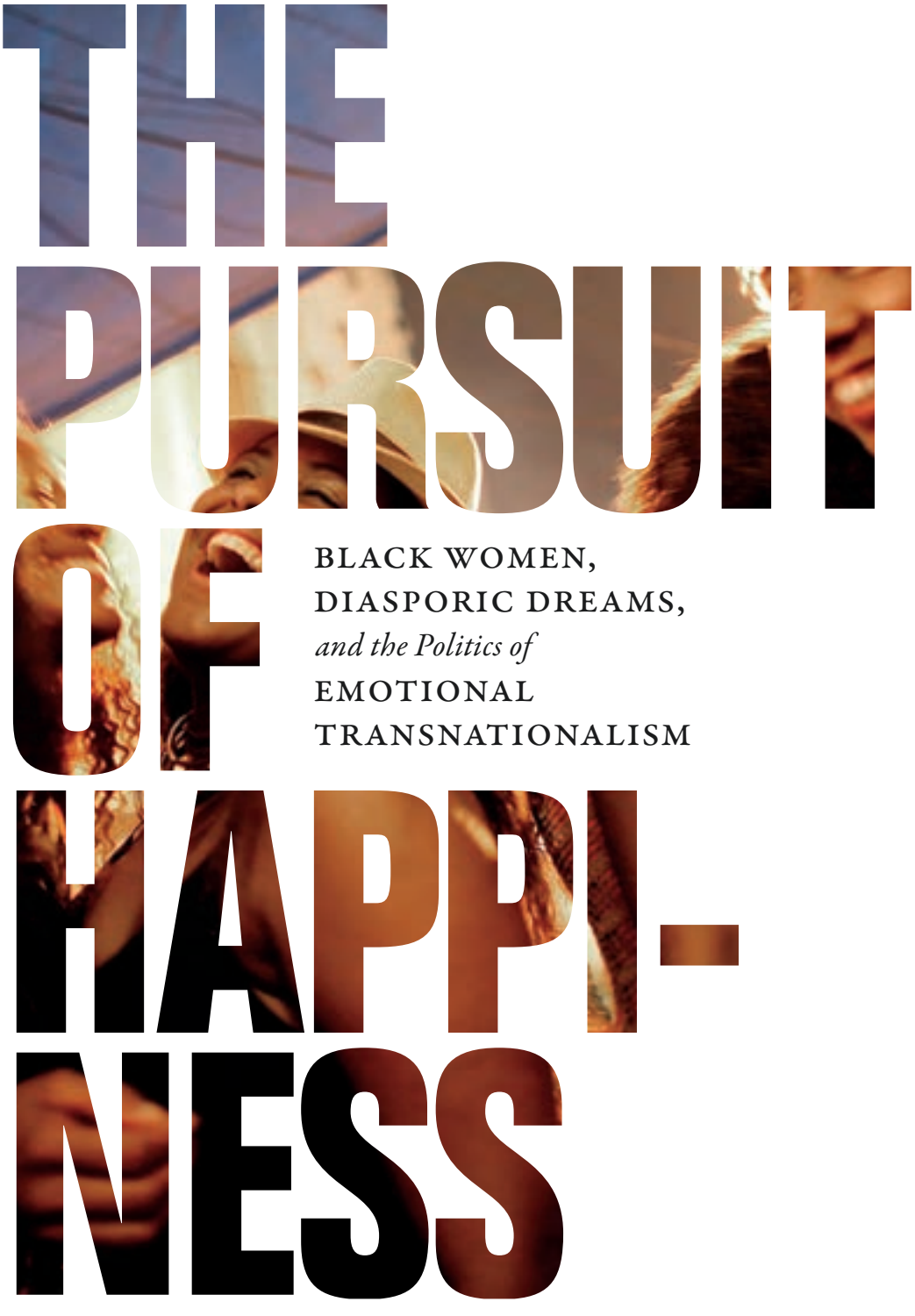

BLACK WOMEN, DIASPORIC DREAMS, *and the Politics of* EMOTIONAL TRANSNATIONALISM

Bianca C. Williams

The Pursuit of Happiness

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For my grandmother, Nerissa Viola Rose:

for all the seeds of love, family, and happiness you planted, from Westmoreland, Jamaica, to the United States, and back.

WE MISS YOU DEEPLY.

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INTRODUCTION. "Jamaica Crawled Into My Soul"

Black Women, Affect, and the Promise of Diaspora

Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.—AUDRE LORDE

Don't wait around for other people to be happy for you. Any happiness you get you've got to make yourself.—ALICE WALKER

Perhaps it is peculiar to begin a book about happiness with a story centered on crying. While tears can have many meanings, they are not usually a central part of one's vacation narrative. Consequently, as I sat in silence on a cliff in Jamaica with the ladies of Girlfriend Tours International (GFT), each staring up at the starry sky and reflecting on our time in the country, I had to stop and ask myself, "What is all this crying about?"

The evening had begun with us filing into a sixteen-passenger van to make the ten-minute drive from our hotel on the beach to the cliffs of Negril's West End for dinner. It was the first night of the annual tour by GFT, a group of predominantly African American women from all over the United States, ranging in age from twenty-two to their early sixties. We held on to our seats as the driver sped through the twists and turns of the hills, following Jacqueline's instructions to "hurry up, before we miss the sunset!" With our hair disheveled but our lives still intact, we finally pulled up to the restaurant, 3 Dives. A large chalkboard advertised the long list of seafood and Jamaican cuisines the cooks specialized in, with the daily special—"CONCH SOUP"—written in bold, white

block letters. Six picnic benches and round wooden tables painted bright red, yellow, and green marked the spot where we would break bread and begin our initiation into girlfriendship.

Marilyn Williams and Angelia Hairston, the founders of GFT, explained that they loved 3 Dives because there was space at the back of the restaurant to make a campfire. The proximity of the benches to the cliff's edge gave the impression that we were sitting directly over the water. The beauty of the vast blue ocean and the rhythmic crashing of waves against the cliffs served as an impressive introduction to Jamaica and provided a serene background for the founders to share their life stories with the Girlfriends. Every year, on the second night of the tour, Girlfriends were "initiated" into GFT on this cliff.

Each cliff initiation played out in a similar manner. After the group made small talk in the main eating area—where they were from, how long it had taken to get to Jamaica, and how many delays or obstacles the ladies had survived at various airports—Marilyn or Angie would welcome them to the tour group and tell them to enjoy the amazing cuisine. Shortly after the food orders were taken, Marilyn would whisper in the ear of one lady, "Girl, come here. I've got something to show you!" She would then escort the Girlfriend down the steps and over the dark dirt path to the edge of the cliff, holding her hand tightly so she would not fall, and seat her on the wooden bench near the campfire. Marilyn would sit down next to the Girlfriend, give her hand a tight squeeze, and encourage her to just look at the stars that lit up the sky, smell the ocean air, and take in Jamaica.

After a few moments of silence had passed, and Marilyn felt like the woman had dutifully followed her instructions and relaxed, she would smile and say in her Southern accent, "Welcome to Jamaica, Girlfriend." More often than not, this statement would immediately draw a few tears from the initiated Girlfriend's eyes, and she would thank Marilyn for bringing her there. After they sat in silence together for a few more moments, Marilyn would head back to the dining area to escort the next Girlfriend down. Eventually, all the Girlfriends would be sitting on the edge of that cliff together, each lost in her thoughts. Intermittently, they would begin to speak softly and share stories about their lives, their struggles, and why they had come to Jamaica.

I heard a diverse collection of life experiences when I first observed and participated in this initiation in 2004. I connected deeply with these women, and most are central to the rest of this book. Jacqueline, a fifty-four-year-old educator, had begun traveling to Jamaica to "get away from all the drama" in the United States. Gayle, a fifty-two-year-old professional, began her travels to Jamaica in 2000 after ending a long-term relationship with a boyfriend. Sitting

next to her was Maya, a fifty-four-year-old civil service worker, who planned on retiring in two years to open her own bed-and-breakfast in Jamaica. Sasha, a thirty-five-year-old woman from DC, said that she had caught "Jamaica fever" from Jacqueline, whom she had met online. This was a standard episode of every GFT initiation: one by one, each Girlfriend would reveal a tiny piece of her story. Some shared more than others, but it was during this moment of life-sharing that, almost every year, the collective tears would begin.

Although I was an ethnographer interested in the affective dimensions of Black women's lived experiences, I had not considered what to do if an interlocutor began to cry.[1] In fact, as I accompanied these mostly middle-aged, African American women on their multiple vacations to Jamaica, back to their hometowns in the United States, and finally, on virtual "journeys" in their web community from 2003 to 2007, I was initially surprised, even dumbfounded, by the frequent display of tears throughout our trips and conversations. However, after four years of listening to their life narratives and combing through hundreds of discussion threads online, I came to understand that the shedding of tears was a form of individual and collective emotional release that was connected to larger stories about happiness, yearning, struggle, validation, escape, and love. These larger stories symbolize the complex webs of contradictory images, destructive stereotypes, and misrecognitions Black women experience as they live at the intersection of racism and sexism.

Unfortunately, popular myths about Black women as Jezebels, Sapphires, Mammies, and Strong Black Women along with deficit-based scholarship (research that focuses on what Black women lack and views them as a problem to be fixed) affect both the visibility of these women and the ways they are represented once they are made visible. As a result, when we see tears drop from the eyes of Black women, it is easy to draw on a familiar narrative that leads to a simplistic conclusion: Black women's lives are full of sadness and struggle, and these tears are what result when one strives to beat the odds. Because of historical and contemporary burdens of racism and sexism, struggle is undoubtedly an aspect of many Black women's lives; however, it has always been only a portion of our story. What about Black women and happiness? Pleasure? Leisure? During my years of fieldwork with the women of GFT, I documented how these Black women found ways to pursue and experience these things in the context of generations of racialized and gendered oppression.

When I first met some of the African American women of Girlfriend Tours International in Jamaica in 2003, it was their undeniable happiness that most impressed me. This tour group, composed predominantly of African American heterosexual cisgender women, featured some of the most lively, young-at-heart

Black women in their forties and fifties I had ever met. A few members were married or partnered, while most were divorced and/or single. They were dedicated to living life to the fullest and enjoying everything Jamaica had to offer, including the latest dancehall music and dance moves. Joy radiated off of each woman, and a sense of tranquility permeated the group. These women declared that they did not need husbands, boyfriends, or some other male escort to travel internationally; they were fine navigating unfamiliar streets on their own. In fact, it seemed that most of these self-proclaimed "Jamaicaholics" were enticed by the tour group's focus on women and the opportunity to build "girlfriendships," or deep female friendships.

It was the tears of happiness, restoration, and connection shared by the Black women of Girlfriend Tours International, along with their profound expressions of girlfriendship and sensuality in Jamaica, that led me to write this book. Something about the sense of Black womanhood they expressed felt freeing, and this freedom intrigued me. The shedding of tears is a metaphoric theme running throughout the chapters—one that connects the different emotional aspects of these women's transnationalism. As the vernacular notion "traveling while Black" suggests, race affects the emotional experience of international travel—as do gender, class, and national identity. I use the phrase "emotional transnationalism," originally coined by Diane Wolf, to capture this experience and to connect the Girlfriends' emotional lives with their transnational mobility. In her research on second-generation Filipinos, Wolf defines emotional transnationalism as the process of sustaining transnational connections through emotions and ideologies.[2] "Emotional transnationalism" conceptualizes the ambiguities and contradictions embedded in the Girlfriends' pursuit of happiness in the context of global racisms and patriarchies. This group's understanding of their racialized and gendered subjectivities is not contained by, or simply attached to, their nation-state, but rather is deeply connected to their participation in transnational processes and an engagement in what they envision as a diasporic community. These women's choices about whom to love, how to relax, and where to find personal acceptance and community tie together countries and cultures using technologies that are different from those of the past. New technologies often result in new forms of connectivity and belonging that link to historical racialized and gendered ideologies. As I observed their emotions and tracked their tears from the United States to Jamaica and back, I wondered what led Girlfriends to use these technologies and seek leisure experiences. The concept of emotional transnationalism offered a theoretical lens that enabled me to answer two central research questions: First, why do people like

the Girlfriends seek out transnational and diasporic experience, and how might their desire for such experience reflect nationally specific affective and political economies of race and gender? Second, how might our understandings of the racialized, gendered, and emotional aspects of transnationalism shift if we place Black women at the center of our research?

This book is a multisited ethnographic study of a group of African American tourist women and their transnational pursuits of happiness. I explore the emotional journey these women encounter as they seek wellness and belonging in the context of national and diasporic differences. I also examine how these African American women make sense of the paradoxical nature of their hyphenated identities while traveling to Jamaica. Initially, like many tourists, they simply seek a leisurely escape from the stress of everyday life. But over time, the *repeated* trips of these self-proclaimed Jamaicaholics take on more meaning as they begin to use Jamaica as a site for dealing with and escaping from American racism and sexism. These African American women have established a complex concept of "happiness," one that can only be fulfilled by moving—both virtually and geographically—across national borders. To travel to Jamaica, Girlfriends need American economic, national, and social capital. At the same time, to remain hopeful and happy within the United States, they need a spiritual connection to their imagined second home of Jamaica and their imagined community of Jamaicans. I argue that their access to virtual and international travel enabled them to temporarily replace their experiences of hardship and invisibility in the United States with fantasies of happiness, intimacy, community, and connectivity in Jamaica.

The Pursuit of Happiness offers an understanding of Girlfriends' relationship to Jamaica that sheds light on multiple areas of anthropological inquiry. Methodologically, the virtual and transnational aspect of this multisited work expands the possibilities for ethnographically documenting imagined community and diasporic longings. Substantively, the focus on these women's affective lives illuminates the significant emotional costs of living as a racialized and gendered subject in the United States. This challenges discourses that belittle and deemphasize emotion, particularly Black people's feelings, as important nodes of data and sites of meaning-making. Additionally, here I highlight some transnational strategies people use to gain access to emotional wellness, leisure, and belonging. And last, while the ethnography centers on the perspectives of one group of African American women, as a whole it illuminates some of the power dynamics of participating in an imagined African diasporic community.

Emotional Transnationalism

Emotional transnationalism is central to my theorization of race, happiness, and diaspora. It enables a useful analysis of exercises of power and privilege, practices of reciprocity and solidarity, the transfer of cultural meanings, and the modification of the identity formations Black women construct and problematize as they create their transnational network and community. Girlfriends' access to class and geographic mobility and their movements in virtual and physical spaces challenge notions of happiness and wellness that mistakenly bind these pursuits to home or a nation-state. The fact that they are African American women, women who are the descendants of enslaved Africans whose movement changed the world, is significant. Their ancestors were forcibly removed from Africa, chained inside the bellies of ships, and sailed across the Atlantic against their will. Aware of this history and that their movement is different, Girlfriends recognize the profound sense of choice and free will they have as they move across national borders and engage in leisure that their ancestors could not. However, they also note how their mobility has been constrained by sexist notions that women should not travel on their own, or that it is abnormal for women to be sexual beings after the age of fifty, and by the particular ways Black women, happiness, and leisure often seem incongruent to many. While their narratives are interwoven with the trauma of the transatlantic slave trade, and a yearning for diasporic connectivity is a significant aspect of their pursuit of happiness, their emotional experiences are more complex than a singular origin story of the diaspora. Therefore, my use of emotional transnationalism is about mapping their desires for girlfriendship, diasporic connectivity, and pleasure and about the ways race and gender influence these desires.

Emotional transnationalism is important for understanding how these women have created a transnational emotional social field—a field that includes two countries that are geographically bounded but also constructed emotionally, culturally, and virtually. Researchers interested in transnationalism and globalization have theorized the fascinating ways goods, ideas, and people increasingly cross national borders and geographic boundaries. However, less attention has been paid to the transnational dynamics of emotions—how people carry emotions with them as they move, experiencing them individually and collectively and across time and space. David Harvey's concept of time-space compression transformation is useful here, as it allows a theorization of the temporal and spatial aspects of emotion. Harvey argues that processes of capitalist

commodification and accumulation, alongside technological advances, can lead to a shrinking of distances, or a sense that different times and spaces are closer together than they appeared before.[3]

For the women of GFT, Jamaica and the United States are two countries with distinct cultures that offer essential components for their pursuits of happiness. Their emotions are linked to their experiences of racialized and cultural politics, which are connected to actual nation-states and geographic spaces. Within the group, many Girlfriends are Black women who feel they cannot experience happiness regularly within U.S. borders because of American racism and sexism. Subsequently, they begin to search for ways to fulfill their "inalienable right" by temporarily leaving the United States, drawing on diasporic connections and imaginings, and pursuing happiness and belonging in Jamaica. While it may be weird to cry on vacation, these women cry because they cannot fully disconnect from the emotional burdens of racism and sexism in the United States even as they search for a space where racism is not as prevalent. They also shed tears while experiencing joy and affirmation within the kinship of other Black American women. And as they virtually and physically travel between the two countries—cultivating deep connections to people, places, and their own understandings of self—time and space seem to compress and their crying takes on different meaning. The time between the past and the present compress as they experience diasporic nostalgia and long for a racial and cultural unity with Jamaicans that they imagine was prevalent in another ancestral time. Their happiness lies in the idea that although slavery was terrible for Black populations in both countries, it is a shared history that creates connection in the present. Girlfriends assume that their relationships with Jamaican men, and their more strained connection with Jamaican women, will be nourished by this shared history, a collective experience of racialized suffering and resilience. These women experience and explore their emotions in virtual and physical spaces that concurrently emphasize and blur each country's borders. Girlfriends' emotions simultaneously are experienced in the present, engage a previous diasporic moment, and embody a hope for a future. Through an examination of their emotions, the concept of emotional transnationalism enables us to recognize how certain ideas and feelings, particularly those connected to race and racism, are linked to spatiality and temporality.

The Significance of Imagined Community: Race, Gender, and Diaspora

My analysis of the Girlfriends' relationships with one another, with Jamaica, and with Jamaicans draws on and contributes to theories about imagined community. To understand how imagined communities are influenced by technological advances, the deterritorialization of economic and political power, and increased movement and mobility, many engage Benedict Anderson's paramount theorization of nationalism and the nation-state in his book, *Imagined Communities*.[4] Anderson describes the nation-state as a unique form of political community shaped by historical forces and imaginings of commonality. He argues that a "community is imagined if its members will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion."[5] Community is often imagined "because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship."[6] The imagined community created by GFT members is a rich site for illuminating the possibilities and limitations of Anderson's concept, because this imagined community is fraught with the dilemmas that arise as individuals navigate the complicated terrain of identity and community formations.

This story of imagined community takes up Anderson's emphasis on imagination, stretching his analysis to conceptualize some of the ways race, diaspora, and transnationality problematize our perception of community as a collectivity based on sameness and similarities. Anderson's theorization does not actively account for the racialized dimensions of imagined community and the tensions that different experiences and understandings of race (and racism) may generate. Anderson does, however, suggest that inequality, difference, and tensions are frequently embedded in imagined community. By using race as a tool for homing in on these differences, our understanding of community shifts, and we can take seriously the fantastical, imagined, and emotional aspects of racialized experiences within communities.

I also use Anderson's notion of an imagined community as an entry point for articulating how imaginings of African diasporic relationships (particularly African American imaginings) connect with or diverge from Anderson's interpretation of how community works. I deconstruct the narrative of diasporic community the ladies of GFT create in order to understand how members of the African diaspora may experience Blackness differently and how power differentials connected to gender, class, and nationality complicate the viability of diaspora as an imagined community. Since processes of racialization and dias-

poric subjectivity are inherently about power, mobility, and difference, one can conceive that these processes may act as dilemmas for imagined communities. Tensions may arise as an individual who imagines community one way is confronted with alternate realities when others perceived as community members do not share the same imagining. The community created by GFT members illuminates the possibilities of diasporic imaginings and potential ruptures generated by diasporic realities. How might imagined communities shift and transform if at times commonalities are viewed as shared and, at other times, this imagining of sameness is rejected?

I aim to frustrate particular notions about diasporic community by highlighting some of the power differentials within diasporic formations. By analyzing how affective transactions influence the creation and maintenance of diasporic relationships, particularly those in which national, economic, and gendered differences frequently become marked, I am using GFT as a lens to investigate diasporic diversity. Additionally, instead of anchoring the notion of diaspora in prevalent histories of pain and suffering, this book shows how people use leisure, laughter, and the pursuit of happiness to construct diaspora. While memories of slavery and discrimination definitely inform these women's constructions of Blackness and Black identities, their experiences of pleasure and leisure also ground their imaginings of diasporic community.

Finally, this ethnographic study of imagined community and emotional transnationalism shows how the women of GFT use transnational methods to create community and engage in affective transactions. In the past thirty years, it has become commonplace in disciplines such as anthropology and sociology to argue that many of our lived experiences are not limited by national borders but are, in fact, transnational. Studies of transnationalism have been conceptualized as political examinations of movement and mobility, recognizing that power and privilege are embedded in the ability to cross national borders and geographic lines. Identifying who has access to global movement and mobility (through people, goods, and ideas) frequently points to who has access to economic wealth and political capital. The transnational factors influencing relationships between African Americans and Jamaicans are also salient. The GFT members participate in various forms of movement, but their movement is different from that of the communities usually studied under the rubric of transnational studies. The chapters that follow describe the women's various methods of mobility, explain why these movements seem necessary to these tourists, and describe how their identities as Black American women affect the methods they use to become virtually, physically, and economically mobile. Their movements across national borders, and the new networks of friends and

family that this mobility enables, drastically change how these women think of themselves as racialized and diasporic subjects. Their experience highlights specific ways that transnational forces complicate the formation and maintenance of imagined communities.

The Pursuit of Happiness focuses on both virtual and real-time communities in which the connections between race, gender, affect, and transnationalism are critical. Because Black women's lives demonstrate the dynamism of race and gender and speak to issues of power and privilege, their experiences are crucially important for understanding the tensions and exchanges that emerge in this transnational, increasingly globalized world. However, the experiences and narratives of Black women, particularly Black American women, are scarce in transnational studies.[7] Moreover, scholars and journalists who do address the lives of Black American women often limit their analyses and representations in three ways: (1) they present narratives that constrain these women's experiences to the national borders of the United States, neglecting to understand how their lives are influenced by transnational processes and various forms of mobility; (2) they discount the differently racialized and gendered experiences Black women have when engaging these transnational processes; and (3) they frequently offer a one-dimensional view of these women's struggles within spaces of institutional and social oppression, presenting them simply as sad, depressed women without also engaging their desires and ability to experience pleasure, leisure, and happiness.

This lack of attention to Black women's narratives and experiences is not unique to transnational studies. While there has been an explosion of affect studies that highlight affect's social and political dimensions, few of these studies theorize the ways that affect is also racial. But for those racialized as Black in the United States, the ways that affect is lived, experienced, and politicized are inextricable from its raciality. Black feminist scholars such as Faye V. Harrison, Patricia Hill Collins, Deborah Gray White, and Beverly Guy Sheftall have long argued that if we examine lived experiences and politics without engaging a racialized analysis, we miss critical dimensions of how power works. As just one example, public health studies describe how Black health is affected by microaggressions; this literature also links experiences of race and racism to high blood pressure, stress-induced diseases, and unhealthy coping mechanisms. Being seen as "different" or being discriminated against because of race can generate emotions that become profoundly significant not only to physical health but also to one's understanding of self and sense of belonging. Emotions are not limited to personal histories and individual anecdotes; they also bring otherwise abstract ideas of oppression and discrimination into stark relief for individual

actors. Because of this, emotions are an excellent source of information about how intersectional oppressions become reified. To not insert race into the story of affect is to leave out a critical dimension necessary to an adequate understanding of how affect works, and to neglect the paramount role race plays for those who are racialized as Black in the United States. Additionally, to equate Blackness with masculinity or to assume that Black men's experiences are the same as Black women's experiences is to ignore the significance of gender in their everyday lives.

Critical race studies, diaspora studies, and gender studies have all made important contributions to the project of theorizing racialized and gendered subjectivities, but these studies frequently remain delinked and relegated to theoretical silos. Black feminist thought, by contrast, enables a better understanding of the links between emotion and transnationalism due to its emphasis on narrative, lived experience, and emotion as ultimate sites of meaning-making and empowerment. Black feminist thought anchors my examination of how processes of racialization and gendering are central to Black American women's lives, including their pursuits of happiness. I identify the methods Black women use to pursue happiness and emotional wellness in the context of American racism and sexism, and I show how the transnational is central to their pursuits of happiness.

This book lays out how the emotional journeys of Black women lead them to momentarily leave the spaces that many argue should make them happy—their families, their homes in their native country, and their jobs. What about these women's lives as Black women pushes them to repeatedly leave the "land of opportunity" to pursue happiness? What happens when Black American women begin to look beyond their nation's borders for happiness and fulfillment? More broadly, what can these tourist women's emotional journeys and participation in affective transactions tell us about race and gender in the contemporary moment of globalization and transnationalism?

Escaping John Henryism and Sojourner Syndrome: Research Motivations and Intersectionality

The African American women of Girlfriend Tours International employed multiple strategies to pursue happiness both at home and abroad. At home, they often addressed their social conditions by requesting that their government and their families make changes that would help them fulfill their pursuits of happiness. But they didn't stop there. These women (mostly of the civil rights generation) constructed a "do-something," action-oriented attitude toward ful-

filling their pursuits. Their trips to Jamaica were an attempt to take advantage of their mobility and expand their lives in the United States. Over the course of my research, I came to recognize that neither the negative media images of Black women nor the women's own apparent joyfulness fully captured the reality of Girlfriends' lives. Instead, their lives were complex and sometimes full of contradictions, so it was necessary to adopt a both/and approach to understanding their life experiences and emotional expressions. There were moments when they encountered financial hardships and cried about feeling lonely. *And* they also experienced profound joy and pleasure, particularly when they could virtually or physically access Jamaica. I wanted to show their full selves, flaws and all, to emphasize their humanity as Black women.

As I began my research, I could not help but see these women's transnational pursuit of happiness as a strategy for escaping the threat of what public health researcher and epidemiologist Sherman James coined "John Henryism." According to legend, steel-driver John Henry died after winning a hammering race against a steam-powered hammer while building a railroad tunnel. To prove his worthiness, Henry essentially worked himself to death. In the 1970s, James used the term "John Henryism" to describe the behavior and strategies African Americans use to cope with long-term, psychosocial stressors they experience, such as social discrimination.[8] In a similar vein, anthropologist Leith Mullings offers the "Sojourner Syndrome" (named after Sojourner Truth) as an intersectional framework that addresses race, class, and gender as relational concepts and acknowledges the survival strategies African American women use to circumvent, resist, and work through racism, classism, and sexism.[9] In her article "Resistance and Resilience: The Sojourner Syndrome and the Social Context of Reproduction in Central Harlem," Mullings discusses the burdens that are associated with the prevalent "class exploitation, racial discrimination, and gender subordination" in the lives of the Black women in Harlem she observed. She argues that this framework encourages researchers to see the ways "race mediates both gender and class status" by recognizing, first, that "the consequences of race and gender—of being a Black woman—contribute to the instability of class status" and, second, that "race dilutes the protections of class."[10]

Mullings persuasively delineates how race acts as a mechanism for these gendered and classed experiences, stating,

> Middle-stratum Black women may have attained the achievements necessary for middle-class status, but they continue to suffer job and occupational discrimination; they are less likely to marry and more likely to become single heads of households because of the shortage of "mar-

> riageable men," as a consequence of disproportionate unemployment and the prison-industrial complex. For middle-class women in the study who moved to a Black community to avoid racism, their class advantage was diluted by the structural discrimination and neglect to which Black communities are subject. All these factors have the potential to become sources of stress and chronic strain.[11]

In the same way that Black women in Harlem create strategies for resisting and working through the racialized, gendered, and classed systems of discrimination and disempowerment they confront daily, the women of GFT use their trips to Jamaica to lay down similar burdens. Instead of, or in addition to, moving to a Black community in the United States to avoid experiencing racism regularly, Girlfriends travel internationally to a predominantly Black country where they feel that their presence among a diasporic critical mass will protect them (even momentarily) from the tentacles of American racism, sexism, and ageism. While none of the GFT members I interviewed discussed John Henryism or Sojourner Syndrome by name, it was clear they were aware that Black Americans, particularly Black women, often worked themselves to death, not taking time to rejuvenate and restore the emotional resources necessary for physical and emotional wellness.

The physical, emotional, and spiritual struggles Black women have encountered throughout U.S. history are in some ways intergenerational and transhistorical; the generations that follow often feel the impact of the pain and struggle of those before them and frequently suffer at the hands of similar structural oppressions. However, the strategies Black women have used to experience happiness, intimacy, laughter—tools for rehumanizing yourself when the world states you do not deserve access to these experiences—are rarely discussed publicly. Instead of becoming their own versions of John Henry, these women prioritized leisure and relaxation, recognizing that all the labor they did at home (for their families and communities) came at an emotional cost. In this way, traveling to Jamaica was an attempt by Girlfriends to put on the proverbial airplane mask before they had to provide physical and emotional labor to the people and institutions that demanded it at home.

In line with Girlfriends' prioritization of happiness, Gina Dent theorizes pleasure and joy, emphasizing the ways that affect and emotions are always political and can be used as oppositional tools. She writes in her introduction to the *Black Popular Culture* reader that "pleasure under commodified conditions, tends to be inward. You take it with you, and it's a highly individualized unit. . . . But joy tries to cut across that. Joy tries to get at those non-market values—love,

care, kindness, service, solidarity, the struggle for justice—values that provide the possibility of bringing people together."[12] In many ways the Girlfriends' trips to Jamaica demonstrate Dent's argument here—they seek individual pleasure and access to sexual autonomy in this foreign space, yet they often travel as a group so they can experience the joy and happiness that comes with the possibilities of bringing Black women together and potentially joining other diasporic kin. Dent continues,

> To extend the discussion of pleasure and joy into a black context is to shift back and forth continually between the political and ethical registers. It is to shift between the material domain in which our identities are constructed for us and where we play them out, and that "other side" where we play with the many possibilities of identification, where we possess the secret of joy.[13]

The women of GFT provided me with insight into the transnational coping strategies Black women use for dealing with American racism and sexism. As a result, I have grown ever more committed to studying the intersectionality of Black women's lives. Ethnography that focuses on Black women's lives can offer crucial information about the links between the affective and material dimensions of race, class, gender, sexuality, and age. These intersecting factors influence women's expectations of how and where they might satisfactorily be recognized as valuable human beings, viewed as community members, and find belonging. In this study, an intersectional approach illuminated the ways that the Girlfriends' yearning for diasporic belonging factored into their participation in emotional transnationalism. American realities led these Black women to travel to Jamaica and imagine that its people and its land would provide not only an escape but also, more importantly, a community of belonging. Their diasporic dreams were the fuel of their imagined community.

As these middle-aged African American women grew increasingly frustrated with feeling devalued and worthless because of their racialized, gendered, and generational social positions in the United States, they sought refuge in the comforts their American dollars could buy in Jamaica, including the companionship of a (sometimes) younger, Jamaican man or the comfort of a peaceful suite in a well-staffed hotel. By transforming themselves into internationally mobile African American women with access to (sometimes symbolic) economic status and social privilege in Jamaica, Girlfriends leveraged the African (read: "Black") and American parts of their identities to make the best of both worlds. Both their trips to Jamaica and their access to new forms of sociality through virtual experience served as strategies for critiquing and respond-

ing to the ageist, racist, and sexist discourses that marginalize them within the United States.

Stella and the Informal Industry of Romance Tourism in Jamaica

Frequently, when I present my research at conferences or tell people in conversations that I study Black women and happiness, they give me a puzzled look, as if these concepts are an oxymoron. Once we get to the role Jamaica plays in my research, the book/film *How Stella Got Her Groove Back* inevitably comes up.[14] In much of the popular discourse and scholarly world, it seems that traveling to the Caribbean as a woman has become synonymous with sex, romance tourism, and the search for a young Jamaican (male) lover. While Jamaican beaches, food, and music are cultural products the Jamaica Tourist Board uses to draw millions of travelers to their country annually, the informal industry of sex, romance, and intimacy for sale or gift exchange has become ever more popular. In other Caribbean and Latin American countries, such as Brazil, the Bahamas, and the Dominican Republic, it is common for residents and visitors to openly engage in transnational sexual exchanges. In these locations, men of a variety of races from the United States and Europe are usually the consumers of sex tourism, while women are the workers. In Jamaica, however, narratives of intimacy, seduction, and desire are central to the informal economy of romantic relationships, where sex may or may not take place. Women from the United States, Canada, and Europe are commonly seen as the consumers here, with Jamaican men providing much of the sexual and emotional labor. Here, the explicit exchange of money for intimacy, romance, or sex is frowned upon, although all involved and observing the practices recognize that money (or gifts in place of actual currency) eventually changes hands. While white European, Canadian, and American women have been participating in this industry in Jamaica for generations, the narrative of *Stella* is frequently cited as the cause for Black American women, particularly African American women, to make the exodus to Jamaica in search of romance, love, and happiness.

In *How Stella Got Her Groove Back*, Terry McMillan tells the story of Stella Payne, a divorced, forty-year-old African American businesswoman and mother who is encouraged by her girlfriends to take a vacation to Jamaica to relax, loosen up, and remember her life's purpose. Early in her trip, Stella meets Winston Shakespeare, a twenty-year-old Jamaican man, who romances her into letting go of her fears and falling in love with him. The book and resulting film depict Stella and Winston's fantastical love affair, with Jamaica's landscape,

food, and music as background characters. Delilah Abraham, Stella's best friend who accompanies her on the trip, both encourages and calms her as Stella worries about the potential complexities of this relationship with a younger man. At a touching part of the story, Stella meets Delilah on her deathbed before cancer takes her away, and Delilah reminds her that life is short and she needs to live it to the fullest. Stella takes this warning seriously and reconsiders her decision not to pursue her relationship with Winston because of the various (gendered, aged, and nationalized) differences in their relationship. At another point in the narrative, Stella meets Winston's well-established Jamaican parents. His mother does not hide her disdain for the relationship, exclaiming that Stella should be ashamed of herself and that she will destroy Winston's dreams of becoming a doctor. Quincy, Stella's son, also expresses some concern about the relationship, worried that the young Jamaican man will break her heart. By the end of the film, Winston comes to the United States to support Stella during Delilah's wake, and the filmmaker offers the promise of their relationship carrying forward.

Since *Stella*'s film release in 1998, droves of Black American women have found their way to Jamaica to get their groove on and back, in dancehalls and on beaches. However, I knew from my time with Girlfriends that their travels were more complicated than a simple reenactment of *Stella*. Nevertheless, the specter of sex and romance tourism haunts this text and their happiness pursuits, as *Stella* and its cultural meanings were both embraced and challenged by Girlfriends. While no one ultimately confessed that finding their Jamaican soulmate was the impetus for their trips, neither could any deny the profound influence Terry McMillan's love story had on their imagining of Jamaica and its significance to them as Black women. Stella's narrative of finding love, girlfriendship, and an agentive sense of self inspired Girlfriends and gave them the courage and permission to go out and pursue different aspects of it for themselves.

An Introduction to the Field Sites and Methods

At its core, *The Pursuit of Happiness* is about a group of lower-middle-class African American women who use the Internet and tourism as methods for finding love, happiness, and girlfriendship across transnational lines and within the context of diasporic diversity. Acknowledging that racialized subjectivities are always simultaneously gendered, classed, and nationalized, I examine the construction of racial and gendered subjectivities within an imagined diasporic community. I focus on the ways Girlfriends work through the complex webs of meaning and experience that constitute Blackness(es). Additionally, I describe

how these women individually and collectively explore racialized, gendered, and nationalized difference in Internet-based and real-world diasporic "contact zones." Instead of simply conceptualizing race as a dichotomous relationship between Blackness and whiteness and gender as a binary between masculinity and femininity, this book explores the complexity of racial and gendered subjectivities as they are constructed in a context where different Blacknesses and cross-gender relations are placed at the forefront.

Ethnographically, I addressed these questions and explored the transnational lives of the African American women of Girlfriend Tours International by observing and participating in group activities, conducting interviews, and analyzing online postings. My ethnographic research with members of GFT began in their virtual community in March 2003 and continued until September 2007, for a total of fifty-four months. I completed my research in multiple cities in Jamaica and the United States during the summers of 2003 and 2004 and throughout 2005–2007, for a total of twenty-two months of regional ethnographic research.

My four years of virtual fieldwork took place in the online web board at www.Jamaicans.com, a site many GFT members engaged with before, after, and during their trips to Jamaica. The Pan-African colors of red, green, and gold appeared all over Jamaicans.com, emphasizing Jamaica's prominence in the community, but also establishing a connection to the entire African diaspora. The online web community frequently acted as a driving force behind the trips of those associated with Girlfriend Tours. Claiming that they are "Out of Many, One People Online," Jamaicans.com members rearticulate Jamaica's national motto as a transnational credo, exhibiting one of the intriguing ways people use technology to reconfigure notions of nationhood and their subject positions within these global communities. Xavier Murphy, a Jamaican who wanted to increase communication between Jamaican diasporic peoples and international tourists, created Jamaicans.com in 1995. Murphy laid the foundation for a virtual community that now includes more than fifteen thousand people from countries all over the globe, including the United States, Poland, Sweden, Australia, the United Kingdom, and, of course, Jamaica.

In the website's twenty-nine discussion forums, conversations about cooking Jamaican food, speaking Jamaican patois, and parenting the "Jamaican" way take place twenty-four hours a day. Interested parties visit the site to receive information about current events in Jamaica and comment on political and economic issues by posting original articles, participating in online forum discussions, and sending private member-to-member messages. This book focuses on a small subsection of the website—the tourist travel forums—where predomi-

nantly American and women web-board members called "boardites" ask questions about accommodations and concerts on the island, make contact with Jamaican entrepreneurs, publish reports of their own leisure and educational experiences in Jamaica, and discuss their obsession with Jamaican culture with other Jamaicaholics. The women of GFT and their networks of online friends, family members, and favorite Jamaican merchants are frequently at the center of discussions in the tourist travel forums. The friendships and adversarial relationships formed between these American Girlfriends and Jamaicans throw into relief assumptions about race, class, gender, and nationality and influence the formation of relationships offline.

I initially found the Jamaicans.com website in March 2003 as I was making travel arrangements for an upcoming research trip to Jamaica during the summer. While sifting through at least thirty websites promoting dancehall concerts and festivals in the Caribbean, I finally came across a website that seemed to answer almost every question I had as a first-time visitor to the country. With a click of my mouse, I walked directly into the trip reports forum, where I virtually traveled to Jamaica vis-à-vis the words of recent visitors. In the travel forums, particularly in the Trip Reports section, these organic ethnographers provided detailed descriptions of the events that took place during their travel adventures, including the people they met, their activities, and the restaurants, beaches, and other places they visited.

The authors often posted colorful photographs to complement their storytelling, providing a more vivid experience of Jamaica for their readers. The photos also lent authenticity to their narratives, a way to state clearly "I was there." From the moment I began to read these trip reports by tourists from various parts of the United States and other countries, I could not help but notice how ethnographic these "field notes" seemed to be. Most of the boardites were not run-of-the-mill tourists—these authors seemed to have a vested interest in understanding what their trips to the island meant for Jamaican people and the Jamaican economy and in publicly reflecting on the profound effect Jamaica had on them as tourists and visitors. For the next three days I spent countless hours on the website, meeting new tourists, veteran visitors, and people who had never visited Jamaica but hoped to make the journey one day. While I devoted some of my time to getting recommendations for places to stay and eat during my upcoming trip, I spent most of my time learning about the various online networks of friends, enemies, and "frenemies" present on Jamaicans.com. One of the most prominent cliques in the virtual community seemed to be the U.S.-based network of Girlfriends.

It was the trip report of Jacqueline, celebrity Girlfriend and unofficial Queen

Jamaicaholic, that piqued my interest and compelled me to attend my first *bashment* (a Jamaican word for "party") in Negril in the summer of 2003. She held a captive audience with a trip report in which she described her love affair with Jamaica and her long-term boyfriend and reported on the comings and goings of everyone from fishermen to schoolchildren she had befriended. Jamaicans, Americans, and other international residents offered comments and critiques of her story, making her trip report and its accompanying commentary one of the longest in the Jamaicans.com archive at over three hundred pages long.

While reading Jacqueline's trip report, I realized that these online conversations about race, national belonging, and diasporic (dis)connections were very similar to the discussions scholars were having about these topics within the academy. Moreover, because these Jamaicans.com members and Girlfriends often expected to meet their virtual neighbors at annual bashments and possibly become real-life friends with their interlocutors, these trip reports and discussion forums drew my attention to the ways people integrate their online and offline worlds, as well as to when and how they police racial and cultural boundaries in both spaces. Jacqueline and I became close during this research, and since she was at the center of many of the community relationships in both the virtual and physical Jamaica, she became a central node in my recruitment practices for research participants. Throughout this book, I present the stories Jacqueline and other African American Girlfriends shared with me in order to explore how their American realities led them to pursue happiness, love, and diasporic connectivity in Jamaica.

Throughout my virtual research, I focused on observing and documenting how racialized subjectivities were transformed and diasporic relations maintained as members of GFT created their social networks. Employing a multisited methodology enabled me to observe how processes of racialization, gendermaking, and diasporic relationship-building work differently in various geographical locations and virtual sites. By participating in this virtual world, I was able to understand more fully the transnational methods these women used to pursue happiness across national borders. I began my virtual ethnographic research among board members in the Jamaicans.com community by participating in private messaging conversations and forum discussions with boardites while tracking their online postings. For the next four and a half years, I saved each thread I came across that had a discussion related to the politics of race, tourism, or diaspora, creating a profile for each of my interlocutors. I created a hard copy and a digital archive of the most popular trip reports, because the web moderators sporadically deleted these since the website's archive filled up quickly. By the end of my fieldwork, I had at least fourteen large three-ring

binders, and numerous PDF files on my laptop, all filled with the stories of love, happiness, success, sadness, death, and depression the ladies of GFT had generated and coauthored with their Jamaicans.com neighbors.

During the international phase of the research, I was based in Negril and Ocho Rios, the two cities Girlfriends and other boardites frequent the most. I attended four GFT-organized trips to Jamaica. Two of these trips were official annual tours to Negril, while another was to Ocho Rios. The fourth trip was an unofficial tour, part of a trip to Negril that the founders planned for a veteran Girlfriend and her coworkers. In the summer of 2007, I accompanied members of GFT on an around-the-island tour with stops in Treasure Beach, Kingston, and Mandeville. The U.S. phase of my research was conducted in cities such as Atlanta, Washington, DC, Memphis, and Fort Lauderdale, where many of the Girlfriends and other boardites reside.

In Jamaica, I accompanied Girlfriends while they visited with friends and family, attended music festivals with other web-board members, and volunteered at schools and orphanages. Jamaicans.com members also had "reunions" in Jamaica, where those who virtually engaged one another in the web community could meet each other in person for the first time or reconnect after previously meeting. While attending the website members' annual reunions, I made contact with at least one hundred boardites, engaged in the weeklong series of organized activities, accompanied them to Sumfest and Sunsplash music festivals, and became acquainted with around forty of their Jamaican friends.

It was during my first trip that I apprehended the important role the Internet played in mediating the creation and maintenance of relationships within this community. I noticed that these opportunities to physically connect with virtual neighbors in real time were as significant as the conversations that took place behind cyber firewalls. In fact, the possibility of seeing neighbors in the future seemed to fuel the relationships constructed within the virtual community. Boardites often began friendships by communicating through online posts; then progressed to private member-to-member messaging, phone calls, and e-mails; and then finally made arrangements to meet face-to-face in the United States or at a bashment in Jamaica. When meeting in person, boardites were often surprised when friends did not fit their preconceived images, which were based on virtual interactions. These moments of "identity crisis"—when the race, gender, or age of the individual befriended in the online community differed from what the person expected—generated new questions regarding visuality and its potential to change the contours of friendship and intimacy between boardites and their virtual neighbors.

After a couple of trips, I realized that these reunions served multiple pur-

poses, including (1) giving members the opportunity to forge relationships with virtual neighbors while simultaneously taking a vacation to enjoy the country they love, and (2) providing a way to "give back" to Jamaica through the revenue these reunions generated for local merchants, the donations they brought from the United States, and the service-oriented activities they completed. During many of these conversations and interactions, I observed how Jamaicans and web-board members encouraged Americans to analyze their nationalized and racialized privileged positions.

After my first Jamaicans.com reunion in 2003, I continued to attend the reunions every year until 2007. From 2004 until the end of my research, I also visited Jamaica as a member of GFT's annual tour. Ultimately, I concentrated my study on this subset of Jamaicans.com board members. Although not every participant of GFT was a member of Jamaicans.com, many times these memberships did overlap. Sometimes Girlfriends would decide to join the online community after their summer trip ended so they could continue their Jamaican experiences virtually and stay connected with Girlfriends with whom they had bonded. Founded by two African American women, Marilyn and Angie, who had met through Jamaicans.com, GFT was a group of mostly Black American women who traveled to the country annually in search of sisterhood (among themselves and with Jamaican women) and enjoyed group vacations designed to promote bonding experiences among women. During these trips, I learned the social geography of the tourist industry in Negril and Ocho Rios, informally interviewed the Jamaicans.com website's creator, and gathered information, which sometimes included gossip about social and intimate relationships between boardites that were not discussed in the public arena of the Internet.

I wanted to understand how visits to Jamaica and participation in this Jamaica-based website affected how members constructed and maintained community within and across national and racialized boundaries. To this end, I paid particular attention to the cultivation of friends or lovers on the island; changes in website participation (i.e., moving from "visitor" status to a board "citizen" with increased participation); face-to-face interactions with other boardites through intra- and interstate travel; increased attention to U.S. foreign policy, especially immigration and international travel regulations related to Jamaica; and attempts to "bring Jamaica home" by cooking Jamaican food, speaking patois, and participating in social or political events in Caribbean communities in the United States.

This ethnographic research of emotional transnationalism usually took one of two forms. In the first scenario, in which the anthropologist follows the individual, I would travel to meet up with Girlfriends and boardites and engage

in activities that were on their itineraries. Either I would travel to Jamaica to join them on their visits (ranging from one to six weeks) and then leave the country to accompany them to their hometowns, or I would travel directly to their hometowns for a two- or three-day visit, gathering data for the domestic part of the project that analyzed race in the United States. This "following the individual" method allowed me to observe how members' views of Jamaica and themselves changed as time progressed and as they moved between locations. At other times, when participants were not vacationing in Jamaica, I resided in Jamaica for one to three months alone, interviewing and observing their Jamaican friends and companions, the hotel staff, taxi drivers, and businesspeople with whom they had interacted during their visits.

Occasionally, participants would have an interest in my activities in Jamaica, and they would either pay me a surprise visit or ask to reside with me for a short time. During these occasions, the ladies often shared an apartment with me in Jamaica for a period of one to eight weeks and took part in a semistructured method of "following the anthropologist." In response to frequent requests that I take them to the spots where I "did my work," I would enlist them to help me in several activities, including completing my daily observations of cruise-ship tourists at Margaritaville in Ocho Rios and actively recruiting people for me to interview at taxi parks, car washes, or local bars. This process of "following the anthropologist" pushed me to question how the research participants perceived me as a young, Black American woman anthropologist and to become aware of how and what they conceptualized as ethnographic work.

I also used formal and informal individual interviews to collect narratives of racially and nationally "marked" experiences from American participants. This international phase included twenty recorded interviews, two to four hours long, with several of the virtual community's web moderators and members (particularly Girlfriends) while in Jamaica. In these interviews, I asked participants to discuss their perceptions of Jamaica, their relationships and networks on the island, and the role Jamaicans.com played during their visits. I supplemented these accounts with interviews with Jamaican mates and spouses of boardites, hotel entertainment coordinators, restaurant owners, and local vendors about their experiences with American tourists, enabling an analysis of these transactions and interactions from other perspectives.

The domestic phase of interviewing focused on boardites' experiences as racialized and gendered subjects in the United States and the role the website played in their lives at home. While providing life histories that explicitly discussed how interviewees "came to be" racialized or participated in racializing others, members also compared "home" experiences of race, class, gender, and

nationality with their experiences in Jamaica. For example, I asked these African American women to describe and define "Blackness," to state whether they identified as Black, and to explain what this racial identity meant to them. Other questions included the following: "Do you see yourself as a part of the African diaspora? Have you ever felt included/excluded or powerless/privileged because of your Blackness? How do you experience your Blackness differently in Jamaica than in the U.S.?" I completed interviews with friends and family of the interviewees to get a sense of how they felt about their loved ones' trips to Jamaica and how this travel affected their relationships. In total, I conducted forty-eight individual interviews. These transcribed interviews provided additional ethnographic data for an analysis of emotional transnationalism. In particular, they helped me understand how the Girlfriends' racial and diasporic experiences were similar and different when they were in direct contact with Jamaicans in Jamaica versus when they were separated by physical distance yet connected via the website.

After participating in several Jamaicans.com reunions in the United States and Jamaica, observing and participating in interactions between these travelers and their Jamaican interlocutors, and interviewing Girlfriends at home and during their vacations, I concluded that African Americans experience a new sense of themselves during these virtual and travel interactions. Some come to realize that similarities of skin color and a shared history of the transatlantic slave trade may not mean that Jamaicans experience life, or their Blackness, in the same ways. Many Jamaicans, online and on the island, repeatedly made Girlfriends aware of the ways their "American" identity, and the perceived economic, social, and political status attached to their nationality, placed them in drastically different racialized and classed positions. Jamaicans they interacted with often reminded them that while they may all be "Black," American Blackness was drastically different and made the travelers more privileged. It was in these moments that the concept of diaspora became an explicit part of the conversation around racialized and national difference. That is to say, although several members of Jamaicans.com and GFT were not of African descent, many of the African American and Jamaican participants did see the website and the country as diasporic spaces where racialized boundaries were problematized and modified and diasporic (dis)connections were continuously discussed. These cross-national, sometimes interracial interactions enabled African American women to explain in virtual and real-world settings the logic that undergirds the stereotypes, assumptions, and meanings associated with various aspects of racial identities.

Here, I must point to an important limitation of this study: While this book

investigates the connections between race, gender, and affect within diasporic relationships, it is centered on the perspectives of the African American women of GFT. The multisitedness of the project enabled me to meet and speak with people from a variety of backgrounds and experiences in the United States and Jamaica. However, I chose to follow the journey of one group throughout multiple cities and virtual spaces to get a fuller view of their participation in emotional transnationalism. In a way, I switched ethnographic foci for this study. In contrast to traditional ethnography, in which the anthropologist stays embedded in one location for a long period of time and creates deep relationships with numerous people in that community, I chose to embed myself in this community, following them through their multisited, transnational journey. I cultivated deep relationships with them and those they came into contact with as they physically and virtually traveled. Readers will hear Jamaican and Jamaican American voices in this book, speaking to and speaking back on what is happening in this imagined community with GFT. I interviewed, observed, and connected with over fifty Jamaican men and women who interacted with GFT members. I asked them about their interactions with Girlfriends, their own experiences in the tourism industry, their perceptions of Americans in Jamaica more broadly, and the differences they saw between Jamaicans and Americans. Jamaican women were less present in these tourist spaces, less excited about befriending American tourist women for a host of reasons that I discuss in chapter 4, and less represented in the friendships GFT members initiated in Jamaica, therefore, they are not as present in this book.[15]

I decided to make the African American members of Girlfriend Tours the anchors in this research. In some ways this reinscribes the privileges and hegemony associated with African Americanness that Jamaicans spoke to in my interviews with them, and I bring attention to these politics of visibility elsewhere. I recognize that one must ask then for whom this community is imagined and whether all members imagine it and mobilize it in similar ways. It becomes clear throughout the book, especially in chapter 2, that Jamaicans and African Americans experience African diasporic connections differently. I also acknowledge that because of the different ways race and gender may operate in Jamaica, and how Black Americans and "Black" Jamaicans have differential access to power and mobility, Jamaicans may have different strategies for maintaining emotional wellness than their American counterparts do. Therefore, I admit that much of this book uses the experiences of the African American women in GFT as a starting point for the discussion about diasporic community, and this focus has undoubtedly influenced my analysis and the conclusions I draw about this imagined community. Nevertheless, one of my main

goals in completing this research was to bring to the forefront the experiences and voices of Black American women, who are themselves oftentimes silenced, overlooked, and made invisible. I do my best to address the politics of multiple groups' invisibility and silence throughout the book.

Analyzing the experiences and life histories of Girlfriends provides some insight on the following questions: (1) Under which circumstances do these women interrogate the attributes and experiences that constitute "Blackness" and "Americanness," and how might their travels and interactions with racialized and nationalized "Others" on- and offline encourage reflexivity about their own participation and positionality within the African diaspora? (2) How do these older Black American women use their access to international travel and the Internet as resources for critiquing their marginalized subject positions within the United States, while simultaneously employing the social privilege and economic capital attached to their American identities? (3) How do these privileges associated with being American situate African Americans as privileged outcasts in the African diasporic imaginary? What does this mean for African American pursuits of happiness and the experience of emotions transnationally? Ultimately, *The Pursuit of Happiness* is about emotional transnationalism and the construction of affect across diasporic difference. I bring together the literature on transnationalism, Black feminism, and diaspora to explain how the Girlfriends cultivate a sense of belonging and pursue happiness while moving across virtual and national boundaries. I complicate the narratives around Black women's affective experiences by exploring how the tears they shed on that cliff in Jamaica were entangled with transnational and diasporic processes that influence not only this group's pursuit of happiness but also the ways we all search for community and belonging.

And now we'll get back to the collective tears.

Notes

INTRODUCTION. *"Jamaica Crawled Into My Soul"*

1 Throughout the book, I use the term "Black Americans" to describe those individuals who reside in the United States and are of African descent. This includes African, Caribbean, and African American peoples—individuals who are ascribed the racialized identity of "Black" by individuals and the State. "African Americans" is used specifically to refer to those individuals native to the United States. This distinction is important as the particular nationalized history and relationship that many African Americans have with the trans-Atlantic slave trade and U.S. racialized politics is central to the diasporic imaginary explored in this text. When I use the term "Black Americans," it is often used in reference to a process or experience that Black peoples encounter regardless of their ethnic background.

2 Wolf, "Family Secrets."

3 Harvey, *Condition of Postmodernity*.

4 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

5 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

6 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.

7 However, see Davies, "Pan-Africanism"; Drake, *Critical Appropriations*; and Pinto, *Difficult Diasporas*.

8 James, "John Henryism."

9 Mullings, "Resistance and Resilience," 79.

10 Mullings, "Resistance and Resilience," 87.

11 Mullings, "Resistance and Resilience," 87.

12 Dent, *Black Popular Culture*, 1.

13 Dent, *Black Popular Culture*, 11.

14 McMillan, *How Stella Got Her Groove Back*; Sullivan, *How Stella Got Her Groove Back*.

15 If I could do this research over, I would have more purposely and actively initiated discussions and interviews with Jamaican women for their responses to what I was observing with the ladies of GFT. While I did spend some time with Jamaican women

in hair salons, in the administrative offices of the accommodations we stayed at, and during the few times I saw some on Fisherman's Beach, I did not usually initiate long-term relationships with them. The Jamaican women I befriended were often friends of friends I had from the United States and were mostly people I interacted with when Girlfriends returned home or when I wasn't in tourist areas.

CHAPTER 1. *More Than a Groove*

1 Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*.
2 Cooper, *Voice from the South*; Davis, *Women, Race, and Class*; Giddings, *When and Where I Enter*; White, *Too Heavy a Load*; Guy-Sheftall, *Words of Fire*; and Smith, *Home Girls*.
3 Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex."
4 "Jamaicaholism" was the word that Girlfriends and Jamaicans.com boardites used to describe their obsession with Jamaica and its culture. Because I recognize the ableist nature of this term, I try to use it sparingly throughout the text.
5 Hall, "What Is This 'Black' in Black Popular Culture?"
6 Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen*.
7 Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen*, 106–107.
8 Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen*, 215.
9 Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*, 43.
10 Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*, 107.
11 Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen*, 5
12 Morgan, *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost*, 59.
13 Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*; Cvetkovich, *Depression*.
14 Ahmed, *Promise of Happiness*.
15 McGlotten, *Virtual Intimacies*, 11.
16 Angelia Hairston and Marilyn Williams are the real names of the owners of Girlfriend Tours International. I have chosen to use their real names when I discuss them in their professional capacities, as the website for their business made their names public in Jamaica and in the virtual community Girlfriends participated in. However, throughout the rest of the book, I use pseudonyms for Girlfriends and Jamaican interviewees to protect their anonymity as they discuss more personal perspectives on their visits to Jamaica and their thoughts on race and racism.
17 All-inclusive resort hotels in Jamaica clearly had a preference for couples, as single occupants often had to pay a pretty steep supplement fee for their room. Girlfriends saw this as a sort of penalty for wanting to travel on their own. They also were aware through conversations with Jamaicans who worked at these hotels that gay, lesbian, and queer couples were often discouraged from booking rooms, particularly if they were understood to be a couple. However, hotels that were not all-inclusives, which were more frequently owned by Jamaicans, were more welcoming to solo women travelers and would generally allow guests to participate in the informal economy of hospitality and romance tourism. Subsequently, heterosexual male companions might be allowed entrance at these hotels, which was mostly forbidden at all-inclusives. Still, during my time completing fieldwork, none of the local hotels Girl-