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"Can Corpses Undie?" Traces of Rothberg's Trauma Model in Faridah Àbíké-Íyímídé's *Ace of Spades*

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Interdisciplinary studies in memory have become more relevant since the turn of the twentieth century with scholars giving their divergent views. That way, personal and collective memories have been explored vis-à-vis communal identities. How tragic/traumatic events affect personal and collective memories remains the concern of trauma theory which has critically investigated both the personal and intergenerational traumas of victims of injustice. One major contribution of Michael Rothberg to collective memory is his advancement of solidarity between group victims of diverse cultures, nationalities, races, and identities in order to create a more peaceful world to live in. This paper purports that Rothberg's multidirectional memory and theory of implication are useful theoretical tools for analysing Faridah Àbíké-Íyímídé's Young Adult novel, Ace of Spades *(2021). The paper, therefore, indicates how diverse sites of trauma in the author's world synergise with those of the protagonists. Also, the paper notably identifies some white characters in* Ace of Spades *as implicated subjects of racism and white supremacy. On the whole, the premise of this paper is that the new media can serve as a convenient site of thoughtful convergence for different victim groups to devise a means of dismantling long-existing regimes of oppression and injustice.*

Keywords
Personal/collective memories; trauma theory; Michael Rothberg; multidirectional memory; theory of implication; Faridah Àbíké-Íyímídé; the new media

Introduction

One distinctive feature of all human beings is memory – the ability to remember past occurrences. An individual person is endowed with the potentiality to

recall the past (Ricoeur 4). Not only are humans gifted with the capability of remembering their personal past, they also share the memory of their collectivity (Marcel and Mucchielli 146). Increasing interdisciplinary research on (and serious interest in) memory has called scholarly attention to the significance of this human endowment (Erll and Nünning v). Since the turn of the twentieth century, this "memory boom" has reshaped our construction of identities (Bell 6) and generated "varieties of inquiry" (Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi and Levy 4). The idea of collective memory conjures up an understanding that a memory can be shared by people of the same identity, thereby becoming communal property. Collective memory is a form of shared memory held by a community (Hunt 97). However, as Bartelson claims, "[t]he idea that memory is a social construct is itself peculiar to the modern-age. Nor did earlier accounts of memory imply that memory was constitutive of personal or collective identity" (37). Bartelson's inclination towards the nonlinearity of (historical) memory illuminates some streak of traumatic memory.

Traumatic memory is "an event [which] lingers in the mind of the subject, without being either understood or truly forgotten" (Bishop 340-341). Traumatic memory is a disrupted kind of memory which is spawned by a "troubled" past. It is an abnormal memory of a traumatic experience, and one that makes bearing witness to such an experience all but impossible. Little wonder French historian Annette Wieviorka argues that "traumatic memory [...] is in danger of replacing history and distorting it, transforming witness testimony into kitsch" (as cited in Dean 117). Trauma is "a state of mind characterized by a shock and stasis produced by the experiences or situations which are extremely painful and distressing, overshadowing people's ability to cope and leaving them powerless" (Zahoor 61). Hence, an individual who suffers from psychological trauma finds it extremely difficult to fully recount the event leading to his/her terrible condition. It is this personal psychological trauma that is countenanced by early literary trauma theorists (Caruth, "Introduction" 154–155; Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 6-10).

While Caruth and other pioneers of literary trauma theory focus on event-based trauma (Craps 4), a group of scholars started interrogating trauma through a cultural or collective lens (Alexander, "Toward a Theory" 1–2). By the turn of the twenty-first century, a group of sociologists, including Neil Smelser, Jeffrey Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bjorn Wittrock, Bernhard Giesen, and Piotr Sztompka came up with "a conceptual framework for analysing historical events" known as cultural trauma (Eyerman 1). One of the leading scholars of the group, Alexander (*Trauma* 2012) "maintain[s] that events do not, in and

of themselves, create collective trauma. Events are not inherently traumatic. Trauma is a socially mediated attribution" (13). The wager of this theory is that trauma, beyond being personal, transcends the boundary of a shocking event and can spread among a people who share the same identity. Eyerman states that "cultural trauma refers to a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people who have achieved some degree of cohesion" (23). Obviously, underlying (psychoanalytic) trauma theory are several contradictions and paradoxes. However, pioneers of this theoretical trend are not unaware of this compendium of contradictions as Caruth ("Introduction" 151) quickly points out: "Beginning with the earliest work on trauma, a perplexing contradiction has faced the basis of its many definitions and description…" In another instance, Caruth (*Unclaimed Experience* 91) submits that "[t]raumatic experience, beyond the psychological dimension of suffering it involves, suggests a certain paradox; that the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it; that immediacy, paradoxically, may take the form of belatedness". It is for this reason that Hartman concludes that "[t]raumatic knowledge, then, would seem to be a contradiction in terms" (537).

Closely related to cultural trauma is intergenerational/transgenerational trauma which has its genealogy traced to Holocaust trauma studies (Nir 1). Holocaust scholars and critics have severally asserted the possibility or impossibility of children inheriting the trauma of their parents (Langer ix; Možina and Erzar 3). Such scholars focus on inheritance of trauma by descendants or transmission of traumatic experience from one generation to another (Jacobs 15; Ayodeji 1). This transmission of trauma from children to parents – called "postmemory" – posits that trauma may not end with the person or group of people who first experienced a traumatic event (Frosh 10). In the words of Hirsch,

> "Postmemory" describes the relationship that the "generation after" bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before – to experiences they "remember" only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right. (5)

In fact, as Schwap (68) attempts to formulate it, descendants of perpetrators may also show signs of trauma. Although research has attested to the

intergenerational transmission of traumatic experiences, Jacobs perceives such a transmission as "complicated and multifaceted" (149). Jacobs's conclusion comes out of her study of the survivors of the Holocaust and their descendants who are still haunted by the past. While this portends a negative trend, Jacobs believes it is "better understood as an ongoing dynamic of integration, reidentification, and reattachment in which succeeding generations continually negotiate and strengthen the bonds of kinship with survivors and their pasts" (151). What Jacobs actually has in mind is finding ways of exploiting intergenerational transmission of trauma to salvage the socio-cultural strains that hold us back.

A dialogue between traumas in Michael Rothberg's model

Bell (5) contends that although collective memories can forge solidarity among members of society, the contingency of such an alliance poses a serious social contention. One major contribution of Michael Rothberg to collective memory is his advancement of solidarity amonggroup victims of diverse cultures, nationalities, races, and identities in order to create a more peaceful world to live in (Ayodeji 3). Kaplan, in his work *Landscapes of Holocaust Postmemory*, agrees with Rothberg's *Multidirectional Memory* (2009) in its exemplary examination of the "place [of] the Holocaust in context with other traumas" (5). Professor of English and Comparative Literature and memory studies scholar Michael Rothberg conceptualises multidirectional memory as "the dynamic interaction between memories belonging to different times, places and groups" (Lie 576). While problematising the popular zero-sum game which presents Holocaust as unique vis-à-vis other traumas, Rothberg ("From Gaza" 524) argues that collective memories of seemingly distinct histories – such as those of slavery, the Holocaust, and colonialism – are not so easily separable from one another. To Rothberg ("From Gaza" 524–525), beyond being unnecessarily competitive, traumatic memories/experiences of people of diverse backgrounds exhibit certain similarities even in their uniqueness, and can speak to each other to forge progressive alliances.

Spurred by the weaknesses of the existing trauma theories, most importantly, their restriction of the scope of victimisation and perpetration, Rothberg's recent book *The Implicated Subject* (2019) expands the scope of his call for solidarity to accommodate not only the categories of victims and perpetrators,

but the figure of the implicated subjects (Rothberg "Trauma" 201). As he clearly elucidates, "[i]nterlocking systems of oppression produce implicated subjects as well as victims and perpetrators. The innocent, uninvolved bystander is, in most cases, an idealized myth" (Rothberg, *The Implicated* 202). Rothberg (*The Implicated*) strongly believes that as far as the reproduction or perpetuation of history of injustice and oppression is concerned, nobody is completely innocent. Implicated subjects, though not the originators of regimes of injustice, indirectly benefit from or contribute to such regimes. Rothberg, thus, treats "implication as a grey zone of moral responsibility" (Watt 86) which must be shouldered tenaciously and holistically. Rothberg further explains: "In the face of complex implication, a multidirectional politics of differentiated, long-distance solidarity has greater purchase than a politics premised on identification, purity, or the absolute separation between locations and histories" (*The Implicated* 203). Rothberg is quite aware of the difficulty in forging such solidarity, but believes that passing over the responsibility would not do humanity any good.

Rothberg's multidirectional memory and theory of implication are useful theoretical tools for analysing Faridah Àbíké-Íyímídé's Young Adult novel *Ace of Spades* (2021). Written by a young black American author, *Ace of Spades* isan interesting story about youthfulness, queerness, gossip, betrayal, and racism. But racism is the motif that drives other elements. The two protagonists – Devon Richards and Chiamaka Adebayo – Black American and Black/Nigerian Italian respectively, have almost nothing in common – of course aside from having the same skin colour – until an anonymous bully called Aces begins to blackmail them. Realising the management of Niveus Private Academy (their school) is silent about their ordeal, "they suspect the harassment to be racially motivated" (Quealy-Gainer 414). Their subsequent awareness of the racist mission of the school draws them to each other – and to outsiders too. The author, who sees the book as a representation of her lived experience (and purgation of her trauma), creates Devon and Chiamaka as a dose of therapy to all victims of racism. This paper argues that the author's world of reality is entwined with the characters' unreal world – both detachedly connected by the uniqueness of their dark skin. Linking the traumatic experiences or memories of the author with those of the protagonists, the novel sheds multidirectional light on the memory of racism and slavery. Just as it was with the author, the protagonists' experiences progress from personal to intergenerational trauma. As the analysis will reveal, the actions of the whites, portrayed as the implicated subjects of racism and slavery, are a sure trigger

of intergenerational trauma. Conclusively, the premise of this paper is that the new media can serve as a convenient site of thoughtful convergence for different victim groups to devise a means of dismantling long-existing regimes of oppression and injustice.

Annexing traumatic sites in *Ace of Spades*

Interaction or synergy of memories without giving way to competition among them underpins Rothberg's multidirectional memory (Günay-Erkol and Şenol-Sert 3; Judaken 492–493). Multidirectional memory "acknowledges how remembrance both cuts across and binds together diverse spatial, temporal, and cultural sites" (Rothberg, *Multidirectional* 11). This means that diverse sites of memory can interact even though they are separated by space and time: "Far from being situated – either physically or discursively – in any single institution or site, the archive of multidirectional memory is irreducibly transversal; it cuts across genres, national contexts, periods, and cultural traditions" (Rothberg 18). Without mincing words, it is argued here that different sites of suffering or traumatic histories interlock in Faridah Àbíké-Íyímídé's *Ace of Spades*. In the Author's Note of the novel, Àbíké-Íyímídé states that she did not write her work in a vacuum: her isolation and feeling of neglect are the source of her inspiration. Àbíké-Íyímídé, besides growing up in the slums of South London which werehighly populated by Black people, also attended a high school wherealmost 90 percent of thestudents were Black (Àbíké-Íyímídé 327).

It was not until she went to a university in Scotland that she appreciated her South London community. She, for the first time in her life, felt nostalgic and uncomfortable in thewhite-dominated university. The author recounts how she found it difficult to cope in the university because she had no friends and felt hated. She now saw her hideous university experience as a portent of the obnoxious system created to suppress people of her colour. Realising the markedly huge difference between her high school and her new university in terms of the number of Black students enrolled, Àbíké-Íyímídé was faced with a maddening questioning of her personality and colour (327–328). The prodding memory of her former school and her home (both Black-dominated) gives her reason to feel less comfortable in the new environment. The situation she has found herself in the university exemplifies the system of isolation smoothly operating in her home and high school (whichpreviously had

seemed convenient to her). For her, the three environments are separated by time and space, but are closely knitted by a system of isolation which her race is made to suffer. Thus, Àbíké-Íyímídé sees all these places as portending varied degrees or sites of suffering not only for herself but for Black people generally. No wonder she hopes that her writing of this book represents a form of therapy for every Black person like herself.

Similarly, in *Ace of Spades*, no space (the tripartite places of home, neighbourhood, and school) provides utmost comfort to Devon Richards and Chiamaka Adebayo. In Devon's case, home is symbolic of inconvenience, imbued with disturbing images of traumatic memories: from the homely, cramped room he shares with his two troublesome younger brothers, his father's uncaring disposition to his family before he was finally convicted for a crime, to his ma's continual rumination over her inability to easily cater to the needs of her children. Their living condition is so poor that whenever it is raining heavily, raindrops spill through the crack in the bottom of the window which has remained too permanently stuck to be closed. With the unsettling memory of his father haunting him, Devon, just like his room's window, "...sometimes feel like [he's] stuck in a loop, reliving the same day over and over" (102). He is confused, fearful of the blurring future which he would not want to mirror his bleak present.

His fears grow the more as he weighs what could be his ma's possible reaction to his sexual preference if she finally knewabout it. He believes she will be disappointed knowing her son is gay, which is unbiblical. That aside, the mother would further be heartbroken if Aces's revelations led to his son dropping out of a school where she had thought his bright future was assured. Ironically, then, the much detested home now turns into a temporary "comfort zone" for Devon: "But now I run to the bad for comfort. I walk out of the school, along the polished streets and past perfect homes, until I reach the unpolished parts of town, where I can't afford to look down anymore" (114). Deducible from Devon's statement is that his home is a replica of the larger Black community. Devon's neighbourhood is a much disorganisedsociety where "[t]he houses are small and unkept, some with smashed-in windows and graffiti on the walls. This place looks like the aftermath of an apocalypse" (261). Chiamaka's description of Devon's horrendous neighbourhood is by no means different from Devon's depiction of the same:

> This world, our world, the one with houses as crooked as the people in them. Broken people, broken by the way the world works. No jobs, no money;

> sell drugs, get money. That's what this world is, that's how it works. I don't want it to be like that for me. I don't want to stay here. (256)

These descriptions of a society lacking in minimal social amenities and of a people living in deprivation, neglect and roughness lay bare why Devon lives in fear about his future too. He fears that his poor environment and its people's crooked way of life could mar his future life, and he tries to build a better future for himself.

Devon hates his neighbourhood almost as much as he hates Niveus Academy, his school. Like the author's, his neighbourhood is predominantly populated by the black, but he (black himself) only manages to live there as an outcast. An outcast, not just because he now attends a white-dominated school, but because almost all the boys he grew up with in the neighbourhood don't want to see his face. More than he even fears for his future in this disorganised world, he fears the boys with whom he grew up. The boys often victimise Devon so that passing through his neighbourhood on his way home from Niveus becomes a nightmarish daily experience for him. He becomes even more uncomfortable with their stares and whispers when he thinks of them having got a hint about the picture of his amorous homosexual affair with Scotty being circulated by Aces. He fears that they could kill him if they got wind of such a secret.

While Devon is aware that his neighbourhood and Niveus are worlds apart, he can't help feeling paranoid about the boys and his ma getting information about his secrets in school. Devon explains that "Niveus isn't so far from our neighbourhood. Our school lies between two worlds: the side of town where the rich people live, and then our side, where people can't afford food or health care" (75). The school which normally would give him some sense of security, a hiatus from a disorganised home and hostile neighbourhood, now makes him feel scared since Aces started posting and revealing his secret sexual escapades. Since the picture and video of his affair with Scotty went out, Devon has formed a habit of keeping his head down regardless of where he is – his school or his neighbourhood. When he walks in his neighbourhood, he even feels more uneasy and paranoid.

Every smile, laughter or whisper (and silence) by other students is suggestive of derision or mockery consequent upon Aces's revelation of his secret sexual affair with other boys. Before the unfolding events, he was not a significant student and, as such, caught no other students' attention. Devon craves a

return to those "good" old days of "insignificance", but that seems to be impossible. Now, the reality is that he has to endure shame in school. Much as he wishes for security or moments of joy outside of Niveus, there is nowhere that could be called a haven. Unfortunately for him, his home, neighbourhood and Niveus – all represent several different hurtful memories. Playing on the piano in his music class, with his favourite teacher Mr. Taylor in charge, which used to give him some peace of mind does not enthuse him anymore. The music class has lost its convenience because he is suspicious of other students. Worsestill, Mr. Taylor's betrayal of his trust also does much damage to his plan for the future. Regretfully, Devon eventually tells his mom that he hates school. Where does he plan her future from – home or neighbourhood? Each place and person he can think of reminds him of a traumatic experience: "I feel so lost and out of control. Andre, my pa, Niveus, Aces. All of them, and the memories I have with them, strangling me" (259).

Home for Chiamaka, on the surface, might appear not as terrible as it is for Devon, but there is just a little difference between the two. Chiamaka's home is beautiful and located in a good, well-organised environment. Every comfort she needs is provided in her room. This is understandable because she has a rich Italian father. Also, her parents seem to maintain some cordial relationship – one had better not take this familial civility for granted. Her mum does not get along with her father's family; neither does Chiamaka find their favour. Barring the beautiful house they live in, to the extent that her family is emotionally disconnected, Chiamaka is as good as being insecure. As much as she tries to distance her pubescent self from that familial emotional dirge playing in the background of her parents' marital life, she is regularly confronted with a nauseating memory in her dreams. She has persistent nightmares about an accident which had led to the crushing of a girl by his friend Jamie's car. Both had abandoned the poor girl, writhing in pain, on the spot without taking her to hospital.

Chiamaka lives (and is expected to sleep soundly and undisturbed) in her cozy room, but the scene of the accident, "permanently carved into [her] memory" (83) and replaying over and over in her head, does not make the room convenient anymore. She has sleepless nights in her dark room perspiring, devastated by the memory of the girl. She says that some nights, she has that terrible dream more than once and always sits in her room thinking about what would happen to her plans for the future if more incriminating secrets of hers were revealed by Aces. She fears that such a revelation could ruin

her chances of going to college and having a good future. Now, she prefers walking to driving a car she begged her parents to buy for her. Since the accident happened, she has been too shakento be able to drive.

In school too, Chiamaka seems to command much respect among the students because of her brilliance and charm. As the first scene unfolds, Chiamaka is chosen Senior Head Prefect. The narrator of the scene, Devon, sees her as deserving of the position: "Chiamaka's been Head Prefect three years in a row now; she was the Junior Head Prefect as well as the Sophomore Head Prefect – there's nothing remotely shocking about her selection" (14). However, Chiamaka sees her attainment of the position as what she had passionately and cunningly worked for. She maintains that, her brilliantacademic performance notwithstanding, her cunning and pretence has made her what she is in the school. So, her relationship with other students is a transaction, built on suspicion, jealousy, rivalry, and a means of getting power. She claims that even thoughshe is always seen together with Ava and Ruby does not mean they are true friends.

When Aces begins to make life even more tiresome for her by posting about her nasty lifestyle, the only friend, Jamie, she could confide in eventually betrays her. Jamie had driven the car that crushed the girl, but he has deliberately obliterated the memory of the accident. He denies ever being involved in the accident, leaving Chiamaka to deal all alone with the worries attached to Aces's posting about her killing of the girl. She feels betrayed by Jamie's pretence and accusation: "Didn't you hit her? Leave the body? That's called a hit-and-run, Chi …People go down for that." Jamie's voice burns my ears. I see blood, I see her blond matted curls, I see her wide eyes…" (189). This experience makes life in school more miserable for her.

"Can corpses undie?" Identifying the implicated subjects of racism

Terrell is the first person to link Aces's harassment of the only two black students in Niveus to racism. He wonders why no other white student is targeted by Aces and tries to convince Devon about the rationality of that argument. Yet, Devon does not buy into that vain argument as he believes not all white people in the school are bad. If anything, he trusts Jack, his close friend, and Mr. Taylor, his music teacher. Devon talks confidently about the loyalty of the duo to him, and the impossibility of them ever hurting him. He

also believes that Jack would not pretend to be his friend if he were racist. Terrell, who does not trust white people, however, insists that racism goes beyond the white being friends with the black as all white people are complicit in racism. Terrell discloses that this white supremacy is a carryover of the past experience which Black activists like Malcom X tried to fight.

The realisation of the racist mission of the white students begins to dawn on Devon when the posters of "a passed-out Chiamaka" with inscriptions such as "Bitch" or "Slut" (180) are put up in every corner of the school. Devon, then, begins to read racist meaning to Aces's harassment. He later tells Terrell: "My face. Chiamaka's face. It's hard to ignore the lack of white faces on the posters. It's hard to ignore the obvious thing tying Chiamaka and me together now: our Black skin" (184). Clearly, Aces's harassment is not born out of homophobic parochialism. For the first time, Devon senses that white students like Scotty and Jamie who had been involved in illicit sexual acts donot get their secrets posted, or highlighted if posted at all. He and Chiamaka still remain the victims of shame and guilt. Just like Devon, Chiamaka initially finds it difficult to believe that Aces is on a racist agenda to destroy the only two black students in the school. But she reminisces about her relationship with Jamie: how he left her for Belle, abandoned the latter eventually just to show his hatred for her (Chiamaka), and is complicit in spreading her secrets through Aces. She, therefore, appropriates Aces's and Jamie's hate of her and Devon to racism.

Devon, on the other hand, is totally devastated to realise in the end, when going through names on Aces's list, that his close friend from childhood, Jack, is one of those implicated in the racist project. Realising that Jack is responsible for all the revelations Aces has made about him, his subsequent breakup with Dre, and his feeling of unease atschool, Devon becomes even more restless. As he scrolls through the names, familiar names of his school mates pop up. This realisation confirms for him Terrell's appropriation of racism to all white people. When later Terrell asks who Aces is, Devon, who is no less distressed by Jack's complicity in the racist agenda, replies: "A whole bunch of people at school – students … I saw a list of names – names I recognize" (233). To worsen the case for him, he has to battle with Mr. Taylor's betrayal too – two important, trusted people in his life just revealed as enemies. He tells Chiamaka: "And I think the teachers are involved too. They all seem to have tasks. And they do this until we have no choice but to drop out, I guess, our futures ruined, or I don't know … worse" (233).

Despite having had an apprehension of the accident as a set-up to tarnish

her reputation and get her out of the school, Chiamaka continues to be tormented by the traumatic memory of the girl in the accident. She now tends to believe the reality of the unreal which the whole scenario has processed in her mind for a long time. She shows instances of trauma when she asks and confesses: "How do you undo a fake memory? My brain still can't let go, see it as anything but real" (249). In fact, she is lost in the same traumatic memory when she rhetorically asks Belle: "do you think death is permanent? Or can corpses undie, roll out of graves, and find their way into Niveus?" (242). Read deeper, the questions are not too rhetorical to be left unattended. The appropriate answer would be that corpses do "undie" in order to disturb the living. "Corpses", here, is a metaphor for memory of the slavery and segregation of black people which still intrudes into the present. In this case, Martha Robinson, the girl thought to have been killed, becomes an implicated subject of racism. Her implication in this injustice is in sync with Rothberg's argument that implicated subjects consciously or indirectly invest in white supremacy to perpetuate "systematic racism and thus enable 'lethal vectors of perpetration'" (*The Implicated* 8).

The only person who seems to be remorseful about the whole racist project in *Ace of Spades* is Belle, Martha's sister. She rues being implicated in the modern-day slavery, but explains that she has no power to stop the game of future destruction in which she must play her part. A strategy, which Belle calls "social eugenics" (Àbíké-Íyímídé 244), is employed to promote racial injustice against black students. A large group of white people is implicated: teachers like Mr. Taylor and Headmaster Ward; students, including Jack, Jamie, and Belle; parents and other professionals such as journalists. However, as Rothberg states, "[A] clear understanding of one's own implication in multileveled conditions of violence and injustice is not a sufficient condition for social change, but it may be a necessary step for the creation of alliances among differently situated subjects" (*The Implicated* 33). Although Belle later realises that she is implicated in the racist project, she does not (or dare not) take any concrete step towards making other implicated subjects abandon the act of injustice.

The yearbooks which Chiamaka finds in Morgan Library also provide a close link of Aces's (or Niveus's) action to slavery and white supremacy. At least there are few black faces in the photographs on the wall of the library, but, surprisingly, the same faces are missing in the yearbooks. That suggests to Chiamaka that each of the former black students in Niveus whose faces he can see in the junior year pictures dropped out before graduation at Niveus

and there is no information about their whereabouts on the Internet. The atmosphere which this revelation educes is one of discrimination. Continuity or mummification of the legacies of slavery, which was abolished in 1866, is clearly the mission of Niveus. Little wonder, then, that Niveus proudly celebrated one hundredth anniversary of slavery abolition with exclusion of black faces from the 1965 yearbook. And "the ace of spades", beyond a game, represents the pleasure derived in eliminating black students from the school.

New media: A new site for solidarity

Niveus's practice of eliminating two black students enrolled every ten years as a reminder of slavery in the US is analogous to "corpses" which are "undying" after years of thinking they had been buried in their graves and forgotten. The need to dig deeper, reinter the corpses in the deepest of the earth and let them "rest in peace" while leaving the present generation to live tranquilly ever after is the stake of Rothberg's *The Implicated Subject*. Rothberg asserts, "the purpose of positing the category of the implicated subject is to open up possibilities for solidarity across social locations" (*The Implicated* 33). In *Ace of Spades*, new media – the Internet and X/Twitter especially – serve as a good site for forging solidarity among victims of injustice. Unluckily, though, the implicated subjects fail to use new media to correct the wrongs of the past. While the implicated subjects, well represented by Aces, use new media to reproduce and promote legacies of slavery by blackmailing the only two black students in Niveus with the aim of forcing them out of the school, the victims use new media to their advantage. For instance, Devon and Terrell's interaction with new media avails them a better understandingof what Niveus Private Academy stands for. Through checking "niveus"onthe Internet, both are able to know that the word in its Latin sense means "white". Also through the same medium, they come to know that *Niveus Private Academy* "was founded by some of the biggest funders of slavery – popular plantation owners, merchants and bankers who financed operations" (Àbíké-Íyímídé 234). So, both now see the school as an agency created to preserve the legacies of slavery in the present time. In doing just that, the teachers, students, and alumni of the school – all white – become implicated subjects.

But it is in the invaluable, bold step taken by Devon that we actually see new media as a site for solidarity. Lying confused in his room and feeling

unconvinced about informing Ms. Donovan – a white journalist – about the plot to frustrate them out of Niveus, Devon opens his Twitter account. An instant urge to tweet about Niveus surges through his mind, but it takes him a great deal oftime finally to yield. He eventually tweets: "**@DLikesTunes: #NiveusPrivateAcademy exposed: This school sabotages its Black students. Every Black student who has attended since 1965 has been targeted and forced to drop out. I was one of the most recent victims. Here's proof**" (267, emphasis in original). He then attaches some images and pictures as evidence. As he has not got many followers, he does not see his tweet generating any serious reaction. That feeling could have ledhim not to tell Chiamaka about it until much later.

When Devon clicks on his tweet from the previous day, he becomes amazed to see that the tweet has garnered 24,000 likes and a great dealof positive comments supporting their cause, making him optimistic about getting justice. Devon now begins to see sense in Chiamaka's insistence that Niveus can be defeated. When Devon receives a tweet from @CindyIsHere47 asking for him to grant their company an interview, he still has some suspicion about her and the company she represents. Not until he finds out that the company is reputable and "[k]nown for their unapologetic articles and fearless takes. All detailing the lives of people like us, wronged by the systems" (319) does he trust them. In the end, when every other option fails and both Devon and Chiamaka almost get killed at the Senior Snowflake Charity Ball, having been betrayed by journalist Ms. Donovan and her crew, Twitter saves the day. Protesters, mostly blacks, who got wind of the unjust situation through Devon's tweet, rush onto the school premises, disrupt their activities, and set the whole school ablaze. The school ceases to exist. Both Devon and Chiamaka finally fulfil their dream in life: one becoming a professor and the other a medical doctor.

Conclusion

A young girl herself, Faridah Àbíké-Íyímídé not only shows how young adults are implicated in racism and white supremacy, she unveils that young victims can employ new media to forge an alliance that works. With Rothberg's work, a new way of rethinking trauma by taking historical-political responsibility is birthed. This responsibility, Rothberg posits, transcends cultivating unnecessary competition among memories across borders; rather, it entails advancing

solidarity amonggroup victims of diverse cultures, nationalities, races, and identities in order to create a more peaceful world to live in. Forming such alliances goes beyond focusing merely on the binary categories of victimhood and perpetration to including the figure of the implicated subject. Faridah Àbíké-Íyímídé's Young Adult novel, *Ace of Spades*, indicates how diverse sites of trauma in the author's world synergise with those of the protagonists, albeit the victims are of different backgrounds. Also, while the paper clearly identifies some white characters in *Ace of Spades* as implicated subjects of racism and white supremacy, it discursively underlines the unwillingness of these implicated subjects to use new media in correcting the wrongs of the past. On the whole, the premise of this paper is that new media can serve as a convenient site of thoughtful convergence for variousvictim groups to devise a means of dismantling long-existing regimes of oppression and injustice.

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