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LISTENING FOR GEOGRAPHIES:
MUSIC AS SONIC COMPASS POINTING TOWARD
AFRICAN AND CHRISTIAN DIASPORIC HORIZONS
IN THE CARIBBEAN

ELIZABETH MCALISTER

I met my partner in Haiti while I was doing field research on Vodou and music. At the time he was a sound tech for his sister's band, Boukman Eksperyans. We were introduced at the Rex Theater in downtown Port-au-Prince, right on the stage, a few hours before the show. The band usually set up to a soundtrack of its own music or to Bob Marley and the Wailers pumped up to a volume I found uncomfortable but that the musicians loved. Loud music made the air thicker, and it shaped the space into a pulsating, vibrating, energized place.

Hand-carved drums thundered during the sound check. The band members of Boukman Eksperyans were self-conscious researchers of the musical legacy of the African Diaspora that had brought their forebears to Haiti during colonial slavery. Taking ethnographic forays into the countryside to historic religious compounds, the band learned the rhythms, songs, and dances associated with the eighteenth-century diasporic strands: the Dahome, the Nago, the Kongo, and the Ibo. They blended these styles, along with elements of Protestant and Rastafari thought, into their own rock fusion and toured the Antilles, the United States, Canada, Europe, and Japan on Chris Blackwell's Island record label (and its subsidiary, Mango). Traveling through the networks of the contemporary Haitian Diaspora, the band sang of the Afro-Creole history of Haiti. They crafted a religious message and a politics of a creole past even as they leaned into a globalizing future, heaving their Dahomean-derived drums through airport metal detectors together with digital music players slung from their back pockets.

Music makes a place where my husband can live in his body. Now that we have moved to a university town in Connecticut, my husband has become adept at streaming live Haitian radio broadcasts over the Internet and through the many speakers in our house. He pumps up the volume just like in the old sound check days, playing his favorite style, *konpa*. Our daily activities in New England are punctuated by the lively advertising jingles

and the radio news in Port-au-Prince. In these moments the soundtrack of our lives echoes the soundscape of a household in Haiti (when there is electricity there, that is). Living away from his extended family and friends, outside his country and culture, my partner tells our children that he came to the U.S. too late, when he was too old to be remade here. Yet when we return to Haiti, he is clearly marked as a partial outsider, a “diaspora,” by his clothing, his physical fitness, and an Americanness readable in other subtle ways. He has become like many transmigrants who are no longer quite fully at home anywhere. For him, I think, Haitian music and radio ads move him to a psychic space closer to home. In fact, for my husband, music itself is a kind of home and hearing it makes him feel he is “in his skin” (see Ramnarine 2007). When the devastating earthquake struck Haiti on January 12, 2010, he lived in an in-between netherworld, playing the only radio station still on the air, Signal FM. We listened to the litany of the dead, the on-air discussions and the slow dirges on Haitian radio, with the television turned soundlessly to CNN (see also McAlister 2012a).

But the *konpa* music changes its tune when my husband’s brother visits. Frèy Guy is *konvèti* (converted), an evangelical who frowns on mainstream *konpa* because it encourages hip rolling, couples dancing, and impure thoughts. Guy brings audiocassettes, CDs, videos, and DVDs of evangelical *konpa*, Haitian gospel, Haitian church services, and Haitian evangelical TV shows. The weekend after the quake, Guy and his family came from Boston to wait for news at our house. The scripture of the day on their favorite Web site was about earthquakes, all part of God’s mysterious plan. Visiting with Guy, we are invited to feel at home in a different diaspora, or more properly phrased, a global movement. Through witnessing and through music, Guy works to convince us that we belong to the one and only Kingdom of God.¹

* * *

Very like Proust’s character dipping a petit madeleine into his tea and being at once flooded by the uncanny sensations of involuntary memory, music has the extraordinary capacity to transport us emotionally to an earlier moment and to re-experience fragmented sensations from the past. A sound, a chord change, a melody, or a particular phrase sends us back to another place and time, to feel a certain way about the past and, of course, therefore, the present. This is the main theoretical question that animates this essay on music and diaspora: can musical sounds reveal history, or collective identity, or new notions of geography in different ways than texts or migrating

1. This essay is dedicated to my Koukou Oli, who has listened, traipsed, recorded, transcribed, discussed, and produced so much music with me over the past seventeen years. Thanks also to Ken Bilby, Melvin Butler, Paul C. Johnson, Jason Craige Harris, Marc Hertzman, Paul Uhry Newman, Raquel Z. Rivera, and Mark Slobin for their ideas and comments and to M. J. Kenny and Robin Nagle for their inspiration.

people themselves? This piece offers the idea that the sounds of music, with their capacity to index memories and associations, become sonic points on a cognitive compass that orients diasporic people in time and space. Tuning in to sonic compass points is one way they come to know a sense of belonging, of “being in their skin.” Music making is one way individuals and groups position themselves towards privileged geographies and locate themselves in the spaces they construct.

This essay listens to grassroots religious musical productions in order to show that Afro-Caribbean groups can stake out multiple diasporic identities in overlapping diasporic spaces through the various political registers of tribe, kingdom, and nation. While researchers often focus on the national diasporas produced through the recent shifts and flows of globalization, I want to illustrate some of the *limits* of the concept of national and ethnic diaspora to understand how Caribbean groups form networks and imagine themselves to be situated. I argue that even groups with self-consciously diasporic identities premised on a national past and culture can form extranational identities through a Christian religious imaginary that mimics salient features of ethnic diasporas. In the case of communities of Haitians and Dominicans with whom I’ve done fieldwork since the early 1980s, imagined geographies of diaspora feature multiple horizons (Johnson 2007), and can be focused on Haiti, the Dominican Republic, or all of Hispaniola and simultaneously on a past Kongo Kingdom or on the future Christian Kingdom of God. These cognitive maps, in turn, open up possibilities for multiethnic networks and forms of group belonging.

I also show how even though evangelical Protestantism is not a diaspora in the established sociological sense, many Caribbean Christians conceive of their “spiritual lineage,” their past, and their future in ways that mirror a “classic” diasporic consciousness. This Christian diasporic sensibility comes precisely out of the genealogy of diaspora in Judaism and its appropriation by Christian thinkers. Christians are not a diaspora by current social science definition, since they do not share an ethnic identity or a common homeland. But do they not fashion themselves as one people through the transcending of ethnicity in the universal possibility of Christian salvation? And do they not have a homeland for which they are nostalgic in the Jerusalem of the ancient Israelites, whose identities they have appropriated as God’s new chosen? Further, they actively envision an immanent “return” through the future in-gathering in the New Jerusalem of the Heavenly Kingdom.

I also offer the intervention that although it is plain to hear in musical styles, lyrics, and consumption flows, the Christianity of many groups in the Americas remains off the charts for many researchers. The local and lively musical forms of the Caribbean—calypso, zouk, reggae, salsa, merengue, *konpa*, etc.—all seem much more interesting to researchers than Christian music, with its steady, European-derived hymns and its biblically

based lyrics. Yet I will suggest that the growth of spirit-filled Christianity in the southern sphere is directly linked to the fact that this Christianity incorporates indigenous forms of music as a biblical injunction to "Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving; Make music to our God on the harp" (Psalms 147:7). Even where the rituals of liturgy, preaching, prayer, witnessing, and testifying take a similar form throughout the world, Christian musics will be various and multiple, allowing groups to produce sonic indexes that create deep associations and a sense of belonging. Music making in its multiple indigenous forms is a central part of what allows evangelicalism to grow and accompany the many diasporas in the Americas.

Diaspora, Religion, Music

In the last twenty years, scholarship on the histories of peoples of African descent in the Americas has come in large measure to pivot on the concept of diaspora. So, too, in ethnomusicology, diaspora is one of the most common rubrics of academic study (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000, 25). Some have lamented the term's ubiquity and have complained that in designating everything a diaspora, the term becomes stretched to the breaking point and loses its usefulness (Slobin 2003, 289). It seems time to refine our theorizing of diaspora, attend to the many ways it is used by various groups and for different agendas, elaborate the ways it can be useful intellectually as a critical concept, and continue to open up ways in which the diaspora concept helps understand history and culture or limits our understanding. Part of this effort involves investigating what the study of music might add to the study of diaspora in general, the African Diaspora in particular, and the Caribbean region especially.

I'm going to bring together two techniques in defining diaspora: the genealogical (later in the discussion), which involves tracing historical uses of the concept, and the social scientific, which involves comparing and analyzing features of diasporic groups. Generally, the social scientific term refers to (1) the dispersion of an ethnic group linked from one place to multiple other places, (2) the continuing collective identity of the group through thought and practice, which necessarily correlates with the group's maintaining differences with the "host" group, often through the building of institutions, (3) the cultivation of memory about the "homeland," often characterized by nostalgia, (4) the maintenance of practical ties with groups in the "homeland," and (5) the cultivation of the idea of an eventual return (Johnson 2007, 44).

Haiti has been one of the most studied areas in diaspora studies (see Basch, Glick-Schiller, and Szanton-Blanc 1994). The first island Columbus staked out in 1492, Aiyiti-Kiskeya, then Hispaniola, now Haiti, is of central historical importance in the hemisphere, as it was second to the U.S. in

achieving independence and first in abolishing slavery. In early African Diaspora studies (and before that term came into use), Haiti was famous for being at the “most African” end of Herskovits’s (problematic) continuum of “Africanisms in the New World” (Herskovits and Herskovits 1966). Haitians are more recently known in the Caribbean literature for being self-consciously diasporic; the term *yon djaspòra* (a diaspora) in Haitian Kreyòl designates a person, like my husband, who returns to Haiti from outside.

As important as Haiti has been for diaspora studies, it may also offer a way out of several conceptual conundrums inherent in diaspora theory. For example, looking at a diasporic group defined nationally points inherently to the critique of the nonboundedness of the nation-state that diaspora theory offers, only to short-circuit that critique by maintaining focus on a national group. Furthermore, how does one parse diaspora through time, since most Caribbean groups have, at this point, been subject to more than one diasporic moment? The vignette with which I opened makes reference to several upheavals. For Haitians this includes (1) the “African Diaspora” of various West and Central African ethnic groups who were trafficked *into* Saint-Domingue to fuel the machine of colonial slavery; (2) the Saint-Domingue dispersal of planter refugees and their slaves fleeing *from* Haiti (Saint-Domingue)—to Louisiana and elsewhere—during the Haitian Revolution; (3) the Haitian transnational diasporas of twentieth-century labor migration outflows to the Dominican Republic, Cuba, the Bahamas, and to the North and Europe in the brain drain spurred by the Duvalier dictatorship; and (4) the continuing diasporic flows that result from Haiti’s downward political and economic spiral. How can we understand how the “African Diaspora” becomes articulated with the Haitian Diaspora or other national diasporas?

With the developments of postmodernist, postcolonialist, and race theory, critical attention is turning to the complex and contradictory ways people and groups produce space, experience time, and locate themselves in collective identities in relation to modernity. While religion is often seen as resisting modernity, it is also true that religious thought, practice, and collective identity is itself articulated with forms of modernity, and these forms may exceed the limits of diaspora. To wit: evangelical Protestantism is sweeping the Americas. A full one-third of Haitians are estimated to engage with evangelical Christianity (much of which is Pentecostal). How exactly is Christianity articulated with the Caribbean, or Haitian, Diaspora? Is Christianity itself a diaspora? If not, in what ways can the new charismatic evangelical Christianity that is on the rise in the southern sphere be *likened* to a diaspora? I suggest that if we think about religion and spatiality when we listen to music of the Haitian diaspora, we will better understand the various modes through which people locate themselves and each other

within multiple realms. By reminding ourselves of the genealogy of the notion of diaspora in religious thought, we might better understand certain postdiasporic, extra-ethnic global identity formations, even among ethnic and national diasporic groups.

Music is one of the most transportable, most easily appropriated features of culture, since music can be practiced without material objects and is associated with religion, healing, pleasure, entertainment, work, and play and with deep bodily sensations linked to memory. Music makers collectively formulate ideas, sentiments, ideologies and politics. To make and experience music is to touch emotion, nostalgia, associations with homeland, nationalism, life away, community, and belonging. Turino draws from Pierce's linguistic theory to write about how music also can be said to function indexically, to point to somatically experienced associations with particular identity groups and historical conditions (Turino 2008, 8). Music indexes the time and place and people with whom we heard the music and can produce powerful emotional experiences. Like an aural version of Proust's madeleine cookie, hearing music once heard during a particular moment in life can transport us back to that moment, and we feel the emotional reverberation. Through music, the past place and the present place and condition are played in tension, and they are also in tension with the ways others, in other parts of the diaspora, are portraying them. Music can house all of these overflows of meaning. Listeners' imaginings of diasporic membership become mediated and shaped by music making.

To consider music and diaspora, we need a processual and contextual approach that assumes music making and hearing to be active processes such that, although people and groups may play the same exact music, the meaning and connotations of that music change according to the conditions under which the music is played. A carnival song played one year, under one government, will not mean the same thing after regime change; music from the homeland immediately signifies and indexes something else in exile or in diaspora. For that matter, music first created in diasporic spaces means something "extra" when it is played in the home territory. When groups are moving in diasporic networks, music can have a spatial valence and can point to other spaces of memory and association.

I offer the image that music creates sonic points on a compass orienting the hearer to one or another "diasporic horizon." Paul C. Johnson gives us the helpful theory of diasporic horizons to organize the tropes of time, space, and position in diasporic religious groups' cognitive maps (and the image works equally well for ethnic diasporas). The idea of a "diasporic horizon" pictures how diasporic identity has to do with both a spatial imagining and a temporal dimension of both past and future, of nostalgia and future return. In its spatial dimensions, groups remember certain places as original, even sacred, sources of deep and abiding identity. In its temporal sense, a future

horizon suggests “futurity and desire” and shows how diasporic identities always relate to conditions in the present (Johnson 2007, 39). Horizons are of different orders, so one could be concerned with the horizon (real or constructed) of “Africa” or even a “Kongo” or “Yoruba” tribal past while being simultaneously oriented to diasporic horizons in the Americas articulated with labor migration from island to island. This conceptualization is most relevant to groups that are more or less self-consciously diasporic. That is, certain places are remembered by groups, or conditions are striven for in the future, so that to be “diasporic” is part of “an idiom, a stance, a claim” (Brubaker 2005, 12). When music is religious, and when music making is part of ritual contact with the unseen world, music is a sonic compass pointing out cosmic directionalities. For religions that work with unseen spiritual force, music is also a transportation device, a sonic bridge linking the past, present, and future through the bodies of singers and musicians and hearers alike.

I’ll now turn to two musical genres from Haitian culture—Rara music from the Afro-Creole traditional religious complex called Vodou and evangelical music that belongs to the charismatic Christian movement. These two forms rest on opposite ends of a religious continuum that runs between Afro-Creole religion on the one hand, and evangelicalism on the other, yet they share similar characteristics in that they are each component parts of both groups’ cognitive mapping and world building. Interestingly, neither repertoire contains many songs that reference Haiti itself as a nation. Most Vodou songs refer to local, general spaces and their “owner” spirits, such as “Legba of the gate,” “Baron of the cemetery,” or “Simbi of the water.” Likewise, Christian songs in Kreyòl and French tend not to refer to Haiti itself; rather, the spatiality they reference is that of the Holy Land. Most hymns’ textual references are from the Bible, and many contain references or phrases from Scripture. So “the valley,” “the mountain,” Nazareth, Calvary, and heaven and earth are common spatial images in this music. Yet I suggest that if we pay attention to the geographies that *are* present in the texts, then both of these forms can illustrate how making and experiencing music effectively maps somatic and discursive location points that reproduce old spatialities and create new ones. These sonic points link individuals and groups and in turn locate them in terms of past and future diasporic horizons. Such sonic forms of navigation are one means by which people and groups locate themselves in space and time and through which they come to know a sense of belonging “in their skin” wherever they might live.

Rara Music and the Kongolese Diasporic Horizon

Haitian Rara is a community music form that can orient its producers to several diasporic horizons (each in its own context, which I will elaborate below). Haitian Rara is a particular genre of music with probable roots in

a stream of the Kongolese Diaspora into colonial Saint-Domingue. It was created and adapted through the generations in Haiti, and by the twentieth century Rara had developed into a full-blown annual tradition, with hundreds of local bands parading all across Haiti throughout the Lenten season—the six weeks between the end of Carnival and the weekend of Easter. Rara embarked with recent transmigrants on a second diaspora to contemporary Miami, New York, Boston, and beyond, recently to be incorporated here and there into hip-hop by Haitian music star Wyclef Jean. Rara is a festival, a musical genre, and a name for the parading bands that form multigenerational musical communities, usually consisting of extended family members. Rara bands are most often religious societies, and usually—although not always—they are going about the business of performing “spiritual work” for deities (called *lwa*). The public face of Rara is that of a carnivalesque parade, but an inner core of ritual priests conceives itself as performing religious obligations to the unseen spirits (the *lwa*), and the family dead (McAlister 2002, 88).

Rara music is a particularly evocative “sonic madeleine” because the instrument that carries the melody as the bands walk down the roads is a distinctive horn all but unheard of anywhere else. The horn produces an eerie sound almost like an owl and carries remarkably far across the mountainous terrain in Haiti. Called a *banbou* or *vaksin*, it consists of a piece of bamboo cut and hollowed, with a mouthpiece set into one end. The length of the bamboo will determine the pitch of the sound, and each *banbou* is cut deliberately to achieve a certain single pitch.² Musicians play the small horns one by one according to a common rhythm to form a melody using the technique of hocketing. (To stay on the same rhythm, the players beat a rhythmic pulse against the bamboo with a stick.) This short, catchy ostinato becomes the “sonic logo” of the band, and a good band will find a signature melody by which it becomes known throughout the village or neighborhood. Rara musicians play *banbou* along with other, metal trumpets called *konè* (also known as *klewon*), handmade metal trumpets with a yard-long tube and a flared horn at the end. They also blow *lanbi* (conch shells), cut with a hole for blowing. All of these horns are accompanied by a battery of drums, cowbells, scrapers, and percussive rattles, in addition to a chorus of singers. Drummers, horn players, singers, and percussion players form waves of musicians who walk down the roads together, followed by dancers and attracting large crowds of singing followers.

I can attest that to join a band on an outing for a night and dance for miles through public space creates a sense of exhilaration as well as a physical

2. Rara bands are often formed at the request of the Afro-Creole spirits, and according to protocol, the bamboo plant must be asked for its use and a small payment must be left in its place.

and musical “flow experience” (Turino 2008, 4). The musical memories that can be lodged somatically are profound, since one’s entire being is engaged in walking, dancing, singing, and playing for hours on end. In fact, during the last week of the festival, bands take to the streets for days, stopping for sleep and food at the compounds of patrons who can afford to host them. Entire families and communities halt their everyday lives to make music in public space, enhance the reputation of their band, and enter into new dramas (romance, alliance, betrayal) and social relations under these liminal, festival conditions.

So how does Rara music point to diasporic horizons? Keeping in mind the way musical meaning relies on context, I’ll recount four ways in which groups in Haiti or its diaspora have used Rara to locate themselves in the present with respect to a diasporic past or future. The first horizon is the past time and place of colonial Central Africa, a source in the “African Diaspora.” One understanding Haitians have is that Rara stems from a Kongolese tradition, adapted and reproduced in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Rara members in Haiti said as much when they consistently told me that Rara sits in the Kongo-Petwo-Bizango branch of the Afro-Haitian religious system (McAlister 2002, 88). Indeed, there does seem to be linguistic, ritual, and musicological evidence that Rara stems from a Kongolese source. The intriguing, fairly rare bamboo hocketed instrument is played in various parts of Africa, including Central Africa (although they are also played by indigenous peoples in the Americas).³ Numerous words in the ritual vocabulary of the Kongo-Petwo-Bizango line are recognizably derived from Kikongo words (such as *nganga*, *Lemba*, *simbi*, *doki*, *bilongo*, *pemba*, *zonbi*, etc). I recorded this song, for example, in a Rara in the early 1990s in the mountains above Port-au-Prince⁴:

Great spirit, great “point,” Simbi-in-water (x3)
 Simbi stays in the gate, he won’t come in
 Ask him what he sees, he won’t pass through
 Ask him what he sees, he won’t come in

Gwo kwa, gwo pwen mwen, Simbi nan dlo (x3)
Simbi rete nan barye-a l’pa sa rantré
Mande’l sa wè l’pa sa pase
Mande’l sa wè l’pa sa rantré

This text is cryptic in ways typical of prayer songs in Afro-Haitian religion and does not impart a narrative or clear message. But we can observe that

3. Central African Babembe bamboo horns are recorded on an LP called *Musique Kongo*, kindly shared with me by Robert Garfias, personal communication, May 2009.

4. You can listen to this song towards the end of the track titled “Notre Dame de 7 Doleurs” on Gillis 1991 or as track 5 on the CD that accompanies my book on Rara (McAlister 2002).

the song is about—and is also an invocation of—the spirit called “Simbi-of-the-water” and would be used in a religious ritual to call Simbi to possess a spirit medium. Here Simbi is also named as a “*pwen*,” (lit., “point”). This rich term in Vodou refers here to an aggressive spiritual force. A *pwen* can also refer to the *vève* (cornmeal ground drawings that “attract” the spirits) or to anything “concerned with both the distillation of knowledge and the deployment of power” (McAlister 2002, 167). In this sense, prayer-songs are also forms of *pwen* that not only “point” to spirits indexically, but also invoke them to “mount” the mediums in the religion.

In this text we learn only that Simbi lives in the water, that Simbi stays at a threshold and will not cross a boundary. However the fact that *basimbi* spirits were and are also a class of spiritual beings in Central African culture makes for strong evidence for a Kongo source. Closely related to the recently deceased ancestors, the *basimbi* are a type of reconfigured ancestor spirit. They are thought to have passed through the under-the-water world of the deceased, living instead in lakes, streams, and territories of the clan of people to which they are related (Jacobson-Widding 1979, 79). The reference to Kongo cosmology and spirit is what marks this song, and its use in the Rara, a potential reference to a past Kongo diasporic horizon.

Tracing African sources for American culture must be carried out with caution, and it still seems to be weighted with a political charge.⁵ One thing that seems clear is that people were brought from a diverse set of regions and ethnic groups from West and West Central Africa. In colonial-era Saint-Domingue, there were an estimated half a million enslaved people on the eve of the Revolution there in 1791, and two-thirds of them were African-born (Fick 1990, 25). French slavers bought slaves from Central Africa, north of the Congo River, and estate inventories show that these Kongoleses slaves comprised the largest groups on the colonial plantations—as many as forty percent in the North in the decades leading up to the Haitian Revolution (Vanhee 2002, 246). European writers of the period spoke of slaves known as “Kongos” who were famous maroon leaders, rebel army leaders, and ritual “cult” priests (Dubois 2004, 159). Don Petre, a notorious possession priest, was most surely from Kongo, where “people were already Catholicized and commonly took catholic names preceded by the honorific Dom or Dona” (Vanhee 2002, 249). Historians surmise that “Don Petre” became Don Pedro in Spanish and that this name evolved into “Petwo,” still the signifier for this “hot” “aggressive,” branch of Haitian religion.

5. This work is part of the project to trace the pasts of cultural groups, not because groups are bounded, or have essential and inherent characteristics, or are unchanging, or are knowable, but precisely because groups fashion themselves as groups in historical processes of change; because their identities change, fade, and renew themselves; and because we want to attend these processes in order to come to some understanding of social formation and cultural production.

So, do Haitians think of Rara as pointing to the Kongo Diaspora? Rural Haitians I worked with on Rara festivals had a sense of Rara as an old tradition, identified with a Kongo source, as I've mentioned. In their embodied practice, dealings with spiritual entities and Kikongo ritual vocabulary can be identified with a Kongo source culture. But they were not invested in a diasporic consciousness, with nostalgia for a Kongo past, and there was certainly no talk of a future, material, return. In only the vaguest way can they be said to have had a sense of themselves as members of Kongo Diaspora who, in Brubaker's terms, might be said to be taking a stance, or making a political claim. In Haitian Afro-Creole religion, there is reference to the "21 nations" (sometimes figured as "101 nations") that are said to comprise the coming together of many African peoples into one system. The various "branches" or "nations" in Vodou and their accompanying rhythms and rites seem to be indicators of a kind of group awareness, perhaps a kind of dissipated diasporic consciousness. So we can say that Rara music provides a reference to a Kongo past, and so to a distant Atlantic diasporic horizon, but that this is arguably a fact of more interest to students of history than to Rara members themselves. Still, this is one past horizon to which Rara music can be made to point, and we will see shortly that groups in diaspora chose to privilege this sonic point on the diasporic compass. Through musical performance they set their sights on this diasporic horizon.

My second example illustrates how performing homeland music can point back to a still-present diasporic horizon even while opening up new spaces and producing new geographies in diasporic territory. In the early 1990s in New York City, first- and second-generation Haitians began playing Rara in the parks on Sunday nights, and a new transnational Rara "scene" developed. Hundreds of young and middle-aged people would come out each week and play music, sing and dance, or follow the bands as they paraded around the southern tip of Prospect Park or near the Summerstage at Central Park. Vendors sold Haitian food, games of dominoes came out, and people formed community around the drum and the bamboo horn.

Rara's distinctive sound was (and is) an emotional "sonic madeleine" for many who participated. Band members told me that "Rara allows me to be in my skin." Like my husband listening to Internet radio, the Rara became a place to be "at home," a place to fully be alive. The diasporic horizon for the Haitian Rara members in New York was most definitely Haiti, the place where it was ironically impossible to live, yet where one could truly be alive. The community was self-consciously diasporic and transnational, as a song composed in Leogane, Haiti, could be sung in Brooklyn a week later (and vice versa).

The New York Raras sang (and sing) a variety of songs: carnival songs,

religious songs, and new songs about the diasporic context and the racism to which they are subject as black youth in the United States. Song lyrics also reference the close proximal Caribbean culture of the Rastafari and its rich religious and political imaginary. Songs about Haiti itself can take on a particular resonance for American Haitians. One song, common in the New York Rara scene, is sung in the voice of a pilgrim who is about to set off to the feast for Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the Miracle Virgin who is unofficial patron saint of Haiti. It makes reference to her famous pilgrimage to the waterfall near Ville Bonheur in central Haiti.

I'm going to Saut d'Eau, really God, I'm going to the waterfall
 Light a lamp for me, I'm leaving
 Shake the ason (priest's rattle) for me, I'm leaving
 Cecil Oh, Virgin of Miracles, give me my wish, I'm leaving.

Sodo m'prale, en verite bon dye sodo m'prale
limen limyè-a pou mwèn prale
sonen ason-an pou mwèn m'prale
Sesil-O Vièj mirak-O banm demann m'prale.

Through these lyrics, the music makers orient their musical compass to the diasporic horizon of a Haiti only recently departed, to which they rhetorically plan to return as pilgrims to the Virgin. Haiti and its Sodo waterfall are places where prayers are granted and where the deities are living and are active participants in people's lives. This Haiti, because of the transnational character of the New York Haitian diaspora, is an immediate and accessible space, unlike the distant and vague Kongo. It is both a recent past and a potentially imminent future, and through Rara songs like this, people inflect New York spaces with an Afro-Haitian geography. The performance of Haitianess, and the distinctive tones of the Rara sound, make this spatiality available to New York Haitians.

My third example of Rara allows us to see that some people may choose which diasporic horizon to orient themselves to, and one way to do this is through a conscious deployment of music making. Grupo Kalunga Neg Mawon is a group of young Dominican and Puerto Rican (mostly) men, at least one of whom grew up partly in a Dominican *batey* (cane plantation) and partly in the Bronx. The Gaga band (a Dominican form of Rara) they have formed is a consciously diasporic arts group that wants to reconcile the long-standing animosity Dominicans have for Haitians. They look to a Kongo past for wisdom, pride, and self-identity. Most members of the group are educators and political and cultural activists who participate in grassroots projects both in the Bronx and in the Dominican Republic. This group's members orient their thought back to the original horizon of Kongo. Their brochures and website state,

Our aim is to preserve aspects of African tradition and identity existing in QuisqueyaAyiti, known today as the Dominican Republic and The Republic of Haiti.

We use the name Kalunga to highlight the Congolese cultural aspects retained in Dominican/Haitian culture and throughout the African Diaspora of the western hemisphere, such as Cuba, Puerto Rico, etc. Kalunga is a Goddess of the Congolese people known also as the Muntu-Bantu or Bakongo. She is the universal cosmos, the great bang from which all life comes, including the depths of the seas and the oceans. Kalunga also represents a time when Congolese culture was dominated by a matriarchal system where women played a prominent role in society.⁶

The Gaga members envision a pre-Christian matriarchy and a Kongolese religious orientation that is more meaningful to them than either the Roman Catholicism or Protestantism that predominate in the Dominican Republic. The New York Gaga members also foreground a strong sense of the role of Rara during the Haitian colonial period. Although they are Dominican, the Gaga members give prominence to the role of Rara parading and music in the maroon rebellions during the Revolution in ways that are more self-conscious than those of their Haitian counterparts in downtown Brooklyn: “Neg Mawon translates into Black Maroons—those who fought against slavery, many of whom were Congolese descendants like Sebastian Lemba. We use the term Neg Mawon to symbolize our resistance against slavery and colonialism in a struggle to maintain and develop our African identity against overwhelming odds.”⁷

There is indeed historical evidence that enslaved Africans practiced Rara in some form during the colonial period and that early Rara bands functioned for the rebel armies as analogues to French military marching bands during the Haitian Revolution. The nineteenth-century Haitian historian Thomas Madiou, writing of the maroon armies during the Haitian war of independence, elaborated with the intriguing details that one rebel leader named Halaou commanded an army of thousands and “marched preceded by the music of drums, lambis [conch shells], trumpets and sorcerers” (Madiou 1847, cited in Fouchard 1981, 346). When communities of young Haitians and Dominicans in New York take up Rara music and ritual, its role in rebellion becomes an important association as a cultural resource that can provide a counternarrative to the prevailing colonial one.

Raquel Z. Rivera writes at length about this group (see her essay in this issue of the *Black Music Research Journal*) and explores their music, diasporic thought, and progressive vision of political reconciliation between Haitians,

6. Available at <http://www.myspace.com/grupokalunga>. Accessed May 7, 2009.).

7. Ibid.

Puerto Ricans, and Dominicans. By constructing what Rivera calls “liberation mythology,” this group of New York youth self-consciously privileges a Kongo diasporic horizon as part of a pan-Hispaniola political project (among other things) that wants to value a specifically Kongo past and set of Kongo religious principles. The groups’ members fashion themselves as modern-day “urban maroons” who take stances of resistance against contemporary neocolonialism, capitalism, and racism in both the Dominican Republic and in New York (Austerlitz 2007; Rivera 2012). Comparing the Haitian Rara players with the Dominican Gaga players in New York highlights how diasporas are not unilinear and how diasporic actors can use the polyvalent meanings of music and sound to position themselves with reference to multiple horizons.

Rara also points to another way of conceiving of diaspora and of being in diaspora. My fourth example of Rara illustrates how music making can also articulate with longings for home-based people to be out in diaspora. One Rara band I recorded was formed of people from the southern coast who tried to escape Haiti during the 1991 coup against Aristide in small boats and rafts to reach Miami. They were intercepted by the U.S. Coast Guard and detained in Guantanamo, then repatriated to Haiti, where they ended up in the notorious slum of Site Soleil. They used the Rara music to narrate their predicament. They sang of how they sold their goats and pigs and everything they had to go to Miami, only to return to starve in Haiti.⁸

We sold our pigs, we sold our goats
To go to Miami
Where we landed we were returned

We sold our pigs, we sold our goats
At Guantanamo they sent us back
We got to Guantanamo
We sold our pigs, we sold our goats
Poverty is not sweet O
Guantanamo is no good O

Nou vann kochon, nou vann kabrit
Pou'n ale Miami
Kote nou rive nou retournen

Nou vann kochon, nou vann kabrit
Guantanamo yo voye'n tounen
Guantanamo nou rive
Nou vann kochon, nou vann kabrit
lamizè pa dous O
Guantanamo pa bon O

8. Listeners can hear this song recorded on track 17, *Rhythms of Rapture: Sacred Musics of Haitian Vodou* (1995), and view field video online at <http://rara.wesleyan.edu/rara/politics/index.php>.

Here, what's interesting, and what may complicate neat formulations of diasporic phases, is that this group is in the so-called homeland yet imagines itself as a part of the diaspora and longs to be out in diaspora. Rather than suffering from nostalgia for homeland and origins, this group diagnoses itself as fighting for survival in Haiti in what is an unviable, untenable space of starvation and death. These group members cast themselves as "imagined migrants" in a diaspora that they are waiting to join (Schuler 2008).

This musical expression points us to a diasporic irony. Because of the deadliness characterizing the life of the Haitian poor, those in Haiti participate in imagining spaces outside the homeland, in the diaspora, as the nostalgic spaces of possibility and full humanity. They turn the typical diasporic condition of "imagining a homeland" on its head and imagine themselves in diaspora, often constructed as a kind of paradise in many ways.

The examples I've discussed illustrate that Haitians in various locations relative to the African Diaspora and the Haitian Diaspora have emplotted Rara music as points on a sonic compass to orient themselves to diasporic horizons most meaningful, salient, and useful in the cultural politics of their present situations. Insofar as it is powerfully evocative, Rara music and its bamboo horns index a far-distant Kongo past, a historical association with rebellion against colonial powers, and a deeply and singularly Haitian parading tradition. While the details will be quite different in the case of Christian music, Haitians will likewise hear hymns and praise songs as points on a sonic compass. Pentecostal Haitians create biblical compass points, which yield directions to a very different set of diasporic horizons.

Evangelical Music and the "Diasporic" Christian Kingdom

The Haitian majority has until recently been understood to be a participant to a greater or lesser extent in the traditional, Afro-Creole religious system that produces Rara and other rituals. But just as evangelical Christian forms have been growing rapidly throughout the Southern Hemisphere since the 1970s (Jenkins 2002), so too are they on the rise in Haiti. It is now estimated that 30 percent of the Haitian social sphere—in Haiti and throughout the diaspora—is engaged with evangelical Protestantism, mostly in some Pentecostal form (and here I refer to all spirit-filled Protestant groups broadly as Pentecostal, although many are independent churches). This religious orientation relies on biblical Scripture as God's inerrant truth and takes the Bible to be truth, history, and the ultimate authority on every aspect of life. Just as important is the idea that the biblical age is still accessible, that God still works in the world and makes himself felt and understood through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit can manifest itself through the "gifts of

the spirit" including performing healings and miracles, dreams, visions, aural communication, speaking in tongues, experiences of intense emotion, laughing, crying, shaking, stuttering, singing and ecstatic dancing, to perform healings and miracles. Pentecostals, like other evangelicals, emphasize the born-again experience, where individuals accept Jesus Christ as savior and commit to undergoing a process of sanctified living, separating themselves from sinful activities such as drinking, smoking, gambling, extramarital sex, and social dancing. Pastors admonish their congregations to be "in the world but not of it" and to separate themselves into Christian social enclaves while still proselytizing the unconverted. To a much greater degree than Afro-Creole religious societies, Protestant networks tend to be formally interconnected with other churches and prayer groups throughout the globe. These interconnections have increased since the Haiti earthquake, and countless church groups were moved to respond with support.

The first thing to note about Haitian evangelical music is that there has been debate and contestation among Haitian Protestants about what rhythms, melodies, and lyrics Christ-centered music should contain. It is clear to Christians that God loves music and that music making is a proper and good way to praise and worship the Lord, since the Bible refers favorably to music in hundreds of verses. In fact, most Pentecostal churches have a choir or two and a band with electric guitars, trap drums, and electronic keyboard. Melvin Butler (2008) writes that many pastors wrestle with the dilemma that so much Haitian music is linked to un-Christian religious spirits. Not only might the rhythms and melodies that "belong" to certain spirits recall somatic experiences for congregants, but music itself has a spiritual force, and as a musical mode of "spiritual work," it could actually invoke the wrong spiritual presence to descend in worship. As for the popular dance music of *konpa*, the cultural associations and physical sensations it might convey relate to the pleasure of *balles* and the secular sphere of close romantic dancing. In the late 1990s Butler found that "recognizable most easily by its characteristic five-note syncopated rhythm on the high hat cymbal, the *konpa* rhythm performed by popular dance bands such as Tabou Combo, Ska-Sha, Tropicana, T-Vice, and Sweet Mickey is a continual source of controversy among Pentecostal congregations and their leaders" (Butler 2008), although that had largely changed by 2007. Some church bands chose to play imported gospel music from the United States or France in order to solve this dilemma.

Most Protestant churches in Haiti and the diaspora cleave to the safe repertoire compiled in the widely circulating hymn book, *Chants d'Espérance* (41st ed.; 1995; Songs of hope). Texts of over eight hundred hymns and "joyous melodies" appear either in French or in Haitian Kreyòl. Many songs are translations of the French *Chants de la Ligue pour la Lecture de la*

Bible (Songs of the League for Bible Reading) and from American Baptist and Methodist hymns from *Marantha Gospel Choruses* (Case 1938) and *Old Fashioned Revival Hour Songs* (Fuller, Green, and MacDougall 1950). No musical scores or notations accompany the hymns. Many songs are sung to the original melodies but some are not. As Butler notes, “*Chan desperans* lends itself particularly well to multiple musical interpretations and facilitates the ‘Haitianization’ of imported church songs” (Butler 2002, 102). Fairly often the songs are transposed into a genre that has come to be called “konpa Jezu” (lit., Jesus konpa) wherein the *tanbou* (hand drum) and the *graj* (metal scraper) that are used in Vodou musics are omitted (Butler 2002, 104).

In contradistinction to the conservatism Butler found, there is also a growing industry of professional Haitian gospel music paralleling gospel music growth throughout the globe. In fact, Haitians consume Christian music videos and musical clips of church services from Francophone Africa, Europe, Canada, and the Antilles on television and Internet sites that feature a wide variety of musical and prayer styles. Some Haitian Christian music—especially that of the young—seems to replicate exactly the sound styles of particular *konpa* bands such as Sweet Mickey, Carimi, and Nu Look.⁹ These musicians and composers are rooted in local churches and so create a “feedback loop” where recent compositions (which may draw from *Chants d’Espérance*) released on albums may be taken up and sung in church—at the discretion of the pastor, of course.

So far, Haitian Pentecostal music is thus a hybrid of Haitian, French, and American influences. Insofar as Haitians typically sing in Kreyòl or French and arrange their hymns with a lilting syncopation, they have developed a style of Christian music they fully “own.” The Haitian case is consistent with Philip Bohlman’s assertion that “in the moment of performance, hymns pass from the ownership of a colonial religious institution into the local religious practices” (Butler 2002, 103). Haitian Protestant community members indigenize imported Christian music to their own tastes and sensibilities, anchoring the gospel truth with their particular cultural sense of being “in their skin.”

The capacity of evangelical music to indigenize is one of the elements that facilitate the spread of spirit-filled Christianity throughout the southern sphere. Joel Robbins takes up the question of “how Pentecostal churches can succeed as institutions at all in the kind of resource-poor conditions in which they regularly take root these days” (2009, 56). He answers the

9. Listen, for example, to how closely the group Revelation Mizik sounds like Gracia Delva on their music video, filmed in Haiti: “Satan m’pa pe w” (Satan I’m not afraid of you), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oowp3-3Sq74>. They perform the song at a church in Philadelphia: see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cJR11Wol8Yc&feature=related>.

question by arguing that Pentecostal social life is premised on a great deal of ritual interaction—praying together, rites of ministry, singing in praise and celebration, in addition to the rituals of Sunday services. These ritual moments can and do take place among the laity, in and outside church settings, so that a Christian form of greeting, eating, working, or meeting for prayer can be carried out almost anywhere (even by phone) to confront almost any circumstance, with any number of people from two to hundreds. It is “the evangelical focus on the global spread of a limited number of widely shared ritual forms [that] thus provides an important foundation for Pentecostalism’s noteworthy ability to travel widely throughout the globe and produce recognizable versions of itself wherever it alights” (Robbins 2009, 62). Robbins draws on Randall Collins’s suggestion that “all successful interactions—interactions that are sufficiently ritualized . . . produce some . . . effervescence,” which he calls “emotional energy” (quoted in Robbins 2009, 60). For Collins and Robbins, “mutual focus and emotional entrainment through bodily synchronization are . . . what turns mundane social encounters into successful interaction rituals” (Robbins 2009, 61).

I offer as a corollary to Robbins’s argument that Pentecostal congregations are free to cultivate the emotional energy and somatic sonic resonances that music produces into a locally specific musical repertoire that contributes to the sense of belonging that evangelicals feel to the church and the Kingdom of God. This cultural belonging mitigates against the uneven power dynamics created by the fact that Protestantism was an American import. It also helps create a buffer against the marginalizing posture Pentecostals adopt that one is sanctified, set apart, and “other” to the sinful society at large. The fact that anyone can “plant” a church and play almost any style of music, in one’s native language, shows that charismatic Christianity has the ability to avail itself of the emotional possibilities of music. This, in turn, is part and parcel of how it is able to reproduce so quickly: biblical content and basic and formulaic rituals are wrapped in the musical forms, styles, language, and tastes of the local congregation.

How does the indigenization of Pentecostal music produce new kinds of spatialities, and how are these related to the idea of diaspora? In the case of Haitian Protestant music, specifically Haitian melody, rhythm, and language are sonic indexes to belonging at the same time that lyrics produce a Christian vision and Christian spatiality. Since so many songs are imported, they contain almost no references to Haiti, or for that matter, to island or even hemispheric geographies. The vast majority of texts offer a simple single image, such as that of Jesus’s love for us, Jesus dying on the cross, or God preparing us a place in Heaven. Lyrical images in hymns are often phrases from Scripture, so they reference the landscape of the ancient world, the Holy Land, or the New Testament cosmology of heaven and earth. When spaces or places do appear, they are invariably biblical

places, such as Jerusalem, Jericho, and Nazareth or the Christian spaces of heaven and earth. The following song is a good example of a single spatial reference to biblical time and place that is transposed to the present. A well-known hymn in Haiti, it was sung by people in at least one encampment in the months after the earthquake. Here, the ancient wall of Jericho, referenced in the Book of Joshua, is smashed, and the analogy is made to the spiritual realm in which Jesus can bring down any wall. The present tense underscores the idea that biblical space and events are still working in the present:

Jericho Jericho the wall is broken
 There is no wall Jesus cannot break
 The wall of sickness,
 The wall of poverty,
 The wall of hunger, etc. etc.

Jericho Jericho miray-la kraze
Nan pwen miray Jezi pa kraze
Miray maladi,
Miray mizè,
*Miray grangou, etc. etc.*¹⁰

In this simple text the important event is the one that happened in the biblical city of Jericho, in the world of the ancient Israelites more than two thousand years ago. In deploying the hymn after the quake, the people in the tent camp sang biblical geography into the city of Port-au-Prince. They made meaning of their predicament, matching the sacred stories of the Bible with their current situation and naming themselves as the righteous and the sanctified. In the face of the worst natural catastrophe in the Americas, the quake survivors used religious music to orient themselves in time and in space through the musical enactment of biblical mythmaking.

We can describe the spatial image in this song (and many others) as echoing the ethnic diasporic horizon of the past, insofar as the past places and events of the group's ancestors are remembered, mythologized, and commemorated. Although it would not seem logical in social science terms that Haitians are the descendents of the ancient Israelites, it is perfectly logical from a Christian perspective. According to Christian theology generally, God chose the Israelites to favor among all other groups, but when they

10. Author's translation. Viewers can see and hear this song performed by Jean-Marie Desir at the church Eglise de Dieu de Delmas 17 in Haiti, on Youtube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dMqYn2j18vY>. Accessed January 4, 2010. The hymn is found in *Chants d'Espérance*, although the Christian recording artist Jean Marie Desir takes credit for the composition, the title track for his 2006 album *Jericho*. Interestingly, Wyclef Jean reproduces the lyric toward the end of his track "Ghetto Racine" on his 2002 album, *Masquerade*, and in an unconventional twist, Rara *banbou* play in accompaniment.

strayed from God's law, the messiah Jesus rose from among them to form the new elect—which is now the Church. It is Christians who inherit the commandments, the covenants, the blessings, and the burdens in this New Testament story of God's dealings with humanity. In this way the ancient past of the Hebrews is also the history of Christians everywhere, including in Haiti.

The following song from *Chants d'Espérance* also evokes a simple image, figured in the call and response mode of a question and answer:

Where are you going?
 I'm going to the house of a king
 I'm going to the house of Jesus of Nazareth

Kote'w prale?
M pral kay yon wa
M pral kay Jesi Nazarèt

In this image, the answerer delivers the pith of the image: she is a sojourner, on her way to some place. That place is definitely known: it is the House of King Jesus of Nazareth. The song invokes the past Christian horizon through naming the place of Jesus's birth: Nazareth. The idea of futurity is also presented here, and of course it refers to the spiritual condition of the pilgrim: upon physical death she will enter the House of the Lord. It is obvious, but worth stressing, that the future Christian horizon is the time and space of the eternal Kingdom of Heaven. Evangelical Christianity stresses that the end times are near and that the Second Coming of Christ as "at hand." This Christianity invites its believers to imagine and long for the immanent future when God will rule over all of humanity in His Kingdom according to His perfect peace and justice. This is the future that all born-again Christians are sure they will see. This is the future horizon that Evangelicals set their sights on.

These brief examples show how through music, evangelical Haitian images point to a temporal and spatial past and future that is part of a religious cosmology yet that mirrors the kinds of diasporic sensibilities that ethnic groups cultivate. This should not be too surprising, since diaspora theory and Christianity share similar deep structures of thought. After all, the term diaspora originates in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of Hebrew Scripture. In the ancient world (the fifth to the first century BCE), the Hebrew Diaspora was cast as a necessary dispersion that prefigured the final return to Jerusalem. Martin Baumann writes, "'Diaspora' turns out to be an integral part of a pattern constituted by the fourfold course of sin or disobedience, scattering and exile as punishment, repentance, and finally return and gathering" (Baumann 2000, 317). The New Testament takes up the term *diaspora*, which is found in three places (James 1, Peter, and John).

Early Christian writers spun the trope of diaspora in terms of a dispersed community that would be as the “seed” to spread the gospel of Jesus. In the early Christian eschatological view, the dispersed Christians would soon be reunited upon the return of the messiah in the “heavenly city of Jerusalem” (Arowele 1977, cited in Baumann 2000). When the hopes of the immanent return of Christ faded and the Christians then rose to political dominance in the late fourth century, the image of diaspora lost its eschatological valence and came to be a sign for a Christian minority living in a doctrinally different society (Baumann 2000, 320). Diaspora was an “inside term,” one for Jewish and Christian thinkers until the 1960s.

Then, interestingly enough for our purposes, it was African Studies that took up the concept with the introduction of the notion of the “African Diaspora” and the subsequent appropriation of the term throughout the academy. Still, our anthropological theories of diaspora retain a connotative echo of Jewish and Christian thought. Brubaker notices and complains about the teleological character of the diaspora concept when he says, “Diaspora is often seen as destiny—a destiny to which previously dormant members (or previously dormant diasporas in their entirety) are now ‘awakening’” (Brubaker 2005, 13, citing Sheffer 2003, 21).

Like national and ethnic diasporic groups, evangelicals see themselves as a dispersed people through their appropriation of the story of the tribe of the ancient Hebrews, the original and most famous diaspora. Now, Christians are dispersed throughout the globe and cultivate a rhetoric of feeling marginalized (and even sometimes martyred) by their opposition to secular society and what they see as social sin and evil. Like diasporic groups that maintain boundaries and long nostalgically to return to their homeland, evangelicals separate themselves through the practices of holiness and long to “return,” for the first time, to the New Jerusalem in the eternal realm.

In adopting a saved and sanctified identity, Pentecostals also produce a new form of spatiality that in turn inflects national and ethnic identity. To be saved is to be oriented toward biblical geographies, both past and future. Among evangelicals in Haiti or in places in diaspora, a common rhetorical stance is to proclaim that citizenship in God’s Kingdom trumps one’s Haitian identification. I heard one pastor preach, “I don’t need to go back to Haiti because I have Jesus.” This imagined Christian citizenship is shared among other groups in the Caribbean. Said a young person in the Virgin Islands with great rhetorical flair to another researcher, “I am Christian. I am first and foremost a citizen of God the Father’s kingdom, adopted into his family through Jesus Christ, whose ambassador I am to his honor and glory, in the power of the Holy Spirit” (Harkins-Pierre 2005, 33). How much more glorious it is to hold a passport to God’s Kingdom

than a passport from Haiti, now declared a “failed state” and the poorest country in the hemisphere! We can see that on a rhetorical level, Caribbean Pentecostals make a move to “leave” the Haitian diaspora to “join” the Christian diaspora (see Johnson 2007).

But it is a paradox that even as they proclaim identities as members of the Christian community, Haitians live their lives mostly in ethnic enclaves. Even as citizens of the kingdom, diasporic Haitians overwhelmingly join Haitian congregations. Above all it is their use of Kreyòl language that makes it easier to participate in Haitian spaces. Haitians are also intensely connected to family and transnational institutions in Haiti, and many people do plan to return when they retire. So it is more proper to describe Haitian Pentecostals as standing simultaneously in two imagined diasporas—one of which might be described as ethnic and one religious.

The following French hymn from *Chants d’Espérance* is one of the few to mention the country of Haiti. It would seek to perform the enormous symbolic work of re-positioning the entire nation as a Christian nation “consecrated to God.”

Soldiers of Christ and Haitians,
 We are citizens of heaven
 In the Word of the Lord,
 We find the only true happiness.
 Save, Lord, bless our dear Haiti!
 Small nation, hasten towards Zion
 Consecrate yourself to God, make Jesus your King . . .
 Save, Lord, bless our dear Haiti!

Soldats de Christ et Haitiens
Du ciel nous sommes citoyens
Dans la parole du seigneur
Nous trouvons le seul vrai bonheur
Sauve, Seigneur, benis notre chere Haiti
Petite nation avant vers Sion
A Dieu consacre-toi fais Jesus ton roi
Souve seigneur, benis notre chere Haiti

The hymn, one of those composed by a Haitian evangelical for the *Chants d’Espérance*, gives voice to the double identity of “Christian soldiers and Haitians” who are also “citizens of heaven.” These special saints have the burden of bringing Haiti to Christ. In this hymn they stand as both evangelizers and intercessors; they implore Haiti to “hasten towards Zion” and implore God to “save and bless Haiti.”

From an evangelical point of view, the nation of Haiti presents a vexing dilemma. In numerous sermons, writings, and conversations with Haitian

Pentecostals, I have heard the anguished question: if Haiti has been Christianized, why has God not bestowed His blessing on its people? Its political and economic chaos belie the troubling “fact” that Haiti is not yet a nation favored by God. If it were, God would have blessed it with prosperity, as He has the United States. The burden of being a Christian who is also a Haitian is a heavy one. But doesn’t God usually test his chosen? One only has to consider the tribes of Israel and Judah, or the prophets, Job, or Jesus himself to see that Satan bedevils the most holy and pure. Satan has been working in Haiti for many generations and has a stronghold in the temples of Afro-Creole religion. Haiti’s imbrication with Vodou is evidence of a cosmic battle between good and evil played out in the earthly realm. This hymn shows how Pentecostal Haitians cast themselves as Christian soldiers who have a special role to play as Haitians in God’s plan for human redemption (see also McAlister 2012b).

Through this Christian logic, Haitians have a role in both the Christian and the Haitian spheres because of their mutual standing in tribal, ethnic, national, royal, and cosmic geographies. For Pentecostal “citizens of heaven,” the whole of Haiti must be born again and must effectively choose to “leave” the African tribal diasporas of Kongo, Ibo, or Dahome. They must orient their diasporic compasses away from old African horizons, and eventually away from Haiti itself. They must “leave” the Haitian nation, to “join” the eternal Christian Kingdom. Haitians must position their compasses away from these historical spatial points and focus the journey on Christian space and time. At the end of time, all these false groupings will be dissolved and humanity will unite under the “new heaven and the new earth,” the new Jerusalem where God dwells and banishes all sorrow from his people (Rev. 21:9).

For Haitian evangelicals in diasporic places, the past is a complex one. Haiti is the immediate homeland, the place where family, foodways, language, and music are beloved and distinct. Yet the beloved “Haiti *cheri*” is also a place where the land itself is home to non-Christian, even demonic, forces. The more distant biblical diasporic past is a powerful one and also understood as God’s truth. This past holds the story of the tribe of Israelites, which has become the Christian story through the great commission to bring the gospel to all nations. The diasporic future horizon that really matters is the Eternal Kingdom.

Conclusions

There are many useful ways to study Caribbean music as a diasporic form, as the essays in this issue of the *Black Music Research Journal* attest. I partici-

pated in a recent roundtable on the topic published in the *New Yorker* magazine.¹¹ Ned Sublette stressed the importance of the Haitian Revolution as

one of the generative explosions of popular music in the hemisphere. . . . The diaspora(s) it engendered carried a great transnational wave of music. You can hear its consequences today . . . in music that reaches to New Orleans in one direction and down the Antilles in the other, through the Dominican Republic, to Puerto Rico, the French Caribbean, and Trinidad. A chain it is. I've found that every time I've been able to visit any place along this musical axis—whether seeing *gwo ka* in Guadeloupe or Mardi Gras Indians in New Orleans—I get more of the picture of what happened up and down the hemisphere in 1791 and the years after.

Sublette points to a dispersion from Saint-Domingue after the Revolution that had lasting musical effects but that did not forge a lasting collective identity. This dissipated diaspora makes itself available through listening to musical form as primary source data. It is a point that researchers are carving onto our sonic compass. It remains to be seen whether social groups will forge an identity oriented to this point as well.

This essay has pursued a different question, looking at the ways groups use music consciously to orient themselves to diasporic horizons. A person “in diaspora” stands in a host society and remembers a home society. To be “diasporic” means to cultivate an identity and maintain boundaries, to retain “diaspora consciousness,” and often to “long for return” to the homeland. Haitians’ lives are oriented toward multiple, overlapping diasporas, from the streams of African ethnic groups coming into Saint-Domingue out through the waves of out-migration. Haitian identity formation can be theorized from the perspective of the “African Diaspora” and the “Haitian Diaspora,” and groups can long to return to Haiti or can long to join the diaspora. I have shown that if we listen carefully to the forms of spatiality inherent in musical texts, we can find multiple registers of diasporic formations. I offered the metaphoric image that groups place sonic points on cognitive compasses that position them in relation to past and future diasporic horizons. When we take seriously the orientations groups form with regard to religious conceptions of space, time, and narratives, we can see that people and groups may privilege extranational diasporic identities, including that of modern-day “Kongo maroons” or nonethnic identities as soldiers in a “Christian diaspora.” Through religious strands configured either as “traditional” or as “Christian,” Haitians use sound, and music, as knowledge—of a Kongo past, or

11. For the *New Yorker* roundtable, see <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/sashafrerejones/2009/03/roundtable-hait.html>.

of biblical truth—and as an expressive tool to create identities in various registers, ranging from Kongo, Creole, Haitian, pan-Hispaniola, to saved and sanctified, and global citizen of God’s Kingdom.

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