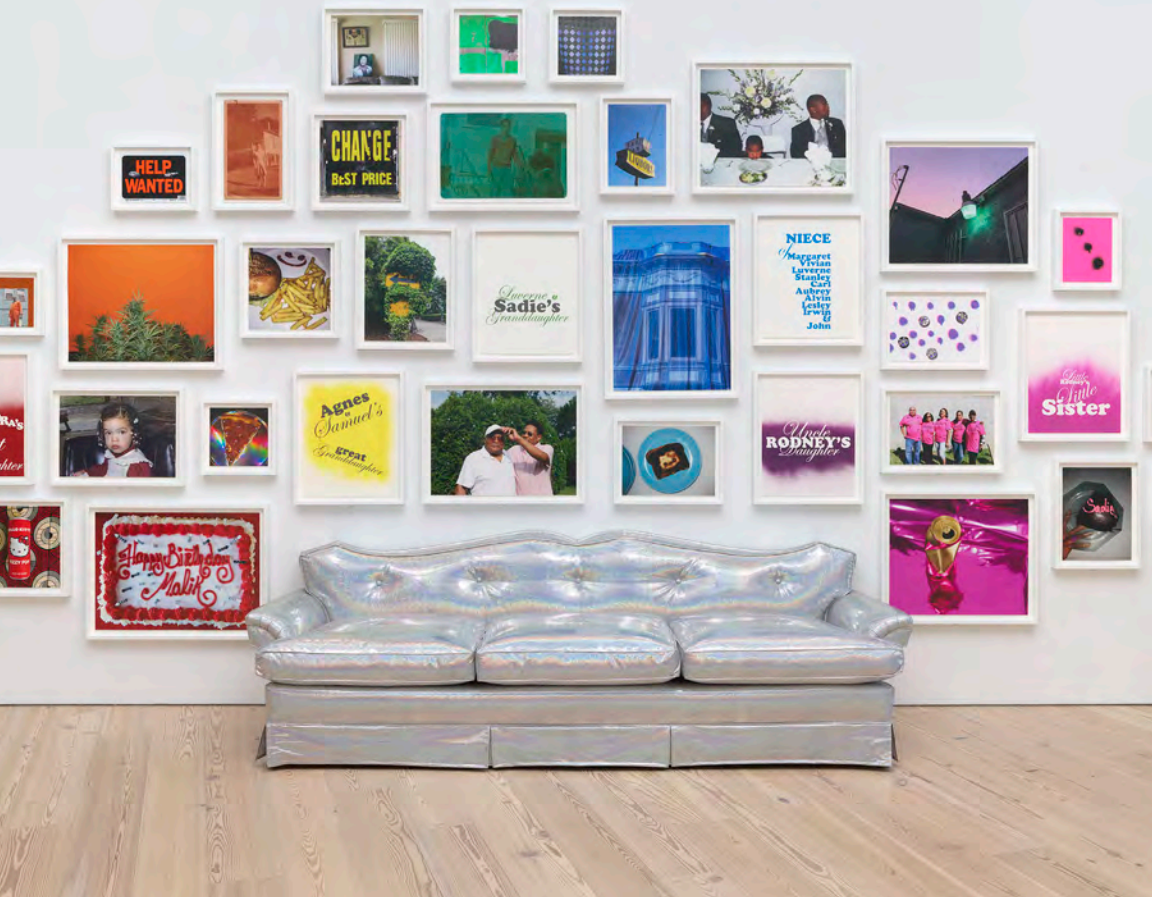
WHEN HOME IS A PHOTOGRAPH

Blackness *and* Belonging *in the World*

LEIGH RAIFORD



WHEN HOME IS A PHOTOGRAPH

THE VISUAL ARTS OF AFRICA AND ITS DIASPORAS
A Series Edited by Kellie Jones and Steven Nelson

WHEN HOME IS A PHOTOGRAPH

Blackness *and* Belonging *in the World*

LEIGH RAIFORD

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Dedicated to my dad,
William Dwight Raiford
(1949–2024)

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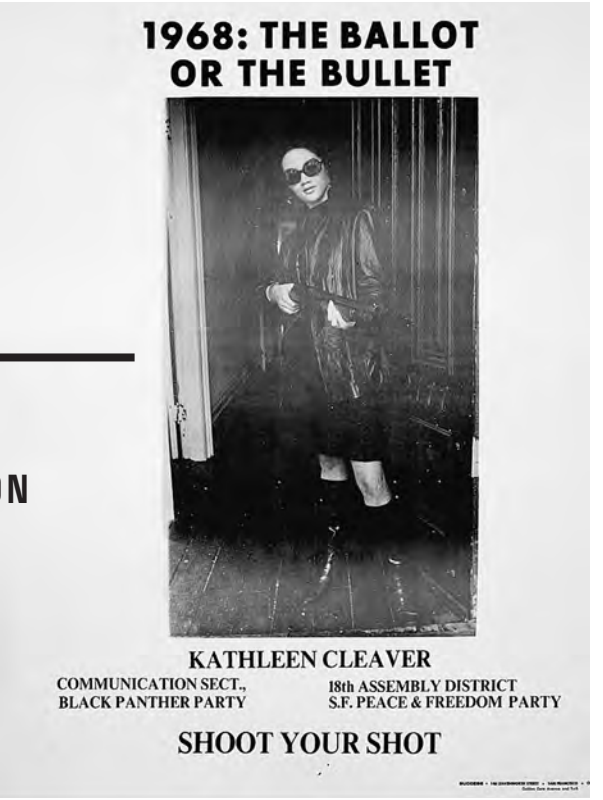

INTRODUCTION

WHEN HOME IS A PHOTOGRAPH

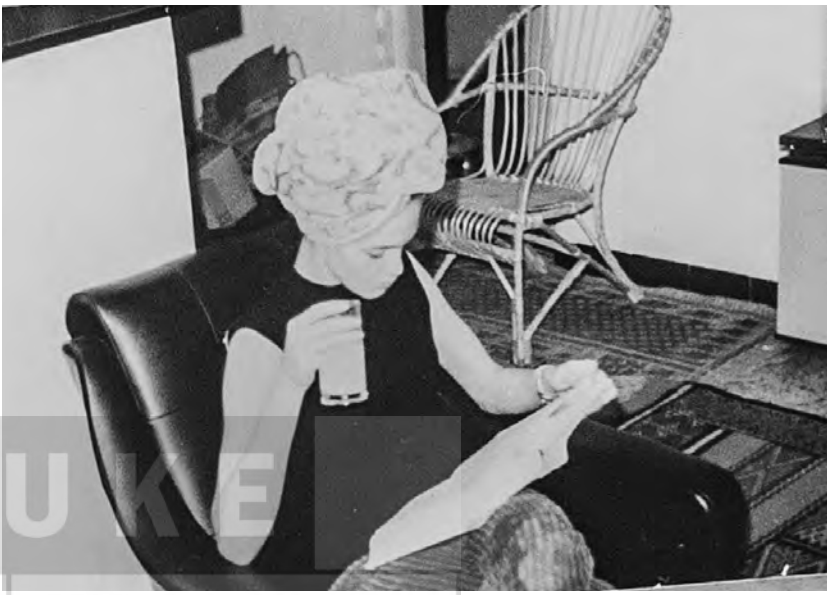

FIGURE 1.1. "1968: The Ballot or the Bullet; Shoot Your Shot." Campaign poster, 1968. *Black Panther*, September 28, 1968.

FIGURE 1.2. "Pointe Pescate [Pescade], Nov. 1969." From Kathleen Cleaver family photo album. Photograph of album by John Stephens. Courtesy and © Kathleen Neal Cleaver Archive.

Here are two photographs of Kathleen Neal Cleaver at home (figures 1.1 and 1.2). One is famous, while the other is faded and forgotten. Both are true.

In the first photograph, Kathleen wields a heavy-gauge pump-action shotgun as she stands guard at the entrance to the San Francisco apartment she shared with her husband, Eldridge Cleaver. Kathleen, Black Panther Party (BPP) communications secretary, had purchased the gun immediately after Oakland police shot through the plate glass windows of BPP headquarters in violent, drunken retaliation for the reduced verdict of voluntary manslaughter against Party leader Huey P. Newton for the death of Oakland police officer John Frey. Kathleen and Eldridge had already endured months of FBI and police surveillance since moving into the grey Victorian house on Pine Street, and the attack on the Party headquarters only confirmed for them the need to protect themselves and their home. As a convicted felon on parole now facing his own trial for his part in a shootout with police, Eldridge could not be seen with guns or have any registered in his name. Thus, Eldridge, Kathleen, BPP chairman Bobby Seale, and Stew Albert, a white Berkeley activist, crafted a publicity event to circulate the story and image of Kathleen arming herself to protect her home. Image and text would offer a message of inspiration to the Panther rank-and-file membership and issue a warning to Panther detractors and self-declared enemies. To produce an attention-grabbing cover story, the Cleavers enlisted writers Marvin Garson and Albert, who both wrote for Bay Area radical newspapers, and Alan Copeland, a white photographer who would later form Photon West agency with another frequent BPP photographer, Stephen

Shames. While the articles are buried in the archives, the photographs have become iconic. Kathleen, "as usual . . . wearing a short black skirt, a black turtleneck sweater, a leather jacket and high black boots," knew immediately that the photographs were "striking" and "had hundreds printed up for a campaign poster."[1] The photograph is loud, amplified by its transformation into a campaign poster and underscored by Malcolm X's ultimatum, "The Ballot or the Bullet." The photograph is unapologetic and polemic; sensational, sexy, resistant. It's the origin of a thousand Blaxploitation fantasies and a million neo–Black Nationalist dreams, highly reproduced, widely circulated, and occasionally imitated. It is at once fierce and fearsome but also funny, by which I mean so iconic as to have occluded some of its iconoclasm. It has become almost a caricature.

I have lived with this image for so long, wondered over it, sometimes fashioned myself after it, and also refused it. I have written about it and with it.[2] It is an image nestled deep in my visual repertoire and optical unconscious. And yet I never gave a lot of thought to what lay through the black portal of the door, or what exactly—materially, not just abstractly—Kathleen was protecting so fiercely.

The second photograph was made a year later and six thousand miles away in Algiers. Here, Kathleen is seated in a black chair, holding reading material with one hand and a beverage in the other. She wears a casual sleeveless top and rust-colored pants that might be corduroy or striped. Her gaze is averted from the camera and its unknown photographer (unknown to us yet likely very familiar to Kathleen). Instead, her attention is focused on the book in her lap. A towel is wrapped around her head suggesting she's just washed her hair (in my imagination she's deep conditioning), tending to the afro that was so central to her public image. A source of pride, a marker of militancy, the afro, as sister radical Angela Y. Davis noted in the charged anti–Black Power moment, also served as "a historical pretext for something akin to a reign of terror for countless young black women" surveilled and harassed by law enforcement for wearing their hair natural and large.[3] Yet, here, in this intimate photograph the afro is unseen, protected, and Kathleen's alone. This color snapshot is affixed to a page of a family album where beneath the photograph Kathleen has written "Point Pescate [Pointe Pescade] Nov. 1969." The date indicates that this is the first home she and Eldridge have shared since the house on Pine Street, since Eldridge fled almost certain imprisonment and possible execution in the United States for exile in Cuba and then Algeria in November 1968, since Kathleen joined him in Algeria in June 1969, and since the birth of their first child, Maceo, a month after.

This photograph is as quiet as the first is loud. Quiet in the way scholar Kevin Quashie invokes that word: not silent (or silenced) but inward-facing, "selffull,"

suggesting surrender.[4] This photograph is intimate and meditative. It is full of breath and air and a stillness that is not immobile, a calm that suggests the capacity to receive. Like the towel wrapped carefully around her hair, the photograph outlines Kathleen's interiority, acknowledging its presence while withholding its substance. At twenty-four years old, Kathleen had become comfortable with the "popping of flashbulbs and press of crowds," as she writes in her memoir. "It felt unsettling, becoming known to thousands of people, but it was exciting to have our message broadcast so widely."[5] She had honed her talking points, learned her angles, developed her personal style, and grown confident in her capacity to lead a movement. Here, though, inside her home, she is indifferent to the photographer (and by extension indifferent to us) but fully present to herself. Perhaps above all this is an image of an icon of the Black radical tradition at rest. Whatever Kathleen is protecting so fiercely in this photograph is hers and hers alone.

It was only after I first visited Kathleen's home at her invitation to begin work organizing her personal photography archive, and encountered the Pointe Pescade snapshot, that I began to understand the ways these two photographs, when taken together and when situated within her vast and varied collection, are fundamentally revealing of Kathleen's lifelong engagement with photography. In three years of working with Cleaver in her home while leading a team organizing and cataloging her archive, I would come to learn that photographs are central to her self-making and sense of belonging. For Kathleen—the keeper of her family's archives spanning more than a century and a half and the collector of photographs of herself across the many geographies of her life—photographs function as a tool to situate herself in place and time, and in her own narrative. Although the organizing work of our team was generally confined to Kathleen's upstairs office, photographs, far more than any other visual medium, decorate and warm every room. There is no space in her home from which one cannot see or touch a framed photograph. Kathleen's relation to and practice of photography reminded me of Deborah Willis's evergreen assertion that photographs of all kinds regardless of genre are central to Black storytelling, and it underscored bell hooks's insight that interior home walls of photographs "announced our visual complexity."[6]

Although I first approached them as opposites, I soon came to recognize the two images of Kathleen at home as mutually informative. The Pine Street poster alerts us to photography's role in amplifying public performances of Black resistance, while the Pointe Pescade snapshot offers an image of "the sovereignty of quiet," the domain of self beyond the demands of an external gaze. But more than counterweights, what might each of these photographs reveal about the other? How, for example, is the campaign poster "an exquisite balance of what

is public and what is intimate," following Quashie's generative reading of the iconic image of Tommie Smith and John Carlos with fists raised on the medal podium at the Mexico 1968 Olympics?[7] How might my isolated reading of the poster's boldness fail to hold space for the "vulnerability and interiority" I chose to identify so clearly in the Pointe Pescade snapshot?

What if, instead, we read these two photographs side by side as if they were a stereograph, the popular nineteenth-century visual technology that mimicked binocular vision to produce an illusion of depth? To achieve this effect, the same sight—whether a landscape, an event, an individual sitter, or a comedic scene—is photographed once and then again. When paired side by side and looked at through the special device of the stereograph (or by crossing one's eyes) the two images become magnified and present a wider field of view and an opportunity to perceive detail. Approaching the two photographs of Kathleen at home in this way enables us to witness the depth of Kathleen's living: image(d) events not as counter to each other or as consecutive or causal (i.e., protest, then rest, then protest again), as if there is a linear singularity to Black life. Rather, viewed together in this manner they indicate a fullness to living that photography promises but can never deliver.

Finally, working to grasp these two photographs of Kathleen at home in their breadth and abundance alerted me to the limits of my own sight, which is also a way of saying the limits of our ability to imagine Black belonging in the world. And yet it was allowing myself the patience to wonder about the unseen in these images—beyond the apartment door, under the head wrap—that began to suggest another way of engaging photography. Tina Campt avers that beyond looking at images, to listen to images "is to perceive their quiet frequencies of possibility—the possibility to inhabit a future as unbounded black subjects."[8] Following Campt and Cleaver and all of us who seek a home in photography, I ask, What do we have to unlodge, unlearn, or undo in order to reimagine photography's relationship to Black life?

This book is about how Black people use photography to make home in the world. I focus on a handful of well-known Black American activists and artists who traveled the world for study, for work, or for movement building, sometimes for pleasure and sometimes because their lives and the lives of their loved ones depended on it. As for many of us, their personal sense of self and their political platforms were elaborated through these encounters with the world. And like most of us, they made and collected photographs at every stage. *When Home Is a Photograph: Blackness and Belonging in the World* considers the everyday image-making practices and habits that this group of Black Americans,

each committed to improving the conditions of Black lives globally, have engaged in order to imagine, identify, create, fabulate, inhabit, leave, defend, and, sometimes, destroy "home."

Home can variously reference a physical location, a material possession, or an imagined geography. It can be a site of shelter and comfort where we are encouraged to be our best and truest selves. For Black Americans, home has at turns been offered and withheld, forcibly imposed and violently dispossessed. There is no shortage of historical examples in which Black Americans have built home only to have it devalued or destroyed under racial capitalism: the separation of enslaved Black families under slavery in the South, carried out while laws that prevented free Black persons from owning property proliferated throughout the country including its expanding territories; the burning of thriving Black towns like those in Tulsa, Oklahoma, or Rosewood, Florida, by white "neighbors" in the Jim Crow era; housing made contingent on conformity to middle-class sexual and gender mores dictated and imposed by Progressive-era reformers and the modern welfare state, while restrictive racial covenants and "predatory inclusion" forced substandard homeownership in underserved neighborhoods on the aspiring Black middle class; the destruction of Black and brown neighborhoods through "urban renewal" in the mid- to late twentieth century, followed by the displacement of Black and brown residents through processes of gentrification at the turn of the twenty-first century.[9]

Home can also be a place of violence and uncertainty, ground zero of our most enduring traumas. Scholar Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor has emphasized the difference between *housing*, the commodity of real estate, and *home*, a place of belonging. Yet in a country that understands property ownership as a right and the route to personal happiness and national stability, this distinction gets elided. Taylor's devastating *Race for Profit* demonstrates how the federal government in alignment with an explicitly racist real estate industry exploited African Americans' need for housing and desire for home to extract wealth and extend the reach of racial capitalism into the post–civil rights era. Yet, as Taylor reminds us, even when those houses were not ours, were dilapidated and substandard, were temporary and transitional, Black homes could be "sources of connection, places of communion, and sites of refuge."[10]

Similarly, Christina Sharpe describes in her books *Ordinary Notes* and *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* how throughout her working-class childhood, her mother taught her that "beauty is a method" by managing to find and make "beauty everyday" in the series of childhood homes they moved through, never quite settled and always at the edge of precariousness.[11] Further back in the twentieth century, bell hooks extolled "homeplace as a site of resistance" against

the terrors of white supremacy in the Jim Crow south.[12] For Black folks in the United States, from those brought forcibly in 1565 to those arriving full of hope next week, there is really no place, no time in this country's history that we have been allowed to be settled, to be free, to be safe, to claim home. It is no wonder that "home" has emerged as an elusive object of desire of the natally alienated.[13]

And yet Black Americans still make home wherever, whenever, and however possible.

Persistently, Black people have looked beyond (which does not always mean outside) national borders to claim home and seek belonging—that is, recognition, efficacy, meaningful community.[14] Diaspora might be defined as the twin readings of Blackness *in* the world and Blackness *and* the world. *Diaspora* is one word that Black people have invoked to mean a desire for elsewhere, for not this and something more. It has been used to mean almost home, not home but nearly there. For those who consider themselves members of a diaspora or who are hailed as diasporic subjects, their experience is generally marked by dispersal from an original homeland and marginalized status in their new locations; it involves making and maintaining affective ties to imagined homelands, even a hope for eventual return; and it often depends on forging a group consciousness and solidarity that at once creates and depends on a continued relationship to, and identity with, the place of "origin." In these ways, *home*, however contentious a term, becomes a key mode for understanding diaspora, even and especially for people who have never met, never shared a location, and who may share little beyond chosen identification. Thus, at its heart, "Black diaspora" wrestles with the idea of home, simultaneously enacting an embrace of home and an acknowledgment of its absence. It embodies a tension between familiarity and unbelonging, and figures attachment in deferral and deferred elsewhere. In its concern with the past, its reckoning with the present, and its insistence on the future, diaspora becomes marked by inhabiting multiple temporalities: the prelapsarian, the daily grind, the fantasy of eventual return, the time of Justice. To the list of what home encompasses—location, possession, geography—we might also add a distinct temporality outside the flow/time regulated by the accumulationist demands of racial capitalism and the epistemes of Western modernity.

Home is not an uncomplicated concept. But then, neither is photography. In traditional histories of the field, "photography" variously references the technological equipment (the camera and its offspring); the people who wield the equipment to make photographs; the modes of distribution, circulation, and consumption of photographs; the relationships generated by photographs; the constantly expanding set of audiences, spectators, and witnesses; and of course

the photograph itself. Rather than any single aspect, photography encompasses all of these. The "event of photography," Ariella Aïsha Azoulay tells us, is "an infinite series of encounters" that defies linear sequentiality and is never over.[15] Photography names a mode of engaging the world, a set of habits of image making that can never be singular but at its heart is collaborative, that is, a relationship between two or more actors and thus a collaboration that is sometimes imposed, sometimes coerced, sometimes given freely. The photograph, then—the knowledge that the photograph produces—is never settled, never fixed. Photography is a persistent way of people trying to know themselves and the world. And the photograph is only one outcome of that engagement.

Long have we (scholars, critics, artists, activists) understood and described photography and the visual more broadly as a site of violence, "a scene of negative instruction."[16] And, in doing so, we have thus framed Black and other subaltern groups' engagement with the medium as "oppositional," redemptive, recuperative.[17] We have held a tentative, if sometimes apologetic, place for pleasure (especially for ambiguous, ambivalent modes of visuality); even visualizing joy becomes an act of resistance.

When Home Is a Photograph argues that, yes, the photograph is a site of violence. And, yes, it is a site of resistance. But/and so too is photography an invitation to refusal. "To look is an act of choice," John Berger states foundationally.[18] And photography offers a series of choices about where we choose to focus our gaze, where we choose to linger, to stop, with what and with whom we choose to sit. It is about attention. Which is to say, photography is also about refusal. That is, I choose to look here and not there. This might be a refusal to accede to a colonial gaze that demands our concentration and energy, denies our knowledge and twists our visions, a gaze that forces us to consume our deaths on autoplay and expects us to whittle our dreams down to what can fit into the tiniest of boxes and the most banal of diversity, equity, and inclusion statements (where they may still exist). Photography can also be an opportunity to give our attention to the spaces, practices, and visual vocabularies with which Black people see otherwise, sometimes as armor against this world and sometimes as a portal to other worlds entirely.

But/and so too is photography a space of practice and experimentation. That is to say, photography as a practice never performs a single function and in a sense is not bound to a single ontology. It is a document, it is performance, it is surveillance, it is violence; it is speculative and fabulation, it is aspiration, it is comfort. The photograph achieves or is employed for a range of different kinds of work.

Photography is a practice that emerged within and alongside racial capitalism, that is, the historical coemergence of white supremacy and capitalist exploitation.[19] We might date the medium's origins to 1839, the year that scholars often designate as the "birth of photography." Or we might follow Azoulay's invitation to imagine photography's birth date as 1492, concomitant with the emergence of a structure of seeing made possible by imperialist aims that advanced a world-building enterprise imposed through land dispossession and the transatlantic slave trade. As a recording mechanism imbued with scientific authority, photography has been made to codify racial sight across political, social, and cultural realms. Photography thus has been elaborated with and defined against Blackness.[20]

Photographs further organize meaning through the specific forms they take and the generic conventions they implement. Photographic genres, a choreography of forms, contexts, and cultural desires, are ways of staging different encounters within the event of photography, affixing meaning and asserting that connotation as above all others. Portraiture, ethnographic photography, family snapshots, and landscape photography—the genres I consider in this book—each engender different expectations, enable different revelations about the self in the world to come into focus. The portrait is an agreed-on fiction that purports to represent the individual but instead produces the individual as a "visualizable fact."[21] Similarly, ethnographic photography claims to "record" difference but, through a repertoire of angles and dress (and undress), widens the distance between viewing subject and visual object. Family photography "documents" kinship through its conscription into a "familial gaze" that projects culturally mythologized notions of family. Through perspective, landscape photography "captures" the natural world as topographic, mappable, explorable, and exploitable. But if we have learned anything from the work of Christopher Pinney, Marianne Hirsch, Shawn Michelle Smith, Coco Fusco, Rosalind Krauss, Martin Berger, and W. J. T. Mitchell, alongside Azoulay, Berger and many, many others, these forms of photography are made to enact and produce that which they are claimed to document and apprehend.[22] Thus, through these genres of photography, the camera as apparatus mediates—shapes, regulates, interpolates, and interpellates—complex encounters between differently positioned diasporic subjects and between Black people and the world.

Indeed, the question of "genre" is fraught terrain, and I am generally skeptical of any rigid proclamations of structure or hubristic impositions of form. This is a skepticism rooted in my training in Black studies, a field which demonstrates that Blackness is always already a modifier that alerts us to the limits of any cate-

gories when "universally" applied. Blackness is "anagrammatical," in Christina Sharpe's generative language. That is, Blackness as lack or excess, as "signifying property plus," reorganizes, if not fully changes, the meaning of what are perceived to be stable categories.[23] In such applications we come to recognize how many such categories—male, female, human—and so too the mediums of their expression—the novel, the painting, the photograph—are defined in opposition to Blackness. In order to fully express itself, Blackness emerges as necessarily peripatetic and interdisciplinary if not undisciplined.

Photography has functioned as such an analytical frame, classifying and confining Black people to "prevailing racial scripts," hemmed us into boxes "woven out of thousands of stories, anecdotes, details."[24] From scientific objects to criminal suspects, video vixens to gangbangers, unloving welfare queens to unlovable Black mothers' sons slain by the ever longer arm of the state, Black camerawork has often sought "a truer word" (Spillers), it has "insist[ed] Black life into the wake" (Sharpe), attempted to "think black life otherwise" (Hartman).[25] To do so, it has worked to carve a space for photography beyond (which does not always mean outside) Eurocentric and anti-Black practices, a way to imagine or experience Black life beyond or outside the "algorithmic logics" that foretell black premature death, that seek to fix—that is, both cement and resolve—the "problem" of Black humanity.

So, to the list of what photography encompasses, we might also add physical location and an imagined geography, photography as a "black sense of place":[26] the places from where Black folks make photography, the places where photography takes us, and what photography can tell us about the place of Blackness.

When Is Home a Photograph, and How Can a Photograph Become a Home?

This book attends to the ways Black artists and activists engaged photography as a mode of emplacing themselves in an anti-Black world. These Black habits of photography, as I now understand them, are not simply (or solely) about a "comforting" self-image but about the ways photography serves as a pedagogical tool for learning oneself in a world where Blackness is often foreclosed as a finite answer rather than an unbound series of questions. "Black habits" mobilize the photograph as a site where the terms of belonging can be worked out, where values can be iterated and practiced, whether of the Black collective asserting home in the world, Black kin longing for home in one another, or the Black individual seeking home in their own skin.

Such a sense of homeplace and belonging is certainly found in the photographic practices of Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth, formerly enslaved abolitionists who created images of themselves in the nineteenth century to vi-

sualize self-possession. The photograph, here the photographic portrait of the formerly enslaved, emerges as a place where one can represent oneself, a place where one can be fully in control of one's faculties, one's body, one's direction in life. Consciously leaving a record of themselves for the future, Douglass, Truth, and many others also mobilized photography to project a material trace of the present into a future that did not yet exist.

As a material object—and here I consider any image as material that can be held in your hand or held in the phone in your hand—the photograph offers a document one can turn and return to. And thus we can also think of the ways the photograph functions as a "diasporic resource." Photographs are the bit of home that dislocated peoples carry with them when they could carry little else with them.[27] The photograph functions as a home that necessarily has to always be in motion, as respite and retreat that necessarily has to be mobile. Likewise, photographs have housed the performance of self-making that dislocated photographed persons send "home" to visualize new belonging(s). In these ways we might think of the photograph as its own shelter-in-place: the place where we can find cover in the midst of migration, transformation, and catastrophe.[28]

"Home" has long been a setting for Black cultural production that understood the domestic sphere as a battleground over citizenship, belonging, and Black bodily integrity. Here I am indebted to an earlier generation of Black feminist scholars including Hazel Carby, Ann duCille, and Claudia Tate who theorized the domestic as sites where nineteenth-century Black women writers "offered [their] recently emancipated [readership] an occasion for [imagining] and exercising political self-definition in fiction at a time when the civil rights of African Americans were constitutionally sanctioned but socially prohibited."[29] Likewise, I draw from the subsequent generation of theorists, Quashie among them, along with Elizabeth Alexander, who offers the language of "the black interior" to highlight the intimate relationship between the home and self, and self as home.[30] So too am I inspired by Saidiya Hartman, who in *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* reminds us that the post–Civil War dichotomy of gendered public and private spheres rooted in anti-Black constructions never held for Black life, and that Black folks have long engaged in a process of making such concepts as gender, family, home, and freedom resonate in ways outside or beyond the confines of racial enclosure.[31] The photographic event plays an important role in Hartman's book: the seeming intractability of pornographic images and mugshots that appear unwilling to unfix their subjects, as well as portraits, snapshots, and mugshots again that offer the possibility to imagine a different outcome and to stage another encounter. And a next generation of Black feminist and queer of color critique, including Marlon Bailey, Jafari Allen, and Sa-

vannah Shange, demonstrates how queer Black communities (and the queerness of Black communities) have troubled the very notion of home even as they have forged new modes of kinship and insisted on homeplace.[32]

Home, then, is always more than home. I am interested not merely in how the Black subjects considered in this book are utilizing photography to emplace themselves in the world but how the choice to use photography is itself a way to mediate one's relationship to the world and to reimagine the world itself. Using photography to comprehend one's place in the world—photographing toward understanding—makes sense given that photography also names and makes manifest a relation of the body as a vessel for sight to the physical world as mediated by the apparatus. What, then, might these Black habits of photography reveal about new modes of making and seeing photography, and making and seeing Black life?

"Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question. . . . How does it feel to be a problem?" wrote W. E. B. Du Bois at the very opening of *The Souls of Black Folk*.[33] Photography has long been deployed and conscripted to come up with an answer, to address the relationship between Blackness and the world. And if *The Souls of Black Folk* has taught us anything—besides the fact that the question is itself a problem—it is that to answer the question of what is the texture of Black life, we must first exceed the disciplinary and generic tools that we have been handed.

Like my first book, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle*, *When Home Is a Photograph* offers an opportunity to consider photography as practiced by figures of the Black (and specifically Black American) radical tradition. Across the longer arc of my research, I have come to recognize that the photographic archives of Black activists, intellectuals, and organizations provide a critical yet understudied resource for illuminating the fraught history and politics of Black representation, as well as the role of photography in conceptualizing Black freedom in both the personal and public arenas. My first book was especially concerned with photography as a social movement strategy for antilynching activists, SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) organizers, and Black Panther Party militants, a necessary tool in an ongoing battle for justice that takes place in the visual field, as well as in courtrooms and classrooms, in the streets, and increasingly in public memory. Photography as a conscious weapon. In this book, I consider photography in its more intimate context, equally as fraught and political, but imbued with more complex personal motivations. More specifically, I am interested in the way quotidian photographs—quiet images of family, of the domes-

tic, of the everyday and unspectacular—give shape to our understanding and visualization of Black life, even for those who are the most recognizable, most vocal, and most resistant figures in our political culture.

In each of four chapters, I consider the employment of a distinct, though interrelated, mode of photography by key Black intellectuals over the past century. I begin with photographic portraiture through the collaboration of famed Harlem, New York, studio photographer James Van Der Zee and Pan-African leader Marcus Garvey, who as head of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), hired Van Der Zee to document the organization's activities in the summer of 1924. This collaboration reveals the importance that Garvey and the UNIA placed on photography to both document and confer consistency and legitimacy on Garvey and the movement in the midst of organizational tumult. Through Van Der Zee, Garvey and the UNIA employed photographic portraiture to mobilize racial feeling and to assert a vision of a masculinist Black modernity rooted in an imagined Africa and routed through the authority of the camera and the promises of portraiture. Certainly, in the interwar period, both Black portraiture and Pan-Africanism were projects engaged in a kind of corrective work, redeeming derogatory images of Black people and committed to Black self-possession. To manifest the "double consciousness" of photography, that is the "twoness" of self and other that W. E. B. Du Bois described as endemic to the condition of Black modern subjects, I develop the hermeneutic of "reading stereoscopically," drawing on the nineteenth-century photographic technology that mimicked binocular vision to produce an illusion of depth. This analytic reveals the ways photography has worked to articulate—to join up and express—African diaspora.

Chapters 2 and 3 move from formal portraiture to family photography, from masculinist visions of power and belonging to domestic images of home, as practiced by Black women activists and mothers. Chapter 2 turns to ethnographic, family, and travel photography as made by author, activist, and anthropologist Eslanda Goode Robeson in the 1930s and 1940s. In 1936, Goode Robeson, perhaps best known as the wife of celebrated singer, actor, and activist Paul Robeson, set off on a three-month tour of southern Africa, as part of her field study toward completion of an advanced degree in anthropology at the London School of Economics. Also a political mission to see firsthand an Africa in the early stages of anticolonial struggle, the trip quickly became a family vacation when she chose to bring her then-eight-year-old son, Paul Jr. In 1945 Robeson published her travel diary and photographs as the memoir *African Journey*, which featured her son prominently. Chapter 2 considers Robeson's vision of Africa and asks what forms of diasporic identification and belonging might

have been nurtured through the presence of Paul Jr. as a photographic subject. Robeson's photographs in *African Journey* draw on, and blur, the line between ethnographic photography and family snapshots; a desire to note the familiar unknowingly slips into recording the familial. If anthropological photography finds pleasure in difference, family snapshots locate joy in sameness, in the filial and the familiar. In this chapter, I examine how, in Robeson's deft hands, anthropological field image and family and tourist snapshots collide and collude to produce a distinct photographic archive of an African continent on the verge of decolonization not merely as "homeland" but as "homeplace."

Chapter 3 continues the exploration of family photography through close examination of a family photography album made by Kathleen Neal Cleaver of her family's time living in exile in Algeria and France, 1969–72. The Algiers album, in which the Pointe Pescade snapshot lives, is one particularly rich artifact in Cleaver's personal photography collection, and the chapter draws on my three years of working with Cleaver in her home leading a team organizing and cataloging this archive (acquired by Emory University's Rose Library in spring 2020). While this photography collection broadly and the family album specifically have great political and historical significance, enriching our knowledge about the Black Panther Party, the work of Black internationalism in the era of Black Power, and gender politics in the context of Black revolutionary struggles, it is perhaps best understood as a family archive. Thus, I read the Algiers album as a Black woman–authored text that offers an affective and personal history of a movement that has been conveyed primarily as historical document. Its form as a family album forces us to reckon with the messiness of movement and cannot deny the failures and disappointments of family relations—whether a difficult marriage, a growing community of exiles, family as a metaphor for nationalism, or as a map of intergenerational kinship ties. This chapter addresses the role of photography, archives, and curatorial practice in the making of the Black radical tradition and Black feminist futures.

By the time you've read this introduction and the chapters themselves, my hope is that this book will have offered you a sense of some of these Black habits of photography—of love and kinship, of failure and possibility that photography can explore, express, and produce. What I cannot promise, however, is a conclusion that provides definitive proclamations about home and belonging and photography. Since March 2020, what is "belonging" in a system set on killing us, and what is "home" in a world literally on fire? If photography is an apparatus for world-making, what can it actually achieve in the face of disinformation, deepfakes, and unfolding and ongoing catastrophe? And isn't "definitive" just hubris in an unending marathon of uncertainty? By way of con-

clusion, I turn instead to the photographic (plus) projects of two contemporary artists, Dawoud Bey and Sadie Barnette, who deploy photography to engage a set of questions about Black life, belonging, and photography itself. Dawoud Bey's crepuscular 2018 landscape photography series, *Night Coming Tenderly, Black*, revisits locations of the Underground Railroad and renders the experience of fugitives from slavery by embracing the limits of sight. Sadie Barnette's installation *Family Tree* (2021) explodes the notion of the family photograph and asks us to expand our notion of to whom, to what, to which time, and to which realm we belong.

Bey and Barnette's projects demonstrate that while photography proves a useful tool for learning oneself and can function as a "home" for notions of self, community, belonging, and futurity, the investment in specific genres rooted in Enlightenment conceptions of apprehending the world and visualizing the human proves unsatisfactory. Taken alongside the other practitioners in *When Home Is a Photograph*, we see that the engagement with these genres has always been anagrammatical, inadequate if not inimical to the task of envisioning Black life in its complexity, and we therefore demand new modes of making and seeing photography.

This book doesn't ask, What if Black people invented photography? exactly, because the answer is that we already have and we do every day.[34] Rather, it asks, What forms, what habits of photography have Black Americans invented in their practices of the medium that attend to the violence of anti-Blackness but are neither captive to that violence nor beholden to anti-Blackness's rules, rationale, or systems of order? I want to imagine a different life-place for photography, one that honors the myriad ways Black folks practice photography. I want to consider that the work of "decolonizing the camera"[35] is what Black folks (and others) do every time they bend the camera outside of the imperialist colonialist logics of consumption, enclosure, and dispossession, documenting possibility and coaxing potential lurking in each photograph.

Notes

INTRODUCTION. WHEN HOME IS A PHOTOGRAPH

1. Kathleen Neal Cleaver, "Memories of Love and War," unpublished memoir, Eldridge and Kathleen Cleaver Papers. Rose Library, Emory University, Atlanta, GA.

2. I wrote about this image in my essay "Restaging Revolution: Black Power, *Vibe* Magazine, and Photographic Memory"; and in chapter 3 of my first book, *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle*. I first wrote about it in my senior thesis in college, on Black women and Blaxploitation films. When I say a long time, I mean a long time.

3. Davis, "Afro Images," 177.

4. Quashie, *Sovereignty of Quiet*.

5. Cleaver, "Memories of Love and War," n.p.

6. Deborah Willis, "Introduction: Picturing Us," in Willis, *Picturing Us*; hooks, "In Our Glory," 61.

7. Quashie, *Sovereignty of Quiet*, 3.

8. Campt, *Listening to Images*, 45.

9. Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor coined the phrase "predatory inclusion" in her book *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership*.

10. Taylor, *Race for Profit*, 11.

11. See, for example, Sharpe, *Ordinary Notes*, 51.

12. Hooks, "Homeplace."

13. While 1619 is often cited as the year the first enslaved Africans were brought to the territory now known as the United States of America, as made popular by "The 1619 Project," this year merely marks the beginning of English slavery in the colonies. Spanish colonists brought enslaved Africans to the settlement in present-day St. Augustine, Florida, a half century earlier, reminding us that the history of African enslavement in North America, let alone the entire Western hemisphere, was a long, pan-European endeavor whose legacy cannot easily be undone (or erased, despite the best efforts of current authoritarian regimes). See Hannah-Jones, "1619 Project."

Orlando Patterson identifies natal alienation as a key aspect of the social death that marks the condition of the slave; that is, one's birth ties are not recognized, and familial structures are broken apart. Natal alienation, vulnerability to gratuitous violence, and the fungibility (expendability and interchangeability) of the Black/slave form the foundation of Afro-pessimist thought and fundamentally shape Western modernity. See Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*; and Cunningham, "Argument of Afropessimism." See also Hayes, *Love for Liberation*, 4.

14. On belonging, see Glenn, *Unequal Freedom*, 52–54.

15. Azoulay, *Civil Imagination*, 26.

16. See Nash, *Black Body in Ecstasy*.

17. Hooks, "Oppositional Gaze."

18. Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 8.

19. On "racial capitalism," see Levenson and Paret, "South African Tradition of Racial Capitalism"; Robinson, *Black Marxism*; Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860–1880*; Gilmore, "Abolition Geography and the Problem of Innocence"; and Huerta, *The Unintended*.

20. Azoulay, "Unlearning the Origins of Photography." See also Azoulay, *Potential History*; Lewis, *Unseen Truth*; and especially Kimberly Juanita Brown's powerful *Mortevivum: Photography and the Politics of the Visual*.

21. "Photography produces race as a visualizable fact." Fusco, "Racial Times, Racial Marks, Racial Metaphors," 60.

22. Pinney, *Photography and Anthropology*; Hirsch, *Family Frames*; Smith, *American Archives*; Krauss, "Photography's Discursive Spaces"; Berger, *Sight Unseen*; Mitchell, *Landscape and Power*; Berger, "Understanding a Photograph"; Berger "Changing View of Man in the Portrait." See also Sliwinski, *Human Rights in Camera*.

23. Sharpe's concept of the anagrammatical as developed in *In the Wake* builds on Hortense Spillers's "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book."

24. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 111.

25. Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 96; Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*.

26. Katherine McKittrick writes, "A black sense of place is not a standpoint or a situated knowledge; it is a location of difficult encounter and relationality. A black sense of place is not individualized knowledge—it is collaborative praxis." McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories*, 106.

27. On photography and the Great Migration of southern Black Americans to the US North and West in the first half of the twentieth century, see Morrison, "Quotidian Expenses." Alan Pelaez Lopez describes the arduous journeys of undocumented Afro-Mexican migrants to the United States in the early twenty-first century, in *Intergalactic Travels: Poems from a Fugitive Alien*. See also the compelling exhibition catalog *Home—So Different, So Appealing*, edited by Chon A. Noriega, Mari Carmen Ramírez, and Pilar Tompkins Rivera.

28. Brown, "Black Liverpool, Black America, and the Gendering of Diasporic Space"; Campt, *Image Matters*; Campt, *Listening to Images*; Griffin, *Who Set You Flowin'?*

29. Tate, *Domestic Allegories of Political Desire*, 7. See also Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood*; duCille, *Coupling Convention*.

30. Alexander, *Black Interior*. See also Mitchell, *From Slave Cabins to the White House.*

31. Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*.

32. Bailey, *Butch Queens Up in Pumps*; Allen, *There's a Disco Ball Between Us*; Shange, "Play Aunties and Dyke Bitches"; Green, "In the Life."

33. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*, 8.

34. I am inspired here by Diné artist Will Wilson's description of his Critical Indigenous Photographic Exchange (CIPX) project, prompted by the question "What if Indians invented photography?" The project is, he says, "an intervention within the contentious and competing visual languages that form today's photographic canon," and a portal to imagining new practices. See Wilson, "About"; and Edwards, "'What If Indians Invented Photography?'"

35. Sealy, *Decolonising the Camera.*

CHAPTER 1. THE CYNOSURE OF THE EYES OF HARLEM: MARCUS GARVEY AND JAMES VAN DER ZEE IN STEREOGRAPH

1. Robert A. Hill, "Making Noise," 181.

2. Gilroy, *Against Race*, 155.

3. See Percy Hintzen, Jean Mutaba Rahier, and Felipe Smith, introduction to Hintzen, Rahier, and Smith, *Global Circuits of Blackness*.

4. Campt, *Image Matters.*

5. Throughout his career, Kobena Mercer has called on scholars to "wide[n] [the] horizon for understanding diaspora culture's complex histories and future possibilities" and to "show how artistic conceptions of modernity emerged from numerous directions across the globe." See Mercer, "Diaspora Culture and the Dialogic Imagination"; Mercer, *Exiles, Diasporas and Strangers*; and Mercer, *Travel and See.*

6. Jaji, *Africa in Stereo*, 11. On the stereograph and stereoscope, see Crary, *Techniques of the Observer.*

7. Holmes, "The Stereoscope and the Stereograph." For more on the stereograph, see Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs*; and Goldsby, *A Spectacular Secret.*

8. Mercer, "Art History and the Dialogics of Diaspora," 214.

9. Garvey, "The Negro's Greatest Enemy," 3.

10. Samuel A. Haynes, quoted in Grant, *Negro with a Hat*, 156.

11. Martin, *The Pan African Connection.*

12. *Negro World*, August 5, 1922.

13. The Black Star Line came to number four ships, one of which, the SS *Yarmouth* (renamed the *Booker T. Washington*), would be junked for scrap metal, before the company's financial dissolution in 1922.

14. The Bureau of Investigation, created in 1908, became the Division of Investigation in 1933 and two years later was renamed the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). For more on the early Bureau's investigations of Garvey and others, see Theodor J. Kornweibel's *"Seeing Red": Federal Campaigns Against Black Militancy, 1919–1925*.

15. See Kornweibel, *"Seeing Red"*; and Mail Fraud Charges Against Marcus Garvey: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Criminal Justice of the House Committee on the Judiciary, 100th Cong, 1st sess., July 28, 1987 (statement of Robert Hill). Garvey was