the mass commodification of black popular music forms through the notion of intracultural borrowings. The internet and devices such as the MP3 player point to contemporary ways technology enables the further commodification of African American cultural production.

In *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe*, ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino uses the term “cosmopolitan” to refer to objects, ideas, and cultural positions that exist throughout the world but are accessible

only to certain segments of the population in a given place (2000, 7). Turino's notion of "cosmopolitan loops" identifies media networks that circulate ideas that are embraced in contexts with similar habitus (8). Local structures form bases for cosmopolitan formations and support the establishment of "native" cosmopolitanisms that simultaneously constitute a local habitus but embody translocal features that establish links to similar groups elsewhere (9–11). In this way, Kenyan youth lay claim to public forms of cultural citizenship by borrowing from global hip hop culture the idea that "the role of 'the artist' is not only to make music but also to 'represent the real' by embodying and expressing the authentic subjectivity of her place in the world" (Eisenberg 2012, 557). In post-socialist contexts, African American musical genres create fissures in cosmopolitan ways of being. They offer links to U.S. cultural products and the status invoked through cultural access. Through hip hop's historical association with African Americans, music indexes a specifically "American" experience within the broader "West." It also invokes relationships that immigrants and cultural outsiders living in Ukraine have with "America," offering room for variations regarding circulated relationships and meanings. The "cosmopolitan loops" of hip hop offer direct and overlapping relationships to various forms of blackness that facilitate interracial communication.

Building on research of scholars like ethnomusicologist Ronald Radano who stress the importance of discursive analysis that explores "how the 'musical' enters into and informs the domain of language and social experience" (2003, 20), this study analyzes how constructions of "blackness" and "whiteness" are mediated through more than a century of Soviet and post-Soviet interactions with "black music." As Radano states, "Black music's power does not derive solely from its marking of difference but also from its ability to signify a difference that depends on and grows out of a common history and experience and, in doing so, reveals the sameness of a shared interracial belief in the American racial myth" (22). Radano researches how race discourse has historically informed white consciousness and written in black musical genres before and after the abolition of slavery in America. This book aims to contribute to black music studies by analyzing how discourses on music and race informed black identity construction in the Russian Empire, the former Soviet Union, and independent Ukraine. Just as blackness is a historical construction of whiteness rooted in a history of American slavery, so is "Africa" a construction of "Europeanness" rooted in colonialism, and "East" is a con-

struction of “West” rooted in Marxist discourse. These myriad circulations of historical, cultural, and ideological discourses function within referential processes of modernity in post-Soviet society and have a direct impact on the ways people perceive race in theory and practice. Music, embedded and influenced by discursive practices of sameness and difference, allows for deeper and more nuanced understandings regarding how status and cultural ideas regarding “us” and “them” are sociopolitically and economically negotiated.

HIP HOP REVOLUTION

In Ukraine, music is closely connected to politics, and the broader spectrum of political shifts in the country directly affects opportunities for musicians. The series of antigovernment corruption protests in 2004, commonly known as the Orange Revolution, opened up spaces for Ukrainian language and culture in the media spheres.² As this book goes to print, Russian language and culture have resurfaced as the dominant forms of cultural expression in the public sphere. This is evident in the music of local and immigrant musicians, who now perform predominantly in Russian, even though their music was in Ukrainian at the time of the Orange Revolution when I first began the research for this project. Thus, any references to the Orange Revolution in this book carry multiple meanings. The antigovernment protests that went against corruption and censorship opened up Ukraine’s music industries to new voices. A local Ukrainian music industry was able to develop alongside cultural imports from the Russian Federation and the West.

In a musical sense, the “revolution” signified changes in society and in the role of musicians who had been marginalized due to broader political and economic situations in Ukraine following independence from the Soviet Union. During the course of this research, Ukraine also hosted the Eurovision contest in 2005, following Ruslana Lyzhychko’s win in 2004. Such events, including the foregrounding of music during the Orange Revolution, opened up ideas and spaces regarding the professionalization and commercialization of popular music in Ukraine. Musicians have taken political and social stances on a variety of issues relating to cultural policy, foreign policy, and social issues, such as human trafficking, AIDS, and ethnic rights. In an anti-trafficking public service video sponsored by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in 2009, Ruslana, the most well known female popular musician in Ukraine (and an ethnomusicologist by training), searches for a

trafficked woman against a fragmented soundtrack of her recognizable ethno-rhythmic musical style. The male narrator informs the viewer that thousands of Ukrainian women are trafficked every year. He urges young women to be careful and to not engage in acts that may take away their freedom. The campaign slogan reminds women that they can choose their destiny. Female bodies are not a commodity for sale (PURL 0.1).³

It is important to paint this picture of Ukraine's changing music industries because the early 1990s (when hip hop first emerged in the country) posed insurmountable challenges for musicians during the collapse of the Soviet state-sponsored recording and performance industries. Very little music was produced on a national scale, and musicians had very few opportunities to perform live. The Orange Revolution repositioned musicians front and center in society and validated music as an important avenue for social commentary, as music had been previously in the late 1980s during Ukraine's independence movements. It was also significant in validating hip hop as a commercially viable music genre in Ukraine. The revolution's most popular song, "Razom nas bahato" (Together we are many), discussed in detail in chapter 3, served as a socially conscious rap that rallied support for the antigovernment protests. A reworked version of the song with English lyrics served as Ukraine's submission for the Eurovision contest held in Kyiv in 2005. It placed twentieth out of twenty-three entries, due in part to a very low score from the Russian judge.

Hip hop was first introduced in Ukraine with the fall of the Soviet Union, and the music serves as a metaphor for many of the changes that have come to Ukraine since independence. These include changes in gender relations, emergence of new groups who feel empowered and disempowered by the growing market economy, tensions within the dominant cultures vis-à-vis immigrant and ethnically/racially marginalized groups, growing class divisions between the poor and nouveau riche who have gained questionable power in the wake of post-socialist privatizations, and the increasing power of the media, which has come to be used both by the marginalized and by those in power to manipulate present realities in regard to social, political, and economic anxieties in Ukraine.

While it is not possible to address all of the ways hip hop overlaps with changes in Ukraine, this book attempts to shed light on the ways in which notions of race and migration intersect with the genre through a specific focus on African experiences in post-socialist society. Looking at more commercial

aspects of hip hop and underground scenes, it points to the complex ways that people relate to music associated with the United States and with African Americans in particular. It also shows that engagements with music from the United States are not merely lateral movements between the West and other parts of the world but instead are circulated and mediated through interconnected historical, geographical, economic, and sociocultural junctures. Thus, this book hopes to contribute to ongoing conversations in which issues of migration, race, and individual expression are among the central tenets of analysis.

FIELDWORK IDEOLOGIES AND IDENTITIES

During extended summer stays in eastern Ukraine in 2007 and 2008, I met many African students and through them unearthed a network of hip hop studios in Kharkiv with which Africans, together with Ukrainian and Russian young men and women, are associated. Thus, the book, while titled *Hip Hop Ukraine*, is not a study of hip hop in Ukraine per se but rather a study of a specific connection between hip hop musicians and African musicians living in Ukraine. It analyzes changing ideas regarding race in Soviet and post-Soviet society and how hip hop factors into these changing ideologies. By focusing on Africans living in Ukraine, the book looks at how ideas about hip hop circulate globally and are informed from various perspectives at the same time. As hip hop develops in Ukraine, it is simultaneously informed by the ways in which Africans perceive the genre in their home countries and use it to create their own experiences and promote their own social agendas in Eastern Europe. While the number of Africans involved in hip hop scenes in Ukraine is relatively small when compared with Ukraine's music industries as a whole, they are very influential, based on the ways in which notions of blackness are informed through the circulation of media products from the United States in post-Soviet spaces. Thus, this book offers merely a partial history of the genre's development in Ukraine and contextualizes it in relation to African involvement in local hip hop scenes. While the book provides information on some of the better-known non-African hip hop groups in the country, it does not attempt to cover all hip hop-related activities and groups in Ukraine. It aims to add to the literature on African diaspora and on circulations of blackness from the perspective of post-Soviet engagements with hip hop in its globalized forms.

While the theoretical frame draws from hip hop studies, post-socialist critique, media studies, diaspora theory, class and race analysis, and Cold War race rhetoric, I invoke ethnographic detail to give the reader a clearer picture of the ways in which these ideas tie together and are personalized through interactions between musicians, producers, audiences, and politicians. Furthermore, I attempt to be true to the ways in which language is used to talk about issues of race, “Africa,” and Ukrainian-Russian relations, as these ways may differ based on whether interlocutors speak English, Russian, or Ukrainian. Because I am more fluent in Ukrainian than in Russian, I often used Ukrainian in my interviews, while my interlocutors answered in either Ukrainian or Russian. (In the case of English speakers from African countries, I spoke in English.) As the dominant language of the public sphere in eastern Ukraine is Russian, due to a complex history of Russian domination in urban areas (rural areas tend to speak *surzhyk*, a combination of Ukrainian and Russian), I was often asked if my choice in speaking Ukrainian was political. Thus, language immediately situated me in a political camp, whether Western-leaning (Ukrainian) or supportive of Vladimir Putin’s policies that regard Ukraine as the “near abroad” (Russian). The positions of local hip hop musicians changed based in relation to my perceived ethnic background. For instance, if they thought I was Russian, interviews veered toward discussions of Russian hip hop and Russia’s music industries, particularly those in St. Petersburg, which offers musicians from eastern Ukraine options beyond Kyiv. If they thought I was Ukrainian, they would bring up Kyiv’s burgeoning music industries and talk about the difficulties in trying to make it in a (Western) European music market.

My perceived ethnicity has always posed difficulties in fieldwork exchanges in Ukraine, not so much based on my identity as an American but, ironically, as an ethnic Ukrainian.⁴ My paternal and maternal grandparents escaped Soviet persecution from what is today western Ukraine. They settled in the eastern United States, attempting to recreate a sense of normalcy by surrounding themselves with people who shared a similar immigrant experience. In the milieu of Ukrainian-language schools, churches, community organizations, and meat markets, my mother opened a travel agency in the early 1970s specializing in travel to what was then Soviet Ukraine, often using her travel agency as a clandestine service to smuggle goods and anti-Soviet propaganda across Soviet borders. When Ukraine gained independence in 1991, I was a junior in high school, eager to get in on the family business. Because I was

too young to work as a tour guide, my mother set me up as a currency mule. I flew to Ukraine alone, bringing in U.S. currency from the diaspora for family members in Ukraine who were struggling economically in the chaos of post-socialist transition. Corruption had led to mistrust in banks, coercion of private information, and violence, and it was safer to hand-deliver these resources. This was a time when inflation soared, people lost their life savings, and a few million citizens of the newly independent Ukraine packed their bags and moved West with the hopes of gaining new economic opportunities, as my grandparents had done after World War II. My border crossings taught me to be conscious of my stance, vocal inflections, and gaze so as not to arouse the suspicions of corrupt Ukrainian border guards searching for bribes. I also worked on having an unassuming appearance that would allow me to blend in ways that did not bring unnecessary attention to myself in an independent Ukraine marred by violence and changing sociocultural values.

In my research experiences in graduate school and later as a professor of ethnomusicology, I flowed in and out of identities and situations with relative ease, whether in a mountain village or an urban dance club. I connected most strongly with people living in a constant flow of transitions. During my experiences in post-socialist Ukraine, I have borne witness to people continually forced to redefine themselves as they sought answers to try to understand the new democracy, market economy, and processes of globalization. In the border regions where I conducted my dissertation fieldwork in Roma communities in the late 1990s through the turn of the century, issues of identity were tied to wishes and (relative lack of) abilities to cross borders into Slovakia, Hungary, and Poland for trade and work. I identified with such narratives very strongly, as these were familiar to me in my diaspora milieu. I became sensitive to the ways in which a sense of belonging is tied to paperwork as it is to cultural expressions of ethnic and other forms of identity. I also came to recognize the political and cultural power of my U.S. passport. I witnessed how difficult it was for my Ukrainian counterparts to travel across the border with me and the general challenges imposed by visa requirements. Among Africans, I met those who were stuck in Ukraine, having overstayed their student visas, unable to gain employment or a way out of the country due to lack of paperwork.

I experienced physical and emotional hardships in Ukraine during my fieldwork. I was often robbed, taken advantage of, and physically assaulted as I found myself in the dramatic turmoil of family lives that had been turned

upside-down by post-socialist instability. I came to recognize my role of interviewer as one who provided temporary relief to my interlocutors, who perceived me as momentary hope and a sounding board for their intense anxieties brought forth by the constant unknown and their frustrations in not being able to provide for themselves and their families. Interviews and common exchanges were not merely the sharing of information but also emotional laments as people poured out their feelings to me.⁵ These experiences profoundly shaped my ideological and personal approaches to what I would later define as “fieldwork.” I came to expect that no cross-cultural exchange is easy. One simply had to experience all sides of situations to better understand the hardships and everyday struggles of the people one encountered.

My unusual experiences of traveling to Ukraine in my youth seemed to blur distinctions of “being in the field” and everyday life. Unlike many ethnographers, I do not consider ethnographic research to be fieldwork, *per se*. I view the time as experiences that build on one another and lead me to deeper understandings in the processes. I find that fieldwork is just as much about me as it is about the people I am interviewing and engaging with. Ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl has this to say about fieldwork as an individual process: “All subsequent analysis and interpretation of data depends so heavily on fieldwork, but it is also the most personal part of the job, the part that cannot really be taught, that all of us have had to learn on our own, finding ways of mediating between our own personalities with their strengths and weaknesses and the individuals whose shared beliefs we will learn and interpret, using confidence and mastering timidity” (2005, 146).

I write this book with the conviction that I present the materials with my deepest understanding of what I have learned. I draw from experiences leading diaspora travel groups to various parts of Ukraine in the first decade of the twenty-first century, recognizing the ways that local tour guides in different cities present histories based on local memory and ethnic politics. My dissertation research allowed me to live in Roma settlements in Transcarpathia, which led me to work with non-governmental organizations, policy think tanks, and human rights organizations. I have been conscious of my attempts to negotiate my role in the Ukrainian American diaspora as a scholar not content with simply writing about ethnic Ukrainian folk and popular music, as my cultural background might dictate. A research project finds its researcher, and one must follow that path, processing information as quickly or as slowly as it takes to establish macro- and micro-frameworks created by the flow of

numerous interlocking processes. Fieldwork is not unlike a travel agent who sets up an itinerary of experiences for tourists; it is as much about breaking down how the agent came to create the itinerary as it is about how the tourists interact within perceived frameworks of these experiences. Fieldwork mirrors those processes, the understanding of how things are created and how people engaging with images and ideas come to understand them. I write this to remind myself that I negotiated my identity as much as my African and non-African hip hop interlocutors did, creating disjunctures and similarities between themselves and local audiences. Altering representations, language choice, musical sounds, and movements, they introduced themselves in ways that allowed audiences to relate to them. At the same time, they turned to music to help them process feelings and realities, creating spaces for themselves and others to express similarities and difference in being.

MUSIC, BLACKNESS, AND MIGRATION

Being black in Ukraine today offers critical insights into processes of diasporic identity construction. Such constructions are simultaneously mediated via African experiences in the Soviet Union within politicized frameworks of Soviet-African, U.S.-Soviet, and U.S.-African relations during the Cold War and in the last two decades of post-socialist reformulations. It is possible to catch but a fleeting glimpse of the changes that are taking place in Ukraine when it comes to African experiences. First, the number of Africans living in Ukraine continues to grow, and communities have formed in cities such as Donetsk and Dnipropetrovsk in eastern Ukraine that were not prominent at the time of my research. It is difficult to determine an accurate number of Africans in Ukraine because of the annual turnaround of African students. Second, changing government policies regarding visa and citizenship requirements influence the everyday lives of Africans to unimaginable extents, forcing people to shape their daily experiences in ways that offer safety and stability, influencing where they go in the city and with whom they come into contact. Third, attitudes toward immigrants continue to shift among the general population, at times more welcoming than others, based on the ways in which discourses of immigration are politicized in the media and by political parties. The public sphere plays a significant role in how Africans are portrayed in the media and in the ways in which representations of “Africa” are negotiated by Africans and non-Africans on Ukrainian television, in

news coverage, and in the expressive arts, music among them. New African diaspora institutions and community organizations have begun to work with increasing effectiveness in helping provide increased protection and access to information for Africans living in Ukraine.

It is difficult to situate discourses of postcolonial migration in terms of post-socialist imaginaries because the Soviet Union, while practicing expansion politics framed by the idea of supporting socialist ideologies in various parts of the world, did not seek to gain colonies in the tradition of the British, French, Germans, Belgians, and Dutch. The Russian Empire of the nineteenth century had focused its empirical ambitions toward central Asia and did not exploit the African continent for material gain, as was the intent of European powers following the Berlin Conference of 1884–85, which aimed to regulate European trade and colonization in Africa. Contemporary migrations from Africa to Europe often follow historical routes. Rai musicians from Algeria seek refuge in France, because their overtly political and sexual music is perceived as a threat in an Islamic society. Migrations of Africans to former Soviet republics follow a pattern of historical connections framed by socialist experiences. The Soviet Union welcomed students from socialist-leaning countries, including Cuba⁶ and newly independent African countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Soviet leaders offered military support to protect their interests but diverged from the ideologies of the various African independence movements that were rooted in strong senses of nationalism (Tarabin 1977). They promoted a form of socialism that African countries did not follow but worked to their advantage in fields such as medicine. Relationships rooted in educational exchange forged in the Soviet era continue in the post-Soviet era, and it is still common to see students from Africa enrolled in universities of the former USSR, particularly in the medical fields.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, many Africans and Afro-Caribbean peoples continued to move to the Russian Federation and independent Ukraine but with very different experiences. The documentary film *Black Russians* (2001) by Kara Lynch features archival footage of Paul Robeson and Angela Davis in the USSR and live interviews with Russians of African, Afro-Caribbean, and African American descent aged ten to sixty-five. It offers a deeply personal account of race and communism and the struggles these particular individuals faced in light of rising nationalism in independent Russia. It shows that Soviet society grew increasingly racist over its seventy years of communism. As documented by Paula Garb in

her 1987 book published in the USSR, *They Came to Stay: North Americans in the USSR*, many African Americans and those of mixed marriage moved from the United States to the Soviet Union prior to World War II to escape racial bias at home. When Soviet universities began to extend scholarship programs for students from socialist-leaning countries in the 1960s, African students were somewhat protected by the socialist rhetoric that promoted “Friendship of the Peoples.” An inherent racism guided this policy, however, because Africans were allowed to study in the USSR but were not allowed to gain citizenship. Soviet policies discouraged interracial marriage and forced students to leave the USSR after their student visas expired without regard for interracial unions that had formed or for the children born from such unions. While the Soviet Union touted itself as a place of racial equality, in many regards, it practiced ideologies of racial separation much like the U.S. and European colonial powers.

The USSR positioned itself as morally advanced and as a place of social progress in relation to the West. By the 1960s, at the time of African independence movements, however, Soviet attitudes toward Africa took on a developmental approach that positioned the African continent as a place where the Soviet Union needed to intervene and to help newly independent African countries free themselves from postcolonial pressures. This approach, while aimed to assist, also reinforced the power and influence of the USSR on the African continent. African students were viewed as ambassadors of socialist ideologies, helping to promote the ideas of the USSR in their newly independent homelands. Though many students from Africa were aided by their respective governments, the perception of alleged financial assistance from the Soviet government led to a certain amount of resentment toward them from other students (Blakely 1986, 135–41).

When the USSR collapsed, Africa continued to function as a marker of comparison in post-Soviet consciousness. Whereas during the Soviet era, Africa was a place where Soviet aid was needed to improve everyday conditions, in the early years of transition in the 1990s, it was common for people in independent Ukraine to say that Ukraine had become “wild, without social order, and poor like Africa.”⁷ While in the early 1990s, racial discourse was framed in part by the individual and collective insecurity brought forth by the fall of the Soviet Union, the second decade of transition has been very influenced by depictions of racial identity in popular culture from the United States, especially in the form of movies, music, and television shows. Such products

have reshaped racial imaginaries, strongly guided by the ever-present Soviet fascination with American culture (Yurchak 2006), with a specific emphasis on African American expressions such as hip hop in the last decade or so.

Post-Soviet mediations of African American culture have also come to influence and be influenced by African presence in former Soviet spaces. To better illustrate the complexity of such mediations, I turn to the example that spurred my research interest in this project. In 2004, I came across a picture on the internet of two men of African descent (later I learned that they were students from Uganda and Jamaica) dressed in Ukrainian folk costumes. I was unable to make sense of what this could mean until I saw them later that year performing Ukrainian folk songs for supporters during the Orange Revolution in Kyiv. They sang to a cheering crowd of hundreds of thousands of protesters, standing side-by-side in the dead of winter on the thick ice at Kyiv's Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square), opposing the results of a falsified presidential election. These musicians played up their blackness in the name of their group—Chornobryvtsi—which in the Ukrainian language means “black browed.” They were simultaneously outsiders and insiders in a complex mediation of African student identities and black persons as performers, a more common framework that had been reinforced in media products from the United States now widely promoted on Ukrainian television and radio that overshadowed local low-budget film and music productions.

Though I was traveling often to Ukraine between 2001 and 2005 as part of my dissertation research focusing on the effects of international development aid on Roma (Gypsy) musical traditions (Helbig 2005), it was difficult to formulate an extensive research project focusing on African musicians living in Ukraine following the 2004 Orange Revolution, when I first became acquainted with the issue of African migration. There was little research published on immigration to post-Soviet countries by scholars, policy makers, or non-governmental organizations. Living in New York at the time, I was also coming into increasing contact with people who had left Ukraine to search for economic betterment in the West. I could not place why Africans would move to Ukraine at a time when so many citizens of Ukraine were moving out. The hip hop and reggae styles of the group Chornobryvtsi, however, offered me a frame of analysis. First, Chornobryvtsi's music offered an aural indexing beyond the borders of Ukraine, which at the time signaled a new form of cosmopolitanism and engagement with global musical cultures that had not been readily accessible to people living in the Soviet Union. The live perfor-

26
05.2012
SATURDAY
TIME: 10pm-6am

VPromo GRP
V. Promo Group

NSK
STUDENTS KHARKOV

FR
AFRODISIAC GROUP

RAYSKIY
 Пр. ГАГАРИНА, 43/2
GAGARINA Av. 43/2
Night CLUB RAYSKIY

FINAL EXAMS

MUSIC BY:
 DJ MAC
 DJ SEAN
 DJ MAD
 DJ OMIS
 DJ VAL D

LIVE PERFORMANCE ARTISTS:
 CHARMLEX
 DAVID
 CARTER
 PHIL-G
 CANDY FLOSS

MC:
 JO – ONE (GIGAMORTEL)
 PABLO
 ANTHONY
 SAMMY T

GROUP:
 МАШУНГА
 CHAR D' ASSAUT

ENTRANCE:
 Guys - 65
 Ladies - free till 11 pm
 after - 35

☎ SAMMY T - 093-94-14-227 ENG
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FIGURE 0.1. A poster advertising a hip hop party for African and non-African students featuring DJs and performers from Africa, May 26, 2012, at Club Rayskiy in Kharkiv.

mance of black musicians was also new in the sense that very few people had ever had the opportunity to engage with live musicians who were perceived as having come from elsewhere (meaning from beyond the Soviet Union), based on appearance and linguistic accent.

The presence of African musicians in Ukraine's public media spheres has brought race to the foreground and has, since around 2005, begun to highlight race consciousness and the notion of race as an explanatory variable of inequality in post-Soviet society. Music helps make this type of discourse accessible and malleable on various levels and allows performers and audiences to engage and maneuver through complex mazes of previously unarticulated ideas about the presence of blackness and on the role of black consciousness, African in particular, within public and private identity formation and expression in Ukraine.

GLOBAL CIRCULATIONS OF HIP HOP

Consolidating what little information I had about African musicians in Ukraine in 2004, I came to believe that their music functioned as a form of social activism, based on Chornobryvtsi's participation in the Orange Revolution. When I arrived in Kharkiv, Ukraine, two years later to begin my research on this project, I was able to map out a musical network between Africans, such as the members of Chornobryvtsi, and local musicians connected through hip hop. Though the musicians I had first seen during the Orange Revolution sang Ukrainian folk songs, they were in fact part of a broader group of people involved in putting on hip hop parties, Africa-themed music parties at events associated with underground hip hop studios. These networks were set in place at universities, where most non-Africans first come into contact with Africans. A recent poster (see figure 0.1) featuring African and non-African students (albeit Photoshopped from an American source, as indicated by the graduates wearing caps and gowns, a tradition not practiced in Ukraine) stresses the racial integration at hip hop parties and events. Such sponsors as Nigerian Students Kharkov, Afrodisiac Group, Elena Afro Beauty Salon, and local music promotion companies and their logos on the poster indicate how quickly the music scenes have developed in Kharkiv from the beginning of my more extensive fieldwork in the city in spring of 2007. Earlier events did not have so many co-sponsors, especially among African business owners and African student groups. Rather, they were events put together

with the help of local non-African producers who used the opportunities to promote music associated with their small hip hop studios. Continued research is needed to update analyses on the fast-changing nature of African diaspora experiences in Ukraine regarding population growth, levels of integration, increased economic stability, and the reworking of marketing strategies to engage with non-Africans in the city. Despite such changes, however, it appears that music continues to play a central role in bridging relationships between Africans and non-Africans in Kharkiv.

Though I had spent only two weeks in Kharkiv during my first exploratory trip to the field in 2006 and did not feel I had gathered enough material to write convincing grant proposals to funding agencies in the United States, I was taken aback when all of my grant proposals proved successful. In addition, I was also offered a grant for which I did not even apply. Having framed hip hop as an expression of social activism in a country undergoing democratic reform, my research fell in line with a new hip hop-oriented program initiated by the U.S. Department of State in 2005 that positioned hip hop as a vehicle for international cultural exchange. Under the “Rhythm Road” program, “hip hop envoys” have been sent to the Middle East to promote cross-cultural and inter-religious understanding. In 2011, when commenting on the use of hip hop in diplomacy, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton reportedly remarked, “Hip hop is America.” Clinton’s statement begs the analysis of the broader meanings behind it. Twenty years earlier, Tipper Gore, wife of senator and then vice president Al Gore, in office with President Bill Clinton, co-founded the Parents’ Music Resource Center in 1985. The initiative was aimed at controlling youth access to popular music deemed inappropriate by the PMRC. The PMRC created a mandatory Parental Advisory labeling system to be placed on recordings that made explicit reference to drugs, violence, and sexual behavior. Though the songs originally censored by the committee were by white artists, including Madonna, Cyndi Lauper, Def Leppard, AC/DC, and others, the Parental Advisory: Explicit Content sticker is perhaps most prevalent today on hip hop albums.

In *The Hip-Hop Wars: What We Talk About When We Talk About Hip-Hop—and Why it Matters*, hip hop scholar Tricia Rose analyzes the cultural divide regarding hip hop in the United States (2008). She presents positive and negative aspects of the music, falling back on common arguments regarding commercially available hip hop and the messages that the music sends about African Americans to white listeners and the music’s influence on gender,

class, and racialized youth identity. Rose analyzes the most common stereotypes regarding commercial hip hop: that it promotes sexist, misogynist portrayals of women, highlights dysfunctional ghetto stereotypes, leads to violence, destroys American values, and hurts black people. In a chapter devoted to each of these topics, Rose elucidates the underpinnings of each stereotype regarding hip hop culture and offers balanced perspectives on each point. She stresses that hip hop is the main way people talk about race in the United States and that arguments against it are rooted in racist and sexist frameworks. How people talk about hip hop in the United States frames the ways that hip hop culture is exported across the world.

Ethnomusicologist Cheryl Keyes, in her seminal book *Rap Music and Street Consciousness*, highlights the positive aspects of street culture and rap in the United States and analyzes the changing racial, ethnic, and gender makeup of hip hop in America from the 1970s to the turn of the twenty-first century (2002). Augmenting analyses that focus primarily on hip hop as a predominantly African American male genre, she draws attention to the contributions of white rappers, Latino musicians, and female hip hop artists. Keyes highlights six points to summarize hip hop's positive representation and influence on street culture and the music's broader relevance and influence in the United States. Keyes argues that rap music is a positive display of cultural values and aesthetics—"artists conceptualize musical and verbal delivery within a systematic framework in which rhyme, poetic logic, vocal quality, flow or rhythm and timing, turntablism, and originality rank as primary areas of significance" (229). Rap music serves as a vehicle for self-expression, social control, and cohesiveness and as a political forum. It also fosters ethnic pride among its artists: "through the adoption of names that indicate ethnic affiliation and the formation of crews or posses with similar or supportive ethnic groups and nationalities, artists articulate pride in and representation of their respective communities" (229). In addition, it represents and reflects personal and economic success.

It seems that in analyses of global hip hop, scholars, particularly from the United States, tend to focus on the positive influences of the genre's appropriation. This skewed analysis is framed, perhaps, in historical ideologies in U.S. culture industries and in political ideologies that position music from the United States as free from censorship (consider the contested role of rock music in the USSR) and offering musicians freedom of expression and

development. I would argue that very few musicians across the world who appropriate hip hop recognize the challenges that hip hop artists have faced regarding censorship, marginalization on major airwaves (“playing all music except rap,” as many radio DJs say), and numerous other challenges that are deeply ingrained in racialized stereotypes concerning the musicians and, as Tricia Rose deftly analyzes, the feared impact of hip hop on society (2008). In many ways, U.S.-framed racial ideologies influence who appropriates hip hop, where, and how. Thus, when we study global hip hop, it is important to look not only at processes on the ground in the countries of appropriation but also at how those who appropriate understand and relate to hip hop artists, whether in the United States or elsewhere, who influence new musical developments and trajectories across the world. Such nuanced studies will lend more to the understanding of how hip hop circulates across the globe and the reasons for it. Whereas early hip hop elements were appropriated in other parts of the world from the United States, as this study shows, this is no longer the case. Whereas technology helped disseminate hip hop as a musical form originating in the United States starting in the 1980s, today it has diffused the centers of hip hop across the world. This makes finding the connections between hip hop more difficult but also positions the genre as one of the most effective tools for understanding the global circulations of ideas and modes of expression.

In Ukraine, hip hop was introduced, together with break dancing, in the 1990s and grew in popularity via increasing access to U.S. media. Though it is difficult to say when hip hop first came across Ukraine’s borders, by 1997 it was developing into a Ukrainian- and Russian-language-based musical expression in Kharkiv with groups like *Tanok na Maidani Kongo* (Dance on Congo Square) and *5’Nizza* (pronounced *Piatnytsia*, meaning Friday) and to a lesser extent in Ukraine’s capital, Kyiv, which held its first rap concert, *Funkie Kiev ’97*, that year (Zawada 1998). Though originating from the same city, *Tanok na Maidani Kongo* (TNMK) and *5’Nizza* incorporated musical and lyrical influences from African American hip hop in different ways. *5’Nizza* was a two-man group formed in 2000 that featured acoustic guitar, vocals, and beatboxing. Its musical influences fused reggae, hip hop, Latin, and rock. TNMK, with its iconic reference to Congo Square in New Orleans, began as a rock group called *Novi Doma* (New Houses) in 1989, naming itself after the Kharkiv neighborhood in which members lived. A band comprising

schoolmates, their repertoire featured *estrada* (popular) songs by Russian-language singer Natasha Koroliova from the Ukrainian SSR, London Beat (“I’ve Been Thinking About You”), Guns N’ Roses (“Don’t Cry”), and Los Lobos (“La Bamba”), which the group still performs. As the group changed form and included people from different parts of Kharkiv (moving from the original setup of a neighborhood band in Novi Doma), members agreed that an English-language name would best encapsulate their varied identities. Member Max Lytvynenko came across the phrase “Dance on Congo Square” in the Russian-language book *History of Jazz* written by E. Ovchynnykov in 1994.

According to a paraphrase written in Ukrainian on TNMK’s website, Ovchynnykov described Congo Square in New Orleans as the birthplace of jazz. At first it was a place where enslaved Africans were sold, and then it was a place for their cultural contests. Holding on to their African melodies and rhythms, the performers gave birth to spirituals and blues on the square, from which gospel and jazz emerged.⁸ Scholarly literature in the United States on African American musical traditions associated with Congo Square offers documentation through the drawings and observations of Benjamin Henry Latrobe, a British engineer who came to New Orleans in 1819 to supervise the development of a city waterworks. Latrobe described the instruments and the manner in which they were played, including drawings that helped define the particular regions of West Africa from which these instruments derived and which tribal groups brought them to Louisiana (Donaldson 1984; Johnson 1995, 31). Music scholar and author Freddi Williams Evans offers a thorough account of the various musical and dance traditions through a broader cultural, economic, and historical analysis of the gatherings on Congo Square in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. She analyzes the ways in which these traditions influenced New Orleans musical culture and formed the core of New Orleans jazz (2011). Ovchynnykov’s association of Congo Square with the most widely known African American genres, including spirituals, blues, and gospel, each of which has specific historical trajectories of emergence, shows the imposition of the Russian scholar’s association of all forms of African American music known in the Soviet Union with Congo Square. This blurring of African American musical genre histories and influences is significant in understanding the lack of clarity that scholars in the USSR had regarding African American music because of a lack of access to sources of

information. Such blurring is evident in political as well as cultural discourses relating to black identity in the Soviet era and, as in the case of hip hop, in the post-Soviet era as well. However, it also shows an adherence to notions of African retentions in African American cultural expression (Maultsby 2005). Tying African history into African American identity may possibly stem from Soviet political rhetoric in the early 1930s that stressed historical connections between African, Afro-Caribbean, and African American people on the basis of racial discrimination and exploitation at the hands of white capitalists and colonial powers. Such circulations of blurred notions of black experience from different places and situations may account for why it is common for non-Africans in Ukraine today to use “African” and “African American” interchangeably. For them, the connection is on the basis of black skin and exploitation rather than on geography or difference of culture, language, and historical experience.

Though TNMK admits on its website that members did not know the full relevance of Congo Square when they were choosing the name, they found other references to Congo Square in Patrikey Lisidze’s “A Short History of Hip Hop Music,” in which he ties break dancing to the dances on Congo Square that functioned as competitions between different ethnic groups. Lisidze, an African fluent in Russian, offers his history of hip hop Russian on a chat-room portal that is linked to the website of TNMK.⁹ Significant in this representation is that TNMK’s introduction to African American history came through Russian-language musical scholarship. The group’s association of Congo Square with break dancing and contemporary hip hop culture came through an African who had studied in the USSR. That TNMK, with its two singers Oleh “Fahot” Myhailyuta (“Fahot” means bassoon) and Alexander “Fozzey” Sidorenko, has been the iconic hip hop group in Ukraine from the time it won the Chervona Ruta song contest in 1997 until the present points to the complexities of transmission and interpretation in terms of motive and broader cultural significance. TNMK chose as part of its name “Congo Square” because it evoked “America” by place and through the English language. The group fell in line with early-1990s attitudes in former Soviet society that everything from the West was more modern, hip, and cosmopolitan. The group members believed their association with U.S. culture would give them more cachet in independent Ukraine. The construction of relationships with America via African American history, identity, and musical aesthetics

is reinforced through performances of other “hip hop” groups. Tartak (Sawmill), a hip hop–influenced band from Lutsk led by Sashko Polozhynskyi that competed against TNMK in the 1997 Chervona Ruta contest, makes reference to Congo Square in the song “Tartak ta Vasik” (Tartak and Vasik) with the opening lyrics “Let’s dance a happy dance on Congo Square,” reinforcing a relationally escapist representation of America and African Americans as happy and living an easier life than in Ukraine amid economic, social, and political turmoil.

As music education was widely accessible in the former Soviet Union, TNMK’s musicians are highly trained and approach their compositional process with attention to music scholarship on jazz. Their coming into their own as a hip hop group is tied closely with Soviet interest in jazz, which, according to jazz musician, producer, scholar, and radio personality Oleksij Kogan in Kyiv, lost its status as a musical genre of rebellion and anti-establishment expression with the fall of the Soviet Union and only began to regain its foothold in the last few years. Hip hop emerged in its place and became a prominent form of expression in the 1990s until late in the next decade. Hip hop fusion forms dominate, with many artists in folk music now borrowing from the genre, as evidenced by collaborations between groups such as Tartak (hip hop) and Huliaj Horod (traditional). Ukrainian-language hip hop that draws on ethnic imagery and lyrical tropes from folklore is called “Ukrahop” (украхоп, in Cyrillic). The prefix “Ukr,” an abbreviation of “Ukrainian,” reinforces a localized, ethnic influence in a Ukrainian music industry dominated by Russian language music produced in Russia and Ukraine. The dominant representatives of Ukrahop are TNMK, Tartak, Boombbox, Vova zi L’vova, and Khorta (who define their style as ethnohop).

Collaborations exist among non-African and African musicians, particularly in Kharkiv. Africans are invited to be recording members of small hip hop studios, to attend events, and to add legitimacy to hip hop events, thereby cashing in on economic aspects of blackness. Today, African musicians organize music events, participate in rallies, and collaborate with African political and cultural leaders in Ukraine to create spaces for a new immigrant population. They also fuse traditional African genres into hip hop collaborations and are using hip hop as the framework through which to introduce their languages and traditions to listening audiences.

Today, changing discourses on race work in a similar dialectic with musical expressions as in the past. The difference lies in the ways in which ideas

about race circulate between the East and West, mediated through ideas regarding “Africa.” The five chapters in this book lay out a historical trajectory of African and African American cultural representations in the former Soviet Union, understandings of which lay the groundwork for analyzing how racial identity is created, mediated, and consumed in a post-socialist society. Each chapter builds on the next by adding a piece to the puzzle of complex circulations of musical images and meanings produced by African musicians living in Ukraine who interact with ethnic Ukrainian and Russian musicians via African American musical forms.

Hip hop’s strong association with the mass antigovernment protests in 2004, dubbed the Orange Revolution, established the genre as a culturally accepted form of expression for marginalized groups in Ukraine, including immigrants from the African continent. The response to African musicians in Ukraine’s music industries reveals the complicated way in which citizens relate to people from beyond the borders of the Soviet Union who expressly wish to become citizens of Ukraine.

The book introduces arguments regarding the development and uses of various forms of global hip hop that shed light on the ways that citizens, immigrant musicians, and cultural policy makers have historically used African American–derived genres, including jazz, rock, and blues, to express and negotiate claims of belonging, pluralism, and equal rights to express social and political protest in the Soviet Union. Examining musical production in the post-socialist era, it considers the immense potential for growth in Ukraine’s music industries, analyzing the constantly rising economic potential of the country’s residents. Increased access to technology has broadened the ways in which music produced in Ukraine is marketed worldwide and the effect it has in Ukraine. African-influenced traditional and popular music genres have established a niche in Ukraine that generates money for musicians and producers. Drawing on interviews with music industry professionals, musicians, entrepreneurs, and audience members, this book repositions Ukraine as a country of musical potential and analyzes the factors that have opened the discussion for race relations in the media, education, and politics.

Chapter 1 frames contemporary African experiences within historicized discourses on race in the Russian Empire and in the Soviet Union. Drawing on examples from Ira Aldridge, Taras Shevchenko, Alexander Pushkin, and Mark Twain, it offers insights as to how slavery in the United States shaped ideologies regarding African Americans in the nineteenth century. The chapter

incorporates stories of African Americans who traveled to the Soviet Union, drawn to purported discourses of racial equality, including Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, and others. A closer look at Paul Robeson's experiences in the USSR offers perspectives on the ways black identity was constructed in musical performance. Robeson's performances influenced representations of "Africa" and "Negroes" in Soviet popular culture, ideas that have shaped the ways in which African and African American identities have been perceived through the global circulation of hip hop.

Chapter 2 focuses on the rise of racism in the post-Soviet sphere and looks at the role African students have played in musical scenes from the 1990s onward to combat xenophobia. It further analyzes discourses and politics of race in the Soviet Union to show that socialism did in fact promote racial divisions in society despite its Cold War arguments that the Soviet Union was a racially equal society in comparison with the United States. This chapter examines African experiences in post-Soviet Ukraine in relation to those of Vietnamese and Chinese students and merchants and looks at cultural stereotypes associated with race in terms of economic and class status. Musically, the chapter analyzes the effects of the jazz ambassador program during the Cold War and considers how Russian and Ukrainian words for "black" are incorporated into musical marketing and repertoire and in the production of music by African and Ukrainian residents of African or mixed-race descent.

Chapter 3 takes an ethnographic look at the hip hop scene in Kharkiv, a predominantly Russian-speaking eastern Ukrainian city near the Russian border. Widely considered to be the birthplace of hip hop in Ukraine, circa the mid-1990s, Kharkiv has fostered the development of socially conscious hip hop among local and African students. In Kharkiv, hip hop functions as a genre of social commentary and critique that fosters interracial and economic networking among African and non-African youths. Musicians draw on musical elements from their respective countries, the United States, and local hip hop traditions and use Ukrainian, Russian, and English in lyrics that express concerns about socioeconomic status, personal struggle, and racial inclusion. Local youths use the genre as a commentary on alienation that stems from economic instability and social insecurity, augmented by dramatic political fluctuations. African musicians use hip hop as a social means through which to fight escalating violence against immigrants. There is a strong interaction among African and non-African musicians that is fostered by a network of small, student-run hip hop recording studios. Non-Africans take on protec-

tive roles vis-à-vis their African friends, who are subject to racially motivated attacks. Clubs and hip hop-themed parties address issues of racial violence and draw attention to African and African American cultural norms.

Chapter 4 analyzes issues of migration into Ukraine and repositions the fight for musical representation alongside ethnic Ukrainian singers who struggle for musical airplay (in a media market dominated by Russian-language music), recording contracts, and copyright protection. The discussion of minority-produced popular music is couched within theoretical discussions of multiculturalism, minority rights, and migration, policies that aim to position Ukraine as a pluralist society while casting ethnically based issues of equality within broader social struggles for economic resources. Certain African performance groups have become widely popular as fusion musicians, drawing on Ukrainian folk elements to foster awareness of African experiences in Ukraine. They use their popularity as folk musicians to familiarize non-African audiences with African minorities living in Ukraine and to share their personal stories as immigrants in an unwelcoming country. They show appreciation for Ukrainian culture through musical fusion and popularize Ukrainian culture to African immigrants, as well as to audiences in Uganda, where such music videos have appeared on local radio and television. Folk music offers a point of departure for analyzing the numerous and complex conversations that hip hop and hip hop-influenced folk fusion genres inspire. These include transnational notions of citizenship, the political potential of folk music idioms, and intersections of racial and ethnic identity in post-socialist migration discourse.

Chapter 5 augments the ethnographic data I collected in Ukraine among musicians from Africa by incorporating ethnographic research conducted in Kampala, Uganda, among family and friends of immigrant musicians/students living in Ukraine. It analyzes the ways in which the former Soviet bloc is perceived on the African continent and looks at the motivating factors that bring emigrants and students from Africa to study in Ukraine. It traces music produced in Ukraine by Ugandan musicians, looking at the stylistic, musical, visual, and linguistic influences that African musicians have made to Ukrainian music. This chapter offers lyrical analyses of Ugandan hip hop elements that are incorporated into socially conscious hip hop by immigrant musicians in Ukraine. Ugandan students react to the linguistic and ethnic tensions in Ukraine, using comparisons to such situations in their home country. This chapter shows that musical influences within hip hop are not linearly rooted in

U.S.–non-U.S. transmissions but borrow from within global hip hop genres. Drawing on a brief visit to Gulu, northern Uganda, this chapter also explores the complex ways that hip hop is used as a form of therapy for youths processing traumas of war and violence.

In its entirety, this book positions hip hop as a site of interracial encounters among African students, African immigrants, and local populations in Ukraine. It synthesizes ethnographic research, music, media, and policy analysis to examine how localized forms of hip hop create social and political spaces for a multiracial youth culture to promote issues of human rights and racial equality. Its scholarship contributes to global research in hip hop and to the role of music in social change. It delineates the complex trajectories of musical circulation between the United States and the African continent, between Africa and the former Soviet Union, and between the former Soviet Union and the United States to show the complex ways young musicians use hip hop to comment on and transform their socioeconomic and political environment. This book analyzes how hip hop was established as a revolutionary genre in post-socialist society and gave voice to immigrant musicians negotiating their marginalized status in Ukrainian society. It demonstrates that hip hop has become a global musical language and cultural expression of marginalized groups.

MUSIC AND BLACK IDENTITY IN THE SOVIET UNION

People who move to former Soviet spaces from the African continent face specific challenges that cannot be compared with experiences of other immigrants, due to the historical relationships between the Russian Empire (and later the Soviet Union) and Africa that continue to influence attitudes toward blackness and race. This chapter offers a brief overview of the changing attitudes toward Africans and African Americans in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. It analyzes the root of certain stereotypical representations and ideas relating to the construction and performance of black identity through music. Drawing on the experiences of public artists such as Ira Aldridge, Taras Shevchenko, Alexander Pushkin, and Mark Twain, this chapter analyzes the ways in which the spoken and written word codify and embody certain attitudes regarding blackness, slavery, and an imagined Africa. Significant attention is paid to the experiences of Paul Robeson and the role his musical output and political ideologies had in shaping attitudes regarding African Americans in the Soviet Union. It also draws on personal memoirs of African Americans living in the Soviet Union to point to the disparities between official Soviet rhetoric on racial equality and the realities of being black in the USSR.

SLAVERY AND SERFDOM IN THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE: IRA ALDRIDGE AND TARAS SHEVCHENKO

By the time Peter the Great ascended to power, the Atlantic slave trade had been active for well over a century. Colonial expansions in the Russian Empire differed from those in Europe in that they did not extend into the Americas or the African continent. Russia's attempts to establish a relationship with Madagascar grew out of Russia's commercial and strategic interest in India

and the Far East (Wilson 1974). The search for allies against the Ottoman Empire also led to tsarist interest in Ethiopia. However, Russians did not succeed in establishing colonies on the African continent due to the already dominant presence of European colonial powers.

The Russian Empire opposed the African slave trade, although it reinforced a similar structure of peasant servitude at home (Blakely 1986, 28–29). Russian serfdom would be abolished in 1861, four years prior to the abolition of slavery in the United States. Russian revolutionaries such as Alexander Herzen and Nicholas Chernyshevsky, the radical publicist of *Sovremennik* (The Contemporary), spoke out against African slavery and the slave trade. Copies of the U.S. Constitution were circulated secretly, because it was censored by the tsarist regime. The parallels between African American slavery and serfdom in the Russian Empire were apparent. In 1858, Chernyshevsky published sections of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the antislavery novel written by abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe in 1852, in two issues of *Sovremennik*. This publication would influence early Soviet rhetoric on racial equality as the Soviet Union strived to position itself as a country free from the kind of racial discrimination evidenced in the United States. Soviet films and short stories highlighting racial discrimination in the United States often featured a black male protagonist named Tom, pointing to the broad influence in the Russian Empire of Stowe's publication, which appeared in book and serial form for Russian-language readers (Roman 2012, 77–81).¹

From the mid-1800s, Russian audiences became increasingly familiar with representations of African Americans through translated literature and theatre productions featuring actors such as Ira Aldridge. Ira Frederick Aldridge (1807–67), an African American Shakespearean actor born in New York, moved to London with hopes of developing his career in the British Empire. He was a novelty on British stages but had difficulties gaining audience acceptance in London due to a sustained press campaign motivated by racism. He toured Europe with great success and accepted an invitation to perform in the Russian Empire in 1858. Despite discourses regarding the end of serfdom and Russian opposition to slavery in the American South, Aldridge experienced similar kinds of racial discrimination from Russian critics as he had in London. Certain reviews of Aldridge's performances are particularly drenched in discourses of biological racism. In a letter to the editor of *Den' (Day)*, N. S. Sokhanskaia, a writer who submitted her editorial under the pseudonym N. Kokhanovskaia, wrote:

Not the Moscow Maly Theatre, but the African jungle should have been filled and resounded with voices at the cries of this black, powerful—that it is genuinely black, so naturally un-white does it howl—that savage flesh did its fleshly work. It murdered and crushed the spirit. Our aesthetic feelings made the mistake in its expectations. . . . This blatant flesh introduced into art, this natural black Othello, pardon me, causes only . . . revulsion. (Blakely 1986, 65)

Discourses of African American “savagery” and difference find parallels in Russian and American narratives of the mid-1800s. In the above quote, the description of Aldridge as “naturally un-white” reveals the biological nature of race discourse rooted in binary oppositions of nature versus civilization. Whiteness is equated with culture, and blackness is cast in threatening opposition. Whereas on the one hand the Russian Empire of the mid-1800s opposed African American slavery in the American South, racial biases rooted in an evolutionary discourse of savagery (which resurfaced in the Soviet Union in relation to jazz) positioned African Americans as unable to perform “art,” casting them as not having reached higher forms of “civilization” embodied by the Russian nobility.²

Despite having performed in Shakespeare’s *Othello* and *King Lear*, plays later banned by the Russian tsar alongside *Macbeth*, Aldridge was perhaps best known in the Russian Empire for his role as the slave Mungo in the two-act opera *The Padlock* (1768) by Isaac Bickerstaff. The opera tells the story of an old man who keeps his young fiancée behind closed doors for fear that she will not be faithful to him. The title of the opera takes its name from the large padlock on the cottage door. Mungo, the comic relief character, is the man’s black servant from the West Indies. Usually played by a white man in blackface, Mungo sings and dances at his master’s beckoning. Aldridge attempted to represent Mungo as a more serious character and to rework the more stereotypical aspects of the character’s role.

Whereas Aldridge was an unacceptable Othello for some Russian circles, his popularity as Mungo, a comic character, invokes traditions of blackface minstrelsy where African Americans are represented as happy-go-lucky. Minstrelsy casts the African American as an entertainer, a natural performer. The “naturalness” of black performance places the African American as close to nature but without intellect. As ethnomusicologist Ronald Radano states, “Drawing in line the disparate figures of racial difference was the trope of the natural musician, a conceit that embodied the exceptional qualities of slave music to the point of defining black character for the next hundred-odd years”

(2003, 146). The supposed natural proclivity of blacks for performance would eventually establish an unexamined association between African Americans and music. Such tropes became codified in the Russian Empire to the point that when early African American sojourners traveled to the Soviet Union, they were met with a general stereotype among Russians that all African Americans could sing and dance.³

Ira Aldridge had many supporters and friends, including Leo Tolstoy and Taras Shevchenko (1814–61), the Ukrainian poet who had been born into serfdom, referred to in Ukrainian as *kripatstvo*, and had been exiled for writing satirical verses that offended the tsar in 1840 in St. Petersburg. There have been many editions of his work, and the title *Kobzar* (The Bard) has become applied to all of Shevchenko's poetic works. The six volumes of his works published in 1964 at the time of Nikita Khrushchev's "Thaw" were the first uncensored editions of Shevchenko's poetry to appear in Soviet Ukraine. Literary scholar Dale Peterson, in his analysis of the parallels of the black and Russian "soul," states that African American and Russian writers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries drew on similar concepts to augment African American struggles against slavery and Russian struggles against serfdom (2000). Shevchenko's poetry focused on the plight of the serf and the oppressed and evoked discourses of equality and freedom, similar to the works of those who opposed slavery in the United States. His poem "Kateryna," published in the first edition of the *Kobzar* in 1840, offers insights into the lives of serfs in the Russian Empire, with an illustration on the status of women. Kateryna was seduced, abandoned, and disgraced by a Russian soldier. She serves as an allegory for Ukraine itself. Shevchenko warns Ukrainian women not to fall in love with Russians and does not hide his hatred for the exploitative Russian Empire. His artistic illustration of "Kateryna" in 1842 points to the developments in Ukrainian art regarding critical realism and folk motifs. In his poetry, Shevchenko criticized the aristocracy's oppression of the peasants in the Russian Empire, and for this he was arrested. He was exiled for ten years in the Caspian steppes in the far reaches of the Russian Empire as a rank-and-file officer from 1847 to 1857. Imprisoned and in exile, Shevchenko composed some of his most compelling works.

Shevchenko concerned himself with the plight of oppressed ethnic groups and people. Forbidden to return to Ukraine until 1859, he became acquainted with Aldridge in St. Petersburg. Shevchenko attended Aldridge's



FIGURE 1.1. Portrait of Ira Aldridge by Taras Shevchenko, sketched in St. Petersburg, 1858. *Used with permission from Howard University.*

opening performance at the Russian Imperial Theatre in 1858, and the two men were introduced. One of Tolstoy's daughters served as an early translator for Shevchenko and Aldridge and wrote about the experience and their friendship. Shevchenko attended Aldridge's performances, and Aldridge visited Shevchenko in his studio, posing for a portrait. Unlike common minstrel representations of blacks in America at the time, Shevchenko's humanist portrait of Aldridge represents him as an intellectual with emotional and psychological depth. Sketched in 1858, it hangs on display at Howard University in Washington, D.C.

Shevchenko's friendship with Aldridge is significant in that it shows parallels between experiences of oppression. Both were free, famous, and creative and had powerful friends. Both shared a hope for a better future, but neither could forget his past. Those who knew both men noted that they often sang together. As Irena Bell, producer of the radio program *Ukrainian Hour* in Ottawa, Canada, noted in a segment on Shevchenko and Aldridge, "Aldridge greatly appreciated the sorrowful and melodic Ukrainian songs that captured the unfortunate plight of the people of Ukraine. Shevchenko, in turn, loved the songs of the Negro South no doubt for the same reason."⁴ When Aldridge returned to tour the Russian Empire between 1861 and 1866, Shevchenko had already passed away. Shevchenko and Aldridge serve as examples of individuals who fought against the oppression of their people and strived for human dignity throughout the world. Support for their friendship and interest in them among certain circles within the Russian Empire's elite foreshadowed the revolution that overthrew a regime that exploited the peasantry and kept them poor, illiterate, and silenced. The ideology of equality for all, leading to the creation of what Terry Martin has dubbed "the affirmative action empire" (2001), would pose great challenges for the Soviet Union, fostering its own structures of injustice from its earliest inception.

**IMAGINING BLACKNESS: ALEXANDER PUSHKIN,
MARK TWAIN, JOSEPHINE BAKER, AND CLAUDE MCKAY**

Soviet officials found the African heritage of its national poet Alexander Pushkin a convenient platform in promoting the Soviet Union as a racially blind society (Nepomnyashchy and Trigos 2006, 24). Pushkin's maternal great-grandfather Abram Hannibal was a black child servant of Peter the Great, the son of a prince who was captured and brought to Russia from

Ethiopia. African slaves like Hannibal, not uncommon among the Russian nobility, functioned more as entertainment and status figures in Russian society, as evidenced in numerous paintings, where they often are depicted as children in subservient positions (Blakely 1986, 59). However, Peter sent Hannibal to Paris to be educated, and Hannibal went on to have an illustrious military career in the Russian Empire. Pushkin wrote about Hannibal in his unfinished historical novel *The Negro of Peter the Great* (1837). In the Russian title of the work, *Arap Petra Velikogo*, Pushkin uses the word *arap*, or Arab. According to Russian African American social activist Lily Golden, tsarist officials frequently listed Africans as Arabs and made no distinctions between people from different parts of Africa (Golden-Hanga 1966, 10). “Negro” was not included in Soviet census or other official Soviet records, so it was never possible to really determine the number of African Americans in the Soviet Union (Fikes and Lemon 2002). Nevertheless, “Negro” signified a nationality in Soviet discourse, equal with all others in the logic of the Soviet “affirmative action empire” (Martin 2001). In 1930, two white American Communists working at the Stalingrad Tractor Factory assaulted an African American worker and were tried in court for “national chauvinism” rather than “racial chauvinism” because the language of the Soviet law code did not account for difference in terms of race but rather of nationality (Roman 2012, 30).

Pushkin first made reference to his African ancestry in *Eugene Onegin* (begun in 1823):

Time to leave the dull shore
of a, to me, inimical element,
and 'mid the meridian swell,
beneath the sky of my Africa,
to sigh for somber Russia,
where I suffered, where I loved,
where (my) heart I buried

Pushkin chronicled his African ancestry in a note to the above-quoted verse. Writing in exile at his mother's estate of Mikhaylovskoe in north Russia, he established a literary connection with his African ancestor by contrasting their treatment by the tsarist regime—Hannibal was rewarded for his military achievements, whereas Pushkin was viewed with suspicion because of his political leanings (Hasty 2006, 231).

Pushkin was used by Soviet officials to establish relationships between African Americans and Africans in the 1920s (Nepomnyashchy and Trigos

2006, 25). African Americans viewed Pushkin as a great model to show how African roots were incorporated into Russian national identity (Hasty 2006, 234). Writers of the Harlem Renaissance positioned Pushkin as the champion of the oppressed (235). *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life*, an academic journal published by the National Urban League, published Pushkin's *Arap Petra Velikogo* serially in the February, March, and April 1924 issues of the journal. In 1925, *Opportunity* established the Pushkin Poetry Prize to recognize outstanding poetry written by African Americans.⁵

Ideas about African Americans in the Russian Empire and later in the Soviet Union were introduced via the works of Mark Twain. Twain, a fan of the minstrel show (Ogbar 2007, 13), was the most translated American writer in the Russian language in the early twentieth century and imbued the Russian psyche with myriad stereotypes regarding African Americans and relationships between whites and blacks in the United States. The Soviet press edited his works to augment class issues and published Twain's work without permission and without paying royalties. In 1926, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* appeared in Russian translation as *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn and a Runaway Negro* (Parry 1941, 174). Among the most loudly touted stereotypes was that all African Americans could sing and dance. Preconceived notions of African Americans as singers and dancers were evident in the motivation to involve Langston Hughes in the filming of *Black and White*, a script he eventually vehemently rejected due to its degrading representations of African Americans as victimized slaves in the American South. Louise Thompson, an African American journalist who accompanied Hughes to the Soviet Union for the filming, reveals in her correspondence with Hughes that the Soviets were aware of their lack of knowledge regarding race relations in the United States (Baldwin 2002, 99). They requested that the *Black and White* troupe bring clothes, historical and sociological books on "the Negro in America," and various phonograph records (99). According to historian Maxim Matusевич, the Soviet sponsors of the project shared Western stereotypes of blacks, expecting every member of the troupe to be able to sing and dance (2008, 68). Allison Blakely notes that the basic problem with the script was that the writer had never been to the United States and had depended on the few books that had been translated into Russian about race relations in America. Blakely surmises that the characterization of "Negro manners and mentality" were taken from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1986, 94). Film scripts and, by extension, most forms of Soviet propaganda relating

to African Americans stemmed from an imagined sense of blackness and black realities.

Racialized imaginaries in the Russian Empire were closely tied to performance, music in particular. It is difficult to say how or why the relationship between blackness and music came to be codified in the Soviet Union, but such relationships are evident in French imaginations of the time, evidenced most strongly perhaps in the representations of African American singer Josephine Baker on stage and in French film. In the 1925 musical review *La Revue Nègre* at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Josephine and dance partner Joe Alex captivated the audience with the *Danse Sauvage*. Josephine danced topless, bedecked only with beads and a skirt of flamingo feathers, working the audience into a frenzy with her uninhibited movements to the accompaniments of a jazz brass band. In 1926, she made her Folies-Bergère debut in *La Folie du Jour* wearing nothing but a short skirt of rubber bananas. She opened her cabaret club, *Chez Joséphine Baker*, the spot for “le jazz hot.” Baker’s dancing mapped European imaginations of African savagery and unbridled displays of sexuality onto the black body. Her performances in Austria in the late 1920s were met with vehement opposition from Catholics. The Austrian Parliament held a debate over whether Baker threatened public morals, and according to pop music critic Mike Zwerin, student racists hurled ammonia bombs at her, screaming, “Go back to Africa” (Zwerin 2000, 41). Soviet propaganda used Josephine Baker as a model in the propaganda cartoon *Chuzhoy Golos* (A Foreign Voice) (1949), which features an ostentatious “savage” magpie dancing to jazz and breaking up the harmonious singing of the nightingales (discussed in more detail in chapter 4).

Literary scholar Eileen Julien states that by the 1920s, France was in the “throes of negrophilia . . . a complex, ambiguous phenomenon, conflating European notions of Africa and African American life and performance” (2009, 49). Films starring Baker like *Zouzou* (1934) and *Princesse Tam Tam* (1935) offer opposing approaches to the representation of racial difference in France. *Zouzou* is a black orphaned circus performer who is paired with Jean, a white boy. The two are billed as twins. He treats her as a sister, and no specific mention is made of *Zouzou*’s skin color as a marker of difference. The film highlights issues of class and gender identity, deeming race invisible or meaningless to the character construction and plot (51). In the film *Princesse Tam Tam*, the main character is a Tunisian girl who is introduced to French high society. Issues of class and gender are closely tied to race and are continuously

performed. Protagonist Max de Mirecourt is a writer who travels to Tunisia in search of an inspiration for his next novel. He meets Alwina (played by Josephine Baker), who pretends to be Princess Tam Tam when Max takes her to Paris. She performs provocatively in a bar and reveals her “African” roots, which embarrasses Max. In the French understanding of race as civilization, the dance casts Princess Tam Tam as primitive and portrays the realization that the two cannot be partners due to cultural differences. Alwina returns to Tunisia, and Max publishes his novel with the title *Civilisation*. As Eileen Julien states, “Despite these radically different articulations, both films lead to precisely the same conclusions: racial or cultural incompatibility and the impossibility of bridging racial and cultural differences” (51).

Claude McKay’s novel *Banjo* (1929), set in Marseilles, France, tells the story of a group of black sailors who have chosen the multicultural city as their home. The port, a physical reflection of French colonialism on the African continent, incorporates sailor stories from different parts of the world, including Senegal, the West Indies, and the American South. McKay grew up in Jamaica before immigrating to the United States in 1912 and becoming one of the forefront writers of the Harlem Renaissance. Drawing on his extensive experiences as an American expatriate abroad, he constructs the book as a narrative of episode from the experiences of Lincoln Agrippa Daily, known to his friends as “Banjo,” named after his instrument of choice. Through his interactions with black people from other parts of the world, Banjo is introduced to Marcus Garvey’s Back-to-Africa Movement, which leads Banjo to rediscover his African roots. Though the colonial Africa as represented in French film at the time of *Banjo*’s publication is highly steeped in racial stereotypes and discourses of primitivism, McKay’s character feels a sense of relief and understanding through his realization that he belongs to a race with a historical presence in the world. His nickname, Banjo, indexes Africa through the instrument’s historical association with African Americans in the Deep South and its historical roots in African instruments modified by early slaves (becoming popular in Europe through its use in minstrel shows by white performers in the mid-1800s). McKay’s experiences abroad shed light on how literature, travel, film, and music contributed to the construction of relationships across the world among intellectuals of African descent, broadening perspectives on racial politics and representations of racial identity that offered new ways of being beyond the binary color lines that framed (and in many ways continue to frame) race discourse in the United States.

PRE-WORLD WAR II AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCES IN THE SOVIET UNION

Early leaders of the Soviet Union stressed a framework of equality for all ethnicities and races. V. I. Lenin's ideologies promoted the idea of an international labor movement that was aimed at freeing workers in all oppressive systems, including colonial Africa. In his "Thesis on the National and Colonial Question," presented to the Second Congress of People's Deputies in Moscow in 1920, Lenin stated:

Consequently, we cannot limit ourselves at this time merely to recognizing or proclaiming the friendship of the toilers of various nations. Rather we must pursue a policy of implementing the closest possible alliance of all national and colonial liberation movements with Soviet Russia. The forms of this alliance will be determined by the level of development of the Communist movement within the proletariat of each country or the revolutionary liberation movement in the backward countries and among the backward nationalities. (quoted in Riddell 1991, 285)

Communists argued that African American struggles for liberation were inexorably bound up with the struggle for proletarian revolution in the United States. While many black people respected Communists for defending their rights, black voters did not join the party in large numbers for the following reasons: (1) its line on matters relating to religion placed the party in direct opposition to the church, the single most influential institution in the black community; (2) instances of white chauvinism periodically occurred within the party itself; and (3) the party had done little organizing in the "Black Belt" South, the area in which the majority of black people living in the United States were then concentrated.

The Communist International issued two key resolutions in 1922 and 1928 on "the Negro Question." The resolution of 1922 defined black struggles across the diaspora as key to the world revolution. Historian Erik McDuffie argues that the resolution of 1922 initiated a process in which black radicals looked to Moscow in settling disputes with white Communists at home, bringing to the foreground racism against African Americans among Communists in the United States (2011, 34). The resolution of 1928, commonly referred to as the "Black Belt thesis," declared the right of African American self-determination in the South. Co-authored by the black Chicago Communist Harry Haywood and the Siberian Communist Charles Nasanov, the Black Belt thesis argued

for racial equality. According to the 1928 Comintern Resolution on the Negro Question in the United States:

The Communist Party must come out as the champion of the right of the oppressed Negro race for full emancipation. While continuing and intensifying the struggle under the slogan of full social and political equality for the Negroes, which must remain the central slogan of our Party for work among the masses, the Party must come out openly and unreservedly for the right of the Negroes to national self-determination in the southern states, where the Negroes form a majority of the population. The struggle for equal rights and the propaganda for the slogan of self-determination must be linked up with the economic demands of the Negro masses, especially those directed against the slave remnants and all forms of national and racial oppression. Special stress must be laid upon organizing active resistance against lynching, Jim Crowism, segregation and all other forms of oppression of the Negro population.⁶

The resolution also called for the eradication of “white chauvinism” evidenced in the American Communist Party. McDuffie notes that the resolution declared black women as “the most exploited” segment within the labor force but points out that very little else was done to ensure that black female voices would be heard in the Communist movement. Communist rhetoric and black labor discourse was framed, as McDuffie argues, in masculine terms. That the plight of African Americans in the Soviet Union was perceived in terms of the black male body becomes evident in Soviet cartoons and later in discourses of student exchanges in the USSR following World War II. While Soviet propaganda and literature on racial equality would promote black male workers as heroic revolutionaries fighting for equality, paternalistic language and often historically informed racialized representations of African Americans would render them tragic victims of not only U.S. capitalism but Soviet socialism as well. Despite attempts to adhere to discourses of racial equality, African Americans were often racialized in Soviet publications as black curiosities, drawing on physical and cultural stereotypes of African Americans put forth by whites in the United States.

DU BOIS, HUGHES, MCKAY, AND ROBESON IN THE USSR

W. E. B. Du Bois, Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, and Paul Robeson are among the most discussed figures in English-language scholarship on African American relationships with the Soviet Union (Carew 2008). They traveled to

the Soviet Union and wrote about the opportunities that Soviet communism extended to black Americans (Baldwin 2002; Carew 2008).

In 1922, Claude McKay traveled to the Soviet Union as part of a U.S. delegation to address the Third International in Moscow. His role was to inform Soviet leaders about the nature of race relations in the United States. Historian Meredith Roman notes that McKay's speech was published in *Pravda*, but his discussion of racism among white American Communists was omitted so as to associate racism only with bourgeois society (2012, 5). Soviet plans for rapid industrialization and Soviet recruitment of white and black workers from the United States positioned discourses of U.S. racism as crucial delimiters between U.S. capitalism and Soviet campaigns to build a new society (7). As Blakely notes, McKay was preferred by the Soviets because he was dark-skinned (in comparison to Otto Huiswoud, another African American member of the U.S. delegation) and thus fit Russian preconceptions (Blakely 1986, 84). Joy Gleason Carew writes that McKay himself pointed out that he possessed "unmistakable Negroidness" (as documented by his biographer, Wayne Cooper) (Carew 2008, 22). Carew notes, "McKay's darker skin stood in greater contrast to the white faces of the Russians around him, and, therefore, his propaganda value as a symbol in photos and publications was also greater. Furthermore, McKay's darker color also fit in with the Soviets' preconceived notions of blacks in the United States as having some kind of 'African-ness'" (23).

Such preconceptions indicate that a complex cultural racism informed political rhetoric on racial equality in the Soviet Union. More than that, however, Soviet notions of a preconceived blackness stemmed from an idea that African Americans and Africans were linked. As Kate Baldwin analyzes, Soviet "efforts to link Africans and black Americans were riddled with self-interest and a lack of perceptiveness about the specificities of racial and national formations, the differences between and among peoples of African nations and those descended from these peoples, and the asymmetries among race and other identity markers (such as class, gender, and sexuality) within a singular racial categorization" (2002, 50). Baldwin problematizes both sides of such thinking. The first issue is that the binary positioning of white/black identity, with blackness being reinforced through links to "Africa," positioned Soviets as white, in line with capitalist and colonial oppressors in the West (50). Soviet whiteness, however, then positioned them as the first to promote equality among races on the levels of policy and theory in practice. As Mer-

edith Roman argues, Soviet antiracism aimed to position Russians as “most ‘civilized’ or ‘white’ among European-descended groups,” against whom the racism of white Americans would be “an embarrassment” (2012, 104).

In 1926, W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963) made the first of his four trips to the USSR (1926, 1936, 1949, 1958). Having commissioned McKay to write up his 1922 trip for *The Crisis*, which he edited, Du Bois was similarly attracted to the Soviet Union as an idealized place of racial equality and emancipation. Du Bois believed that a restructuring of capitalist flows in terms of Marxist thought could result in the restructuring of race relations in the United States. As Baldwin notes, the writings of Du Bois changed over time, and only a thorough understanding of his experience in the Soviet Union and with Communist rhetoric can illuminate the changes in his ideologies from individual liberalism to communism (Baldwin 2002, 150–53). Racial discourse, framed by the Soviet Union’s fraught relationship with the capitalist West, is evident in Stalin’s constitutional amendments of 1936: “Neither language nor color of skin . . . can justify national and race inequality.” Suffice it to say, much of this discourse may be perceived purely as propaganda. As explored further in chapter 3, Stalin did not practice an ideology of ethnic and racial equality when it came to harnessing the national question in the Soviet Union, particularly as evidenced by the mass murders of Ukrainian peasants and intellectuals. African Americans were not aware of such atrocities or the duplicity of Soviet rhetoric because it was suppressed and censored in the West. Nevertheless, African Americans who visited the Soviet Union as part of official delegations were treated with respect and found a refreshing hope in the theoretical ideologies of the Soviet Union.

One of the most important ways that Soviet authorities attempted to show their commitment to racial equality was through Soviet support for the Scottsboro Boys, nine black teenagers accused of raping two white women in Alabama in 1931 and sentenced to death by electrocution. Viewed as victims of racism, their arrests were widely protested by the American Communist Party and in the Soviet Union. Though rallies were organized and the case received widespread attention in the Soviet Union, it offers a telling example of the complex rhetoric and propaganda in the Soviet Union at the time. While official propaganda mobilized behind the Scottsboro case and attempted to position the USSR as a country of racial equality, newly colonized Soviet citizens were dying by the hundreds of thousands. In Ukraine, a devastating famine in 1932–33, orchestrated to suppress nationalist opposition to collectivization,

wiped out more than 4 million people in the eastern Ukrainian countryside. However, data concerning Ukraine at the time of the Scottsboro case reflect widespread antiracism campaigns in the region. On July 7, 1931, the newspaper *Trud* (Labor) issued a front-page report that 16,000 workers at a factory in Nikolayev in southern Ukraine, “with great indignation[,] are protesting the American bourgeoisie’s barbaric execution of eight Negro workers” (Roman 2012, 106). According to the central records of MORP (Mezhdunarodnoe ob’edinenie revoliutsionnykh pisatelei, The International Union of Revolutionary Writers), the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic was most active of all Soviet republics in its support for the Scottsboro prisoners, donating more funds, labor, and resources than other Soviet citizens. Roman argues that MORP fabricated this data in order to demonstrate to party leaders that the union had achieved success in thwarting opposition to collectivization in 1931 and 1932, the time of great turmoil and nationalist opposition to the Soviet project (Roman 2012, 110). Again, this example points to the complex ways that Soviet propaganda worked race relations to its advantage on the global scale while at the same time hiding the level of destruction against its own citizens from the world.

The most well known participant in such early initiatives focusing on Soviet race relations is Langston Hughes (1902–67), who came in 1932, accompanied by twenty-two African Americans who had been invited to participate in a film to be called *Black and White*. The failure of this project stemmed from lack of Soviet knowledge regarding the nature of African American experiences with slavery and institutionalized racism in the United States. The film’s producers at Mezhrabpom studio also claimed that the African Americans were “inauthentic” because their skin was too light (Roman 2012, 144). In addition, they were disappointed that the proposed film participants could not sing or dance as they had presumed.

Paul and Eslanda Robeson made their first journey to the USSR in 1934. In the late 1930s, the Robesons enrolled their son in an elementary school in Moscow, joining a community of African Americans who had settled permanently by then (Robeson 2001). Despite the wide press coverage their visits received, such figures were official guests of the Soviet government and had little everyday interaction with urban dwellers or with the significant rural population in the Soviet Union. Memoirs published by African Americans who moved to the Soviet Union and by members of their families (discussed later in this chapter) paint a more telling picture of the challenges they faced

in the USSR. For the most part, the general public perceived them with curiosity and rallied behind the ideological cause of equality for all people. An extended look at singer-activist Paul Robeson's experiences illustrates this more clearly.

PAUL ROBESON: MUSIC AND BLACK ACTIVISM IN THE COLD WAR

The African American singer-activist Paul Robeson (1898–1976) was famous in the USSR and drew on Soviet support to denounce racial segregation in the United States. He performed in the Soviet Union on many occasions and, in his view, contributed to life in a society that claimed to be free from racial bias. Race discourse played an important role in Cold War relations, and Robeson drew on official Soviet rhetoric regarding alleged equality to champion the cause of African American civil rights at home. From a post-socialist perspective, it seems his popularity and outspokenness against racial inequality helped break performance barriers for African musicians living in post-Soviet Ukraine. He made himself available to audiences and established a sense of credibility with Soviet listeners through his knowledge of Russian, his live performances in the Soviet Union, his choice of repertoire, which ranged from arias from Russian operas to Chinese worker songs, and the sincerity with which he portrayed his belief in the social equality of the Communist system.

Robeson's baritone voice fell within Russian aesthetic preferences for melancholic melodies with dramatic elements. His acceptance by Russian audiences was perhaps rooted equally in the aesthetic quality of his voice, his wish to sing in Russian, and ideological connections between African American oppression and oppression of rural populations in the Russian Empire. After one of his first concerts in New York after singing a Russian tune, Robeson is quoted as saying, "I have found a music very closely allied to mine . . . certainly many Russian folk songs seem to have come from Negro peasant life and vice versa" (quoted in Mihailovic 2006, 304).

Paul Robeson performed music that resonated with his experience as an African American. In a 1933 interview with the *New York World-Telegram*, Robeson stated, "I do not understand the psychology or philosophy of the Frenchman, German, or Italian. Their history has nothing in common with the history of my slave ancestors. So I will not sing their music or the songs

of their ancestors” (quoted in Pencak 1999, 83). Allegedly shunning the world of opera and European art music, Robeson focused his career on singing songs of the oppressed to audiences around the world in original languages and in translation. As summarized by Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, president of Morehouse College, on the occasion of the award to Robeson of the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters in 1943:

You [Paul Robeson] have had the courage to dignify and popularize the folk-songs composed by the oppressed peoples of the earth. You have proved that you have a mission in song and a deep, abiding faith in that mission. In your singing you champion the cause of the common man. Whether it is a Negro spiritual, the folk-songs of France or Canada, the songs of the Mexican peons, the Jew's longing for release from persecution, the brave chant of the Russian soldier, the songs of Madrid at the time of bombardment, or a song portraying the heroism of London and China, you, Mr. Robeson, embody in your person the sufferings of mankind. (Robeson 1958, 114)

Taking into account Paul Robeson's influential musical output, as evidenced by the conference of an honorary degree and numerous other honors, it is curious that very few English-language texts offer a musical analysis of his repertoire, let alone an analysis of Robeson's statements on music.⁷ Robeson had an interest in ethnomusicology, theorizing about the collective origin of pentatonic melodies throughout the world. He found parallels between the alleged “melancholy, touched with mysticism” found in the music of Russian serfs and Negro spirituals (1958, 115). Robeson personally knew anthropologist Melville Herskovits at Columbia University and endorsed Herskovits's theories of Africanisms in African American culture (Karp 2003, 67). In *The Myth of the Negro Past*, Herskovits emphasized the continuity of West African traditions in African American culture (1990 [1941]). He argued that enslaved Africans had retained cultural elements, debunking popular thought that African Americans had no connections to their African roots. His concept of Africanisms, however, was limited because it was based on a notion of West African cultural homogeneity. As historian Joseph Holloway observes, more recent scholarship suggests a Bantu origin for many aspects of African American culture (Holloway 2005, 4). At the time, however, Africanisms helped create the modern idea of a black diaspora as unified via African-based difference (Radano 2003, 34).

Following Ghanaian musicologist J. H. Kwabena Nketia's theory that the use of music in African American communities follows a tradition in

African societies where music making is generally organized as a social event (1974, 21), Robeson's concerts could be viewed as communal music making. Ethnomusicologist Portia Maultsby elucidates that this communal approach to music making is evident in the ways performers adapt recorded versions of their songs in live performance, pointing out that "many begin their songs with ad lib 'rapping' (secular) or 'sermonettes' (sacred) to establish rapport with the audience" (2005, 329). Similarly, in his performances, Robeson drew on the speech-song narrative style of African American preachers as lead-ins to his renditions of Jewish chants, arias from Mussorgsky's opera *Boris Godunov*, and monologues from Shakespeare's *Othello*. Accompanied by African American pianist Lawrence Brown, Robeson's renditions of Chinese, Hasidic, and Spanish partisan songs and songs from German work camps were more in line aesthetically with the nineteenth-century European art music he allegedly shunned. However, the speech prefacing the presentation of the songs contextualized them in a broader narrative that drew audience attention to people and groups that shared historical trajectories with African American strivings for freedom.

Despite great success for most of his career, discussions of Paul Robeson's musical contributions in English-language literature are often marginalized at the expense of political rhetoric that focuses more on whether his persecution in the United States resulted from his Communist allegiances, his outspokenness as an African American, or both. Paul Robeson is known in history foremost for his (at the time) controversial support of the Soviet Union. He firmly believed in the emerging Soviet ideology of civil liberties, freedom for all, and equality of all races. His close ties with Communist party echelons in Moscow and his outspoken critique of anti-African American discrimination in the United States provoked the U.S. government to take action against him at the end of World War II. In 1950, Robeson's passport was revoked, based on his alleged statements at the 1949 Paris Peace Conference that African Americans would not go to fight for the United States against the Soviet Union, questioning the rationale of fighting for a nation-state that discriminated against its black citizens. For eight years, Robeson was not allowed to travel or perform internationally, though he persevered, giving concerts by phone to miners in Wales (1957) and a concert at the Canadian border for 30,000 metal miners in 1952. Copies of the Canadian border performance housed in the Library of Congress retain video but suspiciously no audio, leading one to believe the music and Robeson's speech-song were edited from the record-



FIGURE 1.2. Paul Robeson singing in Russian and English at a concert in Green Park, Moscow, 1949. *Courtesy of CriticalPast.*

ing.⁸ His self-published autobiography, *Here I Stand* (1958), sold 25,000 copies in the first year but was completely ignored by the white mainstream press (Wolff 1989, 225).

In contrast to English-language popular literature and scholarship, Soviet depictions of Robeson foreground his musicianship. In interviews and analyses, Robeson is recognized first as a musician; his politics play a secondary role. It would be trite to dismiss this representational reversal by thinking that Soviet censorship of political discourse was at play. On the contrary, Soviets highlighted the plight of African Americans as one of the primary differences between an allegedly equal Communist society and the class stratifications of capitalism. Thus, although it was in the Soviets' best interest to highlight Robeson as an oppressed black man, they portrayed him first as an actor and musician. In a 1956 cartoon in the *Krokodil* satirical magazine, Robeson is pictured in a tuxedo towering over U.S. bureaucrats with the caption "Paul Robeson—This—is the only place where I can still perform" (Baldwin 2002, 236).

Robeson's foregrounding as a musician in Soviet discourse played itself out in diverse ways. As an oddity of sorts in the Soviet Union of the 1930s—an African American fluent in Russian—he was lauded for his racial difference and wined and dined by the party elite. Meanwhile, as Robeson was being invited to perform in the Soviet Union and greeted with cheers and crowds, an untold number of intellectuals in newly incorporated Soviet lands were being tortured and murdered for opposing the forceful collectivization and Russification of culture and society. An often-repeated account states that Robeson was allegedly aware of such atrocities. He was certainly aware of anti-Jewish actions in Germany, because in 1933, Robeson donated the proceeds he had earned performing in Eugene O'Neill's play *All God's Chillun Got Wings* (1924) to Jewish refugees fleeing Hitler's Germany. During his trip to the Soviet Union in 1949, Robeson, sensing the growing anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union, requested that the authorities let him meet with Yiddish poet Itzik Feffer. Feffer joined Robeson in a bugged room and, through hand gestures, relayed that their mutual friend Solomon Mikhoels, Yiddish actor and impresario, co-chairman of the Jewish Antifascist Committee and a leader of Soviet Jewry, had been brutally murdered. The Soviet Union under Stalin was experiencing a great purge of Yiddish culture. In response, Robeson performed "The Partisan Song" ("Zog nit keynmol"), a tribute to the Jews who had perished in resistance to the Nazi liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto (Karp 2003). His performance of "The Partisan Song" did not prompt public condemnation from the party elite but elicited discomfort from the crowd, aware of the political tensions in the country. Interestingly enough, while Robeson knew of the purges, and while the worst violence against Yiddish writers would come in 1952, Robeson never officially made any critique against Soviet policy of any kind. He adamantly supported Soviet policies because of the safety and attention he received from the Soviet government and the official stance on racial equality in the USSR. A chocolate cake and a "black" heirloom tomato variety from Siberia named after Robeson attest to his popularity among Soviet citizens. A 13,000-foot mountain in the Tian Shan range was named after him in the early 1950s, and in 1958 he was made honorary professor of the Moscow State Conservatory of Music ([PURL 1.1](#)). Memoirs written by sojourners and Africans in Russia who say they have been mistaken for Paul Robeson indicate that average Russians had very little face-to-face interaction with black people and associated them with theatre. One of Paul's brothers-in-law was hired to perform as the "Black Samson" in a circus.

ROBESON'S SPIRITUAL IN *BLACK AND WHITE*

When Langston Hughes's party arrived in the Soviet Union in 1932 to film the aforementioned *Black and White*, he is said to have criticized the script, stating that it was beyond revision (Baldwin 2002, 95–102; Carew 2008, 115–39). However, Soviet archives confirm that white American capitalist interventions ensured the cancelation of the film. Colonel Hugh L. Cooper, an American engineer and businessman instrumental in the construction of the Dnieprostroi dam, met with Lazar Kaganovich and Viacheslav Molotov to inform them that he would withdraw his assistance from the construction of the dam if a film about U.S. racism featuring African Americans were made. Kaganovich advised Stalin that the film was “unnecessary” and that the Central Committee had not even approved its production, and the Politburo voted to cancel the film (Roman 2012, 137).⁹

Despite the film's cancelation, L. Ivanov-Vano and L. Amalrik produced an animated cartoon in 1933 titled *Black and White*, addressing issues of racism in the Jim Crow South. It contrasts the relationship between whites and blacks in class terms, depicting whites as affluent, fat, driving big cars, and enjoying pineapples, a symbol of material wealth and access to goods that was often used in Soviet cartoons. A white question mark on a black screen pauses the narrative and asks the viewers to question the disparity between the white man's large pineapple on a plate and the black man's pineapple, only a fraction of the size. The pineapple, a sign of hospitality from the times of colonial America, functions as a broader symbol for capitalist greed and want. The fruit was not readily available in the Soviet Union, and as will be analyzed in chapter 4, Soviet cartoons of the 1960s depicting “Africa” feature pineapples growing upside-down (like coconuts) from palm trees.

In the cartoon *Black and White* (PURL 1.2), economic disparities are blamed on the United States' history of slavery and exploitation of laborers. The cartoon depicts plantation owners as capitalists, exploiting black and white workers. The inclusion of white laborers indicates the ways that Soviet propaganda cast race discourse in terms of class disparities. The plantation owner walks across the fields with a cross in his hand, perhaps indexing the oppressive role that the church, in its close relationship with government, played in the suppression of laborers. The cartoon mocks Christianity in the West for its hierarchical structure and veneration of the pope, a type of monarch (the priest in the animation wears a cardinal's hat, reinforcing the

supremacy of the pope). The inclusion of the church, however, is perhaps more indicative of Soviet sensitivities than those in the United States regarding religion at the time. The Orthodox Church had a powerful influence on the politics of the Russian Empire, and the strong push for atheism as part of socialism indicates the oppression many felt stemmed from the church. Thousands of churches in lands usurped into the fold of the Soviet Union were destroyed, and all formal practice of religion was forbidden and punished by the state. The priest in the cartoon has a similar gait to that of an Orthodox priest. He is fat, a commentary on the Orthodox Church's amassed wealth, and stands with his hand on his waist, a stereotypical stance for Orthodox bishops. That the Soviet makers of the cartoon were not familiar with religious issues in the United States is clear from their projection of Orthodox and Catholic imagery (rather than Protestant belief, most common in the American South). As the priest moves the cross in a blessing, the pattern follows that of an Orthodox priest, from left to right, his movements mirroring the ways people bless themselves in Orthodox Christianity (from right to left, opposite that of the Latin rite). The producers of the propaganda cartoon were clearly not aware that the cross is not used for veneration in Protestant practice because it is considered idolatry.

Despite clear representations of exploitation, an African American figure is presented as standing up to a white man whose anger makes him appear larger than life, in contrast to the persistent and calm African American, who appears to be presenting arguments based on logic, indicated through a consistent hand gesture. The cartoon shows violence against African American individuals who stand against the white capitalist system. And it portrays numerous African American men lynched along telephone wires, pointing to the sacrifice African Americans made with their lives to ensure the modernity and progress enjoyed only by whites. African Americans are seen in a chain gang heading to prison, and an individual languishes in jail and is later killed in the electric chair. Meredith Roman analyzes the wire of the electric chair as the modern equivalent to the rope once used to lynch African Americans—the rope and the electric chair were used to suppress black revolutionaries in the United States (Roman 2012, 98). The electric chair was used in antiracist Soviet propaganda relating to the impending execution of the Scottsboro defendants.

The film ends with the word “Lenin” on the backdrop of a rising building constructed in the style of socialist realism. It reinforced the idea that the

Soviet Union offered solutions to racial and class exploitation. Ironically, women are not represented in any way in this cartoon. It features only figures of black and white men, and Robeson's baritone provides a male aural framework to the soundtrack. Such a gendered representation is not an anomaly in Soviet rhetoric. Women's voices were usurped by the cause of modernity and equality in ways that silenced any female-specific contributions or needs. The Soviet Union lauded women as mothers but did not encourage feminist thought in socialist rhetoric. Rather, the framework of socialism and Soviet patriotism was masculine in nature (Verdery 1996; McDuffie 2011; Roman 2012).

Perhaps more haunting than the images themselves is the soundtrack that features the Negro spiritual "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child," performed by Paul Robeson, whose recordings were issued in the Soviet Union by the state recording company Melodiya. This particular spiritual dates back to the 1870s and was first performed by the Fisk Jubilee Singers. An expression of despair and pain of alienation and loneliness, the word "sometimes" also offers hope that there are moments that such feelings do not pervade. African American author, intellectual, and civil rights activist James Weldon Johnson (1871–1931) casts the spiritual in Marxist terms as a song of laborers within an exploitative capitalist system ruled by white masters. As Radano analyzes, "At this time, whites still commonly thought that blacks produced song simply by speaking and singing 'naturally,' free from the burdens of intellect and reason that had complicated European notions of creativity. Johnson supplies the slaves with agency, with a form of action that situates song making in the sphere of public works" (Radano 2003, 165). Spirituals as songs of exploited laborers fit within Soviet frameworks of class discourse. It is important to note that Soviet censors allowed the use of the spiritual as the soundtrack for this 1933 cartoon, despite the popular genre's association with Christianity. By 1958, following the horrors of Stalinist repressions and World War II, playing Robeson's songs to celebrate his visit to Russia, including the spirituals, led to the firings of a number of Soviet radio personnel. As Allison Blakely notes, "Despite arguing that phrases such as 'Steal Away to Jesus' were a code language for rebellion," Robeson's performances of spirituals were no longer perceived as appropriate or acceptable in an officially atheist Communist country such as the USSR (1986, 153).

While the Soviet Union practiced racial equality by offering equal opportunity for employment and housing, an overarching sense of exoticism

regarding black people prevailed, and they were more of a curiosity to the masses than embraced as citizens. The often-referenced example of Grigory Aleksandrov's famous film-musical *Tsirk* (Circus) (1936) is a case in point (Mihailovic 2006, 305–6). The film tells the story of a white American circus performer, Marion Dixon, who has a child with an African American. A German impresario brings her to perform in the Soviet Union, where he blackmails her by threatening to reveal her secret. When he does so in the middle of a performance, the mixed-race child (played by James Llyodovych Patterson, son of African American sojourner Lloyd Patterson and his Russian wife, Vera Oreleva) is embraced by the circus audience. The boy is passed from person to person and serenaded by the multiethnic and multiracial audience in Russian, Ukrainian, Georgian, and Yiddish. Singing plays an important role in mediating the images of African Americans in Soviet culture to put forth political and social agendas of equality. However, audience acceptance of such messages rarely translated itself into full acceptance and integration of the persons who would hope to benefit from such rhetoric.

As Meredith Roman analyzes, *Circus* signals a step away from the Soviet rhetoric on racial equality of the early 1930s and positions fascism as the main evil through the depiction of the German antagonist who blackmails Marion by threatening to expose her black child (Roman 2012, 153). It also reinforces stereotypes of black women (Davis 1998). Though Dixon is escaping from racial discrimination in the United States, she nevertheless reinforces her own whiteness through the role of her African American maid, who plays the stereotypical benevolent black “mammy” whose main role is to care for the children of white women. The black female is desexualized, as in the case of Emma Harris, longtime resident of Moscow who, according to Langston Hughes, was always introduced at Moscow rallies condemning U.S. racism as “our own beloved Negro comrade, Emma, who before she came to the Soviet motherland, knew the stinging lash of race hatred in her native America” (Roman 2012, 117). Roman asserts that Soviets attempted to erase the history that Harris had moved to Moscow in 1901 at the time of the Russian Empire and had enjoyed success as a singer and brothel owner for sixteen years, because this would have rendered the political rhetoric regarding the Soviet Union as the only place where African Americans enjoyed equal opportunity as improbable (117). Roman and Erik McDuffie point to numerous examples of how Communist rhetoric on racial equality is gendered in terms of masculine discourse. Photographs of lynched African American males (which introduced

new Russian verbs like *linchevat*, “to lynch”) and electric chair executions of black men reinforced the masculine nature of race discourse and associated black men with violence, death, and victimhood.¹⁰

Theatrical representations of black and white relationships by U.S. playwrights, including Eugene O’Neill, were seen on the Russian stage. Historian Meredith Roman mentions that the Scottsboro protest rallies in Moscow were held during the intermission of O’Neill’s play *All God’s Chillun Got Wings*, whose title is taken from a Negro spiritual, at Moscow’s Kamernyi Theatre. The play focuses on a psychologically abusive relationship between an ambitious black man and an emotionally unstable white woman whose jealousies and insecurities destroy the black man’s aspirations to become a lawyer. In the United States, Paul Robeson and Mary Blair played the two characters at the premier in a small theatre in New York. In Moscow, the play was performed in blackface and offended African American and African students in attendance who brought up the problematic depiction of blacks during a 1933 meeting with officials at the Communist University of the Toilers of the East, where they were enrolled (Roman 2012, 178). There is no mention, however, of how the male students perceived the mentally ill white woman who cannot come to terms with her husband’s black skin and acts destructively toward him. The woman is perceived as low-class, unable to succeed on her own and thus dependent on the black man, though she is unable to support him through her own insecurities. This representation of the white woman differs greatly in O’Neill’s play and the Soviet film *Circus*, where the black husband or lover is essentially absent from the narrative. In *Circus*, the white female protagonist embraces racial difference, whereas in O’Neill’s play, the woman’s inability to embrace racial difference leads to the downfall of both characters. Interracial love is the key to both plots, but only in the Soviet narrative is the goal to show a sense of embracing racial difference.

Glenda Gill, in her analysis of O’Neill’s collaboration with Robeson, points out that O’Neill and Robeson each had extremely different visions as to how the African American male should be constructed for the theatre. According to Gill, “Robeson sought to debunk the stereotypes which minstrelsy had created; O’Neill, however well-intentioned, perpetuated them, although the playwright was heroic in promoting the casting of black actors in his plays” (Gill 2006). Robeson was severely criticized by African American intellectuals of the time for taking on theatrical roles that perpetuated racial stereotypes. However, Robeson felt it was important to collaborate with white

playwrights like O'Neill and to work in interracial theatre troupes. Broadway policy in 1925 was to have white actors play "colored" roles in black face to avoid public controversy around mixed casts. O'Neill pushed the limits of these sensibilities by having Paul Robeson kiss the hand of a white actress, goading the press to call for the cancelation of the production.

"BLACK ON RED": AFRICAN AMERICAN REALITIES IN THE SOVIET UNION

Personal experiences, documented in memoirs, reflect the relative failure of the Communist system to overcome social racism and cultural exoticization of African Americans by local populations (Khanga and Jacoby 1992; Robinson 1988). Robert Robinson's autobiography *Black on Red: My 44 Years inside the Soviet Union* (1988) describes his experience as a black auto worker from Detroit who was offered a job in the Soviet Union in 1933 as a mechanical engineer. His memoir betrays his disappointments, alienation, encounters with Soviet secret police, racism, and tragic experiences in the USSR. He writes, "Trying to survive in a society where dark-skinned people feel anxious, despised, and unwanted, and are considered inherently inferior by many whites, is an undertaking filled with agony. The handful of blacks who emigrated to the Soviet Union were serious, independent minded, sensitive, and usually well-educated. They all viewed Lenin as their Moses. So deep was their belief—and their need to believe—that they refused to notice the Bolsheviks' shortcomings" (13). Robinson shares details about the types of social racism embedded in Russian consciousness and how the rhetoric of racial equality in the Soviet Union was not reflected in everyday realities.

The fact is that all non-Russians are considered inferior. On the unofficial scale of inferiority, the Armenians, Georgians, and Ukrainians are more acceptable than other non-Russians. The eastern Soviet citizens—those with yellow skin and almond-shaped eyes—are considered to be at the bottom of society. They think of blacks as even worse. The reality of racism contrasts with the picture of social perfection painted by the authorities. It is maddening that Russians pride themselves on being free of racial prejudice. It is difficult for them to understand how thoroughly bigoted they are. (16)

In his memoir *Black Bolshevik: Autobiography of an Afro-American Communist* (1978), Harry Haywood describes his interactions with Russians while he was a student in Moscow in the 1920s:

Needless to say, Blacks attracted the curiosity of the Muscovites. Children followed us in the streets. If we paused to greet a friend, we found ourselves instantly surrounded by curious crowds—unabashedly staring at us. It was a friendly curiosity which we took in stride. Once, while strolling down Tverskaya, Otto (Hall, his older brother) and I stopped to greet a white American friend and immediately found ourselves surrounded by curious Russians. A young Russian woman stepped forward and began to upbraid and lecture the crowd. “Why are you staring at these people? They’re human beings the same as us. Do you want them to think that we’re savages? *Eta ne kulturnya!* (That is uncultured!)” The last was an epithet and in those days a high insult. “*Eta ne po-Sovietski!* (It’s not the Soviet way!)” she scolded them. (169)

Haywood, whose grandfather killed a Ku Klux Klan night rider while defending his family, joined the Communist Youth League in 1923 and the Communist Party in 1925. In 1927 he became the first black student at the new Lenin School and became an active participant in Soviet politics, remaining a loyal Communist and Stalinist after his return to the United States. In many ways, Haywood exceeded the optimism of his fellow African American Communist sympathizers in believing that it was possible to unite the black and white working classes, an ideology stressed in Communist theory (Blakely 1986, 111).

In the frequently cited memoir of African American experiences in the Soviet Union *Soul to Soul: A Black Russian American Family 1865–1992*, Yelena Khanga, the grandchild of an African American grandfather and a white Jewish grandmother who were members of the American Communist Party, staunchly defends her upbringing in the Soviet Union. The title of her book references a Russian phrase for the most intense, meaningful conversations between friends—*dusha v dushu* (soul to soul). She writes: “In spite of the many strands in my heritage, I am also Russian to the core. Russian was my first language, though my mother and grandmother often spoke English at home. My schooling was Soviet, beginning with the kindergarten where I was taught to love Dedushka (Grandpa) Lenin. My mind and soul have been shaped by the compassionate irony of Chekhov, the poetry of Pushkin, the romantic music of Tchaikovsky.” Yelena Khanga seems to have developed her own personal relationship to her African American roots:

I was black—to be more precise, deep burnished copper—in a world where nearly everyone was white. My favorite song was “We Shall Overcome,” which I learned in English as a small child. Those black American voices, resonant with a world of sorrow and joy, came to us on records, gifts from a steady stream of black American visitors who passed through our home. I was raised on tales of

my grandparents' friendships with such great black Americans as the singer Paul Robeson, the poet Langston Hughes, and the father of pan-Africanism, W. E. B. Du Bois. (Khanga and Jacoby 1992, 21)

Khanga reflects on the difficulties her mother, Lily Golden, experienced in the Soviet Union. Lily Golden was a longtime friend of Svetlana Alliluyeva, Joseph Stalin's daughter, who defected to the West in 1966. Lily's life became increasingly difficult when she appeared in Svetlana's second book, titled *Only One Year* (1968). Svetlana described Lily as a "strange hybrid"—half Negro and half Jew—who would never be allowed to travel abroad even though she knew more about Africa than any of the Party hacks who represented the Soviet Union at international academic conferences" (quoted in Khanga and Jacoby 1992, 139). Under surveillance by the KGB, Lily Golden experienced difficulties with Soviet censors while researching a book on black people living in the Soviet Union. In the Republic of Abkhazia near the Black Sea coast, Lily studied isolated, impoverished villages of the descendants of African slaves brought there between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries when the area was a part of the Ottoman Empire. The book was eventually published in English by the Novosti Press Agency, and while black Abkhazians were included in the text, all references to their poverty had been deleted (139).

MULTIPLE REALITIES OF BLACKNESS IN SOVIET AND POST-SOVIET SPACES

One can hardly cast the experiences of all black people in the Soviet Union in the same light. Policies regarding Africans and African Americans differed at various times. For instance, some African American sojourners like Lloyd Patterson were invited to stay. Some became Soviet citizens and intermarried. But African students arriving after World War II were not allowed to seek citizenship and were required to leave after their studies, even if they had children with Soviet women. Whereas African American sojourners of the 1920s and 1930s strongly supported Soviet rhetoric regarding racial equality, which contrasted with their experiences in Jim Crow America, and overlooked many of the deficiencies in the Soviet system, African students arriving in the 1950s and 1960s were quick to criticize the treatment of African students, the poor living conditions in dorms, the restrictions imposed on dating Russian women, and the forced agricultural labor in the summer required of all university students. They also staged protests in response to ra-

cially motivated killings and the harassment of Africans in the Soviet Union, drawing attention to the hypocrisy of the Soviet system (Matusevich 2008).

The scholarship on African experiences in the Soviet Union focuses mostly on the experiences of men living in major cities such as Moscow. This skews the dialogue on Soviet-African and now post-Soviet-African experiences, because little is known about everyday interactions beyond official rhetoric. The aforementioned memoirs by Yelena Khanga, Robert Robinson, and Harry Haywood and writings by former African students in the Soviet Union have begun to fill in the narrative. These accounts, however, omit interactions with rural populations and with those living in smaller towns beyond Moscow, St. Petersburg (Leningrad), Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Odessa and offer an incomplete, if not biased, view of African history in the Soviet Union.

In post-Soviet spaces, opportunities for African inclusion in social and economic circles differ from city to city and are further informed by gender, age, Russian and Ukrainian language skills, and financial standing. According to data gathered by researchers from the Kennan Institute in Washington, D.C., cities with large bazaars in Ukraine such as Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Odessa draw a larger number of immigrants and have a higher rate of post-socialist racial diversity. Of these, Kharkiv, an eastern Ukrainian industrial city close to the Russian border, has the highest percentage of racial integration based on the larger percentage of immigrants who have become economically successful (Ruble 2008, 14–18). Kharkiv, the ethnographic focus of chapter 3, is known for its medical and law universities and has a large African presence made up of students, many of whom have opted to stay in Ukraine after the completion of their studies, and laborers who came after 1991, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, in search of economic betterment. Their stories are vocalized through the experiences and musical performances of Africans involved in Kharkiv's hip hop scenes, active and recognized within Ukraine's burgeoning music industries since the late 1990s. These scenes have become increasingly interracial since around 2005 through the development of small hip hop studios, "Africa"-themed music parties, and the circulation of African-made music in Ukraine back to Africa.

It is important to note that representations of "Africa" in popular music from this part of the world did not emerge with the collapse of the Soviet Union. One of the most poignant examples of popular references to "Africa" is the album *Radio Africa* by the Soviet rock group Aquarium, with its leader Boris Grebenshchikov ([PURL1.3](#)).¹¹ Grebenshchikov's later songs during per-

estroika and the post-Soviet transition period are interpreted as expressing his pain for the homeland (Friedman and Weiner 1999, 127). His 1995 song “Maet-sia” from the album *Navigator* “depicts Russians as a people cursed forever to seek a truth that will always evade them” (129). The earlier “Captain Africa” (1983) has a very different tone from the songs to come and positions Grebenshchikov in his element of opposition to and critique of Soviet social oppression. In the second verse of the song, Grebenshchikov speaks of the heat that has overcome the land, interpreted as political pressure that stifles. He evokes images of white Rastafarians, transparent Roma, and Captain Africa:

How many thousands of words—all in vain,
 Or stealing fire from the gods, the blind;
 We know how to burn, as the alcohol in the outstretched hands;
 I will take my place where I see my
 White Rastafarian, transparent Roma
 Silver beast for warmth;
 I call Captain Africa . . .

The album *Radio Africa* was recorded in a mobile recording studio of the Melodiya label, from which Aquarium ultimately was banned due to inappropriate stage behavior during its concerts in Leningrad. Its music circulated throughout the Soviet Union through self-copied and self-distributed recordings called *magnitizdat*, made at acoustic house concerts in apartments. Such recordings were made with the musicians’ knowledge as a way to circumvent political censorship and to help spread their music to audiences. Members of Aquarium bribed the technician and recorded the album without putting the group’s name on it upon release. A mix of electronic, psychedelic, rock, and jazz, it breaks genres by drawing on local and international sounds. The reference to “Captain Africa” is in opposition to “Captain America,” the Marvel comics character who first appeared in 1941 as an American patriotic creation. That Captain America is positioned opposite to Captain Africa points to the levels that Cold War competition between the Soviet Union and the United States regarding influence on the African continent permeated popular culture. The album’s title, *Radio Africa*, references Radio Moscow, whose broadcasts first reached Africa in the late 1950s in English and French. In 1961, Radio Moscow introduced three African languages: Amharic, Swahili, and Hausa, with other African languages added over time. The album positions Africa as part of the triangular commentary on East-West relations and of the brewing

unrest in the Soviet Union in the 1980s that would lead to the reformation movement in the mid-1980s known as perestroika, the restructuring of the Soviet political and economic system.

As explored in later chapters, the global circulation of beats and lyrics in post-Soviet Ukraine reinforces a complex circulation of sounds influenced by African American music, Russian and Ukrainian musical styles, and the different musical interests of immigrants and students from various African countries. Positioned within historical and contemporary mediations of African and African American musical identities, hip hop is not merely an appropriated genre from the United States but rather a site where geographical, ethnic, class, racial, linguistic, and gendered trajectories merge and are contested by musicians, audiences, the media, globalized music industries, politicians, rights activists, immigrants, and citizens coming to grips with a changing post-socialist world.

MUSIC AND BLACK EXPERIENCES IN POST-SOVIET UKRAINE

Contemporary migration patterns place Ukraine as the fourth-largest immigrant-receiving nation-state in the world, following the United States, the Russian Federation, and Germany (Mansoor and Quillin 2006, 3). In a 2005 study conducted by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division, 6,833,000 foreign-born people were residing in Ukraine, a figure that constitutes 14.7 percent of Ukraine's population of 48 million (Ruble 2008, 5). As of 2010, migration continues to rise. According to Ukraine's State Statistics Committee data, during a five-month period in 2010, 5,304 persons emigrated from Ukraine, while 12,472 immigrated to Ukraine, leading to a significantly greater percentage of non-Ukrainian residents (State Statistics Committee 2010a).¹ Blair Ruble, former director of the Kennan Institute at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C., which conducts research on migration in Ukraine, says this: "Ukraine is becoming more and more a society on the move. We must stop thinking about it as a post-Soviet society and begin to think about Ukraine as a contemporary mobile society that looks like other societies dealing with globalization."²

Augmenting the influx of newcomers is the continued decrease of Ukraine's local population. Since independence in 1991, Ukraine has lost 5 million to 7 million citizens to an economics-driven brain-drain migration of intellectuals and skilled laborers to the West. The majority of labor emigrants left Ukraine in the mid-1990s when the country's borders opened for travel. Due to the large number of people from the country who initially moved to Western Europe, European Union visas were restricted for Ukrainians, impeding business, tourist, and personal travel from Ukraine to the EU. In 2007, the Ukrainian government signed an agreement with the EU that guaranteed

freer travel for Ukrainian citizens to the EU. In exchange, the Ukrainian government agreed to accept and facilitate the transit of any undocumented migrant within the boundaries of the EU who was proved to have entered from a checkpoint in Ukraine. Those found to have crossed the borders illegally from Ukraine to neighboring Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania are held in immigrant detention centers, some financed by the EU. According to Human Rights Watch reports, the Ukrainian state houses these people for indefinite periods of time in often deplorable conditions within these facilities before transferring them back to their country of origin (Human Rights Watch 2005, 2010).

As certain factions within the Ukrainian government actively work to align Ukraine with the European Union, Ukraine is seeing the adoption of Western concepts such as guest workers (*Gastarbeiter*, a German term originally used since the mid-1950s to denote temporary foreign workers in Germany) that are reflective of European migration policies and speak loudly of the pressure to categorize newcomers to Ukraine as temporary. Policy workers in Ukraine and the European Union do not consider Ukraine a country of immigrant destination but rather a stopover to Europe. The reality is that many immigrants wish to remain in Ukraine and send for their extended families. Because Ukrainian and EU officials do not appear to think about the true nature of this migration, Ukrainian society has not been prepared or willing to integrate newcomers. This has created a breadth of unreadiness in facilitating transitions for people engaging with economic, political, and social systems different from those in their home country. There is very little assistance offered toward procuring necessary paperwork and very few social programs in place that help ease anxieties for newcomers and for local populations whose suspicions of newcomers as an economic drain on social services, competition in the job market, and a potential threat to social order are evidenced in cultural, social, economic, and political marginalizations.

The country's education curriculum also does little to help newcomers integrate and obtain knowledge. In conversations with professors from the Kyiv Conservatory of Music, which has enrolled an increasing number of students from China in the last few years, such tensions are particularly evident in ethnomusicology course enrollment. Chinese students are admitted to the conservatory on a paying basis, and their tuition helps cover the costs of running the school, which was once fully funded by the Soviet state. However, their lack of fluency in Russian or Ukrainian often keeps them out of ethno-

musicology courses, where students are required to learn various folk repertoires. The Kyiv Conservatory's historical focus on vocal performance in the study of folk repertoires places Chinese students at a great disadvantage since students are often discouraged from enrolling in ethnomusicological courses due to the linguistic and cultural barriers. There have been few attempts by the ethnomusicology faculty to work in ways that would allow foreign students to benefit from the full music curriculum at the Kyiv Conservatory, where ethnomusicology remains firmly rooted in the collection, theoretical analysis, and performance of musical folklore (Alexeyev 1991; Olson 2004).³

The growing African diaspora in Ukraine points to the challenges of incorporating newcomers in a changing political and economic context. The country is unprepared for logistically accepting and integrating people from different countries (Human Rights Watch 2010), though more progress has been made with those who have come from former republics of the Soviet Union because they have a knowledge of Russian and are aware of the system of change that is in place. Today, there is a significant presence of East Africans in Ukraine, especially from Uganda and Kenya. An increase in the population of West Africans in the last few years has begun to change the dynamics among those who consider themselves to be part of the growing African diaspora. In hip hop events in Kharkiv, for instance, musical styles now reflect musical trends popular in Algeria, Tunisia, and Ghana, showing that the idea of "Africa" continues to be negotiated in post-socialist society based on the migration trends of students and workers. These negotiations take place among musicians and audiences as well through the increasing use of the French language, in addition to English and Russian, as the organizing element of such events and in the ways people from different parts of Africa relate to one another through musical styles and dance. As local non-African populations also attend such events, Ukrainian and Russian perceptions of Africa are becoming more familiar but also increasingly blurred as cultural similarities and differences are highlighted for various reasons by DJs, performers, and audiences.

As sociologist Percy Hintzen and anthropologist Jean Muteba Rahier argue, "Diaspora reveals different forms and content of black consciousness brought together in the spaces constituted by and through such consciousness" (Rahier, Hintze, and Smith 2010, xvii). Thus, "diaspora is both the space produced by and the space that facilitates movement and migration among people with legitimate claims to residence in (as opposed to belonging to)

different places in the modern world” (xix). These scholars postulate that blackness is not based on skin color or origin but should be understood as a form of consciousness and identity. Such processes of consciousness have begun to play out in Ukraine as African leaders begin to think about long-term diaspora development in the country. The African Center in Kyiv, for instance, founded in 2003, has started to engage in ethnographic studies, working to build a library of resources and information on new communities and their rituals, family backgrounds, and lineages that create a sense of place and time for people who have moved to Ukraine. Charles Asante-Yebo, director of the African Center, explains that the purpose of these activities is to benefit future generations and is based on the center’s awareness of those who travel to Africa in search of their roots. Such immigrants are conscious of their uprootedness and rootlessness in Ukraine and want to offer that historical groundwork for their children and grandchildren whom they plan to raise in Ukraine. Important to note is that the growing number of emigrants from Africa position diaspora identity construction not simply as African vis-à-vis non-African but as African vis-à-vis others from Africa as well. The diverse histories, languages, and cultures often present bigger challenges for Africans to overcome than do relationships with non-Africans. However, the growing number of umbrella organizations and, for that matter, music events that encourage representation from all cultural and linguistic groups has created a number of new forums through which people can represent themselves and learn about others, sharing the mutual experiences and challenges that living in Ukraine poses for those who move from the African continent.

VIOLENCE AGAINST AFRICANS IN UKRAINE

Despite new laws in Ukraine that are aimed to protect foreigners and immigrants of all color in Ukraine, it is the very specific cultural attitude toward Africans that is most significant to our analysis. Africans represent the former Soviet Union’s attempts to spread socialism into other parts of the world. They received scholarships from the Soviet state and were invited to study at universities in Moscow, Leningrad, Kyiv, Kharkiv, Odessa, and other cities with the assumption that they would return to their home countries to assist with political, social, cultural, and economic development. The United States also fought for influence on the African continent and vied for sway among the newly independent, formerly colonial African states. Yet U.S. and Soviet

policies clashed on ideological and practical levels at the height of the Cold War. For example, the CIA plotted to poison Congo leader Patrice Lumumba. Lumumba was the first elected prime minister of the Republic of the Congo and served in office for only seven months before being arrested and shot by a firing squad. His vision for a unified and independent Congo was strongly supported by the Soviet Union, though Lumumba denied being a Communist. His government received material aid from Nikita Khrushchev and attempted to scare adversaries by threatening to bring Soviet troops into the Congo. The issue of a Soviet military presence in the Congo led to Lumumba's arrest and death. He was hailed a martyr in the Soviet Union and a champion of freedom and equality. The People's Friendship University, established in Moscow in 1960, was renamed after Patrice Lumumba in 1961. Many city streets in the former Soviet Union, including one in Kyiv's Pechersk region, still carry Lumumba's name.

Beginning in the 1950s, students came from Uganda, Kenya, and Nigeria and socialist countries such as Mozambique and the Congo, nations with whom the Soviet Union had strong relations. Kyiv and Kharkiv, with their well-known medical and technological university programs, drew a significant number of students, as did universities in Leningrad and People's Friendship University of Russia. In its first year, People's Friendship University enrolled 539 foreign students from fifty-nine countries, including fifty-seven students from the Soviet Union. Prior to the Soviet Union's collapse, there were approximately 50,000 African students living and studying in the USSR (Quist-Adade 2007, 158).

Though education in Ukraine is no longer free for foreigners, many semi-affluent, middle-class male students from countries such as Uganda, Kenya, and Mozambique still choose to study in Ukraine. Universities require African students to pay more for enrollment than Ukrainian citizens, because their classes are offered in English. This, in turn, further segregates African students in Ukrainian universities, where the majority of classes are taught in Russian and Ukrainian. Approximately 40,000 students from 129 countries study in 209 Ukrainian higher education institutions, mostly in Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Odessa (ECRI 2008, 17).

There have been numerous documented cases of violence against foreign students, particularly those from Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and the Caucasus. In October 2006, racially motivated attacks resulted in the death of a Nigerian national who was married to a Ukrainian. As noted in the 2008

report by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, the extent of the problem cannot be clearly ascertained, because the police do not keep a register on racially motivated crimes. Additionally, victims are often reluctant to report attacks, since some police officers have been reported to exhibit racist attitudes (2008, 30). A popular hit from the Russian group Zapreshchennye Barabanshchiki (Banned Drummers) from 1999 titled “Ubili Negra” (They killed a Negro) offers a commentary on racial violence and post-socialist perceptions of Africans in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) ([PURL 2.1](#)):

The dead snake does not hiss
 The dead goldfinch does not chirp
 The dead Negro does not play basketball
 Only the dead Negro does not play basketball

Aj ja ja jaj! They killed the Negro
 They killed the Negro, they killed him
 Aj ja ja jaj! The sons of bitches did him in for nothing

Hands folded on his stomach
 Third day without food or water
 The Negro lies and does not dance hip hop
 Only the dead Negro does not dance hip hop

Aj ja ja jaj! They killed the Negro
 They killed the Negro, they killed him
 Aj ja ja jaj! The sons of bitches did him in for nothing

His mother was all alone
 His mother invited a witch doctor
 He played the tom-tom and Billy got up and walked
 Even the dead Negro heard the tom-tom and walked

It's ok that he's a zombie
 He still got up and walked
 Zombies can play basketball, too!

In a 1999 interview in the newspaper *Zavtra* (Tomorrow), band leader Ivan Trofimov stated:

One of the secret missions of the song was to provoke the African community, meaning those who study in Russian universities, to not focus on their abilities to play basketball and dance hip-hop, but rather remember that there were important black leaders such as Malcolm X, Frantz Fanon, leader of the Algerian Revolution, a Negro from Martinique who came to help the Arabs fight against French

colonialism, Haile Selassie, who fought against the Italians in Ethiopia. My whole childhood I was interested in the national independence struggles of Third World countries and have always thought of these people with great respect.⁴

The discourse relating to anticolonial movements in Africa reflects the generational perceptions of Africans by a person who grew up in the Soviet era. Trofimov is also familiar with African American civil rights leaders. What is telling is his fusion of contemporary cultural stereotypes associated with African Americans such as basketball and hip hop with African identities.

The video for “Ubili Negra,” which aired frequently on Russia’s MTV, features the band members playing in an upscale lounge. In an adjacent room, an African male is seated at a desk and attempts to study. Corresponding to the lyrics, the African student forgoes his studies to shoot hoops and dance in the lounge with the band. The identity of the African as intellectual is overshadowed by layers of stereotypes gleaned from U.S. music videos and television programming that began to circulate on Russian television by the mid-1990s. The calypso-style accompaniment and the sonic punctuation added by steel drums index an aural sense of pan-Africanness. As global hip hop scholar Lee Watkins observes, “The experiences of memory and trans-local exchanges are inscribed in the African body’s musical expressions and musical behaviour” (2004, 135). Though the African in the Russian video is clearly made to represent an African American, the calypso rhythm reinforces local notions of globalized “African”-based identity as physically mediated and embodied. Despite a disclaimer at the beginning of the song that it does not promote violence against Africans, the song was very popular and people sang it with an alternative chorus: “They killed the Negro, it’s ok, we don’t care” (Reitschuster 2004).

While stories of victimization and socioeconomic marginalization are common narratives in my interviews with Africans in Ukraine, a female African American graduate student in sociology at the New School in New York, at first hesitant about conducting research in Kyiv due to stories of alleged racial attacks, reported being surprised that she did not experience the racial bias she had anticipated. She was intrigued that her interlocutors all assumed she was a student from Africa. On the other hand, Terrell Jermaine Starr, an African American journalist and Fulbright scholar in Kyiv, was stopped by police twenty-nine times during his fellowship in 2008–09.⁵ This shows that perhaps black experiences in post-socialist spaces are gendered and that fear

of black male bodies is greater than that of black female bodies, which are highly sexualized in the media, as evidenced in the music videos of *mulat* (mixed-race) Afro-Ukrainian pop singer Gaitana Essami, addressed later in this chapter.

RACISM IN POST-SOVIET SOCIETY

By the 1950s, the Soviet Union had attempted to present itself to the world through an ideology that socialist society was not as racist as its capitalist Cold War enemy, the United States. It began to extend educational scholarships to growing numbers of African students. The students, predominantly men, were expected to return home upon completion of their studies. No opportunities were extended to them to work and seek Soviet citizenship.

Historian Maxim Matusevich explains that Africans were perceived differently from other foreigners in Soviet society. They came to the Soviet Union to gain an education that would contribute to social and economic advancement in their home countries. Because the opportunity for economic and social mobility was not possible for citizens of the Soviet Union, this general attitude set Africans apart ideologically from other students (Matusevich 2007b, 362). Africans, unlike students who were Soviet citizens, also had the right to travel outside of the Soviet Union for summer break, often to Western countries such as the United Kingdom. They returned with hard currency and Western goods, including jeans, which were not readily available in the Soviet Union (362). Realities and perceptions of access to Western commodities helped imbue African students with a certain social status in university communities.

Despite their relative social popularity in Soviet university contexts, in the post-Soviet era, attitudes of racial extremism have risen to extreme heights against Africans in both political and social rhetoric. In 2002, I attended a soccer match of FC Karpaty, which had recently acquired Nigerian midfielder Samson Godwin. Soccer players from Africa often use the post-Soviet leagues as a stepping-stone to a European team. I witnessed soccer fans taunt the black player with chants such as “*Mavpa* [monkey], go home.” Ten years later, as Ukraine together with Poland prepared to host the Euro Cup for the first time in Eastern Europe in the summer of 2012, the former captain of the British soccer team Sol Campbell, of Jamaican descent, warned British fans about racism in Ukraine. He stated, “Stay at home, watch it on TV. Don’t even risk

it . . . because you could end up coming back in a coffin.” Many British fans did indeed stay out of Ukraine, leaving few Brits in the stands to cheer on their team. The predominantly white British fans who did travel to Ukraine staged a “coffin protest,” carrying a wooden coffin through the streets of Donetsk to protest the fears of racism that were promoted in Western media leading up to Poland and Ukraine’s hosting of the Euro Cup. According to representatives from the African Center in Kyiv, which monitored for racial attacks during the tournament, no incidents of racially motivated violence were reported during the Euro Cup tournament in Ukraine. Afro-Ukrainian singer Gaitana, Ukraine’s representative to Eurovision 2012 and an official “Friend of Euro 2012,” produced the video for her Eurovision 2012 song “Be My Guest,” featuring soccer players from Ukraine’s foremost team, FC Shakhtar Donetsk, which plays in Donetsk where five Euro Cup matches took place. “Be My Guest,” an invitation to the world to come to Ukraine, shared musical features with the anthem of Euro Cup 2012. While no incidents were reported during Euro Cup 2012 in Ukraine, Campbell’s statements hold true when looking at broader cultural attitudes toward people with dark skin in former Soviet spaces. And it is important to remember that much anti-African and anti-Afro-Caribbean violence in Ukraine is unreported in the media.

In many ways, racism is promoted in politics and has often been associated with pro-Russian political parties, which reinforce Russia’s anti-migration stance. A political television ad put out by the People’s Opposition Bloc of Natalia Vitrenko features an elderly lady entering an Orthodox church ([PURL 2.2](#)). A priest stands near the altar, his back to the woman. She approaches to receive his blessing and gasps as he turns toward her—the priest is dark-skinned, presumably African. The ad ends with an announcer reading the visual text in a stern voice: “Protect Orthodoxy.” It plays on public fears regarding immigrants and can be interpreted as an attack on “foreign churches,” which, according to Russian social anthropologist Ekaterina Shakhbazyan, means “churches that have no roots in the ‘mainstream’ Russian culture and are perceived as a rule by the country’s native citizens as completely alien” (2010, 47). Since 1994, the Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for all Nations, established by Nigerian bishop Sunday Adelaja in Kyiv, Ukraine, has grown to more than 20,000 members, including the former mayor of Kyiv, Leonid Chernovetskyi, and approximately 30 percent of the members of the city council. It is the largest evangelical church and the fastest-growing church in Ukraine (Wanner 2007), and the largest African-led church in Eastern Europe (Olofin-

jana 2010, 44). It serves as a social and community center for African and non-African parishioners, including converts from Christian Orthodoxy. Sunday Adelaja's church is actively involved in missionary work, in the rehabilitation of drug addicts and prostitutes, and in the feeding of the poor (50). Adelaja speaks out against racism but has been under investigation for financial fraud by the Ukrainian government. In August 2012, the bishop faced allegations that he was the leader of a crime syndicate. His assets were frozen and seized by the government. Adelaja blames the charges on racism and xenophobia.

Indeed, 88 percent of Africans surveyed by researchers from the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies in 2001 stated they would not have moved to Ukraine had they known "what experiences were in store" (Ruble 2005, 164). Rarely do Africans walk alone in the center of Kharkiv, except near the universities. According to Gomez and Dami, two Nigerian hip hop musicians studying at Kharkiv National University, a rising number of racially motivated murders is rarely reported in the national media:

Sometimes when we are in a hip hop club, our friends say, don't go out now, don't go out. There are some crazy people out there who can hurt you. Skinheads. So most of the time, we walk in groups. So if anyone wants to attack us, our friends provide security for us. They killed nine Nigerians. They killed a Ghanaian girl. Right in front of the police; the police won't do anything. It's important to bring attention to the Ukrainian government that this is happening to us. Just last week I had a fight with a Russian boy. He said they don't want *inostrantsi* [foreigners] in the country. In Kharkiv they beat you. In Kyiv, they kill you.⁶

Based on interviews with African students in Lviv, western Ukraine, social worker and scholar Michelle Goldhaber states that African students view their dorm room as the safest place. Students at the Medical Institute in Lviv have established systems to check on each other in case someone isn't where he or she is expected to be and strategies to defend each other in case of hostile attack. The school and areas around it are slightly safer than the rest of the city. The city center is generally considered to be unsafe. I observed this in conducting interviews and became increasingly conscious during my fieldwork of safer places in the city to schedule interviews. At first, it didn't dawn on me that a white woman interviewing a black man in the city center could invoke violence. The first five interviews that I scheduled at cafés with black DJs proved very uncomfortable for my interlocutors, who constantly looked around them, watched their backs, and could not focus or relax. It was only after interviewing two black females did I consider the DJs' behavior as a

fear of violence. African women seemed much more comfortable with me in public. They explained that African males are often attacked by non-Africans if they are seen in public with Ukrainian and Russian women. According to Michelle Goldhaber and Emine Ziyatdinova:

In general, African men are more likely to have friendships with Ukrainian women than African women with Ukrainian men. They also tend to spend more time in night clubs and discos, though some women also reported enjoying going out dancing. Women tended to enjoy “window shopping” and walking around the city more than men. It is interesting to note, that after the focus groups, some women reported privately that there was a double standard on the part of African males, and that it wasn’t fair that “they can date Ukrainian women, but we can’t date Ukrainian men without them getting mad.”

Harassment and fears of violence affect socializing among students from Africa. Goldhaber and Ziyatdinova report:

Several students described how they used to cook together in the dorms, and spend evenings socializing together as a group. However, over time they stopped this habit, as well as smiling at each other and being open around each other. They attributed this change to their adapting to the local culture that they experienced on the streets; more distant and less friendly compared to the interactions to which they were accustomed at home where people talk with each other on the street even if they don’t know each other. They explained that it was too painful and difficult to continue expecting people to reach out how they do at home, and so they too stopped investing this energy in each other. They speculated that when they returned home, they would experience “reverse culture shock” and be taken aback at the level of openness. (2010, 10)

These changes in personality that oftentimes lead to frustration, depression, anger, and alienation reinforce the important role that social gatherings revolving around music making, dancing, and interactions have and also the significant psychological and emotional support and release that hip hop activities offer.

International non-governmental organizations have been instrumental in bringing attention to hate crimes in Ukraine. The International Organization for Migration, the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and Amnesty International have been reliable sources in monitoring racially motivated attacks.⁷ Since its 2008 reports on Ukraine, Amnesty International has included a section titled “Racism” not present in previous reports, indicating a rise in racially motivated attacks and homicides. The U.S.-based

nonprofit organization Human Rights First reports, “Small populations of citizens and immigrants of African origin are highly visible and particularly vulnerable targets of racism and xenophobia. Although relatively few people of African origin reside in Ukraine, the rate of violence against this group has been extraordinary. African refugees, students, visitors, and the handful of citizens and permanent residents of African origin have lived under constant threat of harassment and violence” (Human Rights First 2008).⁸

The Shuliavska trade market in Kyiv has been a site of consistent attacks on its non-Slavic vendors. Strife among ultranationalists, skinheads, and vendors have been reported since the first decade of the twenty-first century. In 2007, the market burned down almost completely during such an attack. According to Human Rights First, Kyiv’s deputy mayor Irena Kilchitskaya did not perceive the attack as a hate crime but rather attributed the incident to “ethnic quarrels between representatives of Caucasian nationalities and African countries, who are constantly engaged in scandals and hooliganism against each other” (2008). The general lack of empathy regarding dark-skinned foreigners positions immigrants, and Africans in particular, in perilous situations. On paper, Ukraine is developing theoretical policies to establish an inclusive civil society that protects the rights of immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. However, as noted in the 2010 Human Rights Watch report on the treatment of immigrants and asylum seekers, “Ukraine has been unable or unwilling to provide effective protection to refugees and asylum seekers, and it has also subjected some immigrants returned from neighboring EU countries to torture and other inhuman and degrading treatment” (2). The actions of the judicial system and police reflect a strong racial bias.

ECONOMICS OF RACE: THE BARABASHOVA MARKET IN KHARKIV

Discourses relating to Africans differ from those relating to other immigrants, such as Asians. Ukrainians relate to the Chinese with a relative sense of respect that stems from assumptions of hard work and diligence. Ukrainian interactions with Chinese began with the collapse of the Soviet Union when Chinese traders began peddling wares at local bazaars (Repnikova and Balzer 2009). These so-called shuttle traders brought goods from China on trains as far as Hungary and in a very short period of time were able to establish financially lucrative trade routes. According to Nyiri Pal, Chinese traders

made significant amounts of money in the 1990s selling cheap wares and have become an established part of Eastern European post-socialist economies (Pal 2007). As shuttle traders, so named because they transported goods from China in suitcases on trains, accumulated capital and developed business infrastructure, they legalized businesses and migrated with their families to Hungary and neighboring Eastern European countries. Some have remained in Eastern Europe, while others have migrated farther west toward Germany, Spain, England, Canada, and the United States (101). Other groups have chosen to stay in Eastern Europe. Vietnamese merchants in Kharkiv, for instance, have become so financially successful that music professors earn more giving private lessons to Vietnamese children than at their university jobs. In 2008, the Vietnamese community in Kharkiv opened the Trunc Lam (Bamboo Forest) Pagoda Buddhist Center, the largest Buddhist pagoda in Europe.

Like the Chinese, the Vietnamese established their economic hold selling goods at the Bazaar Barabashova, the largest market in Ukraine. Built on restricted vacant land above the metro station called Akademika Barabashova, named after Soviet Russian astronomer Nikolai Barabashov, the market offers a glimmer of financial opportunity for the local population and foreigners. While trading at the bazaar may seem like a limited opportunity for economic advancement, Kharkiv locals say that the Bazaar Barabashova is the biggest in “Europe” and can be seen on satellite pictures. Banners along the 300 miles of highway between Kyiv and Kharkiv advertise the distance to the Bazaar Barabashova, reinforcing its geographically far-reaching commercial significance. This discourse attests to the importance that both immigrants and Kharkiv locals attribute to the bazaar itself, which employs 80,000 vendors from twenty-three countries (Ruble 2008, 6). Similarly, Kyiv’s largest market in the Troeshchyna neighborhood hires immigrants from Afghanistan, Turkey, and Iraq and employed 20,000 workers by the year 2000. Odessa’s Seven-Kilometer Market spans 170 acres; 16,000 vendors serve more than 150,000 customers. The market’s central administration comprises 1,600 workers (6).

Cities with bazaars such as Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Odessa draw larger populations of international immigrants as well as rural migrants from surrounding areas (Popson and Ruble 2000). The bazaar merchants collaborate with their ethnic groups, leading to a diverse but ethnically divided economic space. Because the products are so similar and of low quality, it is immediately apparent whether a person is wearing clothes purchased at a bazaar, which in turn influences how clothes imbue status and meaning in Kharkiv. In reaction



FIGURE 2.1. African merchants selling jeans at the entrance to the Bazaar Barabashova in Kharkiv, 2008. *Photo by author.*

to the sameness of these products, young hip hop musicians shop at more expensive hip hop-specific shops in the city as a way to differentiate themselves.

At Kharkiv's Bazaar Barabashova, Chinese and Vietnamese merchants sell wares from containers set up at the edges of the market. After hours, I have seen these merchants going home in expensive cars. The central outdoor and indoor stalls are managed by local Russians and Ukrainians. African merchants sell jeans and sunglasses from portable stands at the entrances to the bazaar and in alleys between the stalls. The majority of African merchants are not financially successful. A former accountant from Nigeria in his mid-forties with an economics degree from a university in India who arrived in Ukraine in 1998 in search of economic opportunities now sells sunglasses at the bazaar. Earning the equivalent of \$2.75 a day, he is essentially stuck in Ukraine. Having overstayed work visas, he cannot gain citizenship papers and cannot afford to pay for an exit visa because of his meager living. He shares a room in the church of a Nigerian pastor with five other men from Africa who

are in a similar situation. During another visit to the Bazaar Barabashova in 2008, I was purchasing jeans from a merchant from Uganda when a Turkish food merchant hurled racial slurs at him, yelling that his jeans were blocking access to his kebab stand. The Ugandan admitted that such slurs were not an isolated incident and that African merchants were discriminated against by other merchants. Locals didn't buy as many goods from them as from the Chinese and Vietnamese. According to researchers at the Kennan Institute in Washington, D.C., when compared with emigrants from India and Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Vietnam, unemployment is highest among emigrants from African countries (Braichevska et al. 2004, 46).

The comparative success of other immigrants in Ukraine reveals that Africans are racialized into a specific rubric of Others due to locals' fears based on physical blackness. Colleagues and friends in Ukraine admit that they are afraid of being physically close to people with black skin. They have used the word *strashni* (scary) to describe African men in particular. The Soviet-era term for perceived black identity—*Neger* (the Russian translation of “Negro”)—is still often used in colloquial conversation, but students from Africa are quick to dismiss the term in conversation due to its association with slavery and Jim Crow indignities in the United States. They will, however, answer to the designation “African American,” a term that non-Africans now often use to socially reference Africans in Ukraine. Regarding issues of race, an analysis of musical marketing points to a direct correlation between the increased use of the term “Afro-Ukrainian” in political discourse and the growing participation of African students in Ukraine's popular music scenes, hip hop among them. The prefix “Afro” is much more commonly used in Ukraine than in other post-socialist countries such as Russia. A possible reason for this occurrence, as witnessed by the 2004 Orange Revolution, is that “Ukrainian” is more often used to describe ethnicity than to denote nationality. This understanding is greatly influenced by continued cultural and political conflicts among Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians, Russian-speaking Ukrainians, and ethnic Russians as to which group, if any, can function as the dominant representative of Ukraine's population (Bilaniuk 2006). Differences in religion, language, and customs throughout the country allow for strong regional identities but a less cohesive national identity.

In Russia, which functions for Ukraine's present government as the key Other, the centralized, patriarchal system of government and religion leaves less room for the inclusion of racial, religious, and cultural difference and a

less tolerant policy of accepting people as Russians. In this sense, “Russian” also continues to serve as a marker of ethnic identity and not necessarily one of citizenship. For instance, in 2007, the Russian government issued a ban on foreign workers in Russia’s large indoor and outdoor food and clothing retail markets (Osborn 2007). Such markets, similar to the Bazaar Barabashova in Kharkiv, where many immigrants find work, are a primary source of income for a significant majority of people in many urban centers throughout the former Soviet Union. The Russian government’s ban on foreigners in these contexts signals a centralized control over the economy and a significantly higher level of racism on the level of government policy in the Russian Federation than in other post-Soviet countries experiencing similar levels of migration from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East as well as from other former Soviet countries.

The lack of antiracism oversight within the government, within the educational system, and in the public media sphere has contributed to escalating issues of racial violence in the first part of the twenty-first century. Xenophobia is not addressed in the education system, and the media has a tendency to inflame already tense interethnic relations by portraying immigrants in an unfavorable light. According to Blair Ruble, “When one reads Ukrainian newspapers, when one talks to Ukrainian journalists, there is a notable discourse that these ‘dirty, filthy immigrants are bringing horrible diseases into the country and committing crimes.’”⁹ Ruble says such discourse is being influenced by the anti-immigrant sentiments within the European Union. Nevertheless, a home-grown racism is on the rise in Ukraine. Ukrainian society has been stressed and divided by post-Soviet political, economic, and cultural stratifications that colored the transition from socialism. These include deeply corrupt privatization processes, the rise of mafia elites, and growing social injustice and inequality. Working to move beyond political and economic instability, as well as past religious and ethnic strife, “the Ukrainians now say, ‘We’re the new Europeans—who are these terrible people moving in on us?’”¹⁰

Compounding these pressures from without is the lack of support within. Relatively few civic organizations work on behalf of emigrants from Africa and Ukrainian citizens of African descent. The African Center, the Kyiv-based NGO, has been instrumental in bringing awareness to the public and in helping Africans familiarize themselves with the laws of the country in which they live.¹¹ On May 25, 2011, the organization sponsored “Africa Day” celebrations to commemorate the 1963 founding of the Organization for African Unity.

This first commemoration of its kind in Ukraine featured a hip hop performance by African rappers on Khreshchatyk Street, Kyiv's central boulevard, a soccer tournament between teams of African and non-African students, and an exhibition showcasing African culture, nature, and traditions at the Shevchenko Institute. A roundtable discussion focusing on the 2011 theme "Africa and the Diaspora" included ambassadors of African countries and staff of African diplomatic corps; officials from non-African diplomatic missions, the United Nations, the International Organization for Migration, and other institutions; and Africans, Ukrainians, and other nationals.

In an interview about the event on Ukraine's television channel Kanal 5, known for its fair news coverage (media in Ukraine is controlled by varying degrees of political censorship), Morris Mouke, a member of the board at the African Center, explained that he had come to study international law in the Soviet Union in 1986. He stayed in Kyiv because of wars in the Congo and considers Ukraine his home. He spoke Russian (rather than Ukrainian), as do most African students, since Russian is still the urban lingua franca. In his jacket pocket, however, he wore a yellow and blue handkerchief to indicate his allegiance to Ukraine (rather than to Russia). In describing the soccer tournament between African and non-African students as part of the commemorations, Mouke drew on socialist discourse of equality, referring to the game as an example of *druzhba narodov* (fraternity of peoples). This expression of Marxist social class theory is significant in its use in a post-socialist context, particularly by an African civil leader in Ukraine. It shows that understandings of equality differ based on personal experience with socialist rhetoric. Socialist rhetoric has not disappeared; it has merely shifted into a parallel position alongside Western ideologies promoted especially by NGOs regarding equal rights (minority rights, civil rights, cultural rights, women's rights, indigenous rights). Further aspects of equality discourse are augmented by understandings of equal rights in immigrants' home countries, which determine the effectiveness of their rights efforts in Ukraine. In other words, understandings of "minority" differ greatly in various African countries, and the application of home-grown minority rights strategies oftentimes clashes with such understandings in Ukraine and in the ways such issues are promoted by international NGOs. Such tensions will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 4 with regard to Ugandan musicians in Ukraine who identify strongly with the continued minoritization of the Ukrainian language vis-à-vis Russian in Ukraine's media spheres.

MUSIC, RACE, AND DISCOURSES OF “CIVILIZATION”

Ethnically defined frameworks of difference have influenced the development of minority politics in Ukraine, and all groups continue to be viewed through the prism of ethnicity. However, a race-based discourse is gaining ground in reaction to the increasing presence of immigrants in the post-socialist sphere. It is common for politicians and the general public to say, “Ukraina chorniye,” which translates to “Ukraine is becoming [physically] darker.” Such a discourse recalls Soviet concepts of race, identified in Soviet policy as rooted in physiological traits that do not necessarily correlate to behavior or specific needs. Soviet anthropologists and scholars rejected German ideas associating concepts of race with immutable behaviors and genetically transferrable traits, claiming instead that social reform could improve the human condition and that every being could be molded into a Soviet citizen. Such thinking justified Soviet involvement in African development initiatives. Soviet assistance also became a scapegoat for the failing economic system during perestroika. The late 1980s saw a shift in public discourse vis-à-vis the Third World, as Soviet citizens increasingly voiced their discontentment with their quality of life in the USSR. As Matusevich notes, perestroika leaders argued that the USSR had undermined its economic strength by channeling aid to Third World countries (2008, 76). In the wake of post-Soviet collapse, former Soviet citizens drew comparisons between the economic uncertainty of post-Soviet nation-states and the development status of various African countries. Perestroika and post-Soviet transition were thus cast in racialized economic discourse regarding world status, anxieties of poverty, and a sense of disorientation of world order as the former Soviet republics struggled with the collapse of industry, devaluation of currency, nationalist and democratic ideologies that challenged socialist rhetoric, and extreme feelings of anxiety regarding individual and collective identities and feelings of worth. Africans who continued to study in the former USSR, children of African/non-African unions living in former Soviet territories, and new categories of immigrants (workers, businessmen, religious leaders, investors) from the African continent became visible scapegoats in this transition period in the 1990s. Physical attacks against Africans, destruction of African trading places in outdoor markets, and social alienation were manifestations of anxieties regarding post-Soviet loss of “whiteness,” described in greater detail in the next section.

The Soviet approach to development on the African continent after World War II is strikingly similar in ideology to that of French colonialism, which, according to literary scholar Eileen Julien, is “based on the notion of racial hierarchy and imbued with a sense of a grand civilizing mission” (2009, 48). Colonial France practiced an ideology that all colonial citizens and subjects could be assimilated through education and the acquisition of the French language. France discourages the active distinction of its people according to race and ethnicity and rather casts difference in terms of “cultural practices.” In the French colonial imagination, “Africa” was “savage,” “primitive,” full of energy to be harnessed, controlled, and subdued. Similar to the French, Soviets felt that they could “mold” Africans into versions of “homo-Sovieticus” (Soviet man) through education initiatives for African students in the USSR and various development projects on the African continent, thus “elevating” Africans to the levels of progress and modernity purported in Soviet Cold War discourse.

Ukraine’s economic woes have brought forth concerns that Ukraine will spiral into social unrest, violence, and “uncivilized” culture, alluding to stereotypes about African-based culture. Such discourse is rooted in deeply held Soviet attitudes regarding African-influenced cultural expressions, among them jazz. Often referred to as “jungle” music in Soviet popular media, jazz was circulated by African students at Soviet universities. As an African American genre, it was viewed through the lens of Soviet stereotypes of Africanness as a base culture that was lower and less civilized than Soviet society. Such views were vehemently expressed by Maxim Gorky in his 1928 essay “On the Music of the Gross,” published in *Pravda* while Gorky lived in Sorrento, Italy: “The monstrous bass belches out English words; a wild horn wails piercingly, calling to mind the cries of a raving camel; a drum pounds monotonously; a nasty little pipe tears at one’s ears; a saxophone emits its quacking nasal sound. Fleshy hips sway, and thousands of heavy feet tread and shuffle. The music of the degenerate ends finally with a deafening thud, as though a case of pottery had been flung to earth from the skies” (quoted in Starr 1994 [1983], 91). Such ideologies stand in contrast to the effects that jazz was perceived to have as a propaganda tool during World War II. In his book *Swing Under the Nazis: Jazz as a Metaphor for Freedom*, pop music critic Mike Zwerin writes that the majority of jazz musicians at the time of World War II in Germany were Jews, Roma (Gypsies), and African Americans. Jazz was censored and perceived as enemy propaganda (associated with Voice of America programming) and

as decadent for youth (2000 [1985], 87). Yet Zwerin points to numerous cases where Nazi SS officers looked the other way where jazz musicians were concerned, extending protection to jazz aficionados in danger with authorities, trading favors for jazz records. He also states that while Jewish and Roma musicians were threatened by the state, black musicians were not subject to the same political pressures. Despite Nazi casting of jazz as “Americano nigger kike jungle music” (6) and *entartete*, meaning “not in conformity with the pure German character” (32), Nazi attitudes toward jazz practitioners and listeners were not consistent with practice. Zwerin notes that leniency was extended to Jewish and Roma musicians by certain SS jazz aficionados—that they did this while acting out orders against other Jews and Roma shows that it was the music, not ideological conviction, that led them to show leniency toward musicians. More perplexing were Nazi attitudes toward black jazz musicians, who on the one hand were identified as sources of debauchery for German youths but on the other hand were free to perform in clubs that Nazi officers frequented, oftentimes with special authorization from Nazi authorities who otherwise banned jazz (40).

The complex attitudes toward jazz during and after World War II in Europe positioned the genre as a cultural tool in the Cold War from the perspective of the U.S. Department of State. The Soviet Union viewed itself in global political discourse as a racially blind society in contrast to the United States. Soviet officials emphasized racially motivated economic inequality in the United States as an example of exploitation within the capitalist system, where one group benefits at the expense of another. To counter such narratives, the U.S. Department of State, based on a proposition by Adam Clayton Powell Jr., the first member of the U.S. House of Representatives of African American descent (representing Harlem), sent black musicians on tour in the Soviet Union to promote the idea of the United States as a society not divided by race. Positioning African Americans as leaders of music bands, the United States aimed to discredit Soviet claims of racial inequality. Louis Armstrong was scheduled to travel to the Soviet Union in 1957. Armstrong, however, canceled his participation in the concert tour in protest over events in Little Rock, Arkansas, where white citizens and armed National Guardsmen initially barred nine African American students from entering all-white Central High School.

The struggle for black freedom was at the center of American and international politics. As historian Penny Von Eschen explains, “U.S. officials

pursued a self-conscious campaign against worldwide criticism of U.S. racism, striving to build cordial relations with new African and Asian states” (2006, 3). Jazz was positioned as a weapon of the Cold War, and musicians such as Dizzy Gillespie, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and others were sent on international tours to foreground the importance of African American culture in the United States, with “blackness and race operating culturally to project an image of American nationhood that was [more] inclusive than the reality” (3). Indeed, U.S. State Department officials often tried to shield the integrationist and modernist imagery of the tours from audiences at home. While the Soviet Union used the racial inequality in the United States as a way of positioning itself as a more equal society, Von Eschen notes that on the 1962 tour, Benny Goodman was chosen over African American jazz artists because the Soviets did not want a black bandleader and had declined the suggestion of Armstrong in 1961. This points to a complicated relationship between “blackness” as it relates to music specifically, well beyond the official political rhetoric of the Cold War. According to Von Eschen, black jazz was considered to be more dangerous and distinctive to Russians than jazz performed by a white musician. The association of race with musical playing styles reveals an inherent biological racism that framed Soviet understandings of race. According to Ingrid Monson, African American musicians such as Armstrong weren’t considered disciplined artists. Words like “natural,” “simple” and “uncomplicated” pointed to biological elements of racialized musical expression (1995). As far as Soviets were concerned, jazz in and of itself was an anti-establishment musical genre (Starr 1994 [1983]). They saw Benny Goodman as a white jazz musician who could also perform classical music with the Soviet Symphony Orchestra. Goodman, the child of Jewish immigrants from the Russian Empire, was the preferred musician in the anti-Semitic Soviet milieu rather than an African American musician, because his style conveyed more professional training and musical education. Race and class framed Soviet assumptions regarding African American jazz musicians. Such rhetoric points to music in and of itself as being racially codified in relation to the musicians who played it and was as common in the United States as it was in the Soviet Union at the time.¹²

The Soviet government’s distrust of jazz and the widely held views that it had a base moral and cultural nature is evident in a *Krokodil* magazine satirical cartoon from October 1964 that features a monkey-man playing a guitar. The image of the monkey, with reference to Africa, draws parallels between African-influenced American musical culture. It reflects Soviet paternalistic

and racist rhetoric regarding “Africa” as needing help in attaining the socialist (read Soviet/Russian) cultural and political ideal. The savage nature of the African and African American must be tamed through the censorship of jazz and rock music, where such cultural baseness rears its ugly head (Matusevich 2009a, 69–70; Starr 1994 [1983], 88–94).

Post-socialist discourse regarding “uncivilized” society is fused with notions of poverty that stem from socialist assumptions that all Africans are backward and poor, though ironically in today’s Ukraine, African hip hop artists earn more than the average citizen. This stereotype was based on Soviet development projects on the African continent. The stereotype hit too close to home following the collapse of the Soviet Union, when development statistics placed Ukraine alongside African countries near the bottom of the world economic spectrum. In February 2012, Yury Sirotnyuk, of Ukraine’s right-wing political party Svoboda (Freedom), caused controversy with his racist statements against the Afro-Ukrainian singer Gaitana, who was voted to represent Ukraine in the 2012 Eurovision contest in Baku, Azerbaijan, with the song “Be My Guest.” Sirotnyuk’s statement that “the show’s millions of viewers will see Ukraine represented by someone who does not belong to our race. Now people will think that Ukraine is located somewhere in Africa” prompted anger from the general public in Ukraine but for reasons beyond those of explicit racist remarks. Twenty years after independence, there is a general feeling that Ukraine has reinstated its stronger economic position vis-à-vis African countries and is moving toward economic and political status that would have it be contextualized as a “European” state. This is articulated in the cultural sphere through music projects such as Ukrainian ethno-pop singer Ruslana Lyzhychko’s visit to South Africa, during which the singer’s webpage features her dancing in plain clothes with people in traditional Zulu dress.¹³ The Ukrainian media positioned the singer as an “explorer” of a far-away, savage land who finds a common language with an unsophisticated local tribe through a rhythmic dance. Similarly, Ruslana’s 2008 album *Amazonka*, recorded at the Hit Factory in Miami, features collaborations with hip hop artist T-Pain and rapper Missy Elliot ([PURL 2.3](#)). Despite his greater global fame, T-Pain, in the song “Moon of Dreams,” takes a background role in terms of physical representation in the music video and vocals. Ruslana sings the verses, and T-Pain’s rap is confined to an aural framework determined by the Ukrainian singer’s eclectic ethno-dominatrix style. As much a commentary on race as it is on gender and East/West expressions of financial mobility,

this example reinforces the argument that in the post-Soviet sphere, people define their relationships to each other in terms of money and status within racialized frames.

SOVIET AND POST-SOVIET DEFINITIONS OF “BLACKNESS” AND “WHITENESS”

Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant have argued that analyses based on a black-and-white binary index a specifically American experience and should not be relied upon as an analytical category in other geographic contexts (1999, 51). Todd Boyd has urged scholars to analyze African American community-based issues in terms of class rather than through the dominant racial paradigm (2003, 35). Even more, theorists such as Paul Gilroy, motivated in particular by the color-conscious racial divides in the United States, have argued against relying on “race” as an analytical category altogether, favoring instead a post-World War II form of “credible, postanthropological, and resolutely nonracial humanism” (Gilroy 2000, 288). Nonetheless, the black-and-white binary and the category of “race” have been increasingly used in the context of the changing political, economic, and demographic landscape of Ukraine. The globalizing political economy plays a significant role in encouraging the rise of binary racial identities in immigrant destinations, such as Kyiv, that are witnessing the rise of a sizable middle class. Both real and imagined Western class divisions impose a type of racialized blueprint on class formations in formerly “classless” socialist/Communist societies.

A specifically post-Soviet xenophobia is rooted in the economic anxieties that gripped Ukraine in the 1990s as the economic and political structures that held the Soviet Union together fell apart. People lost their life savings, massive corruption marked all aspects of social and political life, and a great mistrust for fellow citizens prevailed. This hardening of society made everyday living extremely difficult. People were terrorized by the fear of being robbed for meager possessions, worried about how to pay bills, and were subjected to the constant rudeness of employees of the bankrupt state, who were going to work but were not being paid. Meanwhile, the growing mafia was gaining access to untold sources of money, and any form of affluence was equated with crime. The desire to be treated with human dignity was one of the most important themes in formal interviews and informal conversations with interlocutors and acquaintances at that time.

Race-based discourse and its relation to economic status became clear to me in the summer of 2006 as I stood in a two-hour line at the train station in Lviv to purchase a ticket to Budapest. It was the height of the tourist season, and the tellers were slow and rude. I attempted to curb my frustration in the sweltering heat by speaking to an older woman standing next to me in the line for tickets abroad. She was smartly dressed, yet the nervousness with which she clenched her Ukrainian passport and a creased paper envelope thickly stuffed with Euros hinted to me that she was a *zarobitchanka*, one of hundreds of thousands of women who travel to the West for menial jobs to help their families in Ukraine. Our conversation confirmed this and helped pass the time, but soon she, too, became frustrated with the wait and said, “Come with me. Upstairs there is a special ticket window. You pay a few *hryvnias* extra, but at least they treat you like a white person.”

The woman’s articulation of “whiteness” as a marker of respect in economic exchange stemmed from her six-year experience of working as a house-cleaner in Italy. For more than a decade, the majority of these immigrants have figuratively been, as one Ukrainian laborer called it, “the blacks of Europe.” At this time, “black” was an economic-racial category that particularly described those who immigrated to Western Europe and were hired by private individuals or companies to do *chorna robota* (black labor), backbreaking physical labor for which they received a relatively meager salary. Many Ukrainian citizens who moved to the European Union in the 1990s did so illegally, thus adding to Ukrainians’ own perceptions of themselves as economically exploited second-class citizens, a self-perception expressed by the majority of Africans in Ukraine today. People want to be treated like *bili liudy* (white people), a Western-mediated identity that demands dignity, fairness, and respect. Whiteness was not articulated as a racial category but was embedded within divisions of political and economic power among ethnic groups within the Soviet Union.¹⁴ To a degree, post-socialist whiteness is determined by class and a sense of urban cosmopolitanism.¹⁵

Articulations and concepts of whiteness and blackness, however, draw on Soviet rhetoric of racial equality, though attitudes toward such binaries changed throughout Soviet history and were impacted in post-Soviet contexts. In the Soviet Union, particularly in the early 1930s when African Americans enrolled alongside white American Communists in the International Lenin School in 1931, black students stressed that they wanted to be treated “like white men” (Roman 2012, 159). The behaviors of white American stu-

dents were scrutinized by Soviets, who argued that class discrepancies lay at the root of American racism and that Americans were reluctant to admit that notions of white supremacy were integral to power structures in the United States. In post-Soviet contexts, whiteness, however, came to symbolize class identity, and the Soviet rhetoric of racial equality resurfaced as former Soviet citizens struggled to assert themselves as white by scrambling for lost economic and political power in the world.

Among urban cosmopolitans in Ukraine today, there is a tenuous but growing sense of financial security and a demand for fair wages among the growing middle class. This was strongly felt during the large-scale peaceful protests in 2004 against election fraud, media censorship, mass government corruption, and oligarchic market reforms. While they succeeded in overturning the results of a contested presidential election, the Orange Revolution did not increase transparency in business and politics. Nevertheless, a newly articulated discourse on whiteness reflects a new sense of post-Orange Revolution entitlement and equality and a growing self-confidence among people who have experienced the benefits of the growing market economy (López 2005). In the post-Soviet period, with discussions of potential EU membership dominating Ukrainian politics, the term *bilyi* (white) has become more highly articulated among urban ethnic Ukrainians as both an ethnic and class marker in opposition to the growing number of dark-skinned immigrants. The nominator *bilyi* is a colloquialism used to designate people with white skin who have middle-class status. With the category of *bilyi* coming more firmly into play, the category *chornyi*, black, has become an even more complex category than it had been in Soviet society and politics. Such changing racial delineations reinforce arguments that race is foremost a social category. In her study *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says about Race in America*, anthropologist Karen Brodtkin demonstrates that Jews have been on both the non-white and white side of the color divide in the United States during the twentieth century (1998). At the time of prevailing anti-Semitism in the 1920s and 1930s, Jews experienced a marginality vis-à-vis whiteness. After World War II, Jews were allowed to partake in institutional “privileges of white racial assignment” (3). Linking analyses of race with class, Brodtkin asks of post-World War II Jews, “Did money whiten? Or did being incorporated into an expanded version of whiteness open up the economic doors to middle-class status?” (36). She argues that agrarian slavery served as a template for how industrial labor was organized at the beginning of the twentieth

eth century, when a large number of European immigrants entered the U.S. workforce. Historian Noel Ignatiev, in his study *How the Irish Became White*, argues that racial assignment shaped economic patterns (2008). The Irish working class performed jobs similar to those of free African Americans in the North, as laborers and servants. Irish laid claim to whiteness by refusing to work with African Americans, pushing them out of labor unions and out of poor working-class neighborhoods to turn these spaces into self-defined white ones. Class-based studies of whiteness are an effective way to analyze how people lay claim to whiteness, how groups get others to validate their whiteness, and what they hope to win by becoming white. As literary scholar Alfred J. López observes, “What such groups share is an investment in whiteness to some degree or other as an indispensable component of their own upward mobility within their respective societies, which each group retains as part of its own particular legacy of colonialism” (2005, 17). While López has in mind examples of nonwhites not “looking white” but nevertheless “believing [they] are white,” the point rests in the use of white identity to claim superiority over other less-privileged groups on racial grounds.

Though contemporary studies of whiteness stress the importance of pushing debates beyond discussions in the United States, it is crucial to understand that U.S. claims to white privilege influenced discourses and pushed for the self-identification of whiteness in other parts of the world, especially during the Jim Crow era. In the Soviet Union, an active push to position Soviets as non-racist whites dominated Soviet foreign policy of the early 1930s. The Soviet Union presented itself as simply a white nation, in contrast to predominantly white nation-states such as the United States, which discriminated against African Americans, and European powers that exploited colonial Africa.

Meanwhile, color-based racial slurs prevailed in Soviet popular culture, despite the Soviet state’s official positioning as a racially inclusive society. The Russian and Ukrainian designator *chernyi/chornyi* has been applied throughout Soviet history to various non-European groups such as Chechens, Georgians, and Roma (Fikes and Lemon 2002, 498). Blackness was constructed subjectively in the Soviet Union, but always in relation to certain characteristics. Physical odor was referenced to accentuate racial and ethnic difference, particularly regarding Roma. Cultural stereotypes that fell outside official discourse associated dark complexions with “naturalized proclivities,” such as “cleverness in the market,” “hot-blooded” temperaments, and “clan-like”

family networks (498). “Black” was also designated as a category infused with stereotypes about people who participated in illegal economic dealings.

The meaning of “black,” an identity that primarily signified difference from the majority, is changing in the post-socialist era. In the two decades of working and living abroad, many *zarobitshany* (migrant laborers) who work outside the country have come to view themselves as members of a new economic elite, differentiating themselves along moral lines from the mafia and corrupt government officials. As representatives of the “new West,” they have grown increasingly conscious of themselves as white people, an identity rooted in the notion of *hidnist* (respect) that is measured against the racialized Western class imaginary. In other words, new class positions have solidified, with a significant division between those with money, power, and privilege and those with significantly less access to new forms of social status (Patico 2008). Due to the growing division between classes, immigrants in Ukraine are perceived by the government and by local populations as economic competitors (Ruble 2008).

The continued volatility of Ukraine’s economic system casts the growing number of Africans, Vietnamese, Chinese, and other ethnic minorities into newly reconstituted, racially marked economic identities of white and black. The reasons for this are twofold. First, *chorny* no longer simply designates groups on the territories of the Eastern European country in question. As Rastaman Davis, lead singer of the Kyiv-based hip hop/reggae band Chornobryvtsi, states, “With our music, we are trying to show the Ukrainians that it is not bad and not so difficult to live together as one people. For us, when we just came to the country, we visited some villages where foreigners are not common at all. But when we are on TV, we show these people that there are foreigners not simply surviving [*vyzhyvaiut*, a term commonly used to index post-socialist economic hardship], but living well in Ukraine, and we are proud of it.” Davis’s emphasis on immigrant financial success attests to the importance of economics in light of increasingly racialized discourses on social inclusion and exclusion in the post-Soviet sphere.¹⁶

Second, while *chorny* was traditionally used to designate people with darker skin than ethnic Ukrainians and Russians, the label has been supplanted by new terms in the Ukrainian language such as “African American,” “African,” “Afro-Ukrainian,” and the biracial designator *mulat*. Unlike the U.S. term “mulatto,” it is not considered derogatory and, in its association with U.S. race relations, refers only to people who are of mixed African descent. An-

alyzing such terms in the Russian Federation, scholars Jessica Allina-Pisano and Eric Allina-Pisano have noted that the term “African” has emerged as a separate discursive category in relation to people’s uses of the term “black” in the Soviet era and reflects the post-Soviet development of a separate and more negative relationship among Russians toward people from Africa relative to other dark-skinned groups (2007, 191).

MULAT, THE EMBODIMENT OF A CHANGING DEMOGRAPHIC

During the Soviet era, African men who married or had children with Russian and Ukrainian women were forced to leave their families behind, because Soviet bureaucrats did not allow African students to overstay student visas and forbade Soviet citizens to emigrate (Quist-Adade 2007, 155). Mothers of biracial children suffered great prejudice during the Soviet era. Yelena Khanga, known as post-socialist Russia’s first black female television host, is a Russian woman of American, Jewish, and African descent (Baldwin 2002, 253–62; Khanga and Jacoby 1992). Between 1997 and 2000, she led Russia’s first talk show, *Pro Eto* (About That), which tackled taboo social issues such as AIDS, homosexuality, and workplace sexual harassment. According to scholar Kate Baldwin, the producer of the show suggested the dark-skinned Khanga wear blue contacts and a blonde wig. She led the show in the wig, negotiating her Russian and black identity and contesting the increasingly xenophobic tendencies in post-socialist Russia by foregrounding a non-stereotypical image of Russia’s multiethnic society. Similarly in Ukraine, Myroslav Kuvaldin and Karolina Ashion, children of mixed unions similar to Yelena Khanga, work as lead announcers on Ukraine’s music television station M1, founded in 2001. Karolina Ashion, daughter of a Nigerian father and a Ukrainian mother, leads a Hollywood gossip show and reads business news. In the mid- to late 1990s, Myroslav Kuvaldin was part of the musical group The View, which mixed reggae with Ukrainian folk sounds. In 2004, he traveled to Nigeria with the help of the BBC in search of his father. He documented his quest in a personal audio diary available on the BBC website; the segment is titled “Everywhere a Stranger.” The BBC writes of Kuvaldin, “As one of the very few black Ukrainians, he can never really blend into the country of his birth but in his media career, this distinctiveness has proved an asset. The price he pays is to constantly feel regarded as a stranger in his

own land.”¹⁷ Kuvaldin states, “Being different, you can perceive it as your disadvantage and suffer all your life, or you can take it as God’s gift, and turn yourself into a hero. I have chosen this second way—to embrace the duality in my life, and became a poet, a musician and a TV personality.”¹⁸ During his visit to Nigeria, Kuvaldin was called a “white guy.” Kuvaldin muses, “I belong to neither the world of the whites, nor the blacks, but I can understand both of these worlds. . . . I think I am privileged in this respect, because this duality brings me more choice in life.”¹⁹

Public figures such as Kuvaldin and Ashion, categorized as *mulat* in Ukraine, have established a voice for racialized Others, including African students, within the niche opened by the influx of African American music videos to Ukrainian television and the cultural curiosity that has surrounded people of African descent since the Soviet era. The reuniting of families has personalized and made public the struggles that children of Africans have faced in light of laws and cultural taboos that discouraged the integration of Africans with non-Africans in the Soviet Union. African-led NGOs such as the African Council in Ukraine have reached out to African students, immigrants, and children of Africans and Afro-Ukrainians. The NGOs sponsor information sessions about African life and culture at various universities and offer presentations on music and dance to schoolchildren.²⁰

The growing interest among Ukrainian citizens in “Africa” is due in no small part to the media’s strong promotion of *mulat* performers in the post-Soviet era, among them Afro-Ukrainian singer Gaitana Essami. Named Gaita-Lurdes, meaning “strong and powerful” in Lingala, Gaitana was born in Kyiv in 1979 and spent a part of her childhood in the Congo with her father, who still lives in Brazzaville, the capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Gaitana is among the most prominent Afro-Ukrainian celebrities in Ukraine and a central figure in Ukraine’s music industry. She sings in Russian, Ukrainian, and English and also speaks French and Lingala. She has won numerous awards, including the 2008 Ukrainian Music Awards Best Female Singer and the 2008 Ukrainian Music Awards Best Album. In 2009, she performed at the Ukrainians for Obama inaugural ball in Kyiv. In 2012, Gaitana represented Ukraine at the Eurovision contest in Baku, Azerbaijan. Her music is produced by Lavina Music, which features her prominently on YouTube, Facebook, MySpace, and VKontakte. Gaitana’s performance aesthetics are hypersexualized, and she presents herself as an alluring and mysterious woman, admired

from afar. Her physical presentation is influenced by Beyoncé and Jennifer Lopez. Gaitana's musical style draws from jazz, funk, and soul music, and she is strongly influenced by R&B.

Lavina Music's blurb on MySpace describes Gaitana in this way: "Gaitana fascinates the audience with her multifaceted Afro-Ukrainian voice, praising love and sexuality, different colors of life." The indexical relationship between sexuality and blackness is inherent in the way Gaitana appropriates styles from African American and Latin American female vocalists from the United States. In a provocative Russian-language collaboration with Roma singer Petya Cherniy titled "Liuby menia" (Love me) (2009), Gaitana channels Jennifer Lopez and Missy Elliott in her physical presentation and dance movements ([PURL 2.4](#)). Petya Cherniy appears in a T-shirt with Al Pacino's Tony Montana character in *Scarface*, an image often featured in Miami rap videos because of the association of the film with drug trafficking, a common theme in Miami hip hop. In the song, Gaitana, dressed as a dominatrix in high heels and leather, tangles herself in her co-singer's brain, using the image of a power washer to portray the idea of brainwashing him into loving her. Her presentation accentuates her figure and offers a revealing look at her black skin. The notion of an "Afro-Ukrainian voice" is central to her physical expression of racial identity. The voice is a natural instrument, an extension of the body in aural space. She brings attention to her body and its blackness not only in her videos but also through the nature of her lyrics that call on listeners to "love," inviting them toward physical, cultural, and racial intimacy. Radano's theories on the "black voice" in regard to African American experience are particularly relevant. Radano states that the "black voice" can be understood in two ways: first as a literal, audible expression that empowers the singing or speaking subject, and, more broadly speaking, as a metonym referring to the social impact of a highly racialized African American performative tradition (2003, 15). Black music forces the white listening audience to recognize black presence. Referring to the historical silencing of African American experience in a sonically absent history of black experience, music becomes the "sonic truth teller of race" (5). By stressing the "Afro" and "Ukrainian" aspects of Gaitana's voice, her (non-African) producers simultaneously displace her origins while reaffirming her belonging in Ukraine. Her physical being, of which her voice is an extension, is made present. Her blackness is made public but also controlled through her hyphenated Ukrainian identity.

NATURALIZING BLACK IDENTITY THROUGH MUSIC

In their introduction to the edited volume *Music and the Racial Imagination*, Ronald Radano and Philip Bohlman state, “The imagination of race not only informs perceptions of musical practice but is at once constituted within and projected into the social through sound” (2000, 5). The formation of racial binaries and the reclaiming of such identities by those who are racialized within this discourse work in a dialectic with local and international music industries. Robert Stam and Ella Shohat have noted that hip hop has become the “international lingua franca” (2001, 111). Felicia McCarren, in her research on hip hop in France, argues that cultural differences distinguish its practice on both sides of the Atlantic and offer insights into the genre’s artistic goals, social profile, and political visibility in both the United States and abroad (2004). What is compelling with regard to the case of hip hop in Ukraine is that its appropriation of the African American version is evident among immigrants as well as among ethnic Ukrainians. What information do such appropriations yield about the commercialization of “black” musics in the United States, musics that, as Les Back argues, are packaged through racial fetish (2000, 129)? Does the commercial exploitation of African American genres reinforce racialized class ideologies both in the United States and abroad where such musics are appropriated (Radano 2003)? How does the present proliferation of “black” musics in a “whitened” post-socialist world fit the cultural configurations of Soviet/post-Soviet racism (Hirsch 2002; Lemon 1995; Weitz 2002)?

Local and international music industries play an integral role in the formation of racial binaries and the reclaiming of such identities by those who are racialized within this discourse. Consider, for instance, the caricatured statue of a male African American jazz musician at the entrance to the Blues Café in Kharkiv (see figure 2.2). The persons at the restaurant I interviewed said that no Africans or African Americans perform at the Blues Café—the statue is meant to draw in customers.²¹ The statue, however, evokes blackface minstrelsy in its representation of the black body. The face has exaggerated lips, and the figure holds a saxophone and indexes the Soviet/post-Soviet correlation between African Americans and musical performance. The banner behind the statue features Louis Armstrong on trumpet, reinforcing Soviet-era interactions with jazz. The statue, however, offsets any sensitivities post-Soviet society claims toward understanding African American culture or the



FIGURE 2.2. Statue depicting an African American jazz musician in front of a banner featuring Louis Armstrong at the entrance to the Blues Café in Kharkiv, June 18, 2007. The Russian language script reads “Soon to open, second floor restaurant.” *Photo by author.*

role of racial/racist representations in music discourse. Rather, it reflects a lack of awareness of how discourses about black music have been used to cast African Americans as different from whites. Radano reminds us that white stories tell us how the sound of black music acquires meaning through discursive representation (2003, xv). Black musicians were historically cast as having “natural” musical abilities, which repositioned their musical talents outside the realm of intellect. He theorizes that it is not black music per se but white discursive practices that reposition black music as “difference,” which, in turn, draw in white listeners (10–12). Cold War civil rights discourse reinforced black difference in Soviet imaginations and continues to inform post-Soviet relationships with African American music genres.

African bartenders are hired to work at posh hip hop/R&B clubs in Kyiv to authenticate experiences of “black” music consumption for middle-class whites in Ukraine. One may surmise that Ukrainians who go to hip hop clubs

feel more white—that is, affluent, cosmopolitan, middle class—because the presence of an African bartender validates such feelings. According to club owners, the physical presence of black bodies reinforces the cultural and material status of the club itself and the club’s visitors. They seek access to blackness to authenticate their experiences.²² African DJs are sought after, and there are many Africa-themed dance events throughout the city. In Kharkiv, producers feel it is important for the small local hip hop recording studios to have musicians from any African country signed to their label as a sign of hip hop legitimacy. According to Mayne G, a rapper from Uganda who studies electronics at Kharkiv National University, “When you get on a stage, of course, Ukrainians love a black, you know, it’s something new. . . . You go to different cities where blacks are very rare. So you can get really applauded on stage, of course if you are good.”²³

To a certain extent, media in Ukraine foster an indexical relationship between African Americans and music and position hip hop musicians as people who are held to different rules and norms than the rest of society. These tropes are naturalized and play out in everyday interactions among Africans and non-Africans in Ukraine. When pulled over by traffic police in Kyiv, some African students feign to be popular reggae or African American hip hop musicians.²⁴ More often than not, the police believe their claims and excuse them from fines. On one hand, this exchange between alleged musicians and local authority figures attests to the strong influence that U.S.-based music genres have on race relations in post-Soviet society. On the other, it shows that certain stereotypes regarding “being black” carry over as well. Racial profiling by police is a typical occurrence, as is racially motivated violence commitment by skinheads.

Such ideas of black identity construction through music became evident in early 1990s attempts by Russian and Ukrainian musicians to incorporate African students into music groups and videos that tried to mimic U.S. music production. With the rise in hip hop popularity and the beginnings of a hip hop movement in the late 1990s in Ukraine, Africans have increasingly become a part of music-making processes in the country because their skin color and English language skills are used to invoke African American identity. In the first years of independence in Ukraine, where everything from the West implied higher status, better quality of living, coolness, sophistication, and world knowledge, it is not surprising that Africans were transformed into African Americans in Ukrainian imaginations. Unfortunately, negative ste-

reotypes also followed. B-movies, negative stereotypes of African Americans found in Hollywood movies, and cultural attitudes toward African Americans were introduced to Ukraine as well. Though Soviets extended sympathy toward African Americans and indignation at their subjugation to racism, in the post-Soviet era, African Americans became lauded for their music but subjected to the same kinds of racial stereotyping as in the United States. Such feelings have been transferred onto Africans studying and living in Russia and Ukraine, who have become the victims of increased racial violence and marginalization. Contemporary African involvement in Kharkiv's music scenes, initially through reggae in the 1990s and later fused with hip hop at the turn of the century, offer insights into how Africans and non-Africans, especially those of college age, relate to one another using African American expressive forms.

T H R E E

COMMERCIAL AND UNDERGROUND HIP HOP IN UKRAINE

In any analysis of appropriated genres, it is important to identify their understandings in particular locales. Michael Urban's study on the blues in Russia shows that the blues, known as a musical expression of black people in the southern United States, functions as an expression of class distinction among the Russian nouveau riche through its association with American culture (Urban 2004). Urban states that for Russian listeners, the English language takes precedence in defining the music's function and meaning because it aurally reinforces geographic imaginings of the West. Their consumption of Western culture signifies economic and social status in post-socialist Russia. Similarly, ethnomusicologist Claire Levy identifies rap acculturation in Bulgaria as a localized music practice that articulates a move toward intercultural dialogue between Bulgaria and the West (2001). Levy's study reveals that genres such as rap are not appropriated as essentialized African American musical expressions in non-Western contexts. Rather, they take on specific forms and meanings that are influenced by and reflect "local and cultural realities" (135). The appropriation of hip hop in Ukraine departs from such "unrelated" understandings because African Ukrainian and ethnic Ukrainian groups play with multivalent racial imaginaries connected with U.S. hip hop. While according to Urban, the blues, a musical genre historically associated with marginalized black people in the United States, does not embody political potential in its Russian equivalent, it has come to influence understandings of race and class among locals and immigrants in Ukraine since the late 1990s. The rise in hip hop performers and clubs and the breadth of locally produced hip hop has become more salient through increased access to music from the United States via the internet and (mostly) pirated CDs. The strengthened post-socialist economy and growth of travel into and out of the country have

spurred the development of a variety of music scenes that have solidified with a music industry that has grown due to economic development, increased interest in leisure activities, access to digital media, and decreased media censorship since the 2004 Orange Revolution.

In the last decade, Ukrainian radio and television stations have regularly aired hip hop music and videos from the United States, Europe, and the Russian Federation. The Kyiv-based record label Moon Records has emerged as a key figure in the distribution of hip hop CDs and DVDs. Smaller independent labels and recording studios are also succeeding in the expanding free market economy. Since the 2004 Orange Revolution, there has been a steady increase of concert tours in Ukraine by international musicians capitalizing on Ukraine's burgeoning music market. Similarly, a growing number of groups from Ukraine have performed and participated in music projects abroad, particularly in Western Europe and the Russian Federation. Interethnic and interracial hip hop collaborations have become common as well, particularly among local Ukrainian musicians and African immigrants.

Kyiv, Kharkiv, Kherson, Odessa, Poltava, Vinnytsia, Yalta, and many other Ukrainian urban centers host hip hop scenes. Hip hop "brotherhoods" organize hip hop events in clubs and advertise rap battles and concerts in their cities. In Lviv, such networks are fostered by the "Lemberg Family"; in Donetsk, by "Juzhnyi Tsentral"; in Rivne, by "Brudna Tusovka"; and in Kharkiv, by the aptly named "Black and White Family." From among these cities, Kharkiv is traditionally considered Ukraine's "Capital of Hip Hop." It is the hometown of Ukraine's preeminent hip hop group Tanok na Maidani Kongo. As the most financially successful hip hop group in Ukraine for more than ten years, it opened for rapper 50 Cent in 2006 when he gave the first concert by a U.S. hip hop artist in Ukraine.

Through access to online networks, hip hop in Ukraine has engaged more directly with its U.S. and European counterparts in terms of beats, sampling techniques, dance moves, fashion, and music video aesthetics. It can be best described at the present time as melodic, upbeat dance music. Ukrainian hip hop oscillates between the highly politicized and the farcical. GreenJolly, a group from the western town of Ivano Frankivsk, inspired by protesters' slogans against government corruption and fraud during the 2004 presidential elections, recorded the song "Razom nas bahato" (Together we are many) in four hours. The lyrics, rapped in Ukrainian, function as a narrative against political corruption, lies, and censorship in Ukraine. The refrain, "Together

we are many; we will not be defeated,” indexes the communal force of approximately half of Ukraine’s population that opposed the presidential election results. This song reportedly was downloaded 100,000 times in the first two days of being on the internet and became the “anthem” of the 2004 Orange Revolution (Helbig 2006). On the other side of the spectrum are groups such as Khid u Zminnomu Vzuti (Walk in Changing Footwear) and Na Vidminu Vid (As Opposed To) and the artist Vova zi L’vova (Vova from Lviv, Volodymyr Parfeniuk), who play with popular U.S. images of ostentatious materialism and attempt to invert discourses of economic marginality by mocking their Western “gangsta rap” contemporaries. Vova zi L’vova counts among his influences Biggie Smalls, 50 Cent, Jay-Z, Kanye West, Nas, Wu-Tang Clan, Common, Lupe Fiasco, Talib Kweli, and Rhymefest. Politically conscious rappers like DJ Bebek, a Crimean Tatar, draw attention to Soviet crimes against humanity. DJ Bebek commemorated the brutal deportation on May 18, 1944, of the entire population of Crimean Tatars, estimated at a quarter-million people, from their homes in the Crimean Peninsula in his debut album *Deportacia* (2004), meaning “deportation” (Sonevtsky 2010).

Hip hop elements are evident in the music of many widely listened to Ukrainian-language groups such as Boombox, who fuse rap and funk. Khorta mixes acoustic instruments with hip hop elements in a style the group defines as folk-hop or ethno-funk. Tartak’s music may be called a fusion of hip hop, rock, and electronica. The acoustic Russian-language group 5’Nizza draws on hip hop, reggae, and rock styles. Like Tanok na Maidani Kongo, 5’Nizza incorporates beatboxing, a form of vocal percussion that imitates turntablism.

Language choice, Russian or Ukrainian, continues to politicize local hip hop to some degree because of political history dating back to the suppression of the Ukrainian language during the time of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. Groups and artists such as Vova zi L’vova, Khid u Zminnomu Vzuti, and a growing number of others choose to rap in Ukrainian. Katon, Novyi Chas, and many others are featured on the 2006 compilation *Ukrainskymy slovamy: Zbirka Ukrainsko-movnoho hip-hopu* (With Ukrainian words: A collection of Ukrainian-language hip-hop). Serhij Potapenko, a successful artist and music producer who goes by the name Potap, sang in Ukrainian when he was a member of Khid u Zminnomu Vzuti but switched to Russian during his collaboration with R&B artist Nastya Kamenskikh. Popular Russian-language hip hop groups from Ukraine include Tuman (Fog),

Yuzhnyi Tsentral (Central Prison for Political Convicts),¹ Tainyi Zagovor (Secret Conversation), and Kandydat Muzykalnykh Nauk (K.M.N.) (Doctor of Musical Studies).

Russian continues to be the predominant language in hip hop, in part because there are broader opportunities for musicians who are exposed to Russian music markets. As ethnomusicologist David-Emil Wickström points out, numerous groups from Ukraine make a living in the Russian Federation, particularly St. Petersburg (2009). Kyiv's Anastasia Prikhodko, a former Eurovision contender in Ukraine, was chosen to represent the Russian Federation at the contest, which was held in Moscow in 2009. She sang "Mamo" in Ukrainian and Russian and caused some controversy, despite gaining 25 percent of the vote. While Ukrainian media are dominated by Russian-language offerings, the reverse is not true. Prikhodko is an exception among Ukrainian musicians, able to build a career in the Russian Federation. As a result, the responses of some Russian music industry producers to Prikhodko were less than positive. Yusif Prigozhin, the producer for the losing Russian finalist, called the choice a disgrace and stated, "A song performed in Ukrainian can't have anything to do with Russia."²

Because hip hop makes up a relatively small part of the general popular music scene in Ukraine, hip hop parties at nightclubs are the most common way that people engage with the music. The music scene social network overlaps with those of break-dance, graffiti, and rap-fusion genres. The guiding principle of hip hop culture in general is professionalism among musicians and producers and the creation of economic structures that will push hip hop out from the underground and establish it as an accepted marker of cosmopolitanism in Ukrainian society. This trend is becoming more evident with regard to popular entertainment on a national level. For instance, hip hop was featured on the 2008 season of a top-ranking dance competition called *Tantsiuiut Usi* (Everybody Dances) that airs on the Ukrainian television station STB. On the show, hip hop dance was taught and judged by African American hip hop choreographer Kenny Marcus. Hip hop dance makes the black body visible while simultaneously functioning in a performance of double-consciousness for white audiences (DeFrantz 2004). The fetishization of hip hop bodies renders feelings of modernity and cosmopolitanism for the genre's post-socialist consumers. Hip hop dance classes are now offered to the general public, who appreciate the genre because it encourages creative expression and fosters the growing emphasis on individualism. Among musicians and audiences, hip

hop culture influences fashion as well as attitudes toward gender and language and creates opportunities for incorporating new technologies in the advancement of new forms of music production and experience.

LOCAL IDENTITY IN UKRAINIAN HIP HOP

Two case studies from Ukrainian-language hip hop—Tanok na Maidani Kongo (TNMK), whose members hail from the Russian-speaking eastern industrial city of Kharkiv, and Vova zi L'vova from western Ukraine, who grew up in Lviv—point to some of the overarching themes in this genre. Despite more than a decade's development, certain topics continue to dominate, including alienation, economics, migration, and social positionings vis-à-vis the United States. TNMK and Vova zi L'vova, however, offer differing approaches to these issues. TNMK continues to be the most established hip hop group in Ukraine, having been one of the first to introduce the genre to wider audiences there. Vova zi L'vova, having gained popularity in 2006 as the anchorman of the hip hop show *Vova zi L'vova* on the music television channel M1, makes choices regarding local versus national appeal in terms of dialect and regional identity relating to Halychyna (Galicia, the general term for western Ukraine) and his city, Lviv, which tends to be culturally and historically associated with a heightened sense of Ukrainian nationalism in relation to Ukraine's other major urban centers.

Both TNMK members and Vova reside in Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine. Kyiv has emerged in the last decade as the home of a professionalized music industry, aided by the way people within the politicized music sphere during the Orange Revolution helped lift censorship from radios and television, solidified a nationwide distribution network for CDs, validated home computer music making, and positioned the internet as a way through which people in Ukraine share music. Unlike other cities in Ukraine, besides Odessa perhaps, Kyiv attracts transnational music stars. Broader organizational events, such as Kyiv's hosting of the 2005 Eurovision Song Contest following Ruslana Lyzhychko's win in 2004 (Pavlyshyn 2009; Sonevytsky 2012; Wickström 2008) and a series of free public concerts by Elton John in 2007 and Paul McCartney in 2008, sponsored by oligarch-turned-cultural patron Viktor Pinchuk, have elevated Kyiv to the status of a city that is now commonly included on Western artists' world tours. More than 200,000 people attended Elton John's free concert in Kyiv in June 2007 to bring attention to HIV/AIDS

in Ukraine (UNICEF 2010).³ Paul McCartney's 2008 free concert in Kyiv was simulcast to five major cities. In contrast, major concerts by Western musicians do not occur regularly in Kharkiv or Lviv, and many musical talents from Ukraine's urban and rural centers have moved to Kyiv, home of the major labels and the revived recording industry following the collapse of Melodiya, the Soviet Union's major state-owned record label.

HIP HOP AS SOCIAL COMMENTARY: TANOK NA MAIDANI KONGO

More than a decade ago, Ukraine's first hip hop group, TNMK, rose to nationwide fame when it won the Dance Music award at the prestigious Ukrainian-language popular music festival, Chervona Ruta (Red Rue). Its 1997 song "Zroby meni hip-hop" (Make me a hip-hop) is the first hip hop song to win a national music competition in Ukraine (PURL 3.1). The song is significant as a Ukrainian-language song performed by a group from Kharkiv, which, like most urban centers throughout eastern Ukraine, is Russian-speaking (most rural areas throughout Ukraine are Ukrainian-speaking). At certain points in the song, TNMK interjects its lyrics with *surzhyk*, a creole mix of Ukrainian and Russian typical of eastern Ukraine (Bilaniuk 2006).

"Zroby meni hip-hop" is explicitly sexual and signifies hypersexualized stereotypes of women and men that comment on early post-Soviet social crises relating to the international sex trafficking of women from Ukraine, an increase in underage female prostitution, drug use, and mafia culture. These themes are evidenced in a general translation of the lyrics that involve many plays on words and the Ukrainianization of foreign terms like *mani*, meaning "money" in English.

I loved Hryts, he had a berry in his pocket
 He came, did me, I turn red like a berry when I remember
 Vania went to Israel, where he makes money
 He wrote that they circumcised him
 He didn't want to but they told him he's not in Ryazan anymore
 Mykola doesn't drink Coca-Cola anymore
 He changed his orientation (t'fu!)
 He's probably right, because good people say he's now in Canada
 Dancing in a bar, where gay daddies clap for him
 Make me a hip, make me a hop, make me a hip-hop!

The accompanying video depicts the group's members amid a bleak, poverty-stricken, urban post-socialist landscape. This imagery, filmed in the city's Saltovka district, marked by cheap, block-style, Soviet-era communal housing on the city's outskirts, draws connections with late-1980s/early-1990s African American hip hop videos that portray housing projects, urban poverty, and disenfranchised youth (Rose 1994). TNMK's interjection of rural Ukrainian accents in an urban context depicts the social and economic trauma of the early years of Ukraine's independence when collective farming mechanisms collapsed and village dwellers fled the countryside in search of work in equally depressed cities or abandoned their homeland to seek a better life abroad. The failing education system of the 1990s (teachers began receiving bonuses in 2008 in lieu of salaries, which were not paid by the state in the 1990s) is depicted in TNMK's representations of youth delinquency, violence, and alcoholism. In the music of TNMK, Ukrainian youths, particularly males, found a voice for the feelings of abandonment they had toward the failing government and toward their parents who lost their financial savings in the transition period and could not provide for them. The sense of alienation of the 1990s finds visual parallels in hip hop illustrations of African American neighborhoods where youths turn to peer groups to help each other through a landscape of crime, poverty, and inequality.

Movement, gesture, posture, and language in TNMK's rap index a hypermasculine aesthetic that is reinforced through a fear of demasculinization by forced circumcision, forbidden in the USSR as a Jewish religious practice, though commonly practiced among Muslims, and through homophobia, as in the line "He changed his orientation (t'fu!)." The musicians' fear and disgust over circumcision reflects Soviet-era anti-Semitism that has risen in independent Ukraine. This perceived emasculation is tied with leaving Ukraine, reinforcing the relationship between masculinity and national identity.

Homosexuality carried criminal repercussions in the USSR, and though male homosexual acts were decriminalized in independent republics in 1993, Ukraine and Russia passed laws in 2012 outlawing "homosexual propaganda." Heteronormative sexuality is reified through the abjection of the homosexual.⁴ Expressions of hypersexuality and hypermasculinity are attempts to hide powerlessness and anxiety over economic instability, the loss of familiar social, gender, and sexual norms, and inability to start families due to lack of employment and state support for education and child care. Changes in social

and gender norms in Ukraine's population declined rapidly in the 1990s due to low birth rates and high death rates. Though the birth rate began to rise at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Ukraine's death rate is still the highest in Europe. According to Euromonitor International, Ukraine will experience the largest overall population loss in Europe between 2011 and 2020 (Euromonitor International 2012).

HIP HOP AND ALIENATION: VOVA ZI L'VOVA

A younger popular hip hop artist, Vova zi L'vova embodies a similar sense of social satire and place-based identity as TNMK did ten years earlier. In one of his most popular songs, "Mij rayon—Sykhiv" (My neighborhood—Sykhiv) (2006), Vova argues for reasons to stay in Ukraine rather than move abroad, as so many have done since 1991 ([PURL 3.2](#)). He does not sugarcoat his social messages but finds beauty in the poverty around him.

To the name of Sykhiv, maybe they forgot to add the letter "p" for Psykhiv⁵
 That would be a name, to fall and not get up
 This word characterizes all the happenings and events
 Of the life of a neighborhood about which no one dreams
 Except the people who live there
Patsan,⁶ where are you from?
 I'm from Psykhiv—O, then no problem, sorry I asked . . .

The song alludes to the destruction of the nuclear family due to the economic migration of one or both parents abroad and the violence of street culture among those who live on the physical and economic margins of a post-socialist society. Vova's videos feature basketball courts in Sykhiv with the net torn off of the hoop, an image that points not only to place but also to race-specific poverty in the United States. Such imagery indexes the growing economic split among emerging classes in the post-socialist sphere.

Vova's music videos, similar to the aforementioned video of TNMK's "Make Me a Hip-Hop," accentuate the importance of place. Notions of place, as tied to representations of city life, are a very important characteristic of hip hop styles throughout Eastern Europe, as in the United States. American rappers call out their area codes, neighborhoods, or even individual public housing projects, and many songs include a list of cities where hip hop is popular. Scholar Murray Forman, among others, identifies place as a defin-



FIGURE 3.1. Postcard issued by the NGO “European City” (<http://euromisto.com>) featuring Vova zi L’vova playing basketball in Lviv’s old town center. *Used with permission.*

ing trope through which hip hop musicians in the United States personalize individually represented experiences in song lyrics and hip hop videos (2002). As analyzed in greater detail in the introduction, TNMK's name references Congo Square in New Orleans, the first place where enslaved Africans could openly make music in the United States, which reflects the group's use of hip hop as an expression of personal freedom and individualism and signifies a clear break from Soviet-era music making. It also reflects the hyper-U.S.-oriented worldview.

In turn, Vova's chosen stage name—Vova from Lviv—positions the western Ukrainian city as his strongest marker of identity. Vova grew up in the Sykhiv neighborhood, a section of Lviv that was marked by violence and poverty in the 1990s. With little infrastructure and a monotonous landscape plagued with crime and uncertainty, Vova's video for the song "My Neighborhood—Sykhiv" visually draws parallels between Sykhiv and U.S. inner-city life.

Recent scholarship on hip hop in Slovakia and Poland associates hip hop culture within similar urban landscapes known as *blokowiska* in Poland (Pasternak-Mazur 2009) and *sidliska* in Slovakia (Barrer 2009, 67). Peter Barrer explains that locality is central to Slovak rap, explicated through the use of vernacular language and regional dialects. Musicians focus on social experiences, particularly the prolonged state of economic deprivation that ensued following Slovakia's independence (67). Renata Pasternak-Mazur explains that in Poland, hip hop fans call the genre *czarna muza* (black muse), a name that functions for both African American and Polish hip hop. *Muza* (muse) is understood as "an inspiration" and functions as an abbreviation for *muzyka* (music) (2009). The signifier *czarna* indexes the genre's African American associations. Pasternak-Mazur argues that Polish hip hop offers a grassroots perspective on post-socialist transition, identifying the graffiti-influenced logo of the Solidarity movement of the 1980s that shaped political graffiti in the late socialist era delineating society between "us" (the people) and "them" (the state). Those who lived in *blokowiska* in urban and rural areas were connected to state farms or industrial enterprises. When the state collapsed, the block housing came to symbolize "the habitat of the new system's losers" (Pasternak-Mazur 2009). Urban space, directly shaped by market and state power, lost its functionality in the transition from socialism to capitalism (Soja 2011 [1989]). The hip hop songs and videos draw on what Ian Maxwell

refers to as a U.S.-informed “social imaginary,” local representations of place that align with U.S.-based images that local artists have not experienced firsthand (2008, 80). The backdrops of dilapidated socialist-era high-rise apartments in hip hop video representations not only emphasize local experiences of economic deprivation but also index awareness of how such tropes function in U.S.-based hip hop.

Immigrants in the United States who maintain personal ties to hip hop musicians in their home countries participate in the cultural feedback loop, a fact often overlooked by scholars. Teenage immigrants from Ukraine living and studying in the United States add their own layers of interpretation to the hip hop culture that they experience with school friends and via the media in the United States, and they share their experiences with their friends back home through varied means. Social media, such as Facebook and MySpace, and Russian networking sites, such as VKontakte, allow for the sharing of information in English, Ukrainian, and Russian. They also participate in various file-sharing sites where music, videos, movies, books, and software are circulated. Thus, Vova raps like U.S. artists about family, loyalty, and not turning his back on his place of origin after gaining financial stability through music. The clothes he wears in his videos are sent by friends whose parents moved to the United States in the 1990s as *zarobitchany*. A friend in San Diego sends him hip hop videos recorded from the internet and music television stations.⁷

Such physical and cultural connections with “homeland,” mediated via hip hop culture, reveal much about the migration experiences of young men from Ukraine who relocated with their parents and matured in economically marginalized social circles in the United States. They identify strongly with the struggles of poverty and exclusion that many inner-city African American males face. Many youths from Ukraine living in the United States live in poorer neighborhoods in cities such as New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Detroit, where the majority population in inner-city public schools is African American. Linguist Cecelia Cutler has researched the changing linguistic styles of Eastern European immigrants in New York City public schools who participate in hip hop as a way of fitting in. Cutler traces the ways Eastern European immigrant males connect through language and modes of dress among peers in Brooklyn and Queens. The incorporation of corporeal and linguistic actions of hip hop helps these teens move away from the racially motivated fear exhibited by their parents, who do not form close friend-

ships with people whose backgrounds are different from their own (Cutler 2008). Emigrants from Eastern Europe often find multiracial hip hop scenes in the United States a kindred social space in which to contextualize and overcome their own anxieties and feelings of social or economic alienation. Mimicking linguistic patterns from hip hop, they articulate affiliation with certain aspects of hip hop culture that offer acceptance on socioeconomic terms.

HIP HOP IN KHARKIV

Contemporary research on global hip hop tends to position non-local genres as Western imports without considering the complexities of appropriation and modification to local aesthetic and social tastes. While hip hop's roots are in the Bronx, what comes to Ukraine does so in a temporal capsule of images and sounds that is laden with the cultural cachet that post-socialist society attributes to U.S. products. Such interpretations fuse with Ugandan, Kenyan, Nigerian, Moroccan, and Congolese (to name a few) interpretations of American musical idioms, as these are understood not only in their African locales but in their appropriations within migration experiences in Ukraine.

Coming from diverse cultural and class backgrounds, producers, performers, and audiences bring a wide variety of understandings and opinions as to what constitutes "hip hop" in Kharkiv. Popular music scholar Andrew Bennett points out that definitions of hip hop culture are continuously reworked by people who appropriate the genre across the world (Bennett 2000). What comes to be constituted as "hip hop" is highly contested. A survey of Ukrainian events marketed as "hip hop" reveals that local hip hop culture broadly encapsulates rapping, MC-ing, DJ-ing, break dancing, graffiti, skateboarding, and increasingly, as a result of growing corporate sponsorship of hip hop events, BMX biking. BMX bikes are expensive and are marketed, alongside other forms of hip hop culture, to relatively prosperous young men.

In Kharkiv's social context, hip hop functions as an articulation of growing middle-class identity and a sense of urban cosmopolitanism influenced by and determined by one's access to Western cultural knowledge. At hip hop parties in clubs throughout Kharkiv, DJs commonly play a wide variety of U.S. hip hop, Russian and Ukrainian-language hip hop, and African hip hop introduced from their home countries by African students when they

deejay. Contrasting this complexity, local medias, entrepreneurs, musicians, and producers within Ukraine's music industries categorize all forms of rap-based music as "hip hop."

Kharkiv's hip hop scenes are delineated by networks of young men associated with particular recording studios that sprang up around 2003 and 2004. At the time of research, these studios, close to fifteen in number, were not professionally established to the degree that they might be known for a particular style of hip hop, as they might be in the United States. These small studios are led by hip hop enthusiasts in their early twenties who are simultaneously producing music and strengthening the infrastructure for music recording and distribution in the city. Many have established contacts among music industry personnel in Kyiv as well as in neighboring Russia—St. Petersburg and Moscow in particular.

Significant at this stage of the scene's development are the interpersonal and often interracial relationships forged among young male musicians, who form an emerging entrepreneurial class in this post-socialist economy. Generally speaking, their professional goals focus on strengthening local music industries to help guarantee an income from music. In the words of a young hip hop producer in Kharkiv:

In Ukraine, hip hop is not mass music, unlike in the United States. It's a subculture. We still do not have that level of development in our music industry to accommodate for many diverse music genres. In Russia, people can earn money by doing hip hop, but that doesn't happen here in Ukraine. In Kharkiv, no one can consider music their main occupation. In four or five years, we will all have families, and we need to earn money for them as well. We want the talented people who do hip hop to earn enough money, to be able to invest the money they earn during concerts in their own music.⁸

A major source of concern for young hip hop entrepreneurs is the issue of copyright and the protection of music rights (Helbig 2013). In 2005, the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry identified Ukraine as one of ten "priority countries" with "unacceptable piracy rates" (2005). According to the International Intellectual Property Alliance, more than 80 percent of music and DVDs sold in Ukraine are illicit (2011). Rampant violation of intellectual property laws prompted the United States to impose trade sanctions on Ukraine in 2001. In 2005, Ukraine put forward a new law that focused specifically on optical disc piracy, and the government made highly publicized raids on pirating factories and warehouses (Haigh 2007, 169). In

turn, the United States reinstated trade relations with Ukraine and repealed the Jackson-Vanik restrictions on Ukraine in 2006.⁹ In the last five years, hologram labels have appeared to indicate officially licensed CDs, though it is clear that many of these labels are pirated as well. The intellectual property crackdown led to much higher prices for music. The price of CDs has increased from 10 *hryvnias* (\$2) in the early part of the decade to approximately 50 *hryvnias* (\$10) in 2010. While CDs sell for upward of \$10 in national music chain stores such as Meloman, CDs sold in bazaars continue to be cheaper (around \$6) because they are more likely to be pirated. The price increase in stores indicates a direct correlation to anti-piracy laws.

Both amateur and professional musicians in Ukraine speak out about the loss of revenue because of piracy.¹⁰ They participate in press conferences and meet with politicians, urging them to enforce existing laws and introduce new legislation regarding copyright protection. The Ukrainian copyright watchdog site Ukrainian League of Musical Rights (www.musicliga.org) warns musicians about companies that are guilty of copyright infringement and publishes a list of production companies that sell music legally, including Universal Music Group, EMI, and Warner and Ukraine-based companies such as CompMusic, Moon Records, Universal Media, and Mama Music.

The artists protest piracy with good reason; their livelihood is literally at stake. According to Alexei Humenchuk, director of the Ukrainian League of Musical Rights website, it costs about 55,000 *hryvnias* (\$7,000) to record a song, promote it, and issue a music video. In 2007, the cost of recording and promoting an album in Ukraine was 200,000 *hryvnias* (\$25,000). The present piracy rates make it impossible for artists to earn their money back. The loss of royalties for 2009 in the Ukrainian music industries is estimated at \$25 million.¹¹ Further problems with piracy pertain to broadcasting operations, 90 percent of which are illegal. Cable operators, TV stations, restaurants, bars, and shopping malls refuse to pay royalties to collecting agencies (IIPA 2010, 353).

Such high levels of piracy would not be possible without the complacency of the government. Ironically, Kharkiv's hip hop scenes are highly dependent on government sponsorship to fund musical infrastructure. Also, the city's hip hop and break-dance competitions are sponsored by Ukraine's Party of Regions, Partia Regionov, a pro-Russian political party that uses such sponsorships to solidify youth support for its political platform. This attempt to build political capital through music is hardly unique.

MUSIC, HISTORY, AND PROPAGANDA

In the years since the Orange Revolution, government officials have capitalized on the political power of music. Those with a pro-ethnic Ukrainian platform draw on musicians who sing Ukrainian-language songs, while those who encourage closer ties with the Russian Federation support Russian-language musicians. While Kharkiv's young hip hop musicians emphatically state that their music is not partisan, that their choice of language between Russian and Ukrainian is not influenced by political sponsorship, and that their music functions outside the realm of politics, the broader realities paint a very different picture. Though it is not publicly discussed in schools or in the media, conversations with musicians reveal an understanding of regional propaganda. Young hip hop musicians have shown me the KGB listening apparatuses that were built into buildings in the center of town, some of which now house makeshift hip hop studios in their basements. As an ethnomusicologist of Ukrainian American descent, more fluent in Ukrainian than in Russian at the time of fieldwork, I was asked in the majority of conversations with musicians in Kharkiv if I was choosing to speak Ukrainian out of political conviction and support for the politics of then-president Viktor Yushchenko, leader of the Orange Revolution, who advocated for closer ties with the European Union. The regional politics in Kharkiv tend to favor pro-Russian candidates because of a more significant ethnic Russian presence in the region. Kharkiv was chosen as the first capital of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic from 1917 to 1934 due to its relative proximity to St. Petersburg and Moscow, and the historical ties with Russia are much stronger there than in western Ukraine, considered to be a cultural stronghold of ethnic Ukrainian identity.

The issue of using Ukrainian or Russian language is highly emotionally charged. By forging a more pro-ethnic Ukrainian political sphere, President Yushchenko's administration (2004–10) brought significant attention to Soviet atrocities in Ukrainian territories, the greatest and most controversial of which related to the Kharkiv region—the Famine Genocide of 1932–33 known as Holodomor, literally “death by hunger,” during which approximately 4 million of the rural population died as the result of Stalin's first Five-Year Plan, implemented between 1928 and 1932 (Snyder 2010, 21–58).¹² Historian Timothy Snyder writes, “In those years, Stalin had taken control of the heights of the communist party, forced through a policy of industrialization and collectivization, and emerged as the frightful father of a beaten population” (25).

Prosperous farmers, kulaks, became the target of Stalin's policies, and the early 1930s saw the massive deportation of peasants to the Gulag, a "system of concentration camps" in Siberia (27). Ukrainian peasants were terrified of losing their land and perceived collectivization to be "second serfdom" (28), but their abilities to fight the Soviet state were ineffective due to lack of organization and the kulak leadership. The mass starvation in the countryside that ensued from enforcement of unrealistic grain quotas affected primarily ethnic Ukrainians (the population of urban centers like Kharkiv was primarily Russian and Jewish, stemming from patterns of population distribution and peasant serfdom in the Russian Empire). Hungry peasants flocked to the cities, looking like walking skeletons, their stomachs bulging, and died of starvation in the streets. Soviet soldiers brutally took all available grain from peasant households, leaving whole villages to starve to death. Snyder includes a note about music that helps illustrate the tragedy:

The Ukrainian musician Yosyp Panasenko was dispatched by central authorities with his troupe of *bandura* players to provide culture to the starving peasants. Even as the state took the peasants' last bit of food, it had the grotesque inclination to elevate the minds and rouse the spirits of the dying. The musicians found village after village completely abandoned. Then they finally came across some people: two girls dead in a bed, two legs of a man protruding from a stove, and an old lady raving and running her fingernails through the dirt. The party official Viktor Kravchenko entered a village to help with the harvest one evening. The next day he found seventeen corpses in the marketplace. Such scenes could be found in villages throughout Soviet Ukraine, where in that spring of 1933 people died at a rate of more than ten thousand a day. (47)

The unimaginable tragedy that befell ethnic Ukrainians in eastern Ukraine in the 1930s is but a silent history in the region. As the Ukrainian countryside was being devastated by collectivization and its population starved to death, the Ethnographic Department at the Russian Museum in Leningrad put forth a new exhibit that "could teach the masses how the collectivization of the countryside was resulting in a new Soviet Ukrainian culture among the peasantry" (Hirsch 2005, 209). The exhibit "The Ukrainian Village before and after October," which opened in 1931, highlighted the farcical and political uses of ethnographic materials in the Soviet Union. There were many objects available to depict life before 1917, including folk art, traditional farming tools, and costumes. The ethnographers manipulated the presentations of the costumes, including some that were more colorfully

and ornately embroidered, to attempt to show class stratifications among the “poorer” peasants and the “kulak” (an upper class of sorts). However, as historian Francine Hirsch points out, the ethnographers knew very well that the peasants wore these different outfits interchangeably and that one represented everyday wear and the other festive wear for holidays and special occasions (209). Contemporary representations of Ukrainian villages came mostly from photographs and diagrams, with no mention of the devastation that collectivization and Soviet modernity had brought upon Ukrainian peasantry.

In independent Ukraine, few monuments mark the memory of those who died. Despite former president Viktor Yushchenko’s efforts to bring the Holodomor into public consciousness, the link to Holodomor information on the Ukrainian government’s official website was deleted when President Viktor Yanukovych was elected in 2010. Russia’s leaders deny that the Holodomor was a genocide against the Ukrainian people, citing a bad harvest that led to famines in Kazakhstan and in other parts of Soviet Russia at that time. But a historical look at other tyrannical anti-Ukrainian policies in eastern Ukraine, including those pertaining to music, reveals a different story. In the 1930s, Stalin’s terrors led to the extermination of countless ethnic Ukrainian intellectuals in literature, theatre, arts, and music. Perhaps most relevant to the history of musical activities in the Kharkiv region were the repressions and murders of wandering (and often blind) minstrels known as *kobzari* and of the ethnomusicologists who researched and documented their music (Mishalow 2008).¹³

When Soviet leaders seized control of eastern Ukrainian lands, they forbade Ukrainian scholars to document and analyze the *dumy*, epic songs, performed by *kobzari* (Kononenko 1998). *Kobzari* were viewed as one of the greatest threats to the Soviet regime’s political stability. They traveled from village to village, spreading news about historical and contemporary events among the rural population. The Soviet regime feared that such traveling musicians could spread anti-Communist, religious, and ethnic propaganda and that their village performances could not be controlled from above. Thus, in 1935, Ukrainian *kobzari* were invited to Kharkiv, the former capital of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, under the pretense of an ethnographic conference, where they were told their songs and stories would be collected and recorded for posterity. Instead, the *kobzari* were brutally executed by the NKVD (Soviet secret police).

To ensure that *kobzar* lore would not be preserved and passed on to future generations, the NKVD also persecuted the scholars who researched



FIGURE 3.2. Ukrainian Bandurist Chorus in the United States.
Used with permission.

kobzar traditions. For instance, between 1919 and 1930, studies on *kobzari* and the musical traditions of blind minstrels were published by Klement Kvitka, Hnat Khotkevych, and Kateryna Hrushevskva. Hrushevskva was arrested in 1934, was imprisoned in 1937, and died in a labor camp in 1943. Khotkevych was shot in 1938. Kvitka was arrested repeatedly in the 1930s but survived his internment in a labor camp. He was forced into exile and lived in Moscow until his death in 1953 (Noll 1997).

The Ukrainian Bandurist Chorus was formed in 1918 in Kyiv with the aim to promote and popularize the *bandura*, a many-stringed instrument associated historically with the *kobzari* in eastern and central parts of Ukraine.¹⁴ The chorus was organized during a brief period of Ukrainian independence between the fall of the Russian Empire and the incorporation of eastern Ukrainian lands into the fold of the Soviet Union. However, its emphasis on ethnic Ukrainian musical expression was perceived as a threat under Stalin's rule, and those members who survived the persecutions were made to reorganize as the State Bandurist Chorus of the Ukrainian SSR. Further persecutions by Soviet and Nazi occupiers prompted the chorus to leave Ukraine as a group, and with the assistance of Allied forces, many members were brought from refugee camps in American-occupied Germany and settled in Detroit in 1949. Though their members now live throughout North America, the chorus continues to tour Europe, Ukraine, Canada, and North America to spread Ukrainian music to Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian audiences.

The chorus and its history touch my family directly because my father, an amateur tenor, was invited to sing with the chorus in the 1980s. Throughout my childhood and until my father's untimely passing in 2003, I sat in our New Jersey kitchen with my mother and sister, listening to chorus members hold

regional rehearsals. Thus I grew up with a very conscious understanding of the role of music in ethnic identity construction and community building. Songs that we learned with friends in Plast Ukrainian scouting camps and community gatherings have direct links to World War I and World War II repertoires. Although local variants on traditional and composed folk repertoires are common, diaspora communities have always been historically conscious of musical developments in Ukraine and have upheld classical and traditional music performance as a crucial link to their émigré past from the time of war to the present (PURL 3.3).

Conducting research in eastern Ukraine and in Kharkiv in particular, I quickly became aware that the region's pro-Russian political leadership does not publicly support ethnic Ukrainian cultural expression. Rather, it promotes a Soviet-Russian ideology that emphasizes the region's cultural identity and history as an extension of the Russian Federation. Events organized by musicians and enthusiasts who attempt to revive *kobzar* lore hold *bandura* festivals and commemorative concerts in Kharkiv and in cities like Poltava that carry historical significance for *kobzar* traditions. Festivals like Mazeppa Fest, held in honor of Hetman Ivan Mazeppa, who lost the deciding battle between the Swedes and Hetmanate against Tsar Peter the Great's army in 1709, are imbued with political significance due to the very nature of the music traditions revived. In June 2008, a concert in Kharkiv featuring the musical traditions of the *bandura* and its lute-like predecessor, the *kobza*, began with a commemorative prayer at a monument to the *kobzari* murdered during Stalinist repressions in the 1930s. Their silenced musical tradition is marked by a broken *kobza* on the commemorative rock.

In a book published in 2007 on the *kobzari*, author Volodymyr Kushpet includes pictures of minstrels from the nineteenth century through the late 1990s. An undated picture featuring two Ukrainian men playing chess accompanied by an African musician on the *kobza* with the caption "music unites the world" points to an awareness among music scholars that Ukraine is a multicultural nation-state, home to people from different parts of the world who contribute to a shared musical fabric (Kushpet 2007). While such cross-cultural research projects are rare, they may be understood more by Ukrainians who feel the need to research their history, language, and identity that had been lost and forbidden in the Soviet era and not fostered in the wake of political and economic turmoil and social upheaval in the first years of independence.

Even as they bring a fresh perspective and sound to Ukraine, young hip hop musicians find themselves entangled in the country's past. Regional politics, linguistic tensions, and historical censorship buffet them, especially because they are dependent on regional government sponsorship for hip hop events. Adding to the mix, as Kharkiv's reputation grows as a center of hip hop, the city is drawing musicians from Kyiv and other parts of the country more influenced by ethnic Ukrainian culture. A hip hop musician from western Ukraine associated with Age Music Studios, one of the most successful youth-run hip hop studios in the city, prompted the studio to produce a Ukrainian-language compilation titled *Ukrainskymy slovamy: Zbirka Ukrainsko-movnoho hip-hopu* (With Ukrainian words: A collection of Ukrainian-language hip-hop) in 2006. Nevertheless, it shows that most attempts to reposition Kharkiv as a center of ethnic Ukrainian consciousness comes from outside the region. Ethnomusicologists from the region are rarely invited to ethnographic conferences held in Kyiv and Lviv due to the perception that most ethnic Ukrainian identity was destroyed at the time of collectivization and that regional villages have not retained elements of "pure" Ukrainian identity as is constructed and imagined, for instance, regarding the Carpathian mountain region in the west. While this casts Kharkiv outside nationalist rhetoric, it opens the region up to explorations of new identities, including immigrant expressions.

HIP HOP, BREAK DANCING, AND GENDER

There are fifteen or so small hip hop studios in Kharkiv. I conducted interviews in the six hip hop recording studios located on Kharkiv's two main streets, Pushkinska and Sumska, in the center of town. These locations were chosen based on connections and information shared by the producers and musicians in the studios. Additionally, young people I spoke to in three hip hop shops in the center of town where musicians and scene participants hang out, purchase clothing and magazines, and listen to music were helpful in finding the studios. Locally circulated, highly professionalized Russian-language hip hop magazines produced in high-gloss color and a 5x7 format, like *Extreme X3M*, *Moloko*, and *K9*, offer advertisements for local and national break-dance and rap competitions and clothes and sneakers at hip hop shops in Kharkiv and other cities and feature interviews with hip hop fans, musicians, and nationally known pop musicians in featured cities in Ukraine. The magazines contain images of African Americans with accompanying Russian-language text with

alternating Cyrillic and Latin letters based on hip hop artists' names. Images of African Americans ranging from Jay-Z to black players on the Rutgers women's basketball team create a textual blurring between blackness and hip hop. The overall message of the magazines seems to be one of professionalism and an awareness of media's role in framing hip hop discourse and aesthetics.

The magazines are produced monthly in Kyiv and funded through the Committee on Information Politics, Television, and Radio in Ukraine, founded in 2001. The committee was established to protect the freedom of speech, to develop an infrastructure for the dissemination of media information in Ukraine, to protect Ukraine-based media production from media sources beyond Ukraine's borders, and to work to integrate Ukraine into competing international media spheres (namely Russia and Europe). That hip hop became one of the first projects supported by the committee is telling of the broader social, political, and economic dimensions the genre held in popular consciousness. It also shows the close relationship that hip hop events have had with government funding and sponsorship from U.S. corporations in Ukraine, such as Mars, the maker of Snickers.

During my research trips to Kharkiv in 2007 and 2008, I purchased the magazines in hip hop shops for 5 *hryvnias* (\$1) each. They were not available according to their monthly publication schedule because only 36,000 copies of each issue were produced each month and distributed across the country. Even in two- or three-month increments, however, I was able to chart an active series of local and national events for the year. Advertisements for Kharkiv's break-dance battles in the magazines led me to the local break-dancing scene, and I attended break-dance classes where groups of young men and women trained and prepared for break-dance competitions. I attended two of these competitions during the summer of 2007.

Young musicians and audience members stress that hip hop culture focuses on the expression of individual strength and originality, as exhibited, for instance, in break-dance and rap competitions. In contrast, the strong discouragement of individualism during the Soviet era has persisted into the post-Soviet era. Those who broke away from family and social networks to foster economic opportunities in the midst of post-socialist economic collapse and amid the rising market economy were viewed as suspect and often as cultural traitors.

The label of cultural traitor was oftentimes applied to me, as the musicians I worked with tried to understand where I had come from. My diaspora iden-

tity, while a common part of the narrative in western Ukraine, did not have a parallel in eastern Ukraine, from which a significantly smaller percentage of the population had opportunities to escape to the West. Though my grandparents had immigrated to the United States during World War II, making me a second-generation Ukrainian American, I was seen as someone who had abandoned her homeland. As my Russian improved and as my Ukrainian accent modified and my word choices became more modernized, replacing my World War II-era (German and Polish-influenced) western Ukrainian vocabulary, language became a constant point of identity that positioned me as *nasha* (ours) or as a foreigner. I also switched my language use to position myself differently in certain fieldwork contexts. Sometimes I was an “American” interested in hip hop, while other times I was an ethnic Ukrainian who supported the rise of Ukrainian-language music. For the most part, I understood the tensions between the pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian factions and was welcomed by African musicians, who appreciated my knowledge of English and ability to explain various aspects of life in Ukraine. Many of those interviews felt like therapy sessions and were opportunities for the musicians I worked with to use me as a sounding board and a witness to their experiences, which included trying to make a living and to make sense of the changes in society.

Perhaps comically, I fit into the hip hop scenes not because of my ability to rap or break dance, of which I can do neither, but because I was constantly assumed to be the mother of one of the young rappers. It is common for women in their mid-thirties, as I was, to have children in their mid- to late teens. Many are divorced and discovering their lost youth in their mid-thirties. There were many women my age in these clubs, which influenced the gender dynamic between young black DJs and older Ukrainian women dancing to their music. Age did not deter people from participating in hip hop culture, though most participants say that the hip hop scene in general includes those from their mid-teens to mid-twenties. Most say that male artists leave the scene in search of more permanent work when they establish families.

For women, the scene opens opportunities for alternate expressions of identity and sexuality that move beyond gendered stereotypes of organized crime and prostitution, which became commonplace in the 1990s. Some Ukrainian women, in search of economic opportunities, became internet brides, prostitutes, and pornography workers. The influx of Western popular culture overturned a Soviet-era aesthetic that did not celebrate overt displays

of sexuality. This culminated in the widespread access to pornography in printed media and on television. The female, celebrated as mother in the Soviet era, came to be viewed in public media predominantly as a sexual object, reinforced by a spike in local prostitution and sex tourism to Ukraine from Western countries. It was at this time that Ukrainian women also became the primary targets of international sex trafficking (Malarek 2004).

Such stereotypes cast women into narrowly defined roles that stood in opposition to pre-Soviet images of women as literary figures, community organizers, and cultural activists (Bohachevsky-Chomiak 1988) and Soviet images of women as workers (Marsh 1996). Post-socialist changes perpetuated a narrowly defined aesthetic of femininity and feminine hypersexuality. Ukrainian women became known for see-through blouses, provocative outfits, and high heels. The hip hop community was a bit of a haven for women who did not fit that aesthetic, as it is very welcoming and accepting of people on their own terms. Young women can wear baggy pants and shop in the unisex hip hop shops. They work on building muscles through athletic break-dancing routines in co-ed groups (each group must have at least two girls to compete) and feel welcome to experiment with their appearance.

Dreadlocks, tattoos, and piercings are very common in the overlapping graffiti scenes, in which many hip hop musicians take part. Many graffiti events are government sponsored, and young people are invited to use provided spray paint to decorate the sides of fences and collapsing buildings on the outskirts of town. Although graffiti originated as an expression of anti-establishment sentiments, in Kharkiv, it is government sponsored and used as a way to garner youth energy and interest. All participants are aware that these events are sponsored by the Party of Regions political party, which ensures their support as they reach voting age. These initiatives are overseen by older graffiti artists in their twenties, who teach teenagers how to use space and provide ideas for expression.

In an interview with members of the two-man graffiti group Quag October (which derives its name from the street next to which its members live, named for the October Revolution), Roman Partola (tag RAMZ) and Andrij Palval (tag FAY!) state that Kharkiv has a much less active graffiti scene than Kyiv, Odessa, Lviv, and Ternopil. Kharkiv has approximately 20 graffiti artists who approach the art form with a sense of professionalism, compared to 100 in Kyiv, 1,000 in Moscow, and 10,000 in Berlin. The statistics reflect the artists' perception of Kharkiv's relatively inactive graffiti scenes as opposed

to the greater range and originality of talent found in the larger cities, despite Kharkiv's hosting of the first national graffiti festival in Ukraine in 1999. Partola and Palval draw on ethnic Ukrainian themes like village scenes, embroidery, and *kozak* imagery. City government-sponsored events limit originality because they dictate themes for the artists, like "Euro 2012," to decorate old stadiums and urban structures. There are no cash prizes for graffiti contests, and even though the sponsors promise to cover the costs of the paint, funds are often stolen or distributed among organizers so that only a percentage of the expense is covered. Because of the high cost of paint in hip hop shops (each can costs \$4, with about twelve cans of paint needed to complete a graffiti project), the boys tap into a supply network where young men travel to Poland, load a truck with 2,000 cans of spray paint, and bring it to Lviv in western Ukraine. Fellow graffiti artists purchase the paint and pass the cans on to Kharkiv via trains. The Polish paint is considered to be cheaper and of better quality. Because graffiti does not generate income, the young men work as commercial painters and designers. Since the time ethnomusicologist Yaryna Romaniuk, my Ukrainian collaborator on a research grant in 2008, interviewed Partola and Palval as part of this project, they have established a successful design firm named after their graffiti group, QuagOctober.¹⁵

Young people I interviewed at graffiti events often signed their names with tags in my fieldwork notebooks, asking me for my opinion and feedback, analyzing and interpreting their signs for me. At one event, I wanted to interview a young man further about the tag he had drawn in my notebook. He began to speak with great difficulty, soon admitting that he had recently gotten his tongue pierced and could barely talk. Such expressions of individualism were socially shunned and inaccessible in the 1990s due to lack of disposable income, lack of access to goods, and society's lack of acceptance regarding perceived diversions from the status quo. A hyperawareness of socially deviant behavior at the height of post-socialist transition marked those who experimented with individuality as suspect and often dangerous due to their perceived involvement with black market, underground, and antisocial activities.

Perhaps most notable within the hip hop, break-dance, and graffiti circles is the emphasis on clean living, meaning free from drugs and alcohol.¹⁶ In a country where alcoholism has reached staggering heights and drug use is epidemic, those in hip hop make a strong delineation between themselves and those outside their groups. They take care of their bodies, expand their minds,

create spaces for expression, and strive for professionalism in their work with the aim of economic stability. Hip hop also sets youths apart by bringing them into contact with peers from other countries. Increasingly, international competitions in rapping, graffiti, break dancing, and BMX biking have taken place in Kharkiv. Sponsored by local and international corporations in the European Union, these events bring an aspect of consumerism to hip hop culture that reinforces a sense of worldliness among Ukrainian youth, some of whom save money all year to be able to buy a token article of clothing from the local hip hop shop. In this way, cosmopolitan, middle-class expressions of “white” identity are being negotiated and explored through a U.S.-based musical genre built on cultural isolation and inequality that is being reinterpreted as a genre of cultural freedom, social inclusion, and gender equality.

HIP HOP AND MIDDLE-CLASS IDENTITY

Youth who identify with hip hop culture physically differentiate themselves through clothes that parallel hip hop styles in the United States. At the hip hop shops in the center of town, a pair of sneakers costs more than \$100. The clothing shops serve as a networking source for those in the scene. Posters at the entrances inform customers of upcoming hip hop and R&B parties. The shops also serve as a social meeting place. I often ran into teens at the shops whom I had interviewed at other venues, and this helped me identify the small, intertwined communities that form hip hop culture. They place strong emphasis on physical identity, whether skin color, clothes, or other physical attributes such as muscles developed from break dancing.

Hip hop scenes are not widely advertised, and information is shared through word of mouth. They function as a form of what Sarah Thornton terms “subcultural capital” (1996), an idea that expands upon Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of “cultural capital,” forms of knowledge, skills, and educational opportunities that facilitate social mobility. According to Thornton, subcultural capital is essentially a form of “hipness” and of “being in the know” that is closely bound to age and gender (11–12). She argues that it is not as bound to class as cultural capital is because it is circulated by the media and thus, arguably in a Western context, more accessible across economic divides (13). Applying this theory in a post-socialist context, one sees that the reverse is true. Subcultural capital is cultural capital. One’s ability to perform connections with Western thought and culture allows one to establish oneself as a

member of the middle class, even without access to money. Hip hop's cultural cachet offers young people a status and identity that supersedes other modes of capital. Hip hop embodies knowledge of English, a celebration of individualism, and capitalist innovation, among the most important qualities that young people have needed to succeed in post-socialist economic transitions.

While the hip hop shops are accessible due to their location near Kharkiv's main streets, the recording studios are unmarked and can be found only through word of mouth. Even with directions, though, they were difficult to locate in a sea of similar Soviet-style buildings. Reaching my destination, I would wait in a courtyard until a young man came out to escort me past identical doorways into the studio. My mobile phone was the most crucial resource during my fieldwork, as phones are the only link for contact. Very few young people use email, since most do not own computers and internet access through internet cafés is limited, expensive, and unreliable.

Most hip hop studios are put together by students in basements of buildings, consisting of a home computer and a sound booth with a microphone, along with makeshift studio controls for sound. For example, the walls of the Boombox Records studio are soundproofed with twenty pairs of old jeans. The majority of studios are supported by meager personal finances. Increasingly, certain studios have received support from corporate sponsors such as local radio stations, local hip hop shops, and quasi-government entities such as national political parties that seek youth support in the region. The young men who run the studios purchase recording equipment; set up sound studios; record, produce, and distribute CDs; and market and organize various hip hop parties, competitions, and other events. Despite its local limitations, the internet has also increasingly become a viable resource for music distribution in Ukraine. Several studios with greater financial capital have websites and use social media sites like VKontakte, through which they advertise new artists and music.

Local hip hop finds representation on local radio stations but is not promoted on the national television channels accessible in the city. The national music television station, M1, plays a variety of hip hop and R&B music videos from the United States and Russia. Information regarding break-dance, graffiti, and rap competitions in Kharkiv, dance parties, and access to recording studios is spread via word of mouth, personal connections, ties among school friends, and posters that announce hip hop events throughout the city. DJ Vas-sabi, a twenty-two-year-old musician of Ukrainian and Rwandan descent,

is enthusiastic about his life as a hip hop musician in Kharkiv but attributes the small scale of local hip hop scenes to a general lack of resources among student musicians:¹⁷

In Kharkiv, when you advertise an R&B/hip hop party . . . the DJ who is invited might not really know how to play the music well, meaning that they don't always get a smooth transition between songs. People who are dancing shouldn't hear the mistakes of the DJ—the beats should flow one into another. It's hard to find places that can afford good technology. Most DJs still use compact discs rather than records because the places can't afford them. And not every DJ gets the chance to really practice because they don't have regular access to good equipment.¹⁸

Ethnic Ukrainian and Russian interviewees acknowledged that their African counterparts come with greater experience into the studio, many having worked as DJs in their home countries, where hip hop scenes have been strong since the 1980s, more than a decade before hip hop became popular in Kharkiv in the mid-1990s. Male non-African musicians who run small independent hip hop recording studios in Kharkiv learn from each other how to produce, market, and earn profits from the music they record and release. An hour of recording time costs between 50 and 100 *hryvnias* (approximately \$10–20), and everyone is welcome to cut a track, regardless of race, class, gender, or talent. Some of the tracks are mastered so well that they are played at break-dancing events sponsored by the studios. Better-produced CDs may be picked up for distribution by hip hop labels such as Moon Records in Kyiv for nationwide distribution. The distribution of Ukrainian-made CDs abroad, however, is still quite minimal.

KHARKIV'S HIP HOP STUDIOS AS SITES OF SOCIO-RACIAL AGENCY

Each hip hop scene includes groups of friends and student acquaintances who produce music in makeshift studios. Throughout the city, studios organize hip hop parties and rap competitions that feature performers associated with their socio-musical networks. As studios grow in influence and professional status, scenes become increasingly split, focusing on a small number of more professional and talented rappers who offer promotional capital for studio-organized hip hop parties. Studios and their accompanying scenes are diverse for many reasons. Each rapper, whatever his ethnic background, brings to his respective group a different personal relationship and individual experi-

ence. His musical influences on local hip hop are usually tripartite. Rappers contribute (1) a personal relationship to African American hip hop through a history of listening influenced by where he grew up and what types of music he has access to, (2) an individualized experience with local hip hop traditions in his country of origin, and (3) a socio-aural style of music/dance expression that takes into account experiences in Ukraine.

More established rappers share their music at competitions sponsored by hip hop clothing and accessory shops in Kharkiv, such as Stuff Skateshop. The corporate element within Kharkiv's hip hop scenes limits participation to teens and university students who visibly display financial means. They buy clothes at newly established hip hop shops rather than at the Bazaar Barabashova because bazaar clothes carry the stigma of sameness, low quality, and lack of critical choice of personal adornment. Such choice is a crucial marker of post-Soviet status. Other expenses include break-dancing lessons, graffiti paint, studio recording time, and computers for recording/mixing music. Admission to hip hop parties, usually free for women, varies for men from \$5 to \$10, depending on the club's prestige. This fee constitutes a half-day's wages for a young professional in Kharkiv. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, African students relied on financial means to gain access to the scenes. Today, the cultural capital associated with "blackness" plays a much more important role in determining the relative ease through which African musicians are integrated into Kharkiv's hip hop milieu.

African musicians offer validity to the scene as foreigners and, more important, as English speakers who assist with hip hop lyrics and add different musical aesthetics into the mix. African American studies scholar Halifu Osumare cites similar discourses of validity within hip hop appropriations in the Russian Federation. In a country where the ruling party invited MC Hammer to perform at a political rally in 1995 to entice young voters, hip hop participants made distinctions between themselves as "white" vis-à-vis hip hop's black sources. Osumare observes that young people participating in hip hop scenes in Russia are "ambivalent about race in relation to their adoption of hip hop aesthetics" and connect to aspects of "youthful rebellion" associated with African American hip hop (2007, 76). Whereas other music genres such as rock were appropriated as musics of rebellion in the Soviet Union and China, *San Jose Mercury News* entertainment writer Mike Antonucci (quoted in Osumare 2007, 77) points out that "rap is branded by its origins."¹⁹ As Osumare explains:

Despite Russian youths' perceptions that underscore continuing racial and class hierarchies in the United States and the world, black American rappers dominate the genre in the global music industry. African Americans as a signifier of post-modern cool confer "authenticity" on the use of hip-hop in its global proliferation. Simultaneously blacks as a quintessential sign of historical oppression complicate hip-hop's use in particular sites like Russia, exposing that nation's own racial perceptions about blackness. (77)

The general argument is perhaps that hip hop is appropriated without full understanding of the specific roots of its experience, which are couched in a distinct dialectic of racial discourse that has been codified in the U.S. culture industries through centuries of black and white interactions founded in slave history.

Despite the widespread popularity of "black" music genres such as hip hop in post-Soviet society, racism against people with dark skin in Ukraine is on the increase, particularly in Kyiv, where anti-African brutality has increased in recent years and continues to go undocumented by the media. African students in Kharkiv rely on local interracial crews to protect them from attack at clubs and in public spaces.

Racial tensions are a fact of life in Kharkiv and are negotiated in a very interesting way among teenagers in the hip hop scene. At hip hop parties, African immigrants and/or students are encouraged to dominate the space physically and culturally and are emulated for their DJ-ing and dance skills by non-African participants. Such networks are very important in a country where, especially for urban male youths, relationships are difficult to maintain, due to fierce competition for economic advancement. Within the post-socialist cultural paranoia among male youth regarding not wanting to stick out or be different from the status quo, hip hop stresses the importance of individualized elements, particularly the development of an individual style, whether a personal signature, a graffiti tag, a signature dance move, or a new way of creating a music sound at the turntable. Such in-group validation is very important for teenagers in the scene, and this support encourages many hip hop youth to become entrepreneurs, running studios and organizing parties in Kharkiv.

Many songs composed by African and Ukrainian hip hop groups associated with the small studios have made it onto nationally distributed discs. Other CDs circulate locally and are distributed via hand-to-hand networks at bazaars and at various rap, graffiti, and break-dance competitions. Rappers

from Kharkiv perform with musicians from abroad at corporate and politically sponsored hip hop events in Ukraine's larger cities such as Kharkiv, Kyiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Odessa, and Yalta. Some are also invited to participate in hip hop events in Russian cities close to the Ukrainian border. Many hip hop musicians say St. Petersburg offers greater financial opportunities, but most express hopes for local investments in Kharkiv's music industries so they may make a living from music at home.

POWER, BLACKNESS, AND MASCULINITY IN HIP HOP

Black masculinity is the masculinity that is heralded among youths drawn to hip hop for its cultural power and status. Miles White argues that the black body is both cultural capital and a consumer commodity that has become increasingly disposable since its most desirable qualities can to some extent be replicated and mimicked (White 2011, 19). This may be the case in the United States, where much black culture has been usurped and engaged with by whites. However, in countries such as Ukraine where one-on-one interaction with Africans and African Americans is limited, there is a sense that black male bodies carry a sense of authenticity regarding hip hop, an element that cannot be replicated but can be capitalized and drawn upon in terms of relational proximity.

The networks of parties, recording studios, and hip hop shops throughout Kharkiv function as male spaces with localized forms of social behavior. Black and white men deejay, emcee, rap, and dance on stage. White women dance on the main floor, where they are greatly outnumbered by young men. Black women are a minority in public spaces and rarely participate in music-making sessions in recording studios. Some black women participate in break-dance competitions and take classes in break-dance that have been organized unofficially at a university in Kharkiv or in private studios in town.

Hip hop events allow for relatively quick dissemination of new ideas and facilitate the social integration of people of different social, cultural, racial, and economic backgrounds. Music parties in Kharkiv showcase the talents of local singers who rap in Russian, Ukrainian, and English. DJ Sam from Sudan and DJ Mehdi from Morocco are among the many prominent Africans DJs in Ukraine. They are key innovators and have introduced genres such as hip hop through local groups like the Black Beatles and the AfroRasta Project, comprising African students living in Kharkiv.



FIGURE 3.3. DJ Stupid (Super-Talented-Unique-Person-in-Demand) (www.djstupid.com) from Nigeria spinning at a CD release party sponsored by Age Music, an entrepreneurial hip hop studio in Kharkiv, 2008. *Photo by author.*

African student groups such as AfroRasta sing about interracial love, as evidenced by their English-language reggae/hip hop song “Peace and Love,” issued on a reggae compilation album by Age Music in 2006 ([PURL 3.4](#)).

Just another one
 Looking for my way back home
 When I hear a voice say
 “Freedom’s not so far”
 From the life we’re livin’ in
 So many fighting for nothin’
 So many dyin’
 All a fucking waste
 Love is what you’re fighting for
 Love is what you’re seeking for
 Hey guy, hey guy . . .
 Hope the Lord could hear my voice
 From this fight we’re fighting for
 Hey guy, hey guy . . .

Da blond, da noir
 Da mama, da papa
 Da little one singing the melodies
 Of love and peace
 Peace and love . . .

The relationships between “Da blond, da noir / Da mama, da papa” point to the growing number of interracial marriages, though from a male perspective. African women’s experiences are marginalized in local hip hop, perhaps explained by the significantly smaller number of female students from Africa and attitudes among African men that deem participation in hip hop culture inappropriate for middle-class African women. Case studies in Eric Charry’s edited volume *Hip Hop Africa: New African Music in a Globalizing World* indicate that the majority of hip hop practitioners on the African continent are male, though female involvement in hip hop and reggae scenes as MCs, DJs, and rappers is on the rise (2012). Non-African women sing backup on hip hop recordings and participate in other aspects of hip hop culture in Kharkiv, such as graffiti and break dancing.

“Peace and Love” is also an example of African musicians’ attitude regarding hip hop as a political and socially conscious musical expression. The group’s emphasis on racial relations mirrors the equal rights discourse evident within the genre throughout the African continent.²⁰ Mixing English, Swahili, Russian, and Ukrainian, song-texts speak out against racial intolerance and focus on the beauty of black bodies, evidenced by an excerpt from the English-language song “Club Fever” sung by the Black Beatles, a hip hop group consisting of students from Kenya who recorded it at Kharkiv’s youth-run Age Music Studios in 2006 ([PURL 3,5](#)). I was unable to interview musicians from this group because they had returned to Kenya. Groups of university students, often dorm mates, compose and record whatever material they have—often only one song. Some stay in Ukraine while others return to their home country after completing their studies.

Pump it up, kill the speaker, feel the fever, at the podium
 Fuck the combination
 Brains, means, lyrical ammunition
 No competition to my lyrical infection . . .
 I ain’t your passion
 I’m your poison
 Can you see my vision?

Better you feel my venom
 I'm the real Kenyan-born
 I'm hitting you raw
 More than you wish for . . .
 From Kenya to Ukraina
 Maximum *kachenia* [movement, swing]

In this song and many others, the debate is physical, with an accent on black male identity. The singers exhibit strength and confidence and offer an “accept me or move out of my way” alternative to audiences who engage with the singer in sonic if not always in physical form. Politicians cast immigrants as people who bring “diseases” into the country—physical, cultural, and moral.²¹ With little information known about the disease, AIDS, called SPID in Russian and Ukrainian, was presented in the media as being associated with Africa and with sexual contact. Meanwhile, hospitals and drug users continually reused contaminated needles. While the general public ignored the disease and resources were lacking, it spread, until today there is an AIDS epidemic in the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Africans have borne the brunt of the social blame for the spread of AIDS, whose Russian/Ukrainian moniker SPID took on alternative racist connotations: *Sotsialnoe Posledstvie Internatsionalnoj Druzby* (Social Consequence of International Friendship) and *Spetsialny Podarok Innostrannykh Druzej* (Special Gift from Foreign Friends) (Matusevich 2009b, 31). Thus, black bodies came to embody the ills of post-socialist society, an irrational stigma that African student musicians in Kharkiv fight in their music.

It seems that very few Ukrainian fans, the majority of whom I interviewed in Russian, understand African rappers’ English-language lyrics. The group the Black Beatles comprises students who had just begun their studies in Kharkiv at the time of recording and had not yet gained fluency in either Russian or Ukrainian. Rapping in English gives them space to say what they wish while not directly engaging in antagonistic, racially charged exchanges with their supporters. It also heightens their social status vis-à-vis non-English speakers in Ukraine. Interviews among African students in Lviv by social worker and scholar Michelle Goldhaber revealed that Africans feel alienated and frustrated by the lack of English proficiency among the general population. As states “Tristan,” an African student at the Medical Institute in Lviv, the lack of English “gives the impression of a lack of civilization” (Goldhaber and Ziyatdinova 2010, 9). Goldhaber observed, “The lack of written and spo-

ken English seemed to further limit the movement of foreign students about the city, and dictated to some extent their social lives and the relationships they formed” (9). Thus, English serves as a means to draw closer social relationships among Africans and to establish a higher social status among those who do not speak English (cast in terms of a “civilizing” discourse). More poignantly, Ukrainian listeners respond positively to English lyrics because it makes the songs sound more like American hip hop. However, according to Vova zi L’vova, rapping in English might be construed as inauthentic and not being true to oneself. Vova is among the few who rap in Ukrainian rather than in Russian. The use of Russian attests to foreigners’ higher level of linguistic proficiency in Russian than in Ukrainian. This is due to the more prominent role that Russian holds in Ukraine’s economic and media spheres, particularly in eastern parts of the country. The use of English by African hip hop musicians, however, blurs the lines between African and African American identity. Though some Africans rap in Ukrainian and Russian, my interviews with them were in English.

The Black Beatles’ “Club Fever,” as an example of musically mediated racial exchange, brings forth many questions regarding scholarly approaches to analyzing hip hop in global contexts. Much of global hip hop scholarship is rooted in case studies that analyze processes through which U.S. hip hop styles are localized in non-Western contexts, with emphasis on genre appropriation and innovation (Barrer 2009; Condry 2006; Basu, Lemelle, and Kelley 2006; Pasternak-Mazur 2009; Mitchell 2001). While much research points to the global circulation of music via recordings, Andrew Bennett identifies impromptu rap performances in clubs by African American GIs stationed in Frankfurt am Mein, Germany, as an influential factor in the development of the city’s hip hop scenes (2000, 216–17). Similarly, African students produce hip hop in Kharkiv while performing within a liminal space of negotiated identities influenced by local race relations and multinational interpretations of U.S. hip hop.

African musicians attempt to forge connections with local musicians in Kharkiv through hip hop music as a black-identified genre within which they have something to say.²² Black skin color itself—rather than musical experience or even interest in DJ-ing and rapping—is enough to enter into the Kharkiv hip hop scenes. All are welcome to participate in recording sessions, and if a musician exhibits less skill, the engineer assists the musician by supplying beats and various sonic elements. This process recalls issues raised by

ethnomusicologist Louise Meintjes regarding the agency of the recording engineer in the recording studio (Meintjes 2003).²³ Meintjes shows that the recording engineer has an understanding of the broader media sphere for which the recordings are intended, a situation that differs greatly when the rapper is a foreigner. Though the recording engineer exhibits a formidable role in relation to home-grown rappers, often suggesting different ways of mixing beats or articulating and accenting various words in Russian or Ukrainian, his role (the engineer is almost always male) differs greatly during a recording session with Africans. First, he does not understand the language, whether English, Swahili, or other, and thus will not comment on vocal inflection or the rhythmic structure of the text. Second, drawing on a broader stereotype among DJs that “Africans mix better beats,”²⁴ he takes recording cues from the musicians themselves, allowing the musicians full control over all aspects of the music recording process. Third, because students from Africa have relatively greater financial means than local students involved in hip hop, they can afford to buy more time in the recording booth. The extended time within the recording studio leads to more carefully balanced recordings.

Local hip hop musicians turn to African musicians to validate efforts of recording studios and to legitimize the genre on a local level. Africans draw on African American cultural capital to position themselves as closer to the origins of the genre via racial identity. As the music industries in Kharkiv develop, significant will be the ways in which the relationships between music and racial identity play out within a more professionalized hip hop milieu. How will talent be interpreted as studios develop their own sounds? Will racial identity be so obviously marked as scenes expand, perhaps, to include immigrant musicians of east Asian or central Asian descent, also growing populations in Kharkiv? Will financial wealth continue to be a factor that determines entrance to the scenes? How will Kharkiv’s hip hop scenes relate to hip hop in other cities within the developing nationwide distribution network? Such questions provide a broader context within which Kharkiv’s hip hop scenes presently function. At least for the time being, it seems that the relationship between race, music, and financial affluence is generally acknowledged by participants to be mediated via interpretations of images from U.S. hip hop industries. While African students and immigrants by no means constitute a majority population in any part of Ukraine, U.S. music videos and Hollywood movies that feature African Americans are a regular part of programming on Ukrainian television and airwaves. As Anatoli Alexseev, a



FIGURE 3.4. Gomez from Nigeria validating the rapping efforts of a young hip hop audience member at the Black Bear Club in Kharkiv, 2008. *Photo by author.*

producer at Age Music, explains: “American hip hop is the fashion legislator [*zakonodatel mody*]. To be the best here, we have to know the newest releases from the United States. Earlier it was more difficult, but now it is easier with the development of the internet, and so on. As soon as something fresh is released, we hear it here immediately.”²⁵ Hip hop has created opportunities for young men of different racial backgrounds to make music together and to respond creatively to contemporary social issues through globalized perspectives on interracial friendship.

A technology-driven groove appears as a central site for negotiating what makes “real music” and, by extension, what makes someone on the scene “real,” unique, true to himself or herself, trustworthy, reliable, and interesting. The issue of beat lies at the heart of many discussions in the recording studio. Most African musicians insist that *popsa*—fast, kitschy popular music in Ukraine and Russia—is rhythmically monotonous and lyrically shallow. The pull to slow down, to offer a different groove, a coolness, interpreted as a sense of confidence, of holding back, is what Africans bring to the mix. Thus,

turntabling and ideas about mixing beats have come to Ukraine not directly from the United States but via African models, highly influenced by Caribbean sounds, reggae, and Latin rhythms.

The power shifts are clear and carry from the studio to other aspects of hip hop experience, such as dancing. At hip hop dance parties, whether or not the DJ is African, a person of African heritage—almost always male—is typically invited to dance on stage in front of the room. His dancing validates the skills of the DJ but concurrently places the black body on display. Such actions and processes make club attendees aware of Africans “in the house” and continuously circulate the indexical relationship between black bodies and hip hop. In this context, the black body is fetishized as a commodity, and white actors usurp the agency of black subjectivity (White 2011, 14).

The social networks within Kharkiv’s hip hop scenes facilitate interracial exchange and create modes of socio-racial agency for African students in a post-Soviet context where discrimination against dark-skinned people is on the rise. Influenced by regional, African, and U.S. musical elements, the scenes serve as spaces where Ukrainians interact, befriend, and create musical and cultural bonds with people from different backgrounds. On the one hand, the genre develops in new ways that draw from a multitude of personal and musical experiences. On the other, it is highly dependent on interpretive frameworks of racial and musical identities mediated by hip hop culture from the United States. Musical meanings are rooted in histories of Soviet-African, Soviet-U.S., post-Soviet Ukrainian-African, Ukrainian-U.S., and (broadly defined) African-U.S. cultural exchanges.

FOUR

AFRO-UKRAINIAN HIP HOP FUSION

Against a historical backdrop that positions Africans as only temporary residents who are distinctly Other in post-Soviet society, some African musicians perform in Ukrainian folk costumes, seemingly repositioning immigrants as potential citizens who are willing to assimilate and adopt the cultural practices of Ukraine. The involvement of African musicians in Ukraine's folk music scenes has broadened the cross-cultural conversation in Ukraine, which since independence in 1991 has focused on ethnic Russian versus ethnic Ukrainian culture. Today, African musicians who sing Ukrainian folk songs appear on television talk shows, at folk music festivals, at public city events, in newspapers, and on the internet, placing them as a third local culture but also as an expansion and melding of post-Soviet Ukrainian cultures.

While these musicians' work has enjoyed wide popularity, it is not clear the extent to which society is willing to create space for African social integration. The popularity of Africans in performance contexts has not translated into significant political, social, or economic change. Nevertheless, the use of Ukrainian folk elements in fusion projects has created a successful performance niche for African musicians in ways similar to hip hop collaborations discussed in chapter 3. Additionally, it influences public perceptions of Africans as interested in and wishing to connect to local traditions. In no small way, Africans' involvement in Ukrainian folk music positions them within complex narratives relating to language, the role of folk music performance in the Soviet era, representations of "Africa" in popular culture from the Soviet and post-Soviet period, and contemporary folk revivals in post-socialist Ukraine. In this way, Afro-Ukrainian fusion music is a highly politicized, culturally charged expression that influences immigrant-related discourse. Significantly, African musicians, the traditionally least-accepted

immigrants, are the only group creating folk fusion projects that place them in the public eye.

I first came across images of the Kyiv-based Afro-Ukrainian group Chornobryvtsi while conducting research on the political impact of music during the 2004 Orange Revolution (Helbig 2006). The group's performance of Ukrainian-language folk music was politicized alongside the actions of other Ukrainian-language folk and popular musicians who used Ukrainian-language music to garner support against pro-Russian government policies at that time. Chornobryvtsi was sought after to perform for protesters in Kyiv during the Orange Revolution precisely because members performed in Ukrainian, not Russian. Continued research led me from Kyiv to Kharkiv, where the group originated. Kharkiv is home to one of the largest populations of immigrants and foreign students in Ukraine. The city boasts a musical network that connects African musicians associated with folk music idioms to the city's interracial hip hop and reggae scenes (Helbig 2011b). There, I befriended the members of Alfa-Alfa, a Kharkiv-based group of Ugandan immigrants performing Ukrainian folk music, with whom Chornobryvtsi had performed in the past (Helbig 2011a).

In 2009, I visited the family of Alfa-Alfa members in Kampala, the capital of Uganda, in order to gain a better understanding regarding the role of folk music in political discourse. I researched the ways in which African students, immigrants, and their families related to ongoing ethnic tensions in Ukraine through the prism of intertribal relations in their home countries. I felt these tensions especially during my visit to the Unyama Internally Displaced Persons camp in Gulu in northern Uganda, where I traveled with Oteng Gloria Kay, the younger sister of Alfa-Alfa lead singer Adong Becky Prossy. The sisters' family are Langi from the Northern Region of Uganda, and their mother holds a government position in Kampala. Meeting with local hip hop musicians in refugee camps gave me insights into how the genre functions as a form of emotional therapy for those who have experienced the traumas of war and violence, uprootedness, and loss of family and loved ones (discussed in chapter 5). It was also evident how international non-governmental organizations in Gulu promote hip hop as a form of political agency, funding groups of young men to record music that endorses peace and social change.

Understanding the motivations for involvement in Ukraine's politicized musical spheres is very important in analyzing the influence of Afro-Ukrainian folk-fusion music on racial dynamics in Ukraine. Ukraine's calls for

equality and ethnic freedom of expression resonate strongly with Ugandans, who have experienced in their country ethnic tension, language and identity issues, government corruption, dictatorship, and violence. On certain levels, Africans also connect these issues with their own experiences in Ukraine, where musicians mediate their identities and performance skills to create spaces for Africans and non-Africans alike to explore new social, racial, and political possibilities.

MUSIC, LANGUAGE, AND POLITICS

During the Orange Revolution, Alfa-Alfa and Chornobryvtsi fused Ukrainian folk music with reggae and hip hop elements, symbolically stating their support for political reforms while simultaneously signaling their desire for citizenship, equal representation, and social inclusiveness. Perhaps the most effective element of relaying this message was their identity as musicians, because in Ukraine, music, especially Ukrainian-language music, has had such a long history of politicization, in part due to numerous decrees during the Russian Empire that censored Ukrainian-language publications. In 1684, all Ukrainian publications became subject to Russian censorship. In 1721, the Russian government forbade the printing of anything in Ukrainian. Only the printing of church books was allowed, though these had to follow Russian standards. Decrees issued in 1727 and 1728 enforced these restrictions. In 1735, books printed in Ukrainian were banned from churches, and Ukrainians were instructed to follow the Russian pronunciation of Church Slavonic during religious services. In 1863, the Russian government issued a secret circular aiming to suppress the emerging Ukrainian literary language based on the vernacular. The government declared that there could not and would not be a distinct Ukrainian language and banned the printing of educational, scholarly, and religious works in Ukrainian. In 1876, the Russian government went further and issued the Ems Decree, *Emsky Ukaz*, which banned the staging of Ukrainian plays and readings and the printing of religious, scholarly, and educational literature in Ukrainian. Ukrainian publications could not be held in libraries or imported from other countries. The only publications that were allowed to appear in print in Ukrainian were belles lettres and historical documents, though only in a modified Russian alphabet. At the end of the nineteenth century, censorship relaxed, but Ukrainian continued to be viewed merely as a dialect of Russian. A brief period of liberalization occurred after

the 1905 Russian Revolution. The publication of Ukrainian periodicals, books, dictionaries, and grammars was allowed, but censorship made such publication difficult. In addition, the Ukrainian language continued to be banned from the courts, the church, and educational institutions. With the onset of World War I, the authorities shut down the Ukrainian press and publishing houses (Helbig, Buranbaeva, and Mladineo 2009, 51).

Many Ukrainian composers took an overt political stance against the ruling elite or were considered political because of their musical activities. For instance, during the 1905 Russian Revolution, Kyrylo Stetsenko published the Ukrainian national anthem, composed in 1863 by Father Mykhailo Verbytsky, a Catholic priest. Stetsenko was exiled from Kyiv in 1907. When the Ukrainian National Republic was declared in 1917, he was appointed head of the Music Section in the Ministry of Education. Two national choirs were created. One choir, led by composer Oleksander Koshyts, toured Europe and North America to promote Ukraine as an independent nation. This choir popularized “Shchedryk,” a winter song of well-wishing arranged by Mykola Leontovych in 1916 and from which “Carol of the Bells” was later adapted. The other state choir, led by Stetsenko, toured at home to promote national unity. The Bolshevik takeover of Ukraine in 1920 stranded the Koshyts choir abroad, while the Communists disbanded Stetsenko’s choir.

Soviet censoring committees and the Union of Soviet Composers, established in 1932 to promote aesthetics of socialist realism, strictly controlled the publication and performance of certain Ukrainian musical repertoires.¹ To counter such limitations, numerous Ukrainian composers fought the attempted silencing of Ukrainian musical expression by infusing Ukrainian folk music into classical forms. Filaret Kolessa, contemporary of Mykola Lysenko and literary figures such as Lesia Ukrainka and Ivan Franko, published a series of monographs in 1910 and 1913 on *dumy*, epic poems, collected in the eastern Ukrainian regions of Poltava and Kharkiv. He also studied the rhythms of western Ukrainian folk songs from Galicia, Volyn, and Lemkivshchyna and was respected for the precision of his notations. His son, Mykola Kolessa, similar to composers such as Kolomyia native Anatoli Kos-Anatolsky, combined folk idioms of Carpathian Hutsul people with twentieth-century trends. Kolessa introduced additional musical instruments to the orchestra to achieve the sound of Hutsul folk instruments and ensembles.² He also influenced and developed regional studies of Ukrainian folk songs by drawing attention to the particulars of language, timbre and performance style. Filaret

Kolessa established the Department of Folklore and Ethnography at the Ivan Franko National University in Lviv. One of the founders of Ukrainian ethnomusicology, Kolessa was also a prolific musicologist, composer, and scholar of ethnographic studies and oral literature. Following his death in 1947, the department was unable to continue its work, because the Soviet regime did not support ethnographic studies with an ethnic Ukrainian focus.³

At the height of political repressions in the Ukrainian SSR in the early 1970s, following a decade of Ukrainian literary, musical, and artistic resurgence during Nikita Khrushchev's "Thaw," the folk bard Volodymyr Ivasiuk composed and performed songs in Ukrainian that became popular across the Soviet Union. Ivasiuk, discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, is widely believed to have been murdered by the KGB in 1979 because of his immense fame and cultural influence and because his songs promoted Ukrainian language, consciousness, and love of nature, widely interpreted as an expression of love toward a free and independent Ukraine. Musicians are recognized as having played a very important role in bringing about the collapse of communism during the perestroika period (Cushman 1995; Ramet 1994; Ryback 1990; Starr 1994 [1983]; Yurchak 2006). They drew on popular music genres, especially rock, to express discontentment with life in the Soviet Union. Many Ukrainian-language musicians like Viktor Morozov and the satirical musical theatre group *Ne Zhurys* (Don't Worry), bard Andriy Panchyshyn, Viktor Petrynenko and the group *Hrono*, *Braty Hadiukiny*, *Mertvyi Piven* (Dead Rooster), *Vika*, *Taras Chubai* and *Plach Yeremiya* (Jeremiah's Wail), the goth cult band *Komu Vnyz*, and many others presented the Communist regime as a farce, and their songs functioned as allegorical critiques of the USSR, empowering listeners to fight for independence.⁴

During the Orange Revolution, newspapers printed the names of Ukraine's most well known musicians and the candidates they supported, either the opposition candidate or the government-sponsored one. These affiliations were based less on political ideology than on ethnic identity, language choice (Ukrainian or Russian), regional identity, and religious identity. *Chornobryvtsi* performed Ukrainian folk songs in a reggae-influenced hip hop style while dressed in traditional Ukrainian garb. At the height of the Orange Revolution, the crowds' chants of "Chor-no-bryv-tsi! Chor-no-bryv-tsi!" as they stood in protest of the regime signaled an embrace of non-ethnic Ukrainians who supported Ukrainian language and culture. This example is similar to one documented by ethnomusicologist Timothy Cooley a decade

earlier regarding the role of reggae in Polish fusion music. Cooley's Polish interlocutor explained his incorporation of reggae and traditional music by indexing African American civil rights rhetoric; "I'm treating my roots like black people are treating their own," he said, pointing to a reconstitution of traditional music through a popular fusion reinterpretation (Cooley 2005, 169). Much like Cooley's interlocutor, who identified African Americans' pride in their history as an inspiration to promote his Polish identity through music, members of Chornobryvtsi stated that they wanted to inspire Ukrainians to have pride in their language and cultural identity. The role of African and Afro-Caribbean musicians in that critical historical moment has brought forth the role of immigrants and foreigners in Ukraine's ongoing political and cultural identity struggles and elicits questions of citizenship, civil society, and cultural rights in Ukraine.

MUSIC, ETHNICITY, AND POWER

African presence in Ukraine's folk music scenes has wide-reaching sociopolitical effects due to music's longstanding influence on local politics. In the Soviet Union, ethnic Ukrainian popular musicians fought against Moscow's linguistic and political oppression by using the Ukrainian language and various antigovernment topics in their lyrics (Bahry 1994; Wanner 1996). The scant data pertaining to music production in the Soviet Union and in independent Ukraine show that a strong relationship between music and politics was set in place during the Soviet era. Music's ability to generate national and civic consciousness made popular music a highly contested domain in Soviet Ukraine, both among audiences and among musicians themselves. The centralized model of governing in the Soviet Union was reflected in state-controlled music production, as was recognition that music had the power to strongly influence sociopolitical norms. From 1919 to 1921, the "Revolutionary Central Agency for the supply and dissemination of printed products" (Centropechat) produced all audio recordings (Bennett 1981, ix). From 1922, when mass industrial production began, until 1965, record production was controlled by the Ministry of Culture through the All-Union Studio of Gramophone Records and the All-Union Firm of Gramophone Records (x). The All-Union Firm of Gramophone Records was given the additional name Melodiya in 1964–65 (x). Melodiya issued the majority of music heard throughout the Soviet Union's fifteen republics. Recordings included classical, arranged folk music, children's stories,

newly composed folk music, ethnic state ensemble recordings, and locally produced popular music. Musicians who wished to record had to submit their recording projects for approval from censoring committees.

During the Soviet era, censorship reinforced a network for musical creation via unofficial channels. An informal, personal network of exchange, not unlike the pre-internet U.S. practice of fans trading bootleg recordings or mixtapes, was one of the primary ways in which Soviet citizens circumvented state control over musical production, consumption, and dissemination. For example, singer-songwriter Vladimir Vysotsky (1938–80) was one of the most widely recognizable musical figures in Soviet popular music culture in the mid-twentieth century, despite a lack of official recordings. His songs used allegory and satire to criticize the Soviet regime. Audiences recorded his music at small gatherings and live concerts on cassette tapes. Like Grateful Dead bootlegs, these private recordings, called *magnitizdat*, were passed from person to person, circumventing state censorship and control (Lazarski 1992, 64). Much of the Soviet Union's rock and roll was similarly distributed via underground networks, as was Western rock music (Bahry 1994; Ramet 1994; Ryback 1990). Western rock came into the Soviet Union through indirect channels, particularly through foreign tourists and residents of the Baltic Republics, who had greater access to foreign goods. Copies of Western rock recordings were pirated on cassettes, and LPs were etched onto human X-ray film, referred to as *rok na kostiakh* (literally, “rock on bones”) and *rok na rebrakh* (“rock on ribs”) (Yurchak 2006, 181–84).

Most music produced by state-run Melodiya was issued on LPs and had a wide audience throughout the Soviet Union. LP technology was financially accessible to most people, and the majority owned LP playback equipment. The radio continued to be the most popular and easily accessible form of music distribution. However, as a mouthpiece for the state, most people recognized the radio as a medium for political propaganda, as evidenced by the local name for the radio speaker systems built into Soviet-era apartment housing—*brekhunets*, “the liar.” Music continued to be used as a form of social critique, however, as in the 1989 song “Brekhunets” (1989), sung by Andriy Panchyshyn, a member of the musical theatre group Ne Zhurys:

Lying from birth
 The end has come
 My Soviet kitchen radio
 Chokes on the truth.

In an act of dissent punishable by the Soviet state, the song questions the types of information disseminated via state-sponsored media. As with early hip hop in the United States, when musical genres were recast as social commentary, rather than as mere entertainment, the act of playing, listening, and distributing these genres became a political act. In this way, music became viewed as a vehicle through which information and sentiment could be shared beyond the radar of state control. In the post-socialist context, much of this sentiment remains strong in Ukraine. Equally significant, however, is that the means through which these recordings were distributed—*magnitizdat* shared within personal networks of exchange to avoid official censure—also retain cultural significance in the post-Soviet era.⁵

Soviet-era ideology regarding the power of popular music has carried over into the first decades of Ukraine's independence and casts musicians into political camps. Musicians have a great deal of power to influence the direction of various social and political movements. During Ukraine's movement for independence, Ukrainian-language musicians composed satirical songs making fun of socialist living conditions. They also wrote songs with nationalist overtones and revived Ukrainian-language repertoires from World War I— and World War II—era struggles for independence.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, much of the officially produced and distributed Ukrainian-language music was done with the help of Ukrainian diaspora organizations in the United States and Canada. These community organizations, church groups, and scouting groups wished to maintain an ethnic national consciousness among émigré communities. They sought to capitalize on the significant role that popular music, namely Ukrainian-language rock, played in stirring Ukrainian ethnic consciousness. Diaspora organizations invited many musicians who sang Ukrainian-language popular and newly composed folk music to perform in community centers and at Ukrainian heritage festivals throughout North America. My mother, in her capacity as travel agent and community impresario, sponsored choirs like the "Homin" Choir and the National Choir of Ukraine "Dumka" and organized their concert tours in the United States. Similarly, diaspora musicians began taking part in politically organized festivals in Ukraine to show public support for Ukrainian-language music among audiences that feared overt nationalist expression due to a history of persecution by the Soviet regime.

Members of Rukh (meaning "movement" in Ukrainian; Рух, in Cyrillic), the People's Movement for Restructuring in Ukraine, launched the Chervona

Ruta Festival in 1989 in Chernivtsi, western Ukraine. The Chervona Ruta Festival was the first Ukrainian-language music festival held since the Soviet takeover. It was named after the song “Chervona ruta” (Red rue), composed by Volodymyr Ivasiuk (1949–79), which won the Soviet Union’s Best Song of the Year award in 1971. Ivasiuk’s Ukrainian-language songs had a wide-reaching nationalist influence far beyond the musical realm. His outward support for a language that was censored and banned in the public sphere by authorities at various times in Soviet history made Ivasiuk a target for authorities. It is widely believed that he was murdered by the KGB. Ivasiuk’s social recognition, like Vysotsky’s, reinforced the role of music as a political tool. The creators of newly composed folk music in the 1970s and 1980s strengthened this link through conscious use of the Ukrainian language in their music.

The Chervona Ruta Festival’s birthplace of Chernivtsi, Ivasiuk’s hometown, draws on the musician-martyr Ivasiuk as a symbol of Ukrainian ethnic (and, by extension, anti-Soviet) consciousness. Festival organizers, independence leaders, diaspora community representatives, musicians, and audiences use music to strengthen Ukrainian nationalist political platforms. The festival takes place every other year in a different Ukrainian city and continues to adhere to its policy of featuring songs only in Ukrainian. Anthropologist Catherine Wanner, who attended a Chervona Ruta event held in a Russified town in eastern Ukraine, points to the ways in which this festival garnered support from ethnic Ukrainians but simultaneously alienated the Russian-speaking ethnic Ukrainians and ethnic Russians who constitute 17.3 percent⁶ of Ukraine’s population (Wanner 1996). It was at the 1997 Chervona Ruta Festival that Tanok na Maidani Kongo performed their hit “Zroby meni hip-hop.” The genre was validated in its Ukrainian language form in a politically and nationally charged context in which language choice trumped genre in terms of social influence. Thus, Ukrainian- and Russian-language hip hop is interpreted differently by younger and older audiences in different parts of the country. Black identity functions differently if musicians choose to sing in Ukrainian because they align themselves with the linguistic underdog of Ukraine’s music industries and tap into ongoing politicized discourses relating to language choice in Ukraine.

The growth of ethnic Ukrainian consciousness and its influence on popular music production and vice versa temporarily halted the public performance of Russian-language music in the 1990s. Efforts by local Ukrainian

nationalist leaders, particularly in western Ukraine, to control the types of music played in the public sphere based on language choice continued into the twenty-first century. During the “Ukraine Without Kuchma” antigovernment protests in 2001, officials in the western city of Lviv banned Russian-language rock music from *marshrutky*, the home-grown transportation system of jitneys that was the forerunner of contemporary urban bus routes. That same year, Ukrainian-language singer Ihor Bilozir was killed by ethnic Russian youths who provoked a fight with the musician when he sang a Ukrainian song at an outdoor café in Lviv. Pro-Ukrainian national media outlets compared his death to that of Ivasiuk (Zhurzhenko 2002).

The politicization of language and the linking of language and ethnic identity during the Soviet era laid the groundwork for the powerful political importance that language played during the independence movement (Bilaniuk 2006). In Ukraine, the jelling of musical and political identities was most prominent during the 2004 Orange Revolution (Helbig 2006; Klid 2007). The peaceful “revolution” fought government corruption and vote manipulation in the presidential election between the pro-Russian candidate Viktor Yanukovich and the pro-Western opposition candidate Viktor Yushchenko. Rock, ethno-rock, and rap music were vehicles for the expression of widespread anger, disappointment, and outrage against government manipulation of the media and information sources. Ukrainian-language musicians, including the Afro-Ukrainian group Chornobryvtsi, performed for the hundreds of thousands of protesters in Kyiv’s Independence Square.

MARKETING “AFRICA” IN UKRAINE

In addition to making a powerful statement about the desires of Africans to find a place in Ukraine, Afro-Ukrainian folk fusion taps into a revival of musical genres categorized by scholars and journalists as “newly composed folk music,” fusion folk, and folk music revival. The latter has become marketed as *avtentyka* (literally, “authenticity”), a category defined by ethnomusicologists as pre-Soviet, village-based music genres and performance practices recorded in villages or recreated by folk performers. *Avtentyka* is categorized by the use of throaty, tense vocal aesthetics associated with female polyphonic singing in rural Ukraine. These vocal aesthetics have become popular through the reclaiming of rural repertoires by young urbanites through a process of what Svetlana Boym terms “restorative nostalgia,” in which the past is idealized and

performed without analysis or mediation in its “original image” (Boym 2001, 49). Restorative nostalgia is evoked in attempts to “conquer and spatialize time” (49). The past reflects contemporary imaginings of a time gone by and is evoked to fill narratives of the present. Musicians lay claim to pre-Soviet rural musical traditions that are recorded by amateur and professional folklorists and relearned. They function within a complex prism of an idealized past that is perceived as disappearing and in need of saving through collecting, learning, and performance. In reality, such approaches result in the collection of predominantly rural female music genres popularized through fieldwork recordings of women who have outlived the men of their generation. The prevalence of collected female genres reinforces a gendered perception of the musical past. As performance is considered an important aspect of ethnomusicological research, the prevalence of revived female genres has led to the rise in female ethnographers and a gendering of ethnomusicology as a discipline (Helbig 2013).

Enter the African musicians in Alfa-Alfa, who began their careers in hip hop and reggae. They were encouraged by Ukraine-based producers and musical entrepreneurs to dress in folk costumes to capitalize on the growing folk music revivals. The ethnic Ukrainian producer for Alfa-Alfa in Kharkiv, Vladyslav Zyuban, also known as DJ Fixa Mixa, states that his motivation in creating the folk fusion group was more economic than political.⁷ However, this *proyekt* (project), as Zyuban referred to it, took root and evolved into a social phenomenon with wide-reaching sociopolitical consequences. According to Bawakana Michael Kityo, Ugandan lead singer for Alfa-Alfa, “No one was interested in redoing the Ukrainian music in a modern style—hip hop, R&B, reggae, all these kinds of styles. We started it. Truly. That’s a fact. We made the Ukrainian artists realize that their music is still beautiful, it’s still informal, it still unites people. And they could welcome us now that we are also respecting and loving the culture, speaking the language.”⁸

This representation of Africans performing in the local language, dressed in modernized folk costumes borrowed from the Kharkiv Opera and Ballet Theatre, appears to be typical only in Ukraine in terms of post-socialist folk music scenes. Spurred on as an internet phenomenon via YouTube videos and websites, it is now fashionable in Ukraine to hire Africans in Ukrainian garb to perform at birthday parties, and they often appear on talk shows. Though public reactions to the group’s Ukrainian-language repertoire are generally positive, some responses are reactionary, stating that the group doesn’t play



FIGURE 4.1. A promotional picture for Alfa-Alfa, an Afro-Ukrainian folk fusion ensemble based in Kharkiv. *Used with permission.*

original music but rather “monkeys” (*mavpuvaty*, a word used to negatively describe “copying”) Ukrainian folk music in different styles. The reference to “monkeying” is rooted in racialized discourse that stems from Soviet-era representations of Africans and African Americans in the public media and satirical magazines. The association between monkeys and Africa pervades contemporary consciousness and leads to racially charged incidents in Ukraine today. In 2012, McDonald’s ran a commercial in Ukraine featuring a monkey that steals a man’s wallet and runs into McDonald’s to order food (PURL 4.1). An African musician who walked into a McDonald’s restaurant in Kharkiv was laughed at by a group of young people who, when asked by the musician why they were laughing, stated that upon seeing her, they were reminded of the McDonald’s commercial with the monkey.

Historian Maxim Matusevich notes that Soviet cartoonists drew relationships between African American jazz and its “jungle nature” (Matusevich 2009a, 70). The notion of the wild “jungle” served as an opposing signifier to Soviet concepts of modernization and civilization. The “foreign,” including music from the West, was positioned as suspect as the Soviet state sought to homogenize cultural processes and to hold everyone to a certain standard of behavior, education, and status quo. This emphasis on a homogeneous “us” (Soviet) versus “them” (United States) is clearly depicted in a 1949 Soviet cartoon titled *Chuzhoy Golos* (A Foreign Voice) that pits jazz against classically orchestrated homophony (PURL 4.2). Set in the treetops of a picturesque forest, the choral singing of various types of colorful birds, perhaps symbolizing Soviet unity of the peoples, is rudely interrupted by the appearance of a magpie that has been “abroad.” The magpie wears red earrings and a necklace to index her ostentatious, capitalist Otherness. The magpie engages the nightingale, a bird essential to Russian literature and song, and critiques the “old” style of singing, saying that she’s heard new music abroad, a sound that is more modern and fun. The nightingale invites the magpie to put on a concert, during which the magpie dances to American big band music. The brassy, syncopated music is dismissed as “noise,” and the magpie is attacked by the other birds and forced to fly away. The narrator states that the moral of this fable is not just for magpies but for all birds who only want to sing something new. Musically, the cartoon ends with the birds returning to their folk-based harmonizations, with younger birds joining in, reinforcing the strength of tradition and unity among the Soviet birds vis-à-vis those who promote

foreign culture. Musical expression must adhere to socially (and politically) condoned senses of aural and cultural appropriateness.

With such morals promoted in Soviet cartoons and the general censorship against foreign music, it is significant that Afro-Ukrainian fusion groups who put forth new folk song renditions enjoy such widespread popularity. Today, Chornobryvtsi and similar groups have a significant number of performance opportunities and enjoy relatively positive media coverage. Whether performing on television or at folk festivals, in western or eastern Ukraine, the ten or so Afro-Ukrainian groups I have identified on YouTube and local Ukrainian television talk shows and news broadcasts share a similar repertoire, namely widely popular folk songs sung in the Ukrainian language, performed in modernized Poltava-region and Carpathian-region embroidered shirts and blouses. In a highly publicized event, a group of African immigrants sponsored by a non-governmental organization in Odessa performed at a Hut-sul folk music festival in the Carpathian Mountains in 2006 (Horodnytska 2006, 1). An article in the Lviv-based *Vysokyi Zamok* (High Castle) newspaper identified the performers as “Afro-Americans,” reinforcing the blurring of African and African American identities. Most significant for the audience was that the performers are foreigners who have an appreciation for Ukrainian culture and help strengthen the tenuous position of Ukrainian-language music in Ukraine.

BLACKFACE IN SOVIET AND POST-SOVIET PERFORMANCE

Blackface minstrelsy was popularized globally by white Americans by the mid-nineteenth century. Commodore Perry, who led the 1853 U.S. naval expedition, entertained Japanese officials with a minstrel show by white sailors in blackface (Yellin 1996).⁹ Mark Twain, whose works were widely translated into Russian, was a fan of minstrel shows (Ogbar 2007, 31). Representations of African Americans in theatre productions popularized in the Russian Empire, as discussed in chapter 1, reinforced cultural stereotypes of black men (predominantly) as entertainers, singers, and dancers. White American stereotypes of black women as “mammies”—heavyset, non-sexualized, strong women who care for white children—are recreated in Soviet films like *Circus*, analyzed in chapter 1. In *Circus*, a white woman who has given birth to a mixed-race child escapes an angry white mob in the United States. The child is accepted in the USSR, where all ethnicities and races are presented as equal.

Yet U.S. race dynamics play themselves out in one of the film's scenes: viewers hear the child cry, and a black woman dressed in a French maid's outfit comes into the parlor to beckon the white woman to come to the child's room. The white woman, who is singing about the beauties of the Soviet land, waves the maid away and motions that she will come when she finishes singing the song. The black woman retreats, and the audience is led to assume that she returns to care for the child and await her mistress, the child's mother.

Soviet authorities cast jazz performed by African Americans as "uncivilized" music. And the fetishization of hip hop in post-socialist contexts recasts the genre into what Marc Anthony Neal refers to as "sonic blackface" (Neal 2003). Historian Jeffrey Ogbar goes so far as to state that for some, the "real niggas" of hip hop "are little more than a reprise of the minstrel," albeit in another form (2007, 12). In contrast to the desexualized stereotypes of minstrels and mammies, the oversexed images of black men and women in hip hop and its references to violence and criminal behavior are what Ogbar identifies as having circulated "narrow and problematic representations of black imagery" worldwide (12). To understand the prevalence of black performance stereotypes in Soviet and post-Soviet culture, such expressions must be positioned and analyzed vis-à-vis similar cultural Otherings.

Minstrelsy, reified in Cold War rhetoric through political cartoons and propaganda, exists in post-Soviet consciousness alongside myriad racist representations of ethnic groups that were once part of the Soviet Union. An internal exoticization of Others was prevalent in Soviet media such as films, literature, and political cartoons. For instance, ethnic Ukrainians, serfs in the Russian Empire, were caricatured as country bumpkins in Soviet film adaptations of Nikolai Gogol's *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka*, written in 1832. It was the indirect goal of Russophile Soviet cultural policy to manipulate Ukrainian folk expressions such as embroidery, village traditions, and folk music to reinforce identities of ethnic Ukrainians as peasants in socialist discourse and to present them as backward and culturally less developed than ethnic Russians (Koropecyjk and Romanchuk 2003). Similarly, Roma (Gypsies) were represented as exoticized nomads, deeply steeped in their cultural practices through films such as *Tabor Ukhodyt v Nebo* (Camp Descends to the Heavens) (Helbig 2009). In this vein, satirical magazines published in the Soviet Union such as *Krokodil* (established in 1922) and its equivalent *Perets* (Pepper) in the Ukrainian SSR caricatured Africans as black puppets. In the April 1984 issue of *Krokodil*, "Africa" is depicted as a small child placed in

handcuffs by larger Soviet authority figures. This satirical Othering of Africans in political cartoons reinforced a costumed, carnivalesque lens through which an imagined Africa was depicted and socially categorized. Children's books lampooned Africans as "Mowgli," creating a popular cartoon character based on Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* (1894). Depictions of Mowgli-inspired characters still appear on chocolate ice-cream wrappers in Ukraine and Russia, indexing the visual relationship between *shokoladnyi* (chocolate) and skin color as racial identity (Matusevich 2007a, 393). Not coincidentally, the use of *shokoladnyi* to index blackness has been usurped by Cameroon-born Pier Narciss in his popular Russian-language hit "Shokoladnyi zayats" (Chocolate bunny), promoted on Russia's competition television show *Fabrika Zvezd* (Factory of Stars) in 2003. "Shokoladnyi zayats" is in a *popsa* style, a kitschy form of popular music defined by a quick beat, use of synthesizers, repetitive song structure, and use of sexualized images in the accompanying videos. The video for "Shokoladnyi zayats" focuses on Pier Narciss, who is black, dancing amid a sea of young, white, scantily clad Russian women. The images allude to Pier's sexual prowess and position him as a source of exoticized desire. In this video, "foreignness" is sexualized, to be dominated and enjoyed, but only within the frames of the video, with no hint to what happens when the music ends. Ella Shohat terms this type of allure of the foreign in media as "cinematic spectatorship," a position that privileges media in shaping one's identifications and affiliations (1995, 168). Audiences form bonds with media images that normalize representations of the Other while simultaneously exoticizing them (168).

The multiple plays on black identity in these examples point to the pervasive influence of minstrel traditions that were introduced in non-U.S. contexts via historical exchanges with white Americans. Cultural critic and historian Tavia Nyong'o points to minstrelsy as such a pervasive historical force that even abolitionists were forced to rely on its performative frameworks to critique slavery and racism in America (2009, 113). Contemporary invocations of minstrel-like traditions by African performers is similar to what Cathy Covell Waegner calls "decorative racism" (2004, 178). Waegner identifies representations of "blackness" as exotic because they highlight foreignness. It is this "double-edged adulation of blackness" (178) that black musicians have had to negotiate in striving for equality. The auto-exoticizing put forth by Pier Narciss indexes a sense of black agency within a performance context. It also evokes Mikhail Bakhtin's notions of the carnivalesque, in which humor

ensues through the performance of inverted social orders (1984). In a social setting or at a party, where being different is hip and cool, blackness is empowered. Black masculinity is not viewed as a threat but rather as a source of pleasure, albeit temporary.

CHORNOBRYVTSI: HIP HOP, REGGAE, AND HOPAK

The group Chornobryvtsi uses Ukrainian folk music to bring attention to members' physical blackness, oftentimes choosing songs that incorporate the word *chorny* (or *chorna*, the female form), meaning "black." The Ukrainian folk costumes and the presence of ethnic Ukrainians in their videos emphasize their dark physical features and hair braids. Chornobryvtsi uses its name as a marketing technique to draw attention to the color of the musicians' skin. "Chornobryvtsi" is the name of the black marigold; it is also a play on words and literally means "black browed." In Ukrainian folk songs, men and women who are "black browed" are deemed physically attractive and are exalted as desirable sexual partners. Thus, the singers purposely draw awareness to their physicality and attempt to invert the common rhetoric regarding immigrants as "diseased" by emphasizing black beauty. Furthermore, such imagery directly invokes discourses of gender that mark the experience of migration for Ukrainians. A significant number of Ukrainian women have emigrated after marrying men from Western countries whom they met through various internet dating services. The members of Chornobryvtsi play with the discourses that identify Western men with economic stability, presenting themselves as eligible and desirable partners for Ukrainian women.

Members of Chornobryvtsi say their music opens a dialogue between Africans and the local population regarding acceptance and tolerance. The group fuses reggae rhythms and hip hop elements such as sampling and rapping to create new arrangements of Ukrainian folk songs, their most popular being "Ty zh mene pidmanula" (You deceived me) ([PURL 4.3](#)). In "Ty zh mene pidmanula," an elderly white man sculpts a statue of a white young female nude that comes to life in his dreams. She deceives him by turning back to stone when he awakes. Chornobryvtsi musicians Steven Okurut and Rastaman Davis are not part of the unfolding song plot as depicted in the video but rather feature themselves during the song's refrain, "You deceived me and brought a young man out of his mind." They are dressed in contemporary clothes and sit on a hood of a car in a European old-city location that is difficult to pinpoint.



FIGURE 4.2. A publicity photo of the Afro-Ukrainian group Chornobryvtsi, featuring Rastaman Davis and Steven Okurut wearing *kozak*-inspired costumes in a popular pose from *hopak* choreography. *Used with permission.*

When Chornobryvtsi performs its repertoire live, however, members wear traditional Ukrainian outfits that combine elements of hip hop and *kozak* culture, including the *zhupan* (overcoat) and *sharavary* (long flowing pants). This stylized outfit is used in performances of central and eastern Ukrainian folk dancing, particularly the well-known *kozak* dance called the *hopak*, often referred to as the “National Dance of Ukraine.” The *hopak*, as popularized by still-functioning Soviet-era professional folk dance ensembles such as Virsky Ukrainian National Folk Dance Ensemble in Kyiv and the Moiseyev Dance Company in Moscow, places great physical demands on the performers, particularly the men. Male choreographies feature high jumps,

splits in the air, back flips, and a variety of acrobatic feats. Women's choreographies focus on quick turns and spins. As an expression of masculinity and power, the *hopak*, with its association with *kozak* imagery and warrior strength, is the quintessential representation of ethnic Ukrainian culture and identity. As seen in figure 4.2, Davis and Okurut of Chornobryvtsi fuse *hopak* costumes with athletic shoes, an indexical representation of African American hip hop style, rather than with red boots, as is typical for Ukrainian folk performers, and pose in the quintessential staged *hopak* pose. Okurut and Davis distinguish themselves in fashion and hairstyle, wearing dreadlocks and the bright colors associated with Jamaican reggae musicians. The reggae aspects of Afro-Ukrainian musical fusion include rhythm, instrumentation, and dance movements. Chornobryvtsi members explain that the history of reggae on the African continent stems back to the origins of reggae in Jamaica and that reggae's popularity grew immediately. In addition to the lyrical and politically charged elements within reggae that connect Jamaica to the Rastafarian culture and Ethiopia, the musical rhythms typical of reggae are similar to the rhythms of various musical genres throughout Africa, as analyzed in more detail in chapter 5.

Musically, Chornobryvtsi members often rap parts of a folk song or remake these well-known songs in a reggae style. Sonically, Okurut and Davis express their blackness through hip hop/reggae, understood as the music of the black Caribbean. Reggae in particular serves to reaffirm African roots, as expressed by the descendants of slaves in Jamaica, combined with soul and rhythm and blues in the United States. In Britain, musicians have utilized the genre to express the experience of immigration across the Atlantic, commenting on poor living conditions, police harassment, and racism. In Chornobryvtsi's understanding, reggae promotes peace and a laid-back attitude toward relations among peoples. For the band, reggae lyrics focus on the beauty of love, highlighting positive qualities of character, and acceptance.¹⁰ The members of Chornobryvtsi say that reggae musicians shun racial violence and do not condone racial tensions, whether on a personal level or in terms of intergroup interaction. They say they incorporate reggae into their folk fusion because in their home countries, reggae musicians are considered to be politically neutral commentators on interracial tensions, economic unfairness, and inequality that they attempt to overcome through messages of peace and love.

ALFA-ALFA: BLACK BEAUTY AND UGANDAN PRIDE

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, Adong Becky Prossy and Bawakana Michael Kityo from Alfa-Alfa and Steven Okurut and Rastaman Davis from Chornobryvtsi performed together as students in Kharkiv. The group split, and Okurut and Davis formed Chornobryvtsi and moved to Kyiv. The groups remain a bit competitive. Because of its performances during the Orange Revolution, Chornobryvtsi has had a wider audience than Kharkiv-based Alfa-Alfa, putting on concerts in cities such as Lviv, a city in western Ukraine known for its strong ethnic Ukrainian nationalism. While members of Alfa-Alfa say they have a wider audience because they have marketed themselves on their website (www.alfa-alfa.com.ua), Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, and VKontakte and were the first Afro-Ukrainian group to produce a CD, Chornobryvtsi is at an advantage because members live in Kyiv, the center of Ukraine's growing music industry. Nevertheless, Alfa-Alfa members stress that they were the first to release a CD and have worked tirelessly to earn a living as professional musicians.

The Ukrainian-language folk song that propelled Alfa-Alfa to fame, “Roz-priahajte khloptsi koni” (Unharness your horses, men), was released in 2006 with an accompanying video on the internet and on local television in Kharkiv (PURL 4.4). The song is the story of a man who meets his love but is rejected for having loved another. The video introduces a subtext of dark-skinned beauty. It begins with a group of white Ukrainian girls dancing *khorovody* (ritual dances) near a river, wearing ritual Ivana Kupala (St. John's Eve) wreaths associated with the magic midsummer night's eve when girls seek their fate in love.¹¹ Among them is Adong Becky Prossy, the African female singer from Alfa-Alfa. Bawakana Michael Kityo, her husband, also African, rides through the village on a horse, drawing on animal tropes that depict masculinity in Ukrainian folk songs. Michael describes it:

OK, this is the story. I am a black man, living in Ukraine. And I fall in love with a Ukrainian girl. That girl is a twin, and I am confused about who is who. But in my mind I know that the one I am in love with has a beauty mark. So I go to their village, searching in the village, where is my *chornobryvaya* [Ukrainian, translated as “black-browed beauty”]? I come across the twin that I'm not in love with, and I'm like, is she the one? Could she be the one, because I have a bouquet of flowers for her. Then when she speaks, she speaks so-so close and alike with the one I'm in love with, but then I look close to her, and I find that she doesn't have the beauty

mark. So I'm like, oh, you know, I have to go, I have to keep on looking. I move from village to village; I don't find her. Then, toward the end, I find my love sitting at the lakeside, then that's when I meet her.¹²

Michael's interpretation of the song as reflected in the music video differs from the song's traditional lyrics, which focus on the love of one peasant woman and a warrior man (most probably a *kozak*, who is typically referenced in folk culture with a horse). Michael adds a literal interpretation to the term *chorna* to describe the young woman and weaves a story in which he chooses the dark-skinned girl because she is the more beautiful of the two. The video (not the traditional song lyrics) represent a courtship between two Africans dressed in folk costumes by the river in a Ukrainian village setting. Young love represents hope and a future of settling down among a group of people who have a different skin color but wear familiar folk costumes. Though the visual narrative implies assimilation in terms of language, folklore, and regional traditions, the video narrative is interjected with Michael and Becky dressed in white costumes decorated with black, red, and yellow stripes that index the Ugandan flag. The musicians appear to embrace the ways of their new homeland but simultaneously celebrate their Ugandan identity. The singers incorporate hand gestures, body postures, and side-to-side body movements from hip hop. Through physical movements, they depict a difference between the narrative, as it unfolds in the verses of the folk song, and their black identity augmented through hip hop and images of Ugandan national pride.

MUSIC AND DISCOURSES OF IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION

The wide marketing of these two groups in the Ukrainian media has influenced representations of other "Ukrainianized" immigrants. The June 29, 2007, cover story of Ukraine's Russian-language magazine *Focus* titled "New Ukrainians" reinforces the importance of ethnic discourse within an increasingly racially diverse country. This representation of immigrants wearing ethnic Ukrainian garb points to the complex ways in which migration is seemingly being recast in terms of ethnicity and less so in terms of racial identity. On the magazine cover, figure 4.3, the Ukrainian shirt/blouse symbolizes an ethnic layer the newcomers wear. The costuming creates a familiar point of departure to observers and presents the foreigners as more similar to than different from the local population.

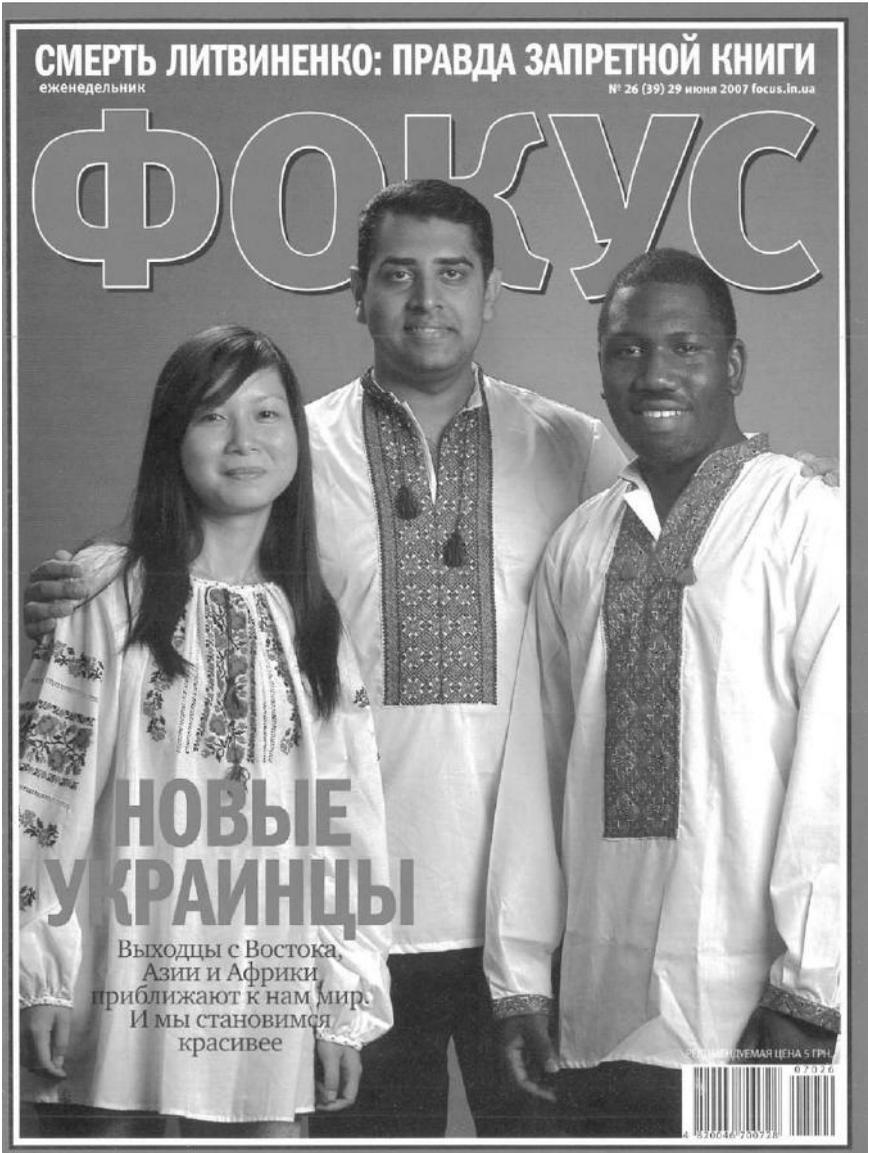


FIGURE 4.3. The cover of the June 29, 2007, magazine *Focus* featuring representative migrants from Asia, the Middle East, and Africa wearing Ukrainian embroidered shirts.

Furthermore, the cover of *Focus* magazine aims to reinforce a pluralist, multicultural identity for independent Ukraine, one that is in opposition to policies in other former Soviet Republics, such as the increasingly Russo-centered concept of the Russian Federation as promoted in Russian politics by Vladimir Putin. Additionally, it introduces the idea that immigrants accept ethnic Ukrainian culture as part of their identity to increase their potential acceptance as citizens of Ukraine. The subtitle on the cover states, “Migrants from the Middle East, Asia, and Africa bring the world closer to us. And we become more beautiful.” While the emphasis still lies on categorizing and relating to Others in terms of outward appearance, it builds on Orange Revolution discourses of inclusion. In other words, migration-rooted discourses in the cultural realm are interpreted as positive, enriching, and breaking the boundaries of access and information that have kept Ukraine relatively isolated from globally influenced development processes.

On the other hand, the proliferation of African identity in the media, particularly the images of Africans dressed in Ukrainian folk garb, has come to be exploited for corporate purposes in the growing market economy. In a 2008 billboard advertisement in Lviv by a Turkish travel agency, Tez Tour, that operates in Ukraine, figure 4.4, an African woman dressed in a Ukrainian blouse holds a loaf of bread, which traditionally symbolizes hospitality in Ukraine. The backdrop of palm trees against a setting sun indexes a “tropical” paradise that beckons Ukrainians to travel abroad, a luxury that was not allowed under the Soviet regime and one that few can afford amid recent economic struggles. The marketing of tourism abroad within a familiar framework of Afro-Ukrainian essentialism further reinforces the extensive influence that Afro-Ukrainian fusion music projects have had on general attitudes regarding Africans as culturally assimilated Ukrainians. Such imagery leaves little room for the integration of immigrants and foreigners on their own cultural, political, and socioeconomic terms.

DOUBLE-CONSCIOUSNESS AND AFRO- UKRAINIAN FUSION MUSIC

Today, blackness is reinforced in musical contexts in various ways, whether through accenting the physical black body, through direct referencing of African American culture, or through the continued exoticization of “Africa.” One



FIGURE 4.4. A billboard advertising tourism abroad by a Turkish travel agency in Lviv, western Ukraine, 2008. *Photo by author.*

of the most significant aspects toward understanding concepts of blackness as they relate to African experiences in Ukraine is the way in which “Africa” is represented by African musicians. Alfa-Alfa’s 2011 hit “Aborigeni” (Aborigines) offers a glimpse of how group members, having established themselves as performers of Ukrainian folk songs, have changed tactics by performing a song about their homeland and their views on Ukraine (PURL 4.5). The Russian lyrics, a movement away from the Ukrainian songs of the previous decade, signal an attempt to reach a broader audience, since Russian-language music is typically more widely marketed. The language change from Ukrainian to Russian also reflects changes in Ukraine’s political leadership with the election of President Viktor Yanukovich in 2010. Yanukovich, who is a close political ally of Russia’s Putin and whose attempt to steal the 2004 presidential election sparked the Orange Revolution, has sharply reverted Ukraine’s political and cultural policies toward closer ties with the Russian Federation. The close relationship between music and politics in Ukraine has brought forth

more ethnic Russian and Soviet-era aesthetics into government-promoted cultural expression.

Alfa-Alfa's "Aborigeni" moves away from Ukrainian folk motifs toward a Soviet-inspired expression about the idealized nation-state. The lyrics focus on the opportunities that moving to Ukraine have opened for the Ugandan musicians. The emphasis is financial and symbolized through a piece of cured fatback pork, *salo*, a traditional rural delicacy in Ukraine. The song has two distinct parts: the verse, in which the lyrics idealize the friendliness and generosity of Ukraine and express the musicians' love for their new country, and the refrain, in which the repetitive lyrics follow an upbeat dance pattern and associate "aborigines" with *salo*, cured fatback, and *horilka*, moonshine or vodka. During the verse sections of the video, the performers wear hip hop- and R&B-inspired outfits against the rolling backdrop of an African safari with flashing images of the South African, Ugandan, and Ukrainian flags. During the refrain, the video features representations of Zulu warriors and a Zulu chief offering a slab of *salo* to his wife. The lyrics reinforce the idea that Ukraine is the land of economic opportunity. *Salo* and *horilka*, used in perhaps the most degrading of all Soviet-promoted stereotypes of peasantry regarding ethnic Ukrainians, are used by the African musicians as a positive representation of Ukraine. The significant input from non-African producers in Kharkiv is quite apparent and reveals that Soviet-era ideas are very strongly rooted in the psyche of the general public, especially regarding "Africa."

Images of Africa as a tropical paradise of sorts were common in Soviet cartoons like *Katorok* (Little Sailboat) from 1970. In this ten-minute clip, a little boat travels along the river and delivers supplies to a school and a medical clinic and is a source of connection for all in Russia. Tragedy strikes when the little boat comes across a large ship and follows it out to sea, only to get lost and land in what is presumably Africa. Two caricatured black children, similar to representations of African Americans at the turn of the twentieth century, come out to play with the boat. They sing a song that became a popular hit in the Soviet Union, "Chunga-Changa" ([PURL 4.6](#)).

Chunga-Changa, a blue sky
 Chunga-Changa, summer all year round
 Chunga-Changa, our life is happy
 Chunga-Changa, we sing a song

Magic island, magic island
 It's so easy to live there
 It's so easy to live there—Chunga-Changa
 Our happiness is permanent
 Chew coconuts, eat bananas
 Chew coconuts, eat bananas—Chunga-Changa

Eventually, the little boat heads back to Russia, only to realize that life as had been enabled by its help is no longer possible. The clinic and school have closed, and those who depended on the little boat for supplies have moved away. The boat loses steam and is trapped in ice. Two Russian children free him, and the boat returns to his job, ensuring the continuation of modern life in Russia. The theme of work and interdependence is clearly associated with the Soviet Union vis-à-vis an idealized but also disregarded “Africa” that is full of a certain bounty but also associated with idleness and easy living. Toil and determination, steadfast work and sacrifice are part of the Soviet nation-building rhetoric. In this way, Alfa-Alfa’s “Aborigeni” video reinforces this notion by positioning Ukraine as the land of bounty from which Africans can bring back prosperity to their homeland. “Africa” is depicted by traditional dress, uncivilized nature, and lack of economic and social progress, similar to how the paradise is represented in the *Katorok* cartoon.

Similar stereotypes are codified in the 1965 Soviet cartoon *Kanikuly Bonifacia* (Bonefati’s Vacation) ([PURL 4.7](#)). Bonefati, a talented, elegant circus lion with an Afro, receives permission from the Russian circus master to visit his grandmother in Africa. His adventures bring him into contact with a group of African children, who insist that he entertain them with his tricks. The narrator, accompanied by a classical music-inspired soundtrack, informs us that at home, Bonefati loves to eat bananas, an exotic food, alongside coconuts and pineapples. These fruits are associated with Africa and were not readily available in the Soviet Union. This positions Bonefati as very respected in Soviet society, having access to goods not available to the masses. The African children he encounters are mesmerized by the tricks he performs for them, which eventually becomes the main activity of his African vacation. Despite having returned “home” to see his grandmother, Bonefati is presented as civilized, wearing a swimsuit, and with “skills” he has acquired in the Soviet Union that afford him economic stability. Despite being an animal, he is far more sophisticated than the children he encounters. As in the cartoon *Katorok*, there seem to be no adults in “Africa,” which in both cartoons is portrayed

as an island. Soviet imaginings are evident in the imagery, the least of which are the pineapples that grow upside down in palm trees. The lack of knowledge of how pineapples and coconuts grow exemplifies the lack of information that the average Soviet citizen had about Africa when students from Africa were first invited to study in the Soviet Union in the 1960s.

Post-socialist imaginings of “Africa” draw strongly on Soviet-era (mis) perceptions that are so strongly rooted as to pervade representations of blackness by performers of African and non-African descent. The aforementioned stereotypes and uses of linguistic and ideological tropes appear clearly in Gaitana Essami’s 2008 children’s CD *Kookaburra* (PURL 4.8). The CD features a song titled “Ukraine” and one titled “Africa,” which reflect the socialist tradition of singing about the bounty and glory of one’s land. Such songs express a personal relationship to the homeland.

“Ukraine”

Where I am
 Wherever I travel
 There are many places in the world that are interesting
 I always say with pride, that I
 Am from the flowering, great land
 I love my land, Ukraine
 For its hospitality and the beauty of its countryside
 I love my land Ukraine
 For the warmth and love in the hearts of its people
 I love my land Ukraine
 For its melodies and your songs
 I love my land Ukraine
 I always want to return to you

Essami, who performs as Gaitana, draws on Soviet-era stereotypes regarding Africa as a faraway, exotic land. She reinforces the images from Soviet cartoons while blending the style of folk song about homeland that continues to be popular in the post-socialist era:

“Africa”

Where there’s a savanna and Sahara
 And Mount Kilimanjaro
 There’s no cold
 It’s always summer
 Only there—the Red Sea

And all the parrots speak
 Only there is the Nile,
 The longest river in the world
 Africa—where dark people live
 Africa—where people travel on camels
 Africa—where music is always playing
 Africa—everyone dances and sings

The CD *Kookaburra* was produced by Kyivstar, one of the largest mobile telephone companies in Ukraine. Elena Pinchuk, the daughter of former president Leonid Kuchma and wife of Viktor Pinchuk, Ukraine's wealthiest man and owner of six television stations and three newspapers, is a major stakeholder in Kyivstar. This indicates corporate support for stars like Gaitana and for the wide-reaching influence she has in the promotion of black identity in Ukraine. Gaitana's presentation of Africa, however, reinforces Soviet-era stereotypes about a magical land where animals talk and everyone leads an exotic life. The role of music in this stereotypification goes along with the historical and contemporary trends of Africans using performance to create a niche in society. It reinforces the common idea that Africans (only) sing and dance. This downplays the contributions that Africans can offer as citizens of Ukraine and casts them within preconceived notions as performers, a stereotype that has become hyper-inflated through the influx of African American cultural products in post-socialist media markets since the early 1990s.

These representations show the dominance of minstrel traditions that harken back to the era of the Russian Empire with performances of Ira Aldridge, translations of Mark Twain's works into Russian, and the impositions of stereotypes of African Americans as singers and musicians on African American intellectuals who traveled to the USSR, discussed in chapter 1. Performances of blackness, as exemplified by Afro-Ukrainians like Gaitana and African groups like Alfa-Alfa and Chornobryvtsi, show that musicians walk a fine line of wishing to change perceptions of blacks in Ukraine while at the same time dipping into expectations of black performance aesthetics in order to communicate with the audience. This process of what Henry Louis Gates terms "signifyin'" points to how black musicians use rhetorical frames and add new meanings through performance (1989). While seemingly reinforcing ongoing stereotypes, they broaden frames of reference and incorporate new meanings. In other words, while Gaitana stereotypes Africa as an exotic land, a stereotype that is generally accepted among listeners in

Ukraine, she shifts the frame of reference through her voice, which physically embodies Africanness for those who consume her musical representation of Africa. Her choice of languages, Russian and Ukrainian, further situates her as a citizen of Ukraine who connects to the two dominant linguistic groups in the country. Similarly, Alfa-Alfa, in its representation of Africa in the music video for “Aborigeni,” plays on imagined stereotypes of tribal warriors who accept financial rewards in the form of food, one of the most important ways that rural populations in Ukraine measure economic prosperity. For instance, the price of sugar functions as an indicator of inflation and economic stability and instability.

Audiences connect strongly through the dominant use of Ukrainian in Afro-Ukrainian fusion music. Yet, as Ronald Radano and Philip Bohlman suggest, language is a pattern of contact as much as a marker of difference (2000, 30). Ukrainian speakers rarely hear accents, because foreigners tend to learn the more commonly spoken Russian rather than Ukrainian. Thus, the repertoire of Alfa-Alfa, Chornobryvtsi, and Gaitana functions as what Tricia Rose calls a “bifocal” form of expression—one that attempts to communicate with white people on the one hand, yet simultaneously accents racial difference on the other (1994, 5). The immigrant musicians sing with strong accents that displace them from Ukraine. Their music reinforces marginalization by casting the performers as entertainment who try to connect with their audiences on their levels of understanding but do so through self-mockery and caricature. As W. E. B. Du Bois postulates in *The Souls of Black Folk*:

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (1903, 3)

Introduced into Western philosophy by G. W. F. Hegel (1807) and having entered the American context through the writings of Du Bois, double-consciousness became one of the main theoretical frameworks for analyzing experiences of African Americans. Such a bifocal identity embodies tensions

between the lived experience of the black body and white ideals that are enacted when the black subject internalizes the values of his or her surrounding American/European environment. The premise of double-consciousness, as rooted in Enlightenment thought, reinforces the notion that there is no space for blackness to exist without whiteness and vice versa.

Double-consciousness is not unique to African Americans. Paul Gilroy draws on the concept to explore the notion of a black Atlantic culture that is simultaneously African, American, Caribbean, and British as a result of the slave trade (1993). Analyzing from the perspective of music, from the Fisk Jubilee Singers in the nineteenth century to Jimi Hendrix to hip hop, Gilroy views double-consciousness as an expression of modernity brought forth within a Hegelian master-slave narrative. Gilroy expands the notion of diaspora, hybridity, and ethnic mixing and border crossing as integral to the formation of black identity. Kate Baldwin has critiqued Gilroy for omitting Soviet experiences within this narrative (Baldwin 2002). However, Gilroy positions his narrative as an alternative to Marxism, which he argues failed to capture the trauma of black experience. Interestingly enough, Gilroy draws extensively on the ideas of Du Bois, a Communist whose visits to the Soviet Union and China led him to publicly praise those countries' Communist governments and to urge African nations to seek Communist support in their independence movements for self-government.¹³

When applying notions of double-consciousness to contexts of the "post," whether postcolonial or post-socialist, it is important to view such experiences as complex, multivector perspectives of exchange. Following Gilroy, it is an experience that moves beyond the boundaries of the nation-state, made complex by historical change within places of origin and in diaspora. Thus, when Chornobryvtsi, Alfa-Alfa, and Gaitana perform, they engage with Soviet and post-Soviet notions of blackness, personal experiences of migration, perceptions of Others in diaspora, and globalized media images via music industries emerging in the United States that blur African and African American identities with myriad perceptions of blackness through the lenses of countless mediators. Double-consciousness is constantly changing; it is a fluid notion that continuously readjusts with each situation, where each new experience shifts countless others in a kaleidoscope of experiences and understandings.

FIVE

HIP HOP IN UGANDA

The more time I spent with African musicians in Ukraine, the more I realized the importance of traveling to East Africa to close the loop for myself, so to speak, and to be part of their musical and social experiences at home and abroad. Familiarizing myself with hip hop in Africa through documentary films, YouTube, ethnomusicological research, and fieldwork in Uganda, I came to see that hip hop, along with its status as a genre of entertainment, is lauded by numerous advocates on the African continent as a form of therapy for young people who have experienced the traumas of poverty, AIDS, war, and violence. Drawing on fieldwork in the Unyama Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp established in 1997 and operated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees near Gulu, northern Uganda, this chapter analyzes the transnational impact of social activist hip hop across East Africa and draws parallels between the therapeutic uses of hip hop in Uganda and Ukraine for young people experiencing various forms of alienation.¹ It situates the sponsorship of certain hip hop projects by international development organizations in a historical loop of transactions between the United States, East Africa, and the former Soviet Union by recasting American, African, and Soviet Cold War propaganda on equality, discussed in chapter 1, in terms of human rights discourse that draws inspiration from African American civil rights and U.S. development aid discourse. The struggles for economic, political, and social stability are similar in Uganda and Ukraine as both countries deal with the collective trauma of dictators, massive death tolls (under Idi Amin and Joseph Stalin), displacement through war, epidemics of AIDS, new forms of media technology, and dynamics of postcolonial rule. Though these parallels are drawn broadly, human abilities to deal with change and process pain, loss, and memories of violence are very similar in situations where such experiences are collective and prolonged.

My own family history is rooted in loss and longing, with maternal and paternal grandparents having been forced to flee their homeland to escape political persecution from Soviet occupiers in western Ukraine. My mother's parents lost four young sons to bullets and disease in their escape west through Poland. My mother, their fifth child, was born in a displaced persons camp in 1946 in Erlangen, Germany, in the American occupied zone, from which the family came to Philadelphia. She returned to Ukraine for the first time in 1972 when she began working as a travel agent and used her growing network of connections with Intourist, the state travel organization in the USSR, to help reunite diaspora and their families. Tourists carried information, goods, and propaganda into and out of Soviet Ukraine. Since this was the family business, I grew up hearing stories of trips in search of lost relatives and of ways that travelers strategized to reunite with family without falling under the gaze of the KGB and the FBI, which allegedly kept track of U.S. citizens traveling to the USSR.

My father's family fled their village home near Brody, western Ukraine, in 1943. At age eight, my father was uprooted from familiar surroundings and family and escaped west on a horse-drawn wagon with his parents, brother, and two sisters, stopping only when they reached the U.S.-occupied sector of Bavaria, Germany. Perhaps because he experienced the trauma of uprootedness in his childhood and lived as a refugee in Germany until age thirteen, my father connected very strongly to Bavaria, never missing an opportunity to pass through it as an adult. My sister and I traveled with him many times to Murnau am Staffelsee in Garmisch-Partenkirchen on the edge of the Bavarian Alps. He showed us the Bavarian places he remembered from childhood, because he could not take us to the village near Brody where he grew up. Until the fall of the Soviet Union, it was forbidden for "foreigners" to travel to villages in the USSR. His longing for clarity and understanding came through in the staggering amount of literature and archival video footage he amassed about Stalin, Hitler, the Holocaust, and the battles of World War II. He sought strength in trying to make sense of the loss and violence and of the war's impact on his life.

SOCIAL ACTIVIST HIP HOP AS "REAL" HIP HOP

People resolving loss and trauma seek escape and may connect with non-localized forms of emotional expression when those forms grow from expres-

sion of similar traumas. This chapter positions hip hop as a foreign form that has become localized and recreated to express and process local experiences. Though this can be stated about hip hop developments across the world, what ties together experiences in Uganda and Ukraine are the specific feelings of anxiety that hip hop helps frame and vocalize. Anthropologist Mwenda Ntarangwi in his book *East African Hip-Hop: Youth Culture and Globalization* defines hip hop as a “forum through which East African youth, often left out of important socioeconomic and political commentaries and decision-making processes, attain agency that enables them to variably shape their lives and participate in raising public awareness and consciousness to social and political issues while also appropriating it for their own economic and political gain” (2009, 3). He differentiates between “real” hip hop musicians, those who focus on social issues, and others who focus on other issues popular in contemporary African American hip hop, including materialism and sexual conquest. Ntarangwi identifies different groups in Tanzania, such as XPlastaz, that consider their music to be “true” hip hop because their lyrics highlight the social and political realities of life among the marginalized poor in Tanzania. In the video for “Nini dhambi kwa mwenye dhiki” (What is the offence of the poor?), lead singer Faza Nelly raps in the poor neighborhoods of Arusha, with impoverished youth walking behind him. The rapper takes on the role of a social activist and gives voice to social issues. The video incorporates images of traditional Maasai culture and features the rapper climbing a volcano, perhaps referencing the figure of Moses with his staff climbing Mount Sinai to talk with God about his people, reinforcing the idea that the rapper feels responsible for the fate of his audience and seeks to give voice to those who are silenced by capitalists who cast away the needs of the poor. In this case, the hip hop musician is a spokesperson for a larger social group on whose behalf he fights for equality. These themes echo those of socially conscious African American hip hop musicians like Grandmaster Flash, KRS-One, Mos Def, Lupe Fiasco, Tupac Shakur, Dead Prez, Nas, OutKast, and Common, among others. In Ukraine, these have included African student groups like the Black Beatles and AfroRasta and Ukrainian groups like GreenJolly, whose rap “Razom nas bahato” served as the anthem of the 2004 Orange Revolution when citizens protested the results of a rigged presidential election.

East African groups like XPlastaz’s serious and socially conscious music contrasts with more entertainment-focused, hip hop–influenced genres such

as “bongo flava” (from the Swahili words *bongo*, “brains,” a slang term for the street smarts needed to live in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and *flava*, “flavor”), which focuses on material wealth and self-glorification (Ntarangwi 2009, ix). XPlastaz incorporates Maasai musical traditions to differentiate itself from other musicians locally and abroad, as evidenced in the title of the group’s first album, *Maasai Hip Hop* (2006). Members of XPlastaz emphasize that their music is honest and tells the truth. It is not music without meaningful messages or made “according to sales and not the truth of thoughtfulness” (interview with XPlastaz quoted in Thompson 2011, 267). According to Diana Rutta from XPlastaz, bongo flava musicians focus on entertainment, women, clubs, parties, and so on. She cites that the members of XPlastaz “sing differently than them: about life, street history, women, AIDS, lots of different things, drugs,” which differentiate them from bongo flava musicians (274).

Throughout East Africa, hip hop is predominantly the language of young men. Diana Rutta of XPlastaz is the sister of two other members, Gsan and Steve Rutta, and is the only woman among the six living members of the group. (Founding member Nelson Rutta, “Faza Nelly,” whose consciousness of poverty shaped the social awareness of the group’s music, was stabbed to death during a quarrel with a neighbor in 2006.) Hip hop songs are predominantly written and performed by men for other men, who reinforce and validate each other’s feelings, experiences, and worldviews. The situation is heightened in Ukraine, where men dominate hip hop scenes because of a smaller percentage of female students and immigrants and because African women are held to the same socially conservative norms by African male counterparts in Ukraine as in their home countries (Goldhaber and Ziyatdinova 2010; Starr 2010).

Gendered responses to hip hop in Africa are context-based and determined by numerous factors. Traditional cultural expectations and social control over young women’s whereabouts and behaviors by their families limit opportunities for young women to be involved in hip hop. This means that their voices and their gender-specific teen anxieties and responses to violence, AIDS, and other social issues are not as clearly evident in the genre. Yet as ethnomusicologist Gregory Barz notes in his work on music and AIDS in Uganda, critical responses by women to the AIDS pandemic through choral and theatrical performances are one of the most important ways that localized knowledge of disease prevention and health-care education is spread in Uganda (2006, 3).² Thus, it is important to note that when analyzing social consciousness in music, we acknowledge whose voices and feelings are ex-

pressed through particular genres and recognize the opportunities people have in participating or not being able to take part in certain musical forms.

FIELDWORK AS ECONOMIC EXCHANGE

During my fieldwork among African musicians in Ukraine from 2006 to 2009, I was constantly aware that I did not have a clear idea of the broader parameters of my fieldwork because I had never traveled to Africa and could only gather relevant information about half of their migration experience—in Ukraine. It was difficult for me to imagine and to understand the motivations and reasons for moving permanently from Africa or for choosing to study at a university in the former Soviet Union in light of the challenges that such universities face in the post-socialist economic instability. Interlocutors often cited war and violence as reasons for leaving their country. Many viewed their educational experiences in Ukraine as a stepping-stone to better-known universities in the European Union or the United Kingdom. It was not until 2009, five years after the inception of this project (during the 2004 Orange Revolution when I saw Chornobryvtsi perform), that I had the opportunity to go to Africa. I attended the International Council for Traditional Music annual conference held at the University of KwaZulu Natal in Durban, South Africa, that summer. Research funds from the University of Pittsburgh enabled me to travel throughout South Africa prior to the conference and then continue on to Zambia and Uganda after the conference. The two months I spent in Africa that summer augmented my understandings of Soviet-African relations and sharpened my research orientations among African interlocutors in Ukraine, helping me appreciate some of their motivations for studying and living in post-Soviet society.

Billboards in Kampala advertising paid educational opportunities in former Soviet countries reflected opportunities for elites with money to gain education abroad. The use of attractive women in the billboard campaign indicated that the target educational audience in Uganda was men. This reflected the realities and the gender bias of educational exchange programs at the time of the Soviet Union as well. When in 2007, I asked DJ Moses, a young hip hop musician from Uganda who studied in Kharkiv, Ukraine, why he had chosen to complete his higher education in Ukraine, he replied, “My mother thought she was sending me to Europe.”³ This telling response points to the ways in which “Europe” as a former colonizing power continues to be



FIGURE 5.1. A billboard in Kampala, Uganda, advertising fee-based university study in the Russian Federation, 2009. It targets middle-class male students, the dominant population among exchange students from Africa in post-Soviet Russia and Ukraine. *Photo by author.*

perceived and to how it shapes the futures of African nationals. It also points to the ways that former Soviet republics are positioned vis-à-vis the economic, political, and sociocultural imaginings and realities of the European Union. By stating that he was not in “Europe” but somewhere outside of it, the young musician indicated tensions and critiques among Africans regarding post-Soviet milieus. It also indicated a consciousness among African elites as to how opportunities abroad facilitate further opportunities for them at home and in other contexts. According to social worker and scholar Michelle Goldhaber, who conducted interviews among African students enrolled at the Medical Institute in Lviv in 2010, students are encouraged to apply by local recruiters. Complaints from students upon arrival in Ukraine regarding harassment, lack of orientation programs for international students, corruption regarding bribes for grades, and other shortcomings reflect student disappointments and feelings of having been “deceived and misled about the conditions and structure of their education” (Goldhaber and Ziyatdinova 2010, 7). Such ex-

periences tend to reinforce a feeling of transience in Ukraine, a temporary stopover to someplace better, though students tend to agree that the medical education they receive in Ukraine prepares them well for careers in medicine back home.

Traveling alone for most of my African trip, I spent the last two weeks in Uganda. I established contacts with hip hop musicians with the help of Joel Isabirye, a popular music scholar who works at a radio station in Kampala. I also made contact with the family of Alfa-Alfa members, because I wanted to meet people associated with the musicians who decided to make Ukraine their permanent home. I was put in touch with Adong Becky Prossy's sister Oteng Gloria Kay, and I spent a very eye-opening two weeks with her in Kampala and Gulu, northern Uganda. In Kampala, I stayed at the home of ethnomusicologist Sylvia Nannyonga-Tamusuza and composer Justinian Tamusuza. As a guest in someone's home, I tried to adhere to behavioral proprieties that seemed limiting to me as a researcher who has always recognized that accommodations are key determinants in how fieldwork experiences are shaped. Oftentimes I was tempted to continue filming a hip hop concert or follow through on an interview rather than take notice of the time of night that I was expected to return to the house. I did not at first recognize that by doing so, I put the household on alert until I returned. Security issues are of great concern in Kampala for those with relative financial means. The professors I stayed with during my first days in Kampala were very worried about me and attempted to explain that my evening activities traveling and going to hip hop clubs opened opportunities for people to rob me, carjack me, or kill me.

Hip hop research can be stereotyped as a nighttime activity. A colleague in the United States once told me that she changed her study from popular music to historical archival research because of the demanding late hours that research in popular music requires. After having the experience of returning home at 3 AM from musical events in Ukraine and Uganda, I find this to be an important point. Time is not your own during certain types of field research, and one has to readjust schedules and sleep in order to gain access to interviews and to live performance events. The age difference between me and most musicians I interviewed, approximately fifteen years—since the majority of them were in their late teens (both in Ukraine and Uganda)—corresponded to the difference in our energy levels. Quite often, it seemed that in less-planned situations, where I would follow one lead after another, I eventually would come to a point where the pursuit of knowledge gave way



FIGURE 5.2. GNL Zamba (wearing a basketball jersey) and his crew following an interview near Jinja, Uganda, July 11, 2009. *Photo by author.*

to exhaustion. I spent one evening with Joel Isabirye, who was helping me land an interview with Ernest Nsimbi Zamba, a hip hop musician in Kampala known as GNL Zamba. GNL, which stands for “Greatest of No Limits,” was not performing that night as we had thought, so we waited for a musician in another club to finish his set to ask where GNL might be. GNL was performing at a school in Jinja, approximately fifty miles away. It was 9 PM by the time we found a taxi to take us along the Kampala-Jinja Road that connects Uganda’s two major cities, stopping for some grilled skewers of chicken from roadside vendors to satiate our hunger during the almost two-hour ride. Our goal was to get to the concert before it finished so that we could interview GNL. The highway was considered dangerous to travel at night, but we had no incidents along the way. We arrived at the school, situated on a mountaintop, which unfortunately proved too much for the car we had hired. It could not negotiate the last hundred or so meters to the school. Joel and I grabbed our recording equipment and ran into the large auditorium packed with young men standing on school benches, dancing to GNL’s last song. Then the lights flipped on, and the concert was over. Having no access to the musicians, who

were swarmed by young men rushing the stage, we ran back to the car with the plan that we would stop their van as they headed down the mountain. We spoke to the GNL's crew, who agreed to an interview alongside the sandy road on the mountain. Around midnight, after about an hour of waiting among the banana trees that lined the sandy road, a van drove down the mountain, and we turned on the high beams on our car to indicate for it to stop. The group got out of their van, and we used the lights from our car to illuminate on the hour-long interview filmed on my Sony handheld 8mm video camera. By 1 AM, we were back on the Kampala-Jinja Road and arrived at the professor's house a little after 3 AM.

I will return to the musical information gleaned from this interview in a later part of this chapter. But in this instance, I want to share the unforeseen aspects of this fieldwork moment. As much as ethnographers want to believe we are in control of our fieldwork sites and are following a research framework laid out in our grant proposals, there is a high level of randomness in our fieldwork encounters, much of which can be controlled based on our levels of information. I find the process through which one accesses this information that facilitates the interview, however, to be of greatest interest. I often look back in wonder at how seemingly lucky I have been to locate people with jackpot phonebooks that contain the cell phone numbers of musicians and producers in the area. And when I found a particular person, there was a certain back and forth that took place between us as I, the researcher, assessed strategies about how to get information from the other while the other analyzed the personal and professional advantages and disadvantages of sharing this information. I have rarely come across people who have not wanted to share information, except in cases where the economic advantage was skewed not in my favor, meaning the information giver—for example, a producer or musician himself—was established and oftentimes rich. Then the incentive for collaboration dropped, unless there was some hope on his part that a connection with a researcher from the United States would benefit him. In broad strokes, I would say that ethnographic fieldwork is essentially a form of economic exchange. The fieldworker wants something that the interlocutor can give him or her—meaning information and materials for analysis—and the interlocutor is faced with the situation of choosing between collaboration or not. Sometimes the interlocutor receives financial compensation from the fieldworker, but oftentimes it comes down to sharing information that frames the livelihood of the interlocutor. There have been many instances,

both directly and indirectly analyzed, in ethnographic research where the researcher has gathered and published information without equal compensation for the interlocutors, and this depends greatly on the attitudes that the researchers have toward the people they are interviewing. For instance in Ukraine, many village musicians no longer collaborate with ethnographers because of decades of intellectual exploitation. Some researchers have also been known to publish books without returning even one copy to the village where the bulk of the information was gathered. This poses great problems for future researchers. I was repeatedly told by my Ukrainian interlocutors that my ability to pay interlocutors from my grants would ruin relationships for ethnographers heading into research sites after me, though most of my dissertation research had focused on Roma, a topic that has not to date been seriously researched by ethnomusicologists in Ukraine (Helbig 2005). On the other hand, it is difficult for me personally to place recording equipment worth thousands of dollars on the table and to not leave some money for someone who has given of their time and has shared information from which my research will directly benefit.

In my constant comparisons between fieldwork in Ukraine and Uganda, I was aware of my need to find a freeing research environment. My whiteness locked me into the layers of being a *mzungu*. The term embodies negative connotations of whiteness that stem from Uganda's colonial history. I tried to sidestep associations with British colonialism by employing my ethnic Ukrainian background. Ironically, this was the very background that caused tensions in my fieldwork in Ukraine. These interesting plays of identity point to immediate shifts in our own representations in our everyday interactions. This type of intercultural code-switching functions perhaps differently in short-term foreign interactions than during long-term stays.

To compare briefly with my fieldwork experiences in Ukraine, I am very aware that I draw on distinct sets of cultural tools, whether I am interacting with village musicians or popular musicians, staying in Roma communities or visiting with my family and friends. These interactions have become shorter as I am increasingly pressed for time to fit in fieldwork experiences in between teaching demands and am constantly reminded that these interactions differ significantly from how I interacted with these same groups of people during more extensive periods of fieldwork, ranging from three to twelve months at a time, in my younger years. The length of time one spends in a foreign setting influences the types of social networks one builds in order to facilitate longer,

more fruitful interactions. I think back to African experiences in Ukraine, where students who studied in the USSR were understood by society to be there on a temporary basis. Today, while most African migration is still considered by politicians to be temporary, despite very strong evidence to the contrary, cross-cultural code-switching becomes one of the most important aspects to delineate when beginning to understand immigrant experiences. The notion of linguistic code-switching—being able to change from one language use to another—brings with it broader sets of behavioral, cultural, and socio-psychological assumptions regarding behavior and emotion. This type of theorizing appears to subscribe to notions that there is some sort of agreed-upon behavior and ideology embedded in each of these categories in order to be able to effectively “switch” between one or another. Thus, if one can effectively switch between languages, then social and behavioral codes can also be switched in order to communicate effectively. And yet, what happens in situations when certain aspects of behavior or physical appearance do not allow someone to ever effectively break out of the identity prescribed to them by others?

In fieldwork, we tell ourselves that we move in and out of situations with degrees of ability to become part of people’s lives, people who entrust us with information regarding their families, personal lives, and various musical and cultural practices we theorize about and analyze in our writings and research. Yet we never really know how a book about our fieldwork experiences may read, from the point of view of our interlocutors. This brings us to the root of our own anxieties about fieldwork. In an interesting ten-year loop in my own research among Roma, I recently came across a picture of myself in a Roma museum in Tarnow, Poland, while with students on a study-abroad trip. The picture features a graduate school version of myself with a video camera documenting a remembrance ceremony in a cemetery for a deceased family member. I am practically standing on the grave in my desire to capture the moment, and yet the intensity and the absurdity of the moment is only revealed to me ten years later, immortalized for posterity in Poland and for my students. Do visitors to the museum question the presence of a woman who is clearly not Roma, holding a video camera? Though I am dressed in similar colorful garb and have similar features to the light-skinned, blue-eyed Roma in the picture, does the presence of technology clearly not readily available in Poland at that time create further disjunctures, despite my cultural, behavioral, and linguistic code-switching among Roma? Perhaps it is these types of experi-

ences that led me to make fewer attempts at code-switching while in Uganda. I had also become hyperaware of intertextual code-switchings among Africans in Ukraine. Perhaps it was the briefness of my visit that did not push me to engage in fieldwork “games” that would most probably either not work or backfire. And yet, despite these attempts, I found myself internally, for my own peace of mind perhaps, disjointing myself from a white-as-American or white-as-European identity to a white-as-East-European identity, falsely assuming that such a displacement came with less cultural, ideological, and psychological baggage.

MUSICAL ECONOMICS IN UGANDA

The family of the members of Alfa-Alfa live in a house along the sandy shores of Lake Victoria, the continent’s largest lake that borders Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania. A cramped van-taxi drove me past numerous establishments named after President Obama to a sandy path where young men on *boda-boda* motorcycles took me the last kilometer to the house. A homemade wooden sign hammered into the ground reads “Welcome to Miami Beach,” indexing the localized appropriations of globally circulated expressions of American culture. The *boda-bodas*, from the English “border” (English is the official language of Uganda, a former British colony), originated in the 1960s and 1970s from the need of people to travel between border crossing posts that did not require legal paperwork. The *boda-bodas* were an easy system that facilitated travel, very different from my experiences in Ukraine where a train is the primary way of transportation and where taxis have become increasingly expensive. My visit with Adong Becky Prossy’s family was very warm, and they asked many questions about Ukraine, where their daughter had gone to study and chose to live her life. They were less enthusiastic about her pursuit of a music career, reflecting their middle-class sensibilities on the importance of education and a more stable job. They told me that the videos produced by Alfa-Alfa are shown on Ugandan television with Swahili subtitles. Financial donations to radio and television stations by the musicians themselves ensured at least some airplay for their music and videos. According to Gulu-based DJ Smokie, who used to work in Kampala, “You can’t get your song on a radio station without the influence of someone very powerful on that radio. Now, if you don’t have contacts with that person, then you have to bribe your way to the radio, which is not even cheap.”

Radio is the main form of mass communication in Uganda. Radios are easily portable and affordable, though mainly to people who live in urban areas, particularly the more prosperous southern parts of the country near Kampala, Uganda's postcolonial capital, and Entebbe, Uganda's colonial capital (1893–1958). In contrast, televisions are expensive and have a limited supply of programming; their ownership also is curtailed by the lack of electrical power in many rural and urban neighborhoods. Radio is most widespread in terms of technological media (Otiso 2006, 44–45). Radio production and audience, however, are differentiated not only according to material access but also by gender, with men being the primary owners of radios and workers in radio production.

Colonial rulers shared similar ideologies to socialist governments by emphasizing discourses of modernity. Modern infrastructures, machinery, technology, and education promoted progress and prosperity of the nation-state. In this vein, anthropologist Brian Larkin identifies the importance of radio and cinema technology in regulating colonial rule in Nigeria (2008).⁴ Larkin analyzes how low-grade reproduction of videos led to the rise of audio and video piracy beyond the government's control. Larkin's discussion of everyday practices of media piracy, representing the potential of technologies of reproduction that are limited by legal frameworks, indexes a form of agency that anthropologist Alexei Yurchak terms "the performative shift" (2006). Yurchak describes oversaturated and hypernormalized performative environments like Soviet political parades in the last decade of socialism as no longer being read as having come from an authoritative subject; instead, they have shifted into realms of alternate meanings. In colonial Africa, as in the USSR, the performative shift rests not in the meanings regulated by the state but in the meanings and value individuals attribute to products and mediated experiences.

In post-socialist Ukraine, access to technology is determined by economic access, and it is difficult to assess whether urban areas have advantage over rural areas, except in terms of internet access, though statistics regarding cyber access are changing rapidly. Language choice in media, however, is gendered. With laws stressing the use of both Ukrainian and Russian in the media, it is often the case that talk shows and broadcasts run in both languages, with the male announcer speaking Russian and the female announcer speaking Ukrainian. It is also common for Russian language shows to have Ukrainian subtitles, which is almost farcical considering that the vast major-

ity of Ukrainian speakers also speak Russian, whereas fewer Russian speakers understand or speak Ukrainian at all. This gendering of language reinforces the privileged use of Russian in the public media spheres and represents an ongoing politicization of language and identity in Ukraine's media spheres and music industries, as discussed in chapter 3.

In part, DJ Smokie and numerous musicians I interviewed alluded to the skewed development of music industries in Uganda, which for the most part are centered in the postcolonial capital of Kampala. The issue of language choice guides much of the musical expression heard on the television and radio. Luganda, the language of the Baganda, the country's most populous group, is Uganda's lingua franca and the most dominant in national affairs since the colonial era. Lugaflow, a term used to denote rap in Uganda in which language is manipulated to "fit" the underlying rhythmic beat, reflects the prioritized position Luganda holds in popular music. While English is the official language, institutionalized as such by the British during the colonial era, most Ugandans have a low English proficiency that is, for the most part, gained in school, so broadcasts in English are not accessible to all parts of the population (Otiso 2006, 5). Language in airwave broadcasts reflects colonial-era language policies and structures.

When the British made today's Uganda a colony in 1894, in order to secure the source of the Nile, the upper reaches of which had remained largely inaccessible and unexplored, they had to use substantial military force to subdue the country's powerful kings. The Buganda kingdom was the first to be subdued by British military power in 1899, and the Baganda people became allied with the British colonialists. The Baganda gained privilege and dominance over other indigenous ethnic groups. Thus, subsequent British treaties with the kingdoms of Toro (1900), Ankole (1901), and Bunyoro (1933) were not as beneficial to these kingdoms. These inequalities under colonial rule would fuel Uganda's political instability in the immediate period after Uganda gained independence in 1962. The Baganda became the ruling elite in independent Uganda, forming the country's middle class, having received more access to education and colonial administrative positions. They had also become increasingly Christianized and Westernized and were relied upon by the British as administrators in other parts of Uganda. This inequality created substantial anti-Baganda sentiment in the country, particularly in terms of language policy. Any elevation of one language is viewed as a devaluation of another. Thus English, while a colonial language, has been perceived as a "safe

neutral” language, albeit exclusive in terms of class and education, gender, and, indirectly, ethnicity.

Language choice determines the audience a musician can reach. Next to English, other languages spoken in Uganda include Luganda, Kiswahili (Swahili), Luo, and Arabic. Luganda is widely used in the public sphere due to colonial-era dominance of Baganda in national affairs. Idi Amin declared Kiswahili as the national language, but it did not have widespread support or avenues for its dissemination. Versions of Kiswahili are spoken in Tanzania and Kenya, and many musicians attempt to incorporate the language in their music to help them expand their markets beyond Uganda. Takeu (also utake), a regional musical genre named after the first syllables of Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda, emerged in the middle part of the first decade of the twenty-first century. Jose Chameleone has been one of the leading musicians in this genre.

Chameleone, perhaps one of the most successful musicians in Uganda, forms a direct link between music in Uganda and Ukraine in that he has worked with and influenced the music of Bawakana Michael Kityo from Alfa-Alfa. Influential in reggae, or ragga, as the Caribbean-influenced musical genre is called, together with the likes of Ragga Dee and Bebe Cool, Chameleone has popularized reggae and reggae-fusion genres. Chameleone performs ragga with mostly Kiswahili lyrics that predominantly highlight social issues. Among East African musicians in the former Soviet Union, these connections account for the widespread use of reggae elements in various forms of popular music, including hip hop in musical groups that include African as well as non-African musicians. In fact, much more than in Tanzania and Kenya, dancehall ragga, R&B, and local musical elements shape much of the popular music output in Uganda. DJ Smokie explains the popularity of reggae this way:

The way reggae has been brought up and has been portrayed, it's been portrayed like live music. Because when you look at most of these reggae artists, you get the feeling that they perform their music live. So reggae is connected more to bands and older musicians. It's not like going to a studio and making a beat and all that. . . . And even though you go to a studio and make a beat, the reggae beat has always been the same, because it is always the same African touch that really connects very well with the people.

I'd say that almost all reggae songs have been very reasonable; they carry a lot of sense in them. Because most of the reggae songs that come out are either rebellious

or something. When you look at difference of hip hop today and reggae, it really makes a very big difference. Because hip hop today is almost mostly about bling. Someone comes out and starts singing about watch[es], and cars, and women. . . . But reggae has always been passing the message to the people: “unite” . . . “stop the killing,” “peace,” “love,” stuff like that. So reggae always gets the softer landing in any place that it reaches.⁵

In other words, DJ Smokie’s music combines hip hop and reggae because reggae has a dance beat that draws certain audiences in and coincides with more popular music on the radio. He states that the ragga element fused into his hip hop ensures that it is played in clubs and on the radio. This style falls in line with performance groups that feature African musicians in Russia and Ukraine, including “They Killed a Negro” by Banned Drummers and the repertoires of Chornobryvtsi and Alfa-Alfa. Such transnational circulations of fusion genres point to the infinite self-referencing indices that make musical sources complicated to pinpoint. Understanding the social workings of the genres in local contexts offers but one new kernel toward understanding musical mediations across borders.

MUSIC AND DEVELOPMENT AID

Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya form the former British colonies of East Africa. Gaining independence from the British in 1962, Uganda was wracked from the onset by internal conflict, warfare, and challenges to development due to the lack of political, economic, and social stability. In addition to the British and American actors who attempted to secure capitalist interests in Uganda, the Soviet Union played a role in diplomatic relations, attempting to sway Ugandan leaders of the initial post-independence period toward socialism, as did Patrice Lumumba of the neighboring Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The conflicts set into place under colonial rule did not allow for a peaceful independence for Uganda. Tensions rose between supporters of a centralized state and those who wished for a loose federation of tribe-based local kingdoms. In 1966, Prime Minister Milton Obote dissolved the constitution and the positions of president and vice president. In 1967, a new constitution abolished traditional kingdoms and gave the president even more power. In 1971, Idi Amin Dada staged a military coup and ousted Obote’s government. From 1971 to 1979, Amin’s regime of terror plunged Uganda into economic decline and social stagnation. His brutality was unleashed on the Acholi and

Langi ethnic groups in northern Uganda who had supported Obote. Between 100,000 and 300,000 Ugandans were murdered during Amin's reign. Amin was eventually forced to flee into exile, escaping first to Libya and then to Saudi Arabia.⁶ Since 1986, President Yoweri Museveni has worked toward restoring control and relative stability to the country. Museveni ran for his third term in 2005. A multi-party political system was reinstated in Uganda that same year. The history of repressions, censorship, and instability evokes parallels with ethnic Ukrainian narratives regarding the history of Ukraine and struggles for political, economic, and cultural independence from the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and the continuing dominance of the Russian Federation in the region. Sensitivity to these issues accounts for why African musicians participated in Ukrainian-language music making and supported the 2004 Orange Revolution.

The population of Uganda has more than doubled in the last twenty-five years, with 12.8 million in 1980 to 28.7 million in 2005. As a result of high death tolls among adults due to AIDS as well as high birth rates (an average of seven children per family) in rural areas, approximately half of the population of Uganda is under the age of fifteen, the youngest age structure in the world (Daumerie and Madsen 2010). War, AIDS, and lack of economic resources have contributed to a high level of poverty, especially in rural areas. Southern parts of Uganda fare better economically because they are home to Kampala, the postcolonial capital, and Entebbe on Lake Victoria, the colonial capital. Northern Uganda was unstable until recently due to violence, physical mutilation, and kidnappings by the Lord's Resistance Army. To some extent, these pressures fuel migration to places like Ukraine, which gives students opportunities to study in a relatively more stable political and economic environment. Despite the challenges that life in Ukraine poses, war, poverty, and lack of infrastructure propel many to move to the former Soviet Union, following trajectories set in place through student exchanges during the Cold War. With them, they bring their family histories and national narratives that influence their everyday experiences, cultural expressions, and political mobilizations in Ukraine.

The United States provides significant humanitarian and development assistance to Uganda. The Obama administration offered \$480.3 million in aid to Uganda in 2011 and \$527.7 million in 2012. Approximately half of all U.S. non-food aid in Uganda is directed at ameliorating the crisis in the north. In 2007, USAID opened an office in Gulu. Programs help rebuild war-torn com-

munities and assist with war-affected children, especially those abducted by warlords and used as child soldiers. Between 2002 and 2005, 7,000 abducted children were rehabilitated and 5,700 were reunified and resettled with their families (Dagne 2011, 4).

Throughout Africa, non-governmental organizations have begun to employ hip hop for social change, therapy, and creative expression. Toni Blackman, the first Hip Hop Cultural Envoy to travel with the U.S. Department of State, a position that emerged from a restructuring of the former jazz ambassadors program, used her role to join with a group of women in the Democratic Republic of Congo to rap about women's rights. The French- and English-language music video, titled "Invisible Woman," was created during an artist's residency Blackman conducted with Congolese hip hop artist and producer Lexxus. It addresses the ways women are held back by traditions and conveys that when united, women can stand up to the social pressures and prejudices and reclaim their voices and agency in society. The women, including Congolese DJs and singers Cecile Walo, Diva Oracle, Lolo, Monik Tenday, Grace, Nu Mama, and Ansia, sing with guitarist Dan Selo. They wear varied Western-style dresses made from traditional fabric, and Blackman stands visibly among them, rapping in English over their French refrain.

Such development initiatives carry many positives in terms of spreading human rights ideology and offering opportunities for expression and social change. On the other hand, such initiatives empower what may be seen as Western cultural values, altering social situations through restructuring of power hierarchies. Many socially focused hip hop songs became popular in Gulu because of funding from NGOs that moved into the area at the height of the violent conflict. Organizations paid musicians to sing about themes they supplied, including children's rights, anti-violence, peace, and the like. NGOs took over the promotion of the videos and songs through their organizations, essentially leaving out the artists as they marketed the music for political and social influence. On one hand, NGOs give artists agency by providing financial means for the production of music. On the other, by dictating musical themes and lyrics and taking over marketing, NGOs undermine the grassroots nature of hip hop as a music that reflects the feelings and experiences of musicians themselves. Many NGO-sponsored music initiatives are thus understood by local musicians and audiences as fulfilling an outsider agenda rather than as facilitating music that young people connect to emotionally.

MUSIC, WAR, AND TRAUMA

I was invited by Oteng Gloria Kay to visit her friend Jackie Lubik near Gulu for a week. As a white person in Gulu, I was repeatedly asked if I worked for an NGO or for USAID. This question was so common that without even having been aware of the extensive development and refugee initiatives in the area sponsored by organizations from the United States in particular, one could surmise that NGO workers played a significant role in the social structuring of the town. The drawbacks of such interventions for fieldworkers are then the presumption of identity on the part of interlocutors, which I experienced to a certain extent in Ukraine. There, however, I had the option of breaking out, through my knowledge of local language and custom.

Not having such tools at my disposal in Uganda, I immediately recognized the trappings of my fieldwork experiences in Gulu. I relied on Gloria's contacts to see what would come about from the trip. Gloria's friend lived in two small rooms in a one-story building surrounded by traditional huts on the outskirts of Gulu. The morning after we arrived, we awoke to a woman's wails from the neighboring hut. Her young son had been attacked on his way home from school the day before, and his mutilated body had been found during the night. Daylight revealed gravesites in the morning mist around the huts in the village, marking the trauma of war and violence that had brought so many Western peacekeepers to Gulu.

That day, Gloria and I traveled the five miles on *boda-bodas* from Gulu to the Unyama IDP camp, where we met eight young men in their mid- to late teens who were among many of the camp's initial 12,000 refugees who had not yet returned to their villages, though much of the fighting had passed. Several were clearly reliving trauma and choosing to work in the fields as a group rather than split up and risk attack and violence in their villages. There was a computer in the Unyama IDP camp, and the teens gave us a disc with songs they had recorded at a hip hop studio in town. In interviews, some of the young men cried as they told me about horrors, including the slaughter of their families. As in my experiences among impoverished Roma in Ukraine, I, as the interviewer, was the sounding board, the catalyst for speaking about trauma, for validating sadness and horror. This put me in a position of not being able to respond; rather, I internalized their stories to process later. The young men told of a childhood lost and hinted at unspoken horrors, and their music cried out for peace. The lyrics to the songs are telling ([PURL 5.1](#)).

“Peace Return Northern Uganda” by Lucky Bosmic Otim⁷

Tunataka amani	We want peace
Watu wetu wanalia	Our people are crying
Usiku na mchana	Night and day
Kweli kweli	Truly
Watu wetu wanalia	Our people are crying
Wamama na watoto	Women and children
Wanaona shida mingi	Have many problems
Wana shida ya magonjwa	They are sick
Wana shida jamani vu[?]	They have problems
Mungu wetu tafadhali	Our God please
Tusaidie na shida zetu	Help us with our problems
Watu wetu wanakufa	Our people are dying
Kila siku bila makosa	Every day, without fail
Wanalia kila siku	They are crying every day
Tuna vita vita ni mbaya	We have war, war is bad
Usiku na mchana	Night and day
Mbio mbio	Rushing around
Mbio mbio tumechoka	Rushing we are tired
Kweli kweli tumechoka	Truly we are tired
Kila saa wa mbio mbio	Every hour rushing around
Wandugu zetu wacha kuua	My brothers stop killing
Kwa nini munauaua rea	Why do you kill indiscriminately and hatefully?
Wandugu wetu wacha vita	My brothers stop the war
Wacha vita	Stop the war
Murudi nyumbani	Return home
Kwa sababu sisi sote	Because we all
Tunataka amani	Want peace
Sisi wote tuko pamoja	We are all together
Tuko pamoja kwa uhuru	We are all together in freedom

For more than twenty years, northern Uganda has been embroiled in violence. The Lord’s Resistance Army, initially formed as the Uganda People’s Democratic Army, began with attacks against military installations primarily in northern Uganda. In the early 1990s, with the emergence of Joseph Kony as leader, the forces that emerged as the LRA began to primarily target civilians in northern Uganda with strong backing from the government of Sudan. Under the leadership of Kony, the LRA conducted military operations in northern Uganda, the DRC, the Central African Republic, and southern Sudan. Although the conflict arose as an effort to overthrow the regime of President Museveni, the primary targets of the LRA have been the civilian population,

especially women and children. According to the United Nations, “The most disturbing aspect of this humanitarian crisis is the fact that this is a war fought by children on children—minors make up almost 90% of the LRA’s soldiers. Some recruits are as young as eight and are inducted through raids on villages. They are brutalized and forced to commit atrocities on fellow abductees and even siblings. Those who attempt to escape are killed. For those living in a state of constant fear, violence becomes a way of life and the psychological trauma is incalculable.”⁸ The LRA was given protection, facilities for training, and supplies by the government of Sudan to wage war in northern Uganda and southern Sudan until a few years ago. The takeover of the government in southern Sudan by the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement curtailed LRA activities in south Sudan. The Sudan Comprehensive Peace Agreement has a provision that all foreign groups, including the LRA, must be forced out of Sudan. The cut of support for the LRA and the defection of many of LRA’s top leaders have significantly weakened the organization. The Congolese government acknowledged the presence of LRA forces in Garamba National Park in 2007. In early November 2007, President Joseph Kabila stated that LRA forces will be forced to leave DRC once a peace agreement is reached between the LRA and the government of Uganda. President Museveni has offered amnesty if the rebels accept a peace agreement. According to media reports and U.S. officials, there is support among many civilians in northern Uganda for reconciliation rather than revenge against the LRA leaders. Kony was the subject of a viral video, *Kony 2012*, aimed at his arrest by December 31, 2012. The video, produced by Invisible Children, Inc., a nonprofit organization working in the United States and Uganda, received 93 million views on the internet.

While the attacks on civilians in northern Uganda have ceased, it is clear that the trauma of the experiences has shaped the lives of the young men we met in the Unyama IDP camp who are afraid to leave the confines of the now almost defunct refugee camp. That they turn to hip hop as a form of expression evokes recent studies in the use of hip hop as therapy (Hadley and Yancy 2012). In their edited volume *Therapeutic Uses of Rap and Hip-Hop*, music therapist Susan Hadley and philosopher George Yancy have compiled research conducted among cancer patients and with at-risk youth in juvenile detention centers and medical facilities in the United States. T. Tomás Álvarez III, in his contribution to the volume, delineates his work among at-risk African American and Latino male youth who grow up in poverty, do not graduate from high school, have a parent in prison, are born to teenage moth-

ers, are exposed to violence and homicide, and experience post-traumatic stress disorder (2012,118).

The prolonged exposure to violence in the community affects the emotional and psychological state of young people, whose trauma manifests itself in behaviors that are often punished by school administrators and others who do not understand the level of grief, loss, and trauma that the youth undergo. The stigmatization of such behaviors and mental health issues inside and outside the community makes it difficult for youth to reach out for help. Trauma of political upheaval, economic depravity, and social alienation in the decade following the collapse of the Soviet Union is what pushed young rappers like those in Tanok na Maidani Kongo, analyzed in chapter 3, to seek individual expression and a grounded identity in hip hop. While the term “rap therapy” was first coined in 2000 by Don Elligan, a clinical psychologist, Alvarez points out that rap and hip hop culture, including break dancing, graffiti, and DJ-ing, has functioned as “cathartic and social” outlets among African American and Latino youths since the 1970s. He states, “Through rap, disenfranchised youth were able to cope with stress, build support groups, speak out about the conditions in the neighborhood, and gain a sense of identity” (123). While much has been written about so many of these aspects of hip hop culture, including issues of gender, race, and poverty, few scholars have focused on the emotional underpinnings of hip hop culture. In rap and hip hop therapy, adolescents learn to use music as a way to jumpstart discussions and as a way to share and relate with their peers (124). Psychological support and life-building skills stem from abilities to “re-author their narratives from a strength-based perspective” (124). In the same volume, Stephen “Buddha” Leafloor offers perspectives on his therapeutic outreach through b-boying (break dancing) in Canada’s Arctic and First Nations communities.

Drawing on his own experiences as a b-boy who turned to dance to channel anger and emotions through a positive outlet, Leafloor states of his early years, “It was about representing the music through our bodies and making a statement about who we were” (2012, 131). His family connections to Inuit peoples through marriage and his concern for addressing the complex family and social issues that plague communities in the Arctic, including very high suicide rates, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual abuse, family violence, and a loss of culture and cultural pride, prompted Leafloor to act (132). He draws parallels between Inuit youth and youth in the south Bronx during the early days of hip hop in that in both contexts, youth have wanted to “scream out

to everyone that they are here and that they count and that their voices are important" (133). A similar connection could be drawn to the break-dance groups in Kharkiv that offer a safe space for young people to explore their physical potential, developing physical and psychological strength in order to compete and taking pride in their bodies by not abusing drugs, tobacco, and alcohol in a country dealing with an epidemic of alcoholism. At the time of publication, Leafloor had conducted intensive one-week programs in thirty-eight remote communities, focusing on teaching boys and girls three dance styles (b-boying, boogaloo, and locking) and hip hop history and then talking about personal issues in the youths' lives. Local cultural artists also became involved to explore how local culture can be incorporated into hip hop. Elders were also included in this effort so as to connect across generations. The circle formed by the participants and onlookers offered a safe space for everyone participating in the workshops, and they presented their movements to the positive reinforcement of the crowd. The flow of positive energy reinforced the youths' sense of ability to do something that they may not have been able to do before, and the reinforcement of the community filled voids of positive affirmation and security. As Leafloor states, "They begin to connect the mind, body, and soul" (139).

In Gulu, northern Uganda, young men use hip hop as a tool of expression, healing, and social change. The organization Breakdance Project Uganda, begun in Kampala in 2006 and extended to Gulu in 2009, offers young people free lessons in break dancing and since its inception counts more than 1,000 students in its two locations. The Gulu Youth Center provides young people the opportunities for self-expression in break dancing. Recent studies in hip hop as therapeutic expression help us understand the complex ways that the movement of the body to rhythm with one's social circle helps promote a sense of inclusion, a sense of self, and centeredness (Hadley and Yancy 2012). A documentary titled *Bouncing Cats* (2010) by Australian director Nabil Elderkin offers perspectives on the anxiety of growing up in a country torn by civil war, where children are taken as child soldiers, wounded, maimed, and orphaned at an early age by warfare and AIDS.⁹ Breakdance Project Uganda was started in 2006 by Abraham Tekya, commonly known as Abramz. The goal of the project is to introduce young people to break dancing as a way to create a sense of pride in oneself and one's community. Partnering with the Health, Education, Arts, Literacy, Sports Project (HEALS), an NGO in northern Uganda, BPU has worked with young people who were abducted



FIGURE 5.3. Young men who make hip hop music at the Unyama Internally Displaced Persons camp near Gulu, northern Uganda, July 14, 2009.

Photo by author.

by the Lord's Resistance Army and were child soldiers. Abramz lost both his parents to AIDS when he was seven and turned to break dancing as a way to process his emotions and to create a feeling of self-worth. He used his skills as a b-boy to help generate income for his education. His inspirations came from his older cousins and from music videos from the 1980s and early 1990s featuring such artists as A Tribe Called Quest, Public Enemy, Big Daddy Kane, De La Soul, Brand Nubian, Chubb Rock, and Philly Bongoley Lutaaya and b-boys such as Crazy Legs of the Rock Steady Crew and Boogaloo Shrimp.

In the Unyama IDP camp outside of Gulu, the computer was available in a little building that functioned as the community center of sorts and canteen where people could purchase soft drinks and some food. Those gathered were immediately welcoming of us as we dismounted our *boda-bodas*. We waited for a few more young men to arrive from the fields where they were working. These young men were among those who chose to stay in the refugee camp though the worst of the fighting was over. In their eyes, one could see their

trauma and heartache, though they held brave stances when speaking about their experiences. Striking a hip hop pose creates a sense of power, as evidenced in figure 5.3. It has struck me again and again that the representation of oneself in the form of a hip hop musician temporarily relieves the body of its surrounding physicalities and reinforces an indexical relationship with hip hop's perceived power, affirmation of masculinity, and centeredness. The young men who shared their stories and music with us in Gulu are only a handful of youth who have turned to music as a way to process their experiences in northern Uganda since the fighting began there. The sense of power they draw from hip hop is similar to the experiences of hip hop youths in Ukraine who use the genre to claim space and visibility.

EPILOGUE

The publication process is such that once an ethnography goes to print, the social phenomena described in it have already changed, with actors growing up, moving on, and becoming involved in new cultural productions. Ukrainian-language folk music fusions have begun incorporating Russian-language pop music influences, mirroring changes in Ukraine's language laws that make Russian the official language in areas like Kharkiv, where Russian-language speakers are the majority. Scenes that were predominantly Russian-speaking in hip hop clubs in Kharkiv have seen the increasing use of English as more language classes are offered in high schools and universities and as young people recognize the value of English for commercial and educational exchange. The growing familiarity with English has introduced numerous new words into Ukrainian and Russian languages, anglicizing even common Ukrainian words like *lytse* (face), now "feisa." These linguistic changes reflect broader intellectual, psychological, emotional, and practical changes as Ukraine's media spheres continue to reflect stronger associations with Western (that is, modern) culture and greater embracings of capitalist norms and class divisions.

Migrations into Ukraine have increased as well, with more and diversified Africans arriving in communities. Whereas the dominant representations were East Africans and Nigerians, a growing number of immigrants and students from West African countries have introduced French language and music into social scenes in Kharkiv, Kyiv, and other larger cities in Ukraine. Negotiations between English- and French-speaking Africans have led to diversity in hip hop, R&B, and "Africa"-themed music parties where each language receives a certain amount of play time from DJs who alternate by country. Whereas French and English are former colonial languages and the languages of educated African elites, pan-regional identities based on colonial

disjunctures solidify and form new language-based cultural contingents in diaspora. These developments intersect with growing Indian communities of students and immigrant workers who engage increasingly with strengthening African communities in industrial, economic, and university cities like Donetsk, where such immigrant communities were not visible or did not exist at the time of my fieldwork between 2004 and 2010. Organizations like the African Center in Kyiv are a strong indicator of the long-term plans that Africans and other immigrants have, viewing Ukraine less as a transitory space and more as a place for long-term settlement.

Regarding racism: it is not enough to call it racism, because every country has different forms of racial discrimination, and racism in Ukraine cannot be compared to the history of racism in the United States. Though no violent attacks against foreigners were reported during the 2012 Euro Cup, which many football fans in the United Kingdom avoided for fear of assault, many racially motivated attacks are not reported in the media. Ukrainians do not differentiate between *bizhentsi*, refugees who escape from war or political persecution, and those who move to Ukraine for economic reasons. All are simply cast as foreigners. Xenophobia is on the rise in terms of social discrimination. Education reform is needed that teaches racial tolerance and also helps people identify which aspects of their behavior and language may be deemed offensive and racist. There also needs to be more stress on implementing laws against discrimination and on creating structures for immigrants and foreigners to secure assistance, legal council, and help in dealing with cultural and social institutions with which they engage. Racial construction is nuanced, and it changes in relation to broader political ideologies and cultural rhetoric of difference that cast people onto spectra of whiteness and blackness. The pendulum swings in Ukraine vis-à-vis how people perceive their class status and how they engage with cultural products from the United States.

African American experiences with racism in the United States have served as the backdrop for people across the world to draw on civil rights discourse and to model forms of dissent and social consciousness from black voices. It is a consciousness that augments civil rights discourse in the United States, as seen when African American musicians now interact with hip hop musicians in other countries, as for instance on the 2010 album *Distant Relatives* put forth by African American rapper Nas and Jamaican reggae artist Damian Marley. The song "Tribes at War" features a collaboration with Somali Canadian rapper K'naan. The song "Patience" features collaborations

with Amadou Bajayoko and Marian Doumbia, a blind couple from Mali who perform a fusion of styles with voice and guitar. These musical co-productions point to a feedback loop between African musicians and African Americans that goes back to the days of Afrika Bambaataa's Zulu Nation philosophies that established enclaves of hip hop worldwide.¹ The height of the Afrocentric movement in hip hop incorporated tribal motives and philosophies from the Nation of Islam. Today, a more cosmopolitan image of Africa returns to influence hip hop directions in the United States as immigrants such as K'naan and musicians facilitated by technology connect with musicians in America and collaborate on projects. These collaborations also take place with white immigrants from Eastern Europe who move to inner-city schools and engage with African American culture, creating an endless loop of influence as these images are circulated back to their home countries and fused with ideas of new immigrants who bring music influenced by home countries and the United States. In other words, the endless new developments and the facilitations of movements across the world behoove us to rethink the ways scholarship in music is done, particularly regarding hip hop and how it as a genre engages and influences concepts of race in other parts of the world.

"Hip hop is no longer American hip hop; it's just hip hop," states a hip hop musician in the 2007 film *Diamonds in the Rough: A Ugandan Hip-Hop Revolution*. African American experiences serve as a connecting vector through which understandings of status, power, and cultural cachet are processed. They function in a complex web of borrowings, narrative reframings, and localized interpretations that bounce across media networks and are appropriated in different places and times. Though hip hop is no longer perceived globally as a U.S. genre, the complexities through which it is translated and exchanged are only becoming clearer, and we reshape our fieldwork in terms of how music travels. No longer can we be satisfied with detached armchair cyber-ethnomusicologies, speaking abstractly about MP3s and file-sharing networks. We must return to the field to analyze on-the-ground processes and physical migrations and musical exchanges in order to shed light on the deeply physical ways musicians and listeners engage with globally circulating genres. Local structures form bases for transnational formations and support the establishment of "native" cosmopolitanisms that simultaneously constitute a local habitus and embody translocal features, which create links to similar groups elsewhere (Turino 2000, 9–11).

As Israeli-born Miri Ben Ari, the daughter of Holocaust survivors and a classically trained musician who was introduced to jazz and now collaborates with hip hop artists, eloquently explains:

When I came to the States, my new circle of friends were African Americans; Jazz musicians, Hip-Hop and R&B artists, all very dear friends. And they talked about their struggle, and their parents, and their grandparents—and their daily struggle with racism. I was very touched by the way that they shared, and I decided to share, too. You know it wasn't a coincidence that my first song was dedicated to the fight against racism. "Adom Olam Ad Matei" [God Almighty, when will it end?] is the first song that is talking about the Jewish Holocaust, so bluntly, and it's the first Hip-Hop song [with a music video about the Jewish Holocaust] of its kind—done by me, and Subliminal . . . my favorite Hip-Hop artist.²

Hip hop scholarship is as much a topic of interest among non-music researchers as it is among music scholars. Thus, narratives about hip hop often reflect the narrative intentions of those who write about the music. Those who write about hip hop are often guilty of projecting social messages into the music that are perhaps not the dominant paradigm in the music itself. These neatly packaged messages, as hip hop scholar Griffith Rollefson points out, inscribe labels onto the musicians such as "minority," "ethnic," and "racial." It is important, however, to take a step back to really see how the people we interview see themselves (Rollefson 2009). This book gives voice to Africans in Ukraine on their own terms and tells as much of their family stories as it does of my own.

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GLOSSARY

- arap*—usually translated as “blackamoor”; used in the Russian Empire to denote a person with black skin
- avtentyka*—meaning “authenticity”; a category defined by ethnomusicologists as pre-Soviet, village-based music genres and performance practices recorded in villages or recreated by folk performers
- bandura*—a Ukrainian plucked string folk instrument with twenty to sixty-eight strings
- bili liudy*—white people; a Western-mediated identity used in contexts that involve demands for dignity, fairness, and respect
- blokowisko*—a Polish term for an urban neighborhood with high-rise apartments
- boda-boda*—motorcycle taxi in East Africa, from the English “border-border”; originally used to transport people across the no-man’s land at the Kenya-Uganda border
- bongo flava—Tanzania’s R&B- and hip hop–influenced genre; from the Swahili words *bongo*, “brains,” a slang term for the street smarts needed to live in Dar es Salaam, and *fleva*, “flavor”
- brekhunets*—literally “the liar”; local name for the radio speaker systems built into Soviet-era apartment housing
- chernyi* (Russian) / *chornyi* (Ukrainian)—black, referring to the color but also a subjective delineator of status as defined by ethnicity in the USSR
- chorna robota*—backbreaking physical labor for which workers receive a relatively meager salary
- czarna muza*—literally “black muse”; name for hip hop in Poland
- duma* (s.), *dumy* (pl.)—literally “thought” or “reflection”; epics sung by wandering minstrels in Ukraine (see *kobzar*)
- Emsky Ukaz (Ems Decree)—a decree issued in 1876 in the Russian Empire forbidding the staging of Ukrainian plays and readings and the printing of religious, scholarly, and educational literature in Ukrainian

- estrada*—literally “small stage”; catch-all term for Soviet and post-Soviet popular music
- Gastarbeiter*—a German term originally used since the mid-1950s to denote temporary foreign workers in Germany
- Halychyna (Galicia)—historical kingdom that encompasses eastern parts of Poland and parts of western Ukraine, including Lviv, Ternopil, and the Ivano-Frankivsk regions
- hidnist*—respect
- Holodomor (Famine Genocide of 1932–33)—literally “death by hunger,” during which approximately 4 million of the rural population died as the result of Stalin’s first Five-Year Plan, implemented between 1928 and 1932
- hopak*—originally a *kozak* social dance, performed by Ukrainian folk dance ensembles to exhibit dance athleticism; considered to be the national dance of Ukraine
- hryvnia*—national currency of Ukraine; the name of the currency in medieval Kyivan Rus’ (882 AD–13th century)
- Hutsul—highlanders who live in the Carpathian Mountains of Ukraine and Romania
- kobza*—a Ukrainian folk music instrument of the lute family, predecessor to the *bandura*, the variant most often used in staged choral and instrumental performance
- kobzar* (s.), *kobzari* (pl.)—itinerant (often blind) Ukrainian minstrel who sang historical and religious epics (see *dumy*) and accompanied himself on the *kobza*
- kozak* (Cossack)—in Ukraine, historical military forces who lived in a fortified territory known as Zaporizhska Sich on the lower Dnipro River and protected Ukrainian lands from invasion (1471–1775)
- kripatstvo*—serfdom in the Russian Empire by which the majority of ethnic Ukrainians were enslaved until 1861
- linchevat*—to lynch; Russification of the English term
- magnitizdat*—from the Russian words for “tape recorder” and “publishing”; self-copied and self-distributed live audio recordings made to circumvent political censorship in the USSR
- marshrutky*—home-grown transportation system of jitneys that was the forerunner of contemporary urban bus routes in the former Soviet Union
- mavpuvaty*—“to copy”; from *mavpa*, “monkey”; used as a racial slur
- Melodiya—Soviet state-run music recording and production company
- mobilka*—cell phone
- mulat*—mixed race, implying African ancestry

- mzungu*—literally “somebody who wanders aimlessly,” originally used in East Africa to describe European explorers; used as a racial slur against white people
- Neger*—Russian translation of “Negro,” used in the USSR
- rayon*—urban neighborhood (Ukraine)
- rok na kostiakh* (literally “rock on bones”) and *rok na rebrakh* (“rock on ribs”)—recordings of predominantly Western music reproduced on old X-rays in the USSR to circumvent censorship
- sharavary*—wide, colorful pants worn by *kozak* fighters as part of the male traditional eastern and central Ukrainian folk costume
- shokolad* (n.), *shokoladnyi* (adj.)—chocolate
- sidlisko* (s.), *sidliska* (pl.)—urban neighborhood (Slovakia)
- surzhyk*—a combination of Ukrainian and Russian spoken in rural central and eastern Ukraine
- Ukrahop (украхоп in Cyrillic)—Ukrainian-language hip hop
- vyzhyvaty*—literally “to survive”; used to describe difficulties of post-socialist living
- zarobitchany* (m.), *zarobitchanka* (f.)—migrant laborer; Ukrainians who work abroad

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NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Historian Matthew Frey Jacobson theorizes whiteness in the United States as having been divided into a hierarchy of white races at the height of immigration between the 1840s and the 1920s. “White ethnics,” meaning immigrants from Poland, Germany, Italy, and other countries, were generally considered to be culturally and socially inferior to Anglo-Saxon whites (Jacobson 1999).

2. During the Orange Revolution in 2004, nearly 1 million people protested in Kyiv against election fraud, media censorship, mass government corruption, and oligarchic market reforms. These protests were named after the campaign colors of Viktor Yushchenko, the opposition candidate who ran against Viktor Yanukovich, a politician with a criminal record who was backed by Moscow and the sitting Ukrainian government of Leonid Kuchma. Yushchenko won the election when the initial results were discarded due to fraud. Yanukovich won the subsequent election in 2008 and is the sitting president as this book goes to press.

3. According to a study by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), more than 110,000 people have been trafficked from Ukraine since 1991. The IOM’s counter-trafficking program in Ukraine aims to combat human trafficking through prevention and advocacy, prosecution and criminalization, protection and reintegration, and partnership with government agencies, institutions, and individuals. See <http://www.iom.int/cms/en/sites/iom/home/where-we-work/europa/south-eastern-europe-eastern-eur/ukraine.html> (accessed January 23, 2013).

4. Belarusian American ethnomusicologist Maria Survilla discusses similar challenges during her fieldwork on popular music in post-Soviet Belarus. See Survilla 2002.

5. The interviews took on a formulaic tone, with interlocutors lamenting about their present poverty, their feelings of abandonment by the state, and their exploitation by a handful of corrupt elites. These ritualized monologues are similar in structure and in style to what Nancy Ries describes in *Russian Talk: Culture and Conversation during Perestroika* (1997). Ries theorizes that the repetitive structure of complaints creates spaces for processing feelings and negotiating relationships to politics, economics, and changing social values.

6. For a thorough overview on the Soviet Union’s influence on musical practices and policies in Cuba, see Moore 2006.

7. This is what many Ukrainians used to say in conversation when commenting on the social and economic state of Ukraine in the 1990s.

8. Ovchynnykov wrote five books on jazz styles and one on rock and roll in the 1980s.

9. See <http://imperium.lenin.ru/LENIN/23/hiphop/>.

1. MUSIC AND BLACK IDENTITY IN THE SOVIET UNION

1. Meredith Roman points out that films like *Little Red Devils* (1923) that include a main black character named Tom feature plots in which the black male protagonist (black women are rarely featured) is unaware of racial equality and freedom in the USSR until he meets Soviet citizens (Roman 2012, 77).

2. Race discourse cast in terms of “civilization” and “savagery” reflects French ways of speaking and thinking about race. French was the second language spoken among elites in the Russian Empire, and a more in-depth study is needed to analyze the influence of French linguistic expressions and concepts on Russian ideas regarding race. Broader French concepts regarding race that find parallel in Russian discourses regarding “nature” and “civilization” are explored in greater detail in chapter 2.

3. In an incident involving white and African American students enrolled at the International Lenin School in Moscow in 1931, Meredith Roman recounts that several white American students had called on two African American students “to do the jig” and sing spirituals when a group of Russian workers surrounded them on the street out of curiosity. The African American students brought this incident to the authorities at the Lenin School, explaining that this was extremely offensive and that the white American students, by telling them to dance a jig in the street, made them feel like “their white colleagues viewed them as having just emerged from the jungle and should act like the mad, uncivilized people they perceived them to be” (Roman 2012, 162). Roman points out that the authorities at the Lenin School did not catch the racial undertones of the incident and questioned why Harry Haywood, an African American worker, did not find it offensive when Russian laborers asked him to perform “the dance of slaves” a few years prior. They failed to realize that meanings attributed to music and dance are context-based and that in the realm of Soviet affirmative action, a request by Russian laborers would carry different interpretations than a mocking demand for entertainment by American whites, albeit Communists, who evoked and embodied racial discrimination of the United States.

4. The segment on Shevchenko and Aldridge aired originally on March 11, 2012. It was produced by Irena Bell by the *Ukrainian Radio Hour* in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yn3Mxtz937E>.

5. Between 1910 and 1930, the Great Migration brought more than 1 million African Americans from the rural South to the urban North in search of a better life. Nearly 40,000 people from the Caribbean arrived in Harlem during those years, among them Claude McKay (1889–1948), born in Jamaica, and Otto Huiswoud, born in Dutch Guiana (now Suriname), supporters of communism and the Soviet Union.

6. See the resolution at <http://www.marx2mao.com/Other/CR75.html>.

7. For an analysis of African American singers and instrumentals within classical music before and after the racial integration of the Metropolitan Opera in 1955, see Allen 1973.

8. This fact was brought to light through the work of my undergraduate research assistant, Isaac Gaylord, at the University of Pittsburgh in 2010–11, whose research interests focus on relationships between African American and Russian thinkers and writers in the nineteenth century.

9. For a more detailed discussion about *Black and White* and the circumstances of its production intentions and cancellation, see chapter 4, “African American Architects of Soviet Antiracism and the Challenge of *Black and White*,” in Roman 2012.

10. Photographs of African American males appeared in magazines and children’s publications without context, both reinforcing the racial difference and divorcing these images from broader contexts (Roman 2012, 127).

11. The title of the Russian-language album *Radio Africa* (1983) is invoked in two English-language albums produced by Aquarium at the time of perestroika and the fall of the Soviet Union—*Radio Silence* (1989) and *Radio London* (1990).

2. MUSIC AND BLACK EXPERIENCES IN POST-SOVIET UKRAINE

1. Ukraine has adopted a set of parameters that will lead to improvements in the liberalization of migration legislation and policies. The challenges lie in the implementation of the legislation outlined in the “Strategy and Action Plan for the Development of a National Policy on the Integration of Migrants in Ukraine and Re-integration of Ukrainian Migrants for 2011–2015.” Among the greatest challenges are racism and the lack of finances to assist migrants and asylum seekers. The “Strategy and Action Plan” was prepared with the assistance of the Council of Europe in 2009–10 and adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers on June 15, 2011. For more information, see Piotr Kaźmierkiewicz’s 2011 report “Non-Paper Integration of Migrants to Ukraine,” prepared for the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, <http://www.osce.org/odihr/81762>.

2. Personal interview with Blair Ruble, May 5, 2006, Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies, Washington, D.C.

3. Similar issues were documented by ethnomusicologists Olya Kolomyets at the Lviv Conservatory of Music and Yaryna Romaniuk at the Kharkiv Conservatory of Music in interviews with Chinese students. Kolomyets and Romaniuk served as collaborative researchers on this project in 2008 with the generous funding of the National Endowment for the Humanities Collaborative Fellowship Program.

4. Oleh Pulemetov and Andrei Smirnov, “Banned Drummers: We Are a Ticking Bomb,” *Pravda*, October 26, 1999, <http://www.zavtra.ru/cgi/veil/data/zavtra/99/308/82.html>.

5. Terrell Jermaine Starr conducts research on interracial marriages between Africans and Ukrainians. For more on gendered interactions between Africans and Ukrainians, see Starr 2010.

6. Personal interview with Gomez and Dami, June 5, 2008. Kharkiv.

7. In July 2008, Amnesty International published a report titled *Ukraine: Government Must Act to Stop Racial Discrimination*, which documents an alarming increase in attacks on foreigners and members of ethnic and religious minorities in Ukraine.

8. See <http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/our-work/fighting-discrimination/2008-hate-crime-survey/ukraine/i-violent-attacks-on-individuals/>.

9. Ruble interview.

10. Ibid.

11. The African Center's outreach activities are detailed in the organization's journal, published in English and available online at the organization's website. The site has functioning translations in Russian and French (with place markers for future translations in Ukrainian, Portuguese, and Arabic) and links to Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, indexing local and global connections in the fight against African racism in Ukraine.

12. Certain ethnic groups have historically been believed to play music with more emotion and virtuosity. Such discourses fall into play when majority populations promote such ideas about other groups. These groups tend not to be able to be integrated fully into society precisely based on the stereotypes that abound about them regarding their expressive styles. The Russian and Ukrainian designator *chernyi/chorny* was applied throughout Soviet history to various non-European groups such as Roma (Fikes and Lemon 2002, 498). Blackness was constructed subjectively in the Soviet Union, but always in relation to certain characteristics. Roma were stereotyped as uncivilized, wild, and exhibiting unbridled emotion, with connections to black magic through sorcery and uninhibited "natural" musical virtuosity. These discourses play out similarly in relation to non-majority groups, pitting the Russian urban majority as the cultural elite vis-à-vis those who were deemed furthest from cultural, social, and ideological ideals.

13. See "Ruslana in the Republic of South Africa." Ruslana typically performs scantily clad in outfits that exoticize the musical culture of the Hutsul people in the Carpathian Mountains of western Ukraine. See http://www.ruslana.com.ua/images/africa_sept6/index.html.

14. For an analysis of unarticulated whiteness and the production of whiteness in ethnographic, political, and institutional practices in the United States, see Frankenberg 1997. For a discussion on the commodification of white female imagery in post-Mao China, see Schein 1994.

15. For a discussion of race and class in America, see Wray and Newitz 1997.

16. Personal interview with Rastaman Davis, August 24, 2006, Kyiv.

17. See http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/specials/1713_stranger/index.shtml.

18. See <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3535014.stm>.

19. Ibid.

20. See <http://africancouncil.org.ua/en/nashi-dostijeniya>.

21. B. B. King toured the Soviet Union in 1979. There is a music club named after him in Moscow, Russia.

22. Personal communication, identity withheld, June 5, 2007, Kyiv.

23. Personal interview with Mayne G, June 1, 2007, Kharkiv.

24. Davis interview.

3. COMMERCIAL AND UNDERGROUND HIP HOP IN UKRAINE

1. One of the main prisons in the Russian Empire for political prisoners until 1917.

2. Sean Michaels, "Russia Picks Ukrainian singer for Eurovision," *The Guardian*, March 10, 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2009/mar/10/russia-ukrainian-singer-eurovision-song-contest> (accessed December 30, 2011).

3. "Elton John Gives Kiev HIV concert," BBC News, June 17, 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6760687.stm>.

4. For a discussion of gay bashing in reggae performances in Japan, see Sterling 2010.
5. Psykhiv meaning “a psychotic place,” a wordplay on Sykhiv.
6. *Patsan*, street slang meaning “young man.”
7. Personal interview with Vova zi L’vova, June 8, 2008, Kyiv.
8. Personal interview with Anatoli Alekseev, June 1, 2008, Age Music Studios,

Kharkiv.

9. The Jackson-Vanik Amendment is a 1974 provision in U.S. federal law intended to affect U.S. trade relations with Communist and former Communist countries that violate human rights and restrict freedom of emigration.

10. For a theoretical analysis of piracy’s influence on video and audio aesthetics in Nigeria, see Larkin 2008.

11. See <http://www.musicliga.org/ru/news/71.html>.

12. See also Conquest 1986 and Klid and Motyl 2012.

13. Renowned Ukrainian Canadian *bandura* player and scholar Victor Mishalow traces aspects of the traditional *kobzar* and staged *bandura* lore that survived among the artforms’ practitioners and promoters in Europe, North America, and Australia who were forced to flee Ukraine during Stalin’s repressions and World War II (Mishalow 2008).

14. The number of strings varies according to the type of *bandura*—folk/*starosvitskaya* (20–23), Kyiv-style (55–65), or Kharkiv-style (strung diatonically with 34–36 strings or chromatically with 61–68 strings).

15. Interview by Yaryna Romaniuk with Roman Partola and Andriy Palval, June 11, 2008, Kharkiv.

16. This follows a broader trend among show business stars in Ukraine drawing attention to the dangers of drinking and smoking. Gaitana, Ukraine’s representative for Eurovision 2012, together with singers Oleh Skrypka from Vopli Vidopliasova; organizer of the Krajina Mrij festivals, Ani Lorak, Ukraine’s representative for Eurovision 2008; and many others signed a “Manifesto of Ukrainians against Smoking” in 2008.

17. DJ Vas-sabi has a Ukrainian mother and a Rwandan father. His mother followed her husband to Rwanda rather than stay in the Soviet Union, but the family returned to Ukraine during the civil war in that country.

18. Interview with DJ Vas-sabi, June 6, 2008, Kharkiv.

19. Mike Antonucci, “Planet Rap: The World Turns to Hip-Hop,” *San Jose Mercury News*, G10.

20. Numerous documentary films on hip hop in countries throughout Africa point to a common trend of socially conscious hip hop. See *African Underground: Democracy in Dakar* (2007), *I Love Hip-Hop in Morocco* (2007), *Hip-Hop Colony: The African Hip-Hop Explosion* (2006), *Diamonds in the Rough: A Ugandan Hip-Hop Revolution* (2007), and *Bouncing Cats: Uniting the Children of Uganda through Breakdance and Hip-Hop Culture* (2010) for examples from Senegal, Morocco, Kenya, and Uganda, respectively.

21. Personal interview with Blair Ruble, May 5, 2006, Washington, D.C.

22. Interviews conducted by Olya Kolomyjets in Lviv during the summer of 2008 indicate that it is more difficult for musicians from Africa to make music with local musicians. They are hired to deejay in clubs like Zanzibar, PozitiFF, and Metro during hip hop-themed events, but a system of hip hop studios is not as developed and as readily accessible to Africans as in Kharkiv. Interview by Olya Kolomyjets with DJ Edgar from Kenya, June 18, 2008, Lviv.

23. For a discussion on the role of the researcher in a recording studio, see Porcello 1998.

24. Personal interview with DJ Vas-sabi, June 6, 2008, Kharkiv.

25. Alekseev interview.

4. AFRO-UKRAINIAN HIP HOP FUSION

1. For more on the persecutions of *kobzari* and on the NKVD (Soviet secret police) repressions of scholars who researched their repertoire, including Klement Kvitka, Hnat Khotkevych, and Kateryna Hrushevska, see chapter 3.

2. Myroslav Skoryk utilized Hutsul motifs in his score for the 1964 highly acclaimed film *Tini Zabutykh Predkiv* (Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors), directed by Sergei Parazhanov. The fascination with Hutsul melodies continues even today, particularly in popular music, as exemplified in the ethno-pop rhythms of 2004 Eurovision winner Ruslana Lyzhychko, whose music played a very important political role during Ukraine's Orange Revolution.

3. Ethnographic fieldwork expeditions in western Ukraine were few in number and were organized mostly by ethnomusicologists/enthusiasts such as Volodymyr Hoshovskyy and Bohdan Lukaniuk. The declaration of Ukrainian independence brought change to the universities, and in 1991, the department reopened again as the Department of Ukrainian Folklore Studies "Filaret Kolessa."

4. Growing up in a Ukrainian American community in Newark, New Jersey, I heard many of these bands in concert performing in the New York–New Jersey metropolitan area Ukrainian Catholic and Orthodox community centers and churches in the early 1990s, when it was common for Ukrainian bands to travel in the United States, sponsored by Ukrainian diaspora entrepreneurs and organizations. My mother assisted with travel arrangements for many of these singers, and some stayed in our family home during their tours in New York and New Jersey.

5. The song "Brehhunets" by Andriy Panchyshyn has been uploaded to various musical sites on the internet, including YouTube. However, it reflects some *magnitizdat* poor sonic qualities tinged with distortion from its live recording on Soviet-era recording equipment. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e88zZQHooUU>.

6. According to the 2001 census, ethnic Ukrainians make up 77.8 percent of the population, and Russians make up 17.3 percent, with 4.9 percent being represented by ten other ethnic groups.

7. Personal interview with Vladyslav Zyuban (DJ Fixa Mixa), June 4, 2008, Kharkiv.

8. Personal interview with Bawakana Michael Kityo, June 7, 2008, Kharkiv.

9. For a broader discussion of blackface in relation to reggae in Japan, see Sterling 2010.

10. For discussions of reggae's influence in Africa and its intersection with hip hop traditions on the African continent, see Charry 2012.

11. Ivana Kupala, St. John's Eve (Midsummer's Eve), was among the most widely celebrated folk holidays in central and eastern Ukrainian villages before World War II. In the Lemko regions of western Ukraine, the holiday was known as Sobitka. Young people lit bonfires called *sobitky* in honor of Perun, the ancient Slavic god of thunder, fire, and lightning. In the early part of the twentieth century, Ivana Kupala was perceived as a Christian holiday that celebrated the birth of St. John the Baptist. Local priests

encouraged the blessing of herbs, rooted in the pagan myths that herbs gathered on St. John's Eve had special healing powers. Such myths have been written about by Ukrainian writers such as Olha Kobylanska, who describes Ivana Kupala rituals in her book *On Sunday Morning She Gathered Herbs* (1909). Despite overt pagan references, the association of Ivana Kupala with the figure of St. John the Baptist marked the festivities as Christian and in opposition to anticlerical Soviet ideology. Nevertheless, Ivana Kupala is represented in Ukrainian literature and in pre-Soviet memory as a night during which freedoms from socially prescribed sexual norms were socially accepted among the rural population (Helbig, forthcoming). See also Kononenko 2004.

12. Kityo interview.

13. Du Bois was tried in 1951 in a U.S. federal court, accused of being a foreign agent. Though he was acquitted, he and his wife were denied travel visas from the U.S. Department of State until 1958, when the couple traveled to Africa and the Soviet Union. During the trip, Du Bois convinced Nikita Khrushchev of the need to create the African Institute of the Soviet Academy of Sciences (Khanga and Jacoby 1992, 21). Du Bois officially joined the Communist Party in the early 1960s and moved to the West African country of Ghana in 1963.

5. HIP HOP IN UGANDA

1. Makerere University, Uganda's largest and second-oldest university, situated in Kampala, offers programs for approximately 30,000 undergraduates and 3,000 post-graduates. The head of the ethnomusicology department at Makerere University received her PhD from the University of Pittsburgh, where I began teaching as an assistant professor in ethnomusicology in 2008. This relationship solidified my decision to travel to Uganda to augment my research on African musicians in Ukraine. Having an affiliation with an ethnomusicologist also gave me a relationship to fall back on in case my intended visits with families of immigrant musicians in Ukraine did not work out. The goal of my trip was to gain a broader idea of the types of popular music-making in Kampala, with a particular focus on hip hop's intersections with reggae, a genre that seemed to permeate musical projects involving African musicians in Ukraine, particularly in the 1990s and the next decade.

2. For a discussion regarding the rise in social consciousness in Ugandan hip hop, see Barz and Liu 2011.

3. Personal interview with DJ Moses, June 17, 2007, Age Music Studios, Kharkiv.

4. Radio programming in Nigeria was largely restricted to the BBC-dominated public space through public loudspeakers. Cinema, circulated through mobile cinema vans in less accessible rural areas, promoted colonial ideas about health, morals, the nation, and modernity. Fixed-channel headsets handed out by Christian missionaries reinforced radio technology's relationship with Christianity (Larkin 2008).

5. Personal interview with DJ Smokie, July 21, 2009, Gulu, Uganda.

6. While the majority of Uganda's population is Christian, Idi Amin converted from Roman Catholicism to Islam. According to Islamic law, when a Muslim seeks exile in an Islamic country, Islamic law or Shari'ah is observed whereby one has to be granted asylum in that country.

7. Translated from Swahili by ethnomusicologist Andrew Eisenberg.

8. See <http://www.un.org/events/tenstories/06/story.asp?storyID=100>.

9. As in another documentary, *Diamonds in the Rough: A Ugandan Hip-Hop Revolution* (2007), break dancing and rapping take on localized forms. Performers invested in the genre go to great lengths to protect their expressive outlet and their ability to have a connection to it.

EPILOGUE

1. Zulu Nation was established in the 1970s in the Bronx and would spread hip hop culture to countries like France, the United Kingdom, Japan, and South Africa by the 1980s.

2. DJ Booth interview with Miri Ben-Ari. See <http://www.djbooth.net/index/interviews/entry/miri-ben-ari-interview/>.

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