Betrayal and Belonging:
Kinship, Ethnicity, and Cosmopolitanism in Kampala

by

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Dedication

This dissertation explores the ways in which kinship can often be contentious and is always obligatory. I dedicate the pages to follow to my maternal grandfather, Richard Simonovitch, who worked his whole life to grant me opportunities that were once beyond the wildest realm of my imagination. Throughout the years, I often returned to my hometown because I felt obliged to do so; but I never visited Grampy out of obligation. It was always out of love, and I thank him for always acting as my bridge to home.

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Abstract

This dissertation interrogates the quotidian realities of ethnic boundary making in the cosmopolitan city of Kampala, Uganda. Foregrounding the experiences of ethnic minority migrant workers who relocated to the capital in search of employment, this research shows the constraints and possibilities of building relationships across ethnic lines. For members of Kampala's working- and underclass who are centered in this ethnography, the proliferation of stereotypes about virtually every ethnic group forces discerning friendships. These stereotypes bear the weight of Uganda's postcolonial history, and tensions are evident in the judicious ways people choose motorbike taxi drivers, greet coworkers, or accuse others of witchcraft. For migrants precariously employed, searching for reasons to explain their austere conditions and the seeming impossibility of upward mobility can take the form of blame and suspicion.

Despite this, living and working amongst diverse Ugandans from across the country enables people to create bonds with others from groups previously deemed "violent" or "thieving". Yet, even when such labels are proven incorrect, the potency of ethnicity does not lessen. Instead, this dissertation argues that stereotypes are constantly redirected onto other groups, with moments of violence reigniting old assumptions. Larger state politics work their way into everyday life affecting even the most intimate relations, collapsing the separate spheres of public and private. Introducing and building a theory of "contentious kinship", this work ethnographically renders how people categorize others, ultimately concluding that meaningful lives are forged through the formation of kinship bonds. It adds to our understanding of how bonds are formed despite social

uncertainty and threats of ethnic betrayal, showing how relationships are made and negotiated as ethnic categorizations are simultaneously made and remade.

Chapter 1
Introduction

My first introduction to Uganda was a two-year stay in the Nilotic pastoralist sub-region of Karamoja, in the northeast of the country bordering Kenya. While the dissertation to follow explores the life worlds of people in the cosmopolitan capital of Kampala, none of these pages could have been written without the formative experiences I had in a remote area so unlike the city that this work interrogates. My husband, Quincy Amoah, is also an anthropologist, and I accompanied him during his fieldwork from 2014-2016. Notorious for being "underdeveloped", Karamoja was indeed challenging, but it was also a place that regularly reminded you of being alive because of its difficulty. This was a gift.

Though we stayed in one of the nicest dwellings in the entire town of Moroto, in a concrete bungalow that was built by the Catholic mission decades ago, the seeming austerity of the place made few exceptions for foreigners. From slaughtering chickens to eat, to fetching water from the local bore hole to bathe, getting through each day required actual work. Beyond the physical labor, quotidian life also forced you to become embedded in a community that is notorious for resisting hierarchy. Reading the pages of Evans-Pritchard's *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People* as he contrasted the group to Azande in our first-year seminar at the University of Michigan actually made me laugh aloud:

> "Azande would not allow me to live as one of themselves; Nuer would not allow me to live otherwise. Among Azande I was compelled to live outside the community; among Nuer I was compelled to be a member of it. Azande treated me as a superior; Nuer as an equal" (1940, 15).

My laughter at this particular passage was triggered by the truth I recognized in it. I was, and remain, privileged in more ways than I can count, but for Karimojong people I met, worked with, and eventually befriended, those privileges were not the most critical or appealing part of me. Many people were puzzled by my presence, confused by what I was doing there, but none of them felt I should be shielded from the realities of everyday life after I had established myself as a long-term resident.

There is of course much to be critiqued and interrogated surrounding Evans-Pritchard's positionality, and I understand the ways in which his work embodies the colonial project. I also anticipate that people will read my own work with a similarly critical eye. But when my colleagues felt Evans-Pritchard's ethnographic material was somehow unjust to Nuer people, as if his descriptions would be offensive to his interlocutors, I could not help but wonder if their perceptions might change if they spent some time amongst Nilotic communities. Karimojong's absolute refusal of outside authority, making them a perpetual thorn in the side of the British during colonialism and "national scapegoats" (Reid 2017, 91) after Uganda's independence, bears some sort of resemblance to Nuer described by Evans-Pritchard. For men in Karamoja and neighboring Pokot in Kenya who received their education from Catholic priests at a handful of seminaries scattered throughout the regions, *The Nuer* was a book in which they saw their communities. They had read it decades prior as students by the time I had the opportunity to speak with them about it, but the book left such a mark that they still discussed it, valuing it so much that additional copies were requested so that they could keep the book inside their homes. Aside from their "traditional" ways of life, the men were also proud that their utter rejection of a white man's superiority was documented.

***

When I returned to the country in the summer of 2017, this time to the capital of Kampala, I stayed on the premises of an orphanage I call Furaha Babies' Home in the city's Mengo district. It has become a bit of a cliché in anthropology to say, "I wanted to study X, but the field brought me to Y," but this project is indeed much different than the one I originally envisioned. When I set out to do fieldwork, I wanted to study the transnational adoption of children from orphanages in the city to self-identifying evangelical Christians in North America and Europe. Though an autoethnographic project was never my goal, I feel compelled to divulge that my initial interest in adoption largely stemmed from my own positionality as a transnational adoptee. For those few months during the summer that I stayed at Furaha, I became interested in the ways Christians from across the world were drawn to Uganda and "called" to adopt children from the country. I attended church services and prayer groups with the Christians who were volunteering at the orphanage from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Germany. We shared nightly meals together, chatting late into the evening hours about adoption, God's plan for them, and the children we had cared for throughout the day.

As I was working alongside the international volunteers during the days, I observed all the minute ways that the orphanage could not function without the staff members who were paid to be there. Looking back, this might seem like an obvious thing to notice, but the workers who were precariously employed remained largely invisible to most volunteers. When they were recognized, it was superficially and borderline offensive. Two middle-aged Canadian volunteers named Maureen[1] and Katelyn, women so dedicated to financially supporting the orphanage that they founded a Furaha Canada through their evangelical church, recognized the women who worked as

[1] This, along with every interlocutor's name in this chapter and dissertation, is a pseudonym; identifying characteristics have been anonymized

caretakers when they left Furaha after a three-week stay in 2017. The administrative staff treated the Canadian women with extra care and attention, as their church raised enough funds to commission new wooden cribs and beds to be made for every child and a new van for transportation. Coordinating with the proprietor of the orphanage, they arranged for a gathering on the evening before their departure and gave heartfelt speeches about how much they valued the mamas for doing God's work. This took place on a gazebo on the property in between the infants' sleeping area and the administrative building. As a token of their appreciation, they called each individual mama to come to the table where they were standing and handed them a small bag of potato crisps and a 500 ml bottle of soda. With the amount of fanfare, one may have expected the Canadians to be handing the women thousands of dollars' worth of goods.

In general, people who thought of themselves as doing a selfless service to Furaha were often a hindrance to the daily workings of the place, wanting to play and cuddle with the children rather than wash dishes or mop the floors. Entire schedules were disrupted when women favored particular children, forcing mealtimes or bathing routines to change in order for them to be near their preferred child. Unlike the interactions I saw between Americans or Europeans and non-deferential Karimojong in Karamoja, the Ugandan staff members of the orphanage and the labor they performed went unnoticed to the so-called volunteers, and the power dynamics of the place made it so that staff could not confront the often condescending, disrespectful behavior they faced. Some of the young women from North America and Europe were not yet 20 years old, but they made it clear that their "expertise" should be valued more than the women who had been working at the orphanage longer than the volunteers had been alive.

Wanting to learn more about the mamas and the men who worked as security guards and groundskeepers on the property, I began Luganda lessons with a tutor through City Language

Centre. I did not want to willingly contribute to what I felt was a disturbing hierarchy on the premises and imagined the only way I could try to overcome a seemingly unbridgeable divide was to literally speak their language. Florence Nakiwala, my Luganda tutor, met me several times a week at various locations across Kampala, and she quickly became a trusted interpreter of language and cultural milieu. I fear I never reached the level of fluency in the city's lingua franca as I should have, but Florence's good humor and patience with my ineptitude quickly became a highlight of my days that summer.

After a few weeks of Luganda lessons, I was sitting on a veranda at Furaha with a 19-year-old American woman named Haley during the children's afternoon nap. Haley, a wiry brunette with round glasses from Colorado who was unflinchingly cheerful and an ardent evangelist of her own interpretation of the Bible, was one of many young Christians who felt called to care for the children of Uganda. She had been at the orphanage for over a year by the time I arrived, and the other volunteers regularly commented on her Luganda skills with admiration. She did not have many conversations with the staff, but she would often use Luganda commands when speaking to the children: "*Ggwe! Genda! Tambula!*[2]" Mama Phoebe, a favorite caretaker amongst the international volunteers who will be further discussed in Chapter 4, came over to sit with us and asked, "Haley, *okola ki?*" Haley looked perplexed, so I answered in English, "We're just chatting about the kids." Understanding the simple phrase meaning, "What are you doing?" was enough to ingratiate me to Mama Phoebe. From that moment, I made a concerted effort to speak to the mamas in Luganda despite my halting abilities, as well as consciously choosing to do things like eat their communal lunch of *posho*[3] and beans with them. I also performed the chores that afforded me more time with them, such as sorting beans, washing bottles, and peeling potatoes. This took me

[2] "You! Go! Walk!"
[3] A staple starch made from ground maize or sorghum; at the orphanage, it was always the maize variety.

away from the children and the volunteers, giving me an entirely new perspective on what life was like for the women who lived and worked there.

It was then that I began to realize that the orphanage was a microcosm of the city. Though I was learning Luganda, the language of the majority ethnic group Baganda, not all of the people employed spoke the city's lingua franca with ease. When I asked the mamas, security guards, and groundskeepers where they were from, many revealed that they had migrated to the city from other parts of the country for employment. Reporting a lack of jobs in their homes, from Arua to Gulu to Ankole to Teso, many were in the city without their natal kin, having left their children and extended families behind and sending Mobile Money home whenever they could to financially provide for them. As I began to venture outside of the orphanage's gates, I tried to listen carefully to the people around me and I heard distinct languages that were not Luganda being spoken by the guards working at the bank down the road; by one particular group of young men selling *chapati*[4]; by the employees at the petrol station where the volunteers bought their bottled water.

Towards the end of that summer, I was comfortable enough with many of the mamas to have open conversations about their homes and their experiences of migrating to Kampala. I was particularly curious about another mama we will come to know more fully in Chapter 4, mama Jacinta, whose boldness charmed me. She was not the most approachable woman and her tall, solid stature added to the intimidation many felt she exuded, but I was captivated by her unwillingness to bend to the desires of the white women who tried to insist she do her a job a certain way. At mealtimes, volunteers would try to sit with their favorite children and feed them gently, but if mama Jacinta happened to be in charge of a person's favored child any given evening, she would not allow interference. No-nonsense in her caregiving approach, the foreigners gossiped and

[4] A flatbread made of wheat flour, water, salt, and oil; in Kampala and across Uganda, *chapati* is a popular street food and people make the breads on charcoal fires throughout the day

questioned why she chose to work at Furaha if she didn't love the children, blissfully ignorant about the circumstances that led most of the women to such precarious labor.

Admittedly, her lack of visible warmth towards most of the children also worried me occasionally, but the horrified reactions from the international volunteers were disproportionate. When I finally got a chance to be alone with her one day, I asked her where she went on her days off from work. Furaha has dwellings for its employees on the premises, and though she lived on the grounds during the days she was on duty, I had noticed that she left Furaha whenever she had two consecutive days off. Mama Jacinta explained that her children stayed at her permanent home in Luweero, roughly a two-hour shared taxi ride north of Kampala. I inquired further, asking her if she had always lived in Luweero.

She answered, half-offended, "Me? No! I am a Karimojong."

The intent of opening with a small glimpse of social relations in Karamoja was to contrast the hierarchies to be explored below, while offering insight into the historic structural disparities in the country that inform contemporary stereotypes. One of the arguments running through this work is the simple notion that you cannot properly grasp the workings of the city without an understanding of what is happening beyond its borders. In a diverse, urban setting, the pages to follow show how boundaries are created, maintained, and subverted in everyday life. Despite such boundaries, the formation of what I call "contentious kinship" is formed amongst members of antagonistic groups. Throughout this dissertation, I argue that contentious kinship provided migrant workers with a sense of purpose, which in turn allowed them to live meaningful lives amidst financial and emotional crises. Using the term 'meaningful life' is motivated by an existential question: what motivates one to wake up every morning and proceed with their day? As the ethnographic illustrations below show, economic considerations alone cannot account for

the efforts of precarious workers in Kampala. Their obligations to kin in and beyond the city give people purpose, and I argue that motivation and purpose are necessary components for a meaningful life that exceeds mere survival. As is implied from its title, this dissertation works to reveal the possibilities of *kinship* across *ethnic* lines in a *cosmopolitan* place. I will now give an overview of these three key themes.

1.1 Cosmopolitanism

1.1.1 Cosmopolitan Kampala

When I arrived back in Kampala in 2019 and ultimately stayed for almost one year, I visited Furaha every day and continued to work alongside both the international volunteers and the caretakers. The more entangled I became in the lives of the staff members, the greater the realization that their social interactions could not be accounted for without an interrogation of how ethnic categories were functioning in the cosmopolitanism of the city. After Mama Jacinta's revelation of being Karimojong, I noticed how her ethnicity was used by the other mamas to explain all of her characteristics, from the bombastic to the mundane. We will come to see the micropolitics of cosmopolitanism at Furaha in detail in Chapter 4, but Mama Jacinta was hardly the only person whose ethnic identity was used in describing behaviors or appearances. Whether it was greed, selflessness, or the color of a baby's skin, a dizzying array of ethnic categories were deployed on a daily basis in the orphanage, which in turn affected how interpersonal relationships between people were made likely or preemptively deemed impossible. As I explored the city beyond the walls of the orphanage, I saw the ways in which assumptions based on these ethnic categories were affecting nearly every interaction throughout Kampala.

In this dissertation, I firmly position Kampala to be a place that can only be understood through its diversity and directly challenge the ways existing literature foregrounds Baganda experiences. However, its location in Central Uganda within the territorial bounds of the kingdom of Buganda is consequential and must be understood historically. Buganda is home to Uganda's majority ethnic group, Baganda, and as mentioned above, their language, Luganda, serves as the lingua franca throughout Kampala. The historical significance of the kingdom of Buganda, and the ways in which it was both favored and manipulated by British indirect rule, has been the subject of many historical works (Hanson 2003; Ray 1991; Reid 2002; Wrigley 1996). After Uganda won independence from the British, Baganda nationalists advocated for their king to become the leader of the new country, forming political alliances and successfully maneuvering to make Kabaka Edward Muteesa II the first president of Uganda. Though Muteesa II's role was largely ceremonial, this capitulation illustrates the political influence Baganda separatists had in newly independent Uganda. Muteesa II's Prime Minister, Milton Obote, of the Lango ethnic group from Northern Uganda, used his position to forge coalitions with leaders across the country who were concerned about the central government favoring the kingdom of Buganda. Obote seized the presidency in a coup d'état in 1966, abolishing all kingdoms and ridding the nation of the federal system that had been established in the first constitution. In consolidating power, it is also a testament to suspicions about the power of "ethnic patriotism" (cf. Peterson 2012) undermining a modern African state project. In other words, Obote and his circle feared ethnic separatists and traditionalists would be a threat to a supposed national unity and dilute their capacity to forcefully construct a modernist and post-colonial Ugandan national identity. When the notorious Ugandan leader, Idi Amin, came to power, he famously expelled Asians from the country in a xenophobic move that he justified as

necessary for Ugandan development.[5] Asians were not the only targets of his violent regime, however; he commanded atrocities to be committed against various ethnic groups who were too "primitive", reinforcing colonial ideas about "tribal" differences impeding Uganda's growth (Decker 2014; Leopold 2021; Peterson and Vokes 2021). Ironically, both Obote and Amin seized and consolidated power based on exclusionist ethnic alliances in the Ugandan Armed Forces. As both belonged to groups considered "martial races" (Streets-Salter 2004), they took advantage of the army's composition of Northern co-ethnics. The weaponization of ethnicity has been a concern for as long as Uganda as a nation has existed.



Figure 1: Mark Dingemanse, "Languages of Uganda," Wikimedia Atlas of the World, 19 August 2005, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages_of_Uganda#/media/File:Languages_of_Uganda.png

[5] See Taylor 2016 for a rich historical account of the relationships between South Asians and Ugandans; see Aiyar 2015 for another rich historical account of such relationships in neighboring Kenya



Figure 2: "Regions of Uganda Map," WorldAtlas, accessed 22 January 2022, https://www.worldatlas.com/maps/uganda

Because of the significance of the kingdoms in Uganda and Kampala being within the territorial bounds of Buganda, it is tempting to view the city through Baganda cosmologies and cultural norms. Scholarly work has approached Kampala in this way and made Baganda the unmarked "normal" (Doherty 2021; Wyrod 2016; Zoanni 2019), while those who study other parts of the country (Behrend 1999; Dubal 2018; Doyle 2006; Mamdani 1976) use the lens of ethnic groups from their respective places of study, thus separating the country's population into regional ethnic groups. The linguistic dominance of Luganda sometimes conceals the diversity of Kampala, but throughout fieldwork, I was confronted with the ways in which the city could not function without ethnic minorities from across the country. Working at Furaha was what first made me realize this, but it is even more evident from postulations people make in everyday life: security

guards are assumed to be from Northern Uganda, bar owners are thought to be from Western Uganda, "white collar" jobs are expected to go to Central Ugandans, and police are presumed to be from Eastern Uganda. Many of these assumptions are informed by colonial legacies of the British using particular ethnic groups for certain jobs. Such stereotypes are not value-neutral; the weight of post-independence ethnic tensions is evident in the discerning ways people choose their motorbike taxi drivers, greet their coworkers, or accuse others of witchcraft or stealing. The disastrous legacies of colonialism in East Africa have been well-documented (e.g. Anderson 2005; Berman and Lonsdale 1992; Branch 2009; Elkins 2005; Mamdani 1996; White 1990), and the sins of colonialism cannot be overstated. The aim of this dissertation is to render how everyday life is affected in the present by ethnic categories that were manipulated, and sometimes created, by colonial forces. For many migrants precariously employed, such as the guards and caretakers at Furaha, searching for reasons for their austere conditions and the seeming impossibility of upward mobility can take the form of blame and suspicion, and this blame is nearly always tied to ideas of ethnic collectives.

Much of the current academic work focusing on Uganda and East Africa more broadly reinforces certain stereotypes about various groups in the country and larger region. These studies lead one to assume that there are ethnically homogenous regions in the country that maintain some sort of cultural purity, while in densely populated urban areas issues of ethnic identity are secondary concerns. For example, monographs taking Acholi people as their focus often interrogate questions about the Lord's Resistance Army (Behrend 1999; Dubal 2018; Finnstrom 2008), while monographs focusing on city life in East Africa raise queries about labor and infrastructure (Degani 2022; Doherty 2021; Kanogo 2005; White 1990). In taking seriously the primary concerns of my interlocutors, this dissertation does not see ethnicity as a secondary

concern for those living and navigating the city of Kampala. Ethnicity is not merely instrumentalized or weaponized when it is politically salient to do so, but is something that is openly discussed, debated, and lived in everyday life.

1.1.2 Historical Diversity

My decision to highlight ethnic diversity and cosmopolitanism in Kampala was not only based on intuition, everyday stereotypes, or chance meetings with people, but also on historical data illustrating the ethnic composition of the city. Though Kampala's importance to the kingdom of Buganda is longstanding and it served as the kingdom's capital, it was Frederick Lugard's arrival in 1890 that would make it the center for the entire Uganda Protectorate. In a direct challenge to Kabaka Mwanga's sovereignty, who was the king of Buganda at the time, Lugard fortified Kampala hill until Mwanga formally accepted British "protection". This made it a center for political and commercial activities and led to an influx in migrants from other parts of the Protectorate (Southall and Gutkind 1957, 1-3). When a friend from Karamoja came to Kampala for a temporary employment position, he expressed frustration at having to spend time amongst Baganda when he visited with us. He memorably stated, "They think the city belongs to them." He felt this belief to be misguided because Kampala was a city for all of Uganda as its capital, not just for the majority group, and Ugandans from all over live and work there. Because Kampala functions as the center of commerce and governance, my Karimojong friend felt Baganda's claim to the city to be especially egregious because a such claim also implies ownership of the larger country. If there are ethnic minority migrant workers that allow for Kampala to function, then all should have the right to live and work in the country's capital. His observations of the actual diversity of Kampala are supported by the tables below that contain data found in the classic survey

published in 1957 by Southall and Gutkind, *Townsmen in the Making: Kampala and its Suburbs*. Table A shows the ethnic groups living the Kisenyi neighborhood in Kampala, while Table B illustrates the ethnic composition of the Mulago neighborhood in Kampala:

Ethnic Groups in Kisenyi	**Percentage of Population**
Baganda	41
Luo	16.8
Toro	7.7
Haya	7.7
Rwanda	3.9
Teso	2.03
Nubis	1.98
Nyoro	1.91
Kikuyu	1.33
Kiga	.97
Gishu	.81

Table 1: Aidan W. Southall and Peter C. W. Gutkind. Townsmen in the Making: Kampala and its Suburbs (Kampala: East African Institute of Social Research, 1957), 27.

Ethnic Groups in Mulago	Percentage of Population
Baganda	46.6
Rwanda	14.5
Toro	7.2
Kiga	5.83
Luo	4.83
Nyoro	2.83
Ankole	2.1
"Tribally mixed households"	6.55
All other groups	8.95

Table 2: Aidan W. Southall and Peter C. W. Gutkind. Townsmen in the Making: Kampala and its Suburbs (Kampala: East African Institute of Social Research, 1957), 107-108

As the data clearly demonstrate, Kampala's ethnic diversity predates Uganda's independence. A study conducted nearly twenty years later in the Kisenyi neighborhood supported these findings (Halpenny 1975). Because these surveys were conducted during a time of rapid change in Uganda, with independence being won in 1962 and Obote's coup d'état in 1966, the stability in the composition of the Kisenyi neighborhood is important in understanding how people navigate national transformations and crises. For example, if a coup d'état that resulted in the king of Buganda going into exile did not result in a massive population redistribution in the city, which is located within the territorial bounds of his kingdom, what does that reveal about the city and who claims ownership over it? If my Karimojong friend's observation that Baganda "think the city belongs to them" is true, the reality is that the city remains a center of cosmopolitanism.

In foregrounding the ways competing cosmologies affect the diversity of life and how people interact in cosmopolitan settings, this dissertation also contributes to a wider set of literature

beyond Uganda and sub-Saharan Africa. Literature exploring cosmopolitanism or town life has emphasized the ways in which it allows for fluidity of identity, even if that fluidity is not without its own struggles (e.g. Appiah 2006; Ivaska 2011; Malkki 1995; Mutongi 2017). Such literature reveals the possibilities of a human community beyond an immutable racial or ethnic identity, and highlights the ways local and foreign are constantly negotiated and seldom clearly defined. Recent ethnographic work in cities across the globe focuses on issues such as infrastructure, aid work, and human/non-human relations, and the ways in which ethnic identities affect quotidian interactions in these urbans spaces is not always foregrounded (Degani 2022; Doherty 2021; Holston 2014; Peterson 2021; Stoetzer 2022). But, for migrants in Kampala, the diversity of the city did not diminish their sense of obligation to their home and its accompanying ethnic identity. In nearly every instance, the people with whom I spoke asserted that their ethnicity was the most important facet of their identity. They judged others' trustworthiness based on a person's ethnic group. From Lugbara being blamed for Idi Amin's regime, to Acholi being inseparable from narratives of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), to Ankole inspiring resentment for sharing an ethnic identity with President Museveni and senior Army officers, people's actions could not be separated from their ethnicity. National belonging was barely a part of interlocutors' imaginaries beyond superficial pleas for Ugandan economic development, and ethnicity was referenced as a nostalgic category that was inseparable from ideas of home.

Yet, as the demographic information of the Kisenyi and Mulago neighborhoods show, the city is not easily segregated into pockets of ethnic enclaves. This is especially true for the working- and underclass[6] of the city that this dissertation foregrounds. People are forced not only to work in diverse settings, but they are also living amongst people from diverse ethnic backgrounds because

[6] I am using the term 'underclass' here to refer to people in the city who were unemployed, and to stress the ways in which upward mobility was not possible for many interlocutors.

of the spaces where affordable housing is available. In this way, Kampala is cosmopolitan in the truest sense as people are constantly forced to confront and negotiate difference. Much of the work to follow shows how bonds of kinship are forged across ethnic lines with people from groups that were previously deemed "violent", "lazy", or otherwise "repugnant" (cf. Harding 1991). Yet, the importance of ethnic difference never disappears, and people often speak about certain ethnic characteristics as being immutable even when stereotypes are disproven through experience. Despite the formation of contentious kinship that transcends seemingly insurmountable difference, moments of violence and unrest like that discussed in Chapter 2 bring dormant tensions to the fore, further complicating assumptions about cosmopolitanism that assume issues of ethnicization will lose potency in cosmopolitan settings. Ethnicity as a romanticized idea of home and origins quickly transforms into a political category with violent potentials.

Returning to the rich sociological data collected in the work of Southall and Gutkind (1957), their work suggests ideas of home and ethnicity have always affected how people relate to one another in the city. Discussions with male residents in the Kisenyi and Mulago neighborhoods illustrate the inseparability of politics with kinship; an Acholi man plainly states, "When I get enough money I shall find a wife in my own country. I don't want to come back to see the Ganda. They are bad and they are lazy. They do not treat us well" (ibid., 155). In a much different setting, Guss and Siroky (2012) suggest that Bosnia's deep ethnic cleavages could be lessened by increasing heterogeneity. They advocate for de-segregated neighborhoods and argue against political quota systems guaranteeing ethnic representation, stating "consociationalism takes ethnic segregation as a permanent give, removes political incentives to work across ethnic lines and effectively constitutionalizes ethnic cleavages" (ibid., 309). Yet in the case of Kampala, subsequent demographic studies following that of Southall and Gutkind consistently show

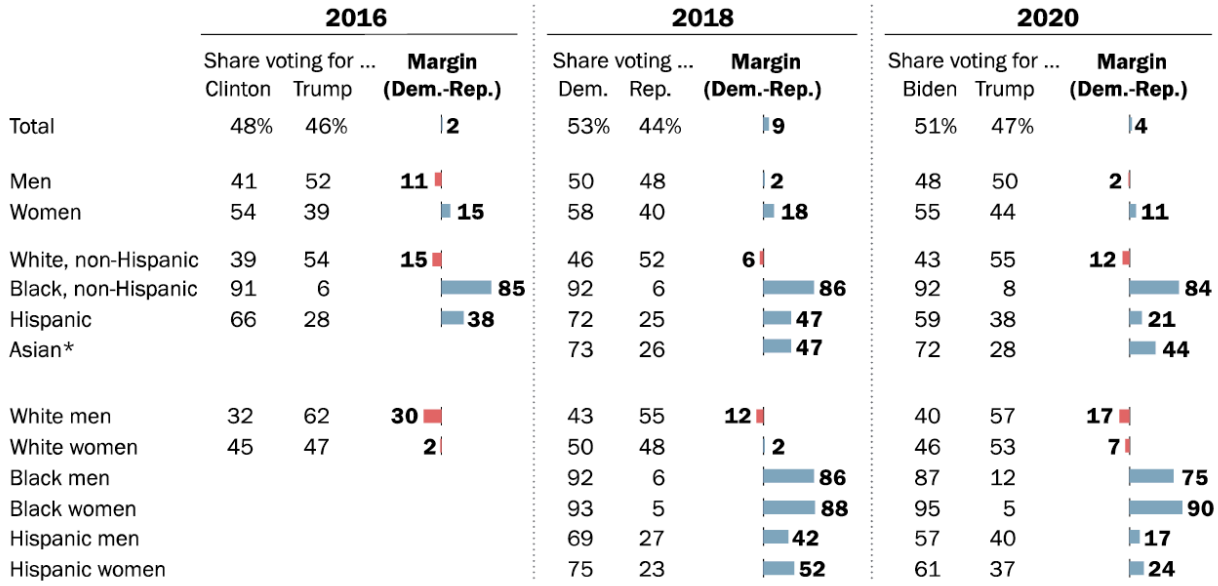
working-class neighborhoods to be ethnically heterogenous. The suspicion of others persists despite, or perhaps because of, this diversity.

Legacies of the LRA and Idi Amin, and the current ruling regime that is viewed as corrupt and inept, affect people's perceptions of others and are uniquely Ugandan, but one does not need to look to the African continent to see how ethnic and racial categories can be manipulated and weaponized. In the campaign leading to the 2016 presidential elections in the United States, Donald Trump's campaign spewed xenophobia, misogyny, and bold racism, yet his crudeness was seen as a virtue for some Americans. In an attempt to understand how the electorate could have possibly elected such a man to the highest office, journalists and academics alike separated the country into 'urban' and 'rural', taking for granted the 'urban' as a liberal zone and the 'rural' as conservative.[7] Yet, in the 2020 election, every nonwhite demographic group voted for Donald Trump in higher numbers than in the 2016 election with the exception of Black women. This cannot be sufficiently explained through the imaginary of homogenous, racist rural versus diverse, antiracist urban alone. After four years of exclusionary policies and inflammatory rhetoric, nonwhite people belonging to the very groups targeted by the Trump administration made the conscious decision to vote for him for a second term in office. The anger and resentment that Trump tapped into did not belong solely to white voters, as shown below.

[7] See for instance Rich Morin, "Behind Trump's win in rural white America: Women joined men in backing him," *Pew Research Center*, November 17, 2016. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/17/behind-trumps-win-in-rural-white-america-women-joined-men-in-backing-him/ (accessed January 3, 2023) and Danielle Kurtzleben, "Rural Voters Played A Big Part In Helping Trump Defeat Clinton," *NPR*, November 14, 2016. https://www.npr.org/2016/11/14/501737150/rural-voters-played-a-big-part-in-helping-trump-defeat-clinton (accessed January 3, 2023). These two articles reflect the assumptions of many liberal voters who see rural and urban as a red/blue binary in the context of the United States.

The gender gap narrowed among White voters

% of validated voters who reported voting for each candidate



*Asian adults interviewed in English only.
Notes: Based on 3,014 (2016), 7,585 (2018) and 9,668 (2020) validated general election voters. Validated voters are those found to have voted in commercial voter files. Vote choice for all years is from a post-election survey. 2018 figures indicate vote for U.S. House candidate. See Methodology for details. White, Black and Asian adults include only those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race. Don't know responses not shown. There were insufficient sample sizes in 2016 to separately show Black and Hispanic men and women. There were insufficient sample sizes in 2016 to show responses among Asians.
Source: Surveys of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 29-Dec. 12, 2016, Nov. 7-16, 2018, and Nov. 12-17, 2020.
"Behind Biden's 2020 Victory"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Figure 3: Ruth Igielnik et al., "Behind Biden's 2020 Victory," Pew Research Center, June 30, 2021. https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2021/06/30/behind-bidens-2020-victory/ (accessed January 2, 2023).

Citing the statistics in the above figure has become rather controversial, as some argue that using them implicitly shifts the burden of electoral politics from white voters to voters of color. This is the opposite of my intention, and these statistics also show the vast majority of votes for Trump in 2020 came from white American voters. But in highlighting voting behaviors that seem to elude the assumptions held by scholars and the media, I hope to show the importance of a deeper examination of urban life. The slew of long-form journalistic pieces that carefully showed rural

Americans' disenfranchisement simply ignored the multitude of ways that urban voters felt aggrieved.[8] With that, I now turn to presidential elections of a different sort.

1.2 Ethnicity

1.2.1 Bobi Wine, the 2021 Presidential Elections, and Urban Politics on the Ground

Uganda's 2021 presidential elections garnered significant international media attention, in large part because of President Yoweri Museveni's young, charismatic challenger. The very month I arrived back in Kampala in June 2019, Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, better known by his stage name of Bobi Wine, announced his bid for presidency. Wine was a famous musician throughout East Africa before entering the world of politics, initially announcing a bid for parliament in 2017. With a grassroots campaign and youth enthusiasm, he handily beat his two opponents from the main political parties: Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM) and the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC). The latter is perhaps best known for its long-time opposition leader, Kizza Besigye, who unsuccessfully challenged the president in the 2001, 2006, 2011, and 2016 presidential elections. During the Bush War that ultimately allowed Museveni to seize power in 1986, Besigye was famously Museveni's medical doctor and long-time ally until he became a high-profile, vocal opponent of the NRM.

The campaign of Bobi Wine, the self-proclaimed "ghetto president" hailing from the Kamwokya "slum" in Kampala, was not inconsequential in a young country where the average age is 16.7 years. Many of Wine's fiercest supporters were born years or even decades after

[8] See for instance Helena Bottemiller Evich, "Revenge of the Rural Voter," *Politico*, November 13, 2016. https://www.politico.com/story/2016/11/hillary-clinton-rural-voters-trump-231266 (accessed January 13, 2023); see also Cramer 2016 for an academic perspective that in many ways mirrors the assumptions of journalistic accounts of urban versus rural

Museveni first became president in 1986. Journalists and many academics reported on the buzz in the city with excitement, believing Wine's popularity was a sign of Museveni's waning grip on power. Throughout my time in the city, there was indeed much anticipation surrounding the campaign, and as further discussed in Chapter 6, large groups of *boda* drivers could be seen and heard throughout Kampala wearing the same signature red beret as Wine and shouting "People power!" with raised fists. The campaigning that was taking place throughout the duration of my fieldwork is a background actor throughout this dissertation. The ways in which the presidential election informed people's conversations about everything from ethnicity (as seen in Chapter 2) to the affordability of healthcare (as seen in Chapter 4) to labor (as seen in Chapter 6) shows how larger politics inform the most intimate details of life in Kampala.

In October 2019, there were protests on the campus of Makerere University, the oldest university in Uganda and the alma mater of many of sub-Saharan Africa's post-independence leaders. It is also the alma mater of Bobi Wine. Students were protesting a hike in tuition while also expressing dissatisfaction for a number of other things, such as extreme delays in receiving their grades and inadequate housing. The students at Makerere embodied the international media's perception of Bobi Wine supporters, and the protestors with whom I spoke were indeed eager for an end to Museveni's reign. Having been born long after the NRM's ascension, students never experienced life outside of the current regime, and protestors wondered aloud why they were paying so much money for an education when there were no jobs available for them upon graduation. In response to the protests, Museveni sent in the police to break up the groups on campus, and videos circulated on social media showing police beating even physically disabled students.

Eventually, Museveni announced that he was removing the police from campus, and the students and their sympathizers breathed a sigh of relief. The announcement was a trap: he did remove the police, but it was only the beginning of a harsher crackdown as he replaced police officers with military personnel on the university grounds. There were reports teargas thrown into the bathing areas of women's residence halls late in the evening, with women running out in towels to be sexually assaulted by the soldiers awaiting them outside. It was then that I first began to hear President Museveni described as a witch, while simultaneously hearing a longing for violent dictators like Idi Amin and Milton Obote. This phenomenon will be fleshed out fully in Chapters 5 and 6, but the inability to trust Museveni's words and his strategic maneuvering made him more dangerous than previous leaders who would unleash violence indiscriminately. In other words, though universal violence was certainly not viewed as a virtue, it was preferable to violence that was unpredictable and manipulative.

The Makerere protests of 2019 and the ways in which the students were misled and subject to violence give insight to the very real risks people in Kampala face, and the choices young people make when they publicly object to the powers that be. Traveling through the city as an outsider, it is easy to forget the repressive potentials of the NRM, as people can talk openly about the regime and live 'normal' lives. Following others who have conducted fieldwork in times of war or war's aftermath (Das 2007; Lubkemann 2008; McGovern 2017; Thiranagama 2011), I argue that even though this normalcy is oppressive in its own right, it does not preclude people from living their lives as they would in any setting across the globe. Yet, even in the face of such violence, a longing for new national leadership did not lead to universal support for Bobi Wine from the students at the university. Though there was seemingly unanimous disapproval of President Museveni, many people either tepidly supported Wine or preferred Museveni over the young candidate because of

Wine's ethnic identity as Muganda, making him a member of the majority ethnic group. With the lingua franca Luganda, its location in the kingdom of Buganda, and cultural dominance of Baganda, people wondered what would become of their multiethnic country with a Muganda as president. Baganda show such loyalty to the *kabaka* and do not hesitate to act on his behalf, as shown in Chapter 2, which led to others openly questioning whether the *kabaka* would actually be the one leading the country if Bobi Wine won. The significance and suspicion that accompanied Wine's ethnicity prevented universal opposition support.

1.2.2 Moral Categories: An Illustration of Ethnic Noses

The inability of Wine to consolidate universal support, as was imagined by the international media, because of his identity as a Muganda shows how categorizing people in Kampala is not an apolitical or amoral act. In the orphanage that served as one of my field sites, even the smallest children housed there could not escape such categorizations. Much has been written about the special category of person children inhabit. In adoption literature, scholars have highlighted the ways in which the law has changed to accommodate children to be adopted by white parents, as children occupy a space that is non-threatening and able to conform to Western cultural norms, unlike adult immigrants (Bhabha 2004 and 2006; Cartwright 2005; Lovelock 2000; Yngvesson 2002). When I began work at Furaha, I imagined that the children at the orphanage would be seen in a similar vein by the women who worked with them. Yet, it was quickly revealed that the adults tasked with caring for the children made assumptions about their origins based on their physical features.

On a day in the orphanage when there was a shortage of volunteers, a mama who was working in the newborn nursery called for my help with afternoon baths. Bathing the smallest

babies required multiple hands on deck: one person had to wake each baby from their midday nap and undress them, another had to do the actual bathing, and two additional people would gather the freshly washed babies, schmear them with petroleum jelly, and dress them for the rest of the day. I was on petroleum jelly and dressing duty with Mama Babirye, a tiny but spirited Muganda who was always eager to help me practice Luganda. She handed me a tiny baby whom I had never before seen, and I asked her for his name. The baby was still yet to be named at this point, as he only came to the orphanage a few days prior. His umbilical cord still intact; he was not even weeks old, and his facial features were certainly far from fully developed. But, Mama Babirye insisted that the baby should have an Ankole name. She pointed to his especially tiny nose and said, "This one is a Westerner."

Despite many academics' insistence on children being a special category of person that are less threatening than adults, for Mama Babirye, the child's face was not prereflective for long (Daniel 1996, 152), as she quickly noticed that his nose was quite small in comparison to his other facial features. The nose then became an index of the baby's origins, suggesting to her that he was from Western Uganda, and thus she wanted to mark that difference permanently by the name that would be given to him. In a setting such as Furaha, where all of the children had to be cared for by a staff of women, marking difference at a young age can have serious consequences for the present and future treatment of particular kids.[9]

The quick judgments made about the noses of various people also affected everyday interactions outside of the orphanage. Traffic is a perpetual issue on the streets of Kampala; every

[9] To clarify, I never was witness to overtly abusive treatment, though the differences in punishment and care from 'Western' standards were made apparent whenever an international volunteer reported what they perceived as bad behavior to the director of the orphanage. I am pointing out differences in treatment such as extra attention during mealtimes, a particularly chaotic ordeal at Furaha. For favored children, caretakers would always make sure their child was fed and ate adequately

moment of the day, the cars are bumper to bumper, and when there is an accident or large event taking place such as a political rally, it is not uncommon for a two-kilometer trip to take an hour's time. A solution to this problem is the *boda boda*, or local motorbike taxi. The drivers, all of whom are men and most of whom are young, are able to maneuver around cars and thus shed precious time. But, because of rampant unemployment, the sheer numbers of *boda* drivers seem to exponentially increase every year. With young men unable to outright pay millions of shillings for a new motorbike, a business model exists in the city whereby wealthy residents loan out bikes to drivers, and they demand a daily fee from each respective driver; this scheme will be further elaborated in Chapter 6. The cash demanded from the bikes' owners creates fierce competition amongst drivers, as they are only able to keep earnings that exceed the daily fee that they must pay to drive the bike. Every ride is crucial.

While many young men simply drive around looking for potential customers, there are also *boda* stages, where drivers wait in busy parts of the city for customers. Some people trust stage drivers more than others because drivers must pay a fee for their place at the stage, thus giving the impression to some that they are more responsible. Whenever a person walks by who could be a potential customer, every driver at a stage will hail them, asking where they are going and offering to take them to their destination. One morning, my trusted *boda* driver arrived at the gate of the compound where I was staying to drive me across the city to the orphanage. We were standing outside of the gate to the place I was renting, chatting as I debated whether or not to stop by the market first to buy diapers that were needed at Furaha, when a man next to us looked across the street at the Ntinda *boda* stage. They yelled a Karimojong greeting: "*Ejok!*" I was surprised, because Karimojong is not a common language to hear on the streets of Kampala, and my driver, Simon, was also confused. I excitedly told Simon that he was using the greeting from the place I

called home for many years, but Simon wrinkled his forehead in disbelief. “Yes, I didn’t understand the greeting and thought it sounded like one of those languages. But to that one?” he said, “That one is a Muganda. Why is he speaking the language of the North?”

As the driver crossed the street to pick up his Karimojong-speaking customer, Simon got a closer look. “Oh, that one. No. That is not the nose of a Muganda.”

In both cases, for the *boda* driver and for the child, these moments of judgment and categorization have potentially severe consequences. For the children at the orphanage, the favoritism of the mothers often (though, as we shall see in Chapter 4, not always) had to do with the appearance of the child. Particularly for the non-Ganda mothers, those children who were believed to be from the same part of Uganda as them were often shown preferential treatment, and mothers took these children as their own. In an orphanage such as Furaha, favoritism can lead to qualitatively different care, affecting the health and well-being of the children. For the *boda* drivers, the decision to not take one particular driver because of his ethnicity could be the difference between making a profit that day or not.

1.2.3 Moral Mastery: A Historical Kikuyu Comparison

While the judgment of noses illustrates the significance of categorizing *others* and marking them as different, of equal importance is “the fact that ethnic groups are categories of ascription and identification by the actors themselves,” (Barth 1988, 10) and many seek relationships with those who share their ethnicity. In the cosmopolitan setting of Kampala, the way “ethnic groups only persist as significant units if they imply marked difference” (ibid., 15) is especially evident as people navigate an ethnically heterogenous space. Much of the ethnographic and theoretical work in this dissertation interrogates the ways in which contentious kinship can be forged across

said difference, but there are also moments of kinship bonds made possible because of shared ethnic identity. When individuals share ethnic identity and believe their cultural values to be a source of morality, the judgments of others are never value neutral.

The moral force of ethnicity is not new, nor is it unique to the groups within Uganda. John Lonsdale's account (1992) of the Kikuyu in neighboring Kenya shows that British domination could not extend to every facet of Kikuyu life, particularly eluding the realms of moral thought and imagination. He states,

> "Conquest states wielded force outside daily life rather than persuasive power within. This was not a strength but a weakness. Dominating networks of ethnicity, they lacked the curb of civil society organized in political parties, trade unions, professional associations or churches. Without such political constraints, white rulers were deprived of social purchase. *Their political domination could not enjoy moral mastery*" (ibid., 322-23, emphasis mine).

Critiquing liberal historiographies that assume imperialism to be a rational system seeking modernization, Lonsdale claims that British rule was arbitrary and inchoate. Thus, "Tribe flourished more on the incoherence than the unevenness of the state" (ibid., 324).

While Lonsdale writes against the idea that colonialism sparked the creation of "tribe" or ethnicity, he does argue that colonialism tried to impose a static ethnic identity on Kikuyu. The creativity that ethnic thought fostered was flattened and destroyed as tribal identity demarcated who received goods from the state, and colonial administration sought representatives from different "tribes". Historically for Kikuyu, ethnic morality was made visible through land clearing and the "colonization of the forest" (ibid., 339). It was "self-mastery" that could lead to "collective power" (ibid., 338), and poor men worked to be loaned land and cattle by rich men, thus enabling the poor upward mobility while providing the rich with labor. White settlers and colonial policy stifled this moral system, as privatized land no longer allowed for such a system to continue. Colonialism did not create Kikuyu identity, but forced the entire community into a crisis of

meaning. Lonsdale is arguing that this contributed to the rebellion that would become known as Mau Mau, and he skillfully circumvents any sort of common stereotype as a unifying factor and instead argues that the amalgam of people who came together as Kikuyu did so in unequal, negotiated, and creative ways. Despite the lack of uniformity, Kikuyu identity never lost its power for those who identified as such even (and perhaps especially) during times of crisis.

Stripped of their forest, the inability of Kikuyu to perform their moral labor forced people to reconfigure how to live a meaningful life, which is also a central concern for present-day migrant workers in Kampala. When Kikuyu could no longer act morally, they organized armed resistance. In a much different setting, I argue that migrant workers' morality was tied to the obligations to their natal kin, leaving them behind in order to fulfill these duties. When workers were unable to send money home and their obligations went unmet, they found renewed purpose and meaning through their new networks of obligation in Kampala.

1.3 Kinship

Despite the circulation of stereotypes and the profound effects they have on people's quotidian lives and relationships, forging bonds with people from across ethnic lines was especially necessary for the people of the working- and underclass who moved to the city without extended kin. Searching for wage labor to provide support to their natal families in their home region, Kampala did not provide opportunities to make large sums of money for the interlocutors whose lives are rendered in this work. The emotional and financial precarity that ensued was sometimes alleviated through shared experiences with other migrant workers, and I argue throughout this dissertation that the relationships forged between workers transcended ordinary friendship. Whether it took the form of crowdsourcing efforts to ensure a coworker's child received

medical care, reserving special foods, or covering another's shift without compensation, workers in Kampala empirically performed tasks that showed their "moral obligation" (McKinley 2002) towards one another. Following McKinley, I take such obligation to be the foundation of kinship rather than shared substance or legal binds. In other words, I reject notions of "fictive kinship" that inherently presume an unmarked "real" kinship. The bonds of kinship that were forged between the people I came to know in Kampala were no more metaphorical than bonds based on biology or the law. These kin bonds had transformative potentials: when a Muganda woman named Teddy in the orphanage became close with Jacinta, the irreverent Karimojong woman described above, Teddy realized through this kin relation that other people's perceptions of Karimojong were misguided. Teddy and Jacinta were not merely friends. Both would cover the other's shift without any demand for compensation, and though both faced serious financial precarity, they would also contribute if either of them encountered an emergency that required extra cash. The relationship will be explored at greater length in Chapter 4, but the most critical aspect of it is that it forced Teddy to question the stereotypes that circulated about people from the region of Karamoja. She came to realize that most Karimojong shared her own basic desires of a healthy family and the means to provide for them.

1.3.1 Contentious Kinship

Yet, the diversity and cosmopolitanism of the city did not diminish the power of stereotypes for Teddy. Because her precarious labor did not afford her with the ability to fulfill the basic desires of providing for her family, Teddy and countless other members of Kampala's underclass sought reasons to explain financial circumstances that seemed beyond her own control. As the discussion of the Makerere protests above demonstrates, this sometimes takes the form of collective action

and grievances against institutions or the government. But in everyday life, it more often takes the form of suspicions against others who are thought to represent the country's corruption. Even when bonds of kin are formed with members of a previously "repugnant" group (cf. Harding 1991) and stereotypes are reconsidered, the difficulties that come with being a migrant laborer always threaten to test relationships. It is in this context that I propose the kin bonds forged as "contentious kinship". Separated from the original kin, their Kampala kin give life meaning and the motivation to continue working. While the term "contentious" is normally used to describe the relationships *between* people, recalling conflict and arguments between individuals or groups, I diverge from this. Instead, I am using contentious to describe the bonds themselves; it is the relationship *itself* that is a source of controversy, ambivalence, or antagonism. The circulation of stereotypes and the resultant prejudices threaten the formation and maintenance of the bonds, but kinship is forged despite the circumstances. When there are ruptures of city-wide violence or a person does something deemed immoral, however, ethnicity becomes a source of tension even as it remains unsaid between individual actors. Even in the absence of outward quarreling between people, the very bond itself was a site of contention.[10]

Despite the dissertation's focus on Kampala, the city itself is not the only source of contentious kinship for migrant workers. For many who moved to the city, there was intense nostalgia for their home regions and a desire to return to their extended families, particularly their children. Yet, financial precarity prevented them from returning home. Going back without the means to build a house or buy land was seen as a failure, thus forcing many to stay in Kampala for many years more than they wished. Though the wages in the city did not live up to the expectations they had prior to their relocation, a return home would only guarantee even lower wages or no

[10] Foregrounding an analysis based on the absence of something was inspired by McGovern 2017 and his interrogation of the absence of war

work at all, making it impossible to provide for the loved ones that inspired their initial move to Kampala. When people spoke of the tensions in their relationships in the city, it seemed as though the stress of the place was the source of their problems. When speaking of their hometowns and their children, they felt their problems would dissipate upon their return.

As the concluding chapter shows, the romanticization of home did not eliminate the possibility of contentious kinship. The cosmopolitanism of Kampala and the problems of ethnicity may not be as present in their homes away from Kampala, but the theoretical framework of contentious kinship is relevant far beyond the borders of the city and the country of Uganda. Even in rural areas, the possibility of kinship becoming a lethal force persists. Contention of ethnicity, nation, class, and cosmopolitanism are all critical in understanding the pages to follow. But in the end, contentious kinship bonds enable migrant workers to persist despite the layers of contention faced in Kampala and beyond.

1.4 Methodology and Field Sites

The data for this dissertation was collected from a number of sites throughout Kampala, and the arguments primarily come from long-term participant observation, life history collections, and semi-structured interviews. The methodology employed most frequently throughout fieldwork was participant observation, where I immersed myself in the quotidian lives and activities of my interlocutors. I lived on the premises of the orphanage I call Furaha Babies' Home for an extended period in 2017, and I saw how the home operated at every hour. I was there for midnight feedings, early-morning prayers, and chaotic dinner times. Having first set out to explore Christianity, I dutifully attended multiple church services every Sunday on this first trip to Kampala. I would accompany white volunteers when they went to churches like Watoto and Calvary Chapel, and I

would also venture to places like Miracle Center with the mamas. In the end, this dissertation does not flesh out Christian beliefs in the ways originally intended. Christianity is not a main actor in this work, though religious faith was an important part of many interlocutors' lives. Though this might seem like an omission, I would argue that the people who came to be my most important interlocutors were not motivated to do their work or forge the relationships that were most critical in their lives because of their faith. When visiting mamas' homes, their sense of purpose always came back to their kin. As for the international volunteers and missionaries, I must admit that I stopped any attempt at forming close relationships with them early on in fieldwork. Work on the dark sides of care and humanitarianism can offer a glimpse of why I came to this decision (Abu-Lughod 2002; Ticktin 2017).

From 2019-2020, I visited Furaha every day from 9am-4pm, and eventually fell into a daily rhythm of helping the caretakers with tasks that were not favored by the volunteers who visited. I washed dishes and clothes, sorted through dried beans and rice to rid them of pebbles and sticks, and mopped floors and wiped away food from eating surfaces. I was not the best or most efficient worker at first, but eventually, the women who worked in the kitchen would call for me around 2pm to perform chores when they did not have time to complete them in the morning. In attempting to make myself useful and to spend as much time possible with the employees, I was able to develop relationships with caretakers, and many extended invitations to their homes where I met their families outside of the orphanage. Excursions to their homes sometimes allowed me to travel beyond the city's borders, and on such trips, I gathered outsiders' perspectives of Kampala which would unknowingly become crucial for the arguments to follow.

Because I lived several kilometers from the orphanage, the *boda* rides there and back offered a glimpse of the larger city patterns and rhythms. I witnessed clouds of teargas and heard

screams from crowds of students during the Makerere protests in 2019 as I drove past the campus every day. When the man I call Simon, my trusted *boda* driver to whom I would eventually owe my life, saw me crying when we passed the campus during one particularly brutal morning, his reaction of pure puzzlement as to why I would shed tears made me realize the normalcy of such events for people. The ruptures of violence at the hands of the state often did not disrupt all of Kampala, and people went about their routines knowing which streets or neighborhoods to avoid on any given day. I also saw groups of young men in red berets being harassed by police officers, and the graffiti that covered the streets lauding Bobi Wine and insulting "M7", the shorthand for Museveni. Being on the back of a motorbike did not allow me to block out the sights and sounds; there was no barrier to the outside world. In this way, the streets of the city itself provided critical insight to the workings of the city and the sentiment of others who were forced to commute every day, either as drivers, passengers, or pedestrians.

Much has been written concerning the ways in which fieldwork can be an extractive exercise, as anthropologists go into "the field", learn about people's lives, and use such information as ethnographic data. This is a tension that I, too, grappled with as I first sat down to write the pages to follow. Yet, I also felt strongly that the richest account I could give was one that painted the fullest picture of people's lives, in all their complexities and contradictions. Lots of the people who shared stories with me did not make it into the dissertation, and in many cases, I highlighted the people whom I came to know the best precisely because I was confident that I could do justice to their stories. Thus, the people foregrounded in this work transcended being mere interlocutors, and were deeply involved in my life, and the lives of my family, throughout fieldwork. I cannot pretend there was not a hierarchy; many of the people to whom this dissertation is indebted were employees, either directly as drivers or caretakers or indirectly as workers for the properties where

we stayed. In this work, I argue that the domains of public and private are untenable, and the spaces I called home and the people who became kin in Kampala also acted as field sites and interlocutors.

In trying to render small-t truths about the people and places written here, I want to also note that precarity, austerity, and hardship inevitably play a part in the ethnography to follow. Yet, the stories that I have chosen to be a part of this work were not selected because I want to convey "suffering subjects", victims of structural violence who lack control over their lives (cf. Robbins 2013). Contrarily, it is my hope that the lives of migrant workers will be seen in all their fullness, in which suffering is only a part of the story. For many, the suffering was not a small part and I felt it to be disingenuous to pretend otherwise; but there was also remarkable creativity, stubborn persistence, absolute refusal to accept that things must stay as they are, and perhaps most importantly for this work, the intentional formation of kinship bonds that allow people to find meaning during even, and especially, difficult times.

1.5 Dissertation Outline

The opening body chapter of the dissertation, "Chapter 2: Contentious Cosmopolitanism", offers an account of the events that transpired in September 2009, when protests and citizen-devised roadblocks brought the city to a standstill for several days. Reconstructing the events from newspaper accounts, NGO reports, and life history collections with people who were living in Kampala at the time, this chapter shows the intense loyalty the majority-ethnic group, Baganda, feel towards their cultural leader and king, the *kabaka*. Kampala is within the physical territory of the Buganda Kingdom, and when President Museveni prevented Kabaka Muwenda Mutebi II from visiting a nearby county, Baganda began to speak of the capital in terms of indigeneity. Baganda searched for Banyankole, people belonging to the ethnic group of President Museveni, and

punished them for the actions of the president. Tensions ran so high that there was even mistrust amongst interethnic families, and "contentious kinship" is theorized through the ethnographic account of a Munyankole man married to a Muganda woman. From diverse perspectives, this chapter challenges scholarship that argues Kampala can be understood as culturally or cosmologically Baganda, instead showing it as a contested space with distinct meanings for different ethnic groups.

In the third chapter, "Milk and Bones," readers learn the ways in which the label of Banyankole, the term for people belonging to the ethnic group of President Museveni, is insufficient. Despite the entire group being a target in opening chapter because of their shared ethnicity with a president viewed as corrupt, there are two categories subsumed within Banyankole: Hima and Iru, with historical connections to Tutsi and Hutu. The hierarchy between Hima and Iru prevents the assumed ethnic solidarity of Banyankole, and the differences between Hima and Iru are thought to be so profound that their bodies are seen as distinct. Though the two groups appear to have an unbridgeable divide, discussions of class and the acquisition of cattle shows how categories can shift, particularly when children of Hima or Iru are born into circumstances that make them live and eat as members of the other group. Through a discussion of food and the ways in which particular foods change one's body, this chapter argues that ethnicity functions as *oobleck*, solidifying or liquifying depending upon the amount of pressure exerted at any given time.

The fourth chapter, "A Woman's Work; A Mother's Love," is set in an orphanage that served as one of my main field sites, a place I call Furaha Babies' Home. In a setting where most of the women live on the premises where they work, it ethnographically renders the relationships that are forged between the women and the children for whom they are paid to care. Using

McKinley's definition of kinship as "moral obligation" (2002), I argue that the kin relations between the women and children are real and not metaphorical. Yet, even days-old babies who arrive at the orphanage do not escape ethnic categorizations from the mamas. When children's origins remain unknown, employees look for visual and behavioral markers, assigning them an ethnicity that explains everything from eating habits to the size of one's nose. Women chose children from ethnic groups they found "repugnant" (Harding 1991), revealing the transgressive potentials of kinship. This chapter is particularly important to the dissertation because it argues that the kin relations forged in the orphanage allow workers to live meaningful lives. With many women working far from their biological and extended families, caring for kin in the orphanage motivates them in ways that transcends monetary compensation. However, as the orphanage only cares for children up to the age of 4 and workers are prohibited from fostering or adopting them, the knowledge that the children will not be theirs forever makes it contentious kinship. Despite the certainty that their kin relations will ultimately be severed, the cost of not forging such bonds is greater than the cost of eventually saying a permanent goodbye to their children.

Moving from the orphanage to domestic spheres across the city, the fifth chapter, "The Shoe," attempts to tackle a problem that was on the minds of many people, and all of my interlocutors, in Kampala: witchcraft. Revealing how precarity facilitates suspicion that often takes the form of witchcraft accusations, it also shows the ways in which ethnic identity is entangled in such accusations. It investigates different cases of witchcraft to show how witchcraft itself precludes satisfactory definitions or shared motivations. Using the ethnographer herself as a subject, this chapter attempts to reveal witchcraft as an experience of the world, and how this experience shapes how people interact with one another. The threat of witchcraft makes people mistrustful of one another while simultaneously necessitating relations of trust to navigate a world

in which witches are real. It also shows how witchcraft is not confined to interpersonal behaviors and offers an account of President Museveni as a witch, and why he is labeled one when notorious leaders like Idi Amin and Milton Obote are not.

Through ethnography conducted in a private residence where the tenants are South Asian and the security guards are Northern Ugandans, the sixth chapter entitled "Interruptions" reveals how historical racial and ethnic purging affect quotidian life. The hierarchy between the tenants and guards seems to be insuperable because of stark racial and class differences, but as the title of the chapter implies, these hierarchies are interrupted in creative ways. The South Asian women in the compound depended on the Ugandan guards and the guards had to be mindful of the women's demands to keep their jobs, yet there were moments of interruption where they challenged the absolute authority of their employers. To illustrate how the private interactions that happen within the walls of the compound are affected by life outside of its gate, this chapter also offers an account of *boda* drivers, motorbike taxis that flood the streets of Kampala. Like the guards who interrupt private hierarchies, *boda* drivers interrupt the absolute power of President Museveni, while also interrupting ideas of desirable leaders. It is in this larger political context that guards are empowered to challenge private social orderings.

Breaking form with the other chapters, the seventh and final chapter, "A Journey Away from Home, and Back," follows the life of one particular woman whose story encompasses all of the major themes of the dissertation. Focusing on a domestic worker who left her daughter and extended family behind in Lira to send money home to them, readers are introduced to some of the hardships faced by migrant working women. While her entire life in the city was necessitated by a search for wage labor to support her family, many of the challenges she faced arose as she attempted to forge new kin relations in the capital. The people she trusted based on shared ethnic

identity revealed themselves to be unworthy of such trust, and she was unable to build new relationships after breaking away from her husband in Kampala. Plagued by an ailment that persisted despite visiting multiple clinics and being prescribed different medications, she felt her life to be cursed and moved back home to be with her daughter when she had the means to do so. Yet, her journey home proved that Kampala alone was not the source of her strife, and being reunited with her kin did not rid her of suffering. This chapter concludes the dissertation by showing how contentious kinship can be used as an analytic far beyond the borders of Kampala or Uganda.

1.6 Aim of the Dissertation

"Humanity is confined to the borders of the tribe, the linguistic group, or even, in some instances, to the village, so that many so-called primitive peoples describe themselves as 'the men' (or sometimes – though hardly more discreetly – as 'the good', 'the excellent', 'the well-achieved'), thus implying that the other tribes, groups or villages have no part in the human virtues or even in human nature, but that their members are, at best, 'bad', 'wicked', 'ground-monkeys', or 'lousy eggs'…the more we claim to discriminate between cultures and customs as good and bad, the more completely do we identify ourselves with those we would condemn. By refusing to consider as human those who seem to us to be the most 'savage' or 'barbarous' of their representatives, we merely adopt one of their own characteristic attitudes. *The barbarian is, first and foremost, the man who believes in barbarism.*" – Claude Levi-Strauss, *Race and History* (emphasis mine)

Levi-Strauss wrote a short pamphlet for UNESCO, from which the extended quotation above is pulled. In the section labeled 'The Ethnocentric Attitude', he insists that ethnocentrism is something that all human groups must contend with, and this is not particularly controversial for me. As we learn to categorize from a very young age, we separate in order to make sense of the world. The problem is not separating one's own group from another, creating in-groups and out-groups. As will be explored in Chapter 2, various groups are sometimes labeled as less than human. My interlocutors from Western Uganda reported that Northern Ugandans are called *ekikoko* in their home regions, which are small biting insects, such as red ants. The shift from categorizing

others because of linguistic or perceived physical differences to a much more sinister othering occurs when ideology drives people to see an entire group as *ekikoko*, as something to be swatted away before it can inflict pain onto you. For my interlocutors reasoning with such ideologies, killing such insects is not something to be avoided, but you must kill them to protect yourself from discomfort; according to such logics, even if *ekikoko* touching your skin will not lead to death, it will lead to enough discomfort that you should not feel any sense of guilt in its death. Though people still fight wars and believe other groups to be less moral, or less worthy of certain rights and privileges than one's own group, the complete inability to see someone as made of the same flesh as oneself is something different entirely. This dissertation attempts to render the quotidian ways in which such dehumanization works in the city of Kampala, Uganda. Beyond this and perhaps more critically, I hope it provides some insight into the ways in which human beings make meaning in precarious circumstances, forging bonds with people who were previously deemed inhuman, and the possibilities of collective futures beyond a romanticized view of diversity or cosmopolitanism.

The transient nature of migrant workers' time in Kampala necessarily made all the bonds created those of contentious kinship. As we shall see in the pages to follow, many ethnic minorities never came to call Kampala home, despite some living there for decades. The cultural and linguistic dominance of Baganda, and the treatment workers received because of their outward appearance or accent, prevented them from feeling the belonging that comes with a home. Despite knowing their time in Kampala was not forever, and despite witnessing the ways in which ethnic differences continually led to mistrust and threats of betrayal, contentious kinship bonds were made and remade. In a broader, more existential way, the knowledge of our own mortality and ultimate death forces us to confront the fragility and temporality of what we share with our kin. I

am less interested in what makes an ethical life (cf. Keane 2015) and more interested in what makes a meaningful life; the quest for meaning was what motivated my interlocutors. For migrant workers in Kampala, it was in kin that meaning was found.

I opened with my experience in Karamoja because it had such a profound effect on what I decided to foreground in this dissertation. If I had not had those formative years in the region, the place where Uganda first became my home, there is a strong possibility that I would not have taken such strong offence when people would speak in disparaging ways about Northern Uganda and its inhabitants. But in everyday conversations, I could not ignore the persistence of people from all class and ethnic backgrounds blaming certain Northern groups for the ills of the entire country, even though most people never had been to the places they deemed "backwards". The cosmopolitan city did not easily lend itself to a more tolerant environment. As I became more deeply entrenched in the city and continued hearing people placing blame on Karimojong for their "primitive" ways hindering development, I also heard Banyankole simultaneously blamed for their "treachery", said to be usurping power through networks of patronage that begin at the very top of the political hierarchy with President Museveni. And still, amidst these suspicions, my interlocutors also accused Baganda of wanting a homogenous country of their own. I hope the broader political stakes of this project are clear: without taking seriously the complexities of how people are negotiating their own identities and those of others, understanding Kampala, or any cosmopolitan place in the world, is impossible.

To end where we began, Karimojong may be "national scapegoats", seen as a hindrance to development for people who live in Kampala, but perhaps we can learn from their stubborn refusal of hierarchy and domination.

Chapter 2

Contentious Cosmopolitanism

"When we left it, the city was still smoldering. Otherwise it was a perfect spring morning. The sky was a September-blue and the pigeons went on pecking at bits of bread scattered from the bombed bakery." – Ocean Vuong, "Immigrant Haibun"

On September 10, 2009, the city of Kampala became a place of unabated chaos. In Kiseka, Kalerwe, Nakawa, and other large open markets where hundreds of vendors sell produce, spices, and Nile tilapia across the city, Baganda[11] men were gathering in groups with the stated intention of walking all the way to Bugerere County, about 55 kilometers northeast. As these groups began spreading across Kampala, they set up roadblocks and forcefully asked those passing by where they were going, and for what purpose. If there were suspicions that the people stopped were not ethnically Baganda, they were further interrogated about their home region. When a person was found to be Munyankole[12], they were beaten as punishment for belonging to the same ethnic group as President Yoweri Museveni, who disrespected the *kabaka*, the king of Buganda. Traffic, always an issue in Kampala, came to a standstill on virtually every street of the city, and people selling street food disappeared from the sides of the roads.

When police were brought in to quell these disturbances, Baganda who had taken to the streets stood firm and were ready to fight for their king. Soon, those who were protesting on behalf of the kingdom of Buganda were met with a heavy-handed government response that included teargas and bullets. Undeterred, Baganda youth soon began burning tires, throwing stones at police

[11] Baganda (singular, Muganda) refers to ethnicity; Buganda refers to territory; Luganda refers to language.
[12] Banyankole (singular, Munyankole) refers to ethnicity; Ankole refers to territory; Runyankole refers to language.

vehicles, breaking glass and destroying shops, and causing unrest in practically every corner of Kampala. United in their fight against what they perceived as an unjust government overstretching its authority, many Baganda who joined the protest became more aggressive in their search for non-Baganda people on the streets. Because Banyankole are perceived to share an ethnic identity with President Museveni, self-identifying Banyankole feared for their lives and stayed indoors wherever they could find shelter. As day one of protests turned into day two, many were stuck without food or water, and there was no safe way of going outside to buy necessities.

When it became clear that police presence was not enough to deter protestors, President Museveni deployed infantry soldiers, and they began firing live ammunition at crowds gathered in the streets. As people scattered, police made mass arrests and charged protestors with everything from unlawful assembly to terrorism for destroying government property (Human Rights Watch, 2009). Sources fluctuate on the number of deaths at the hands of the police and military, but it is likely that there were dozens of fatalities at the least. At Mulago Hospital alone, the main government hospital in the city, 88 people were admitted for treatment during the days of unrest, and the majority of those admitted were treated for gunshot wounds (ibid.).

2.1 The 2009 Strike

To an outside observer, the event that triggered such a fierce and loyal response from Baganda living in Kampala may seem mundane, and certainly not worth risking one's life to protest. Yet, the seemingly trivial event that will now be explained threatened to detonate the resentments of various factions in the city that had been lying dormant for decades. Because of these latent feelings of resentment, I contend that there is a *contentious cosmopolitanism* that exists in Kampala, affecting how people forge relationships of friendship and kinship with one another.

In September of 2009, Kabaka Ronald Muwenda Mutebi II announced that he was taking a trip to Bugerere County to visit Baganda living in the area for National Youth Day. Bugerere County, part of Kayunga District in Central Uganda[13], is home to both Baganda and Banyala ethnic groups, and the two groups have separate cultural leaders who claim authority over their respective kingdoms. The king of Buganda, the *kabaka*, has a palace in Mengo, Kampala, while the king of Banyala, the *ssebanyala*, resides in Bbaale, a town in Kayunga District, which is the very same district the *kabaka* had planned to visit.

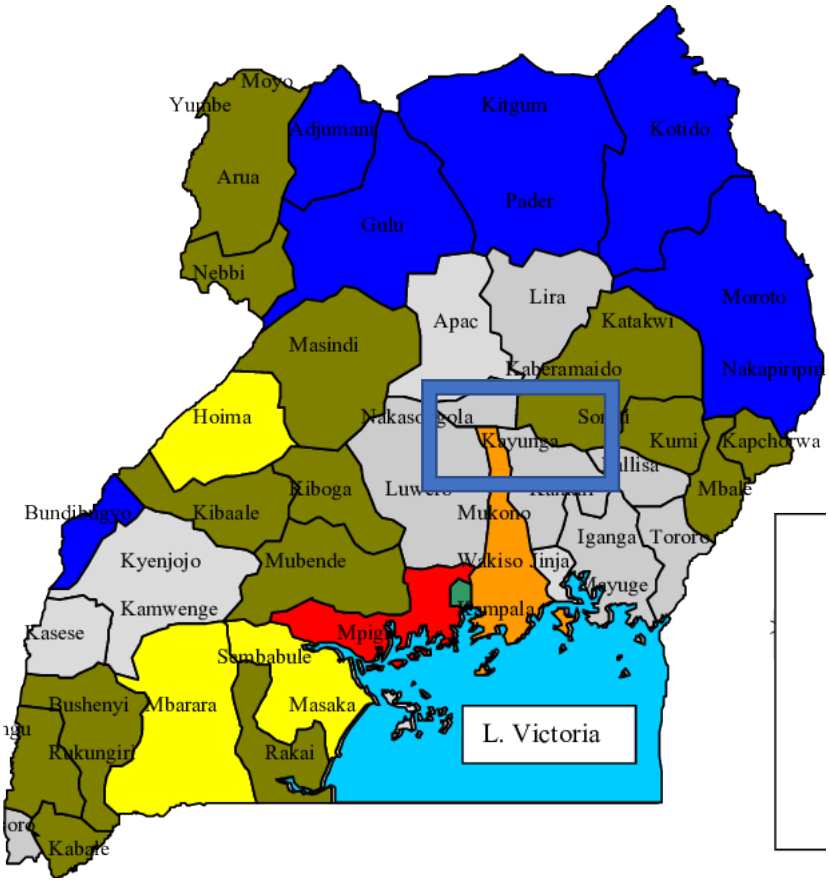


Figure 4: Map of Uganda; you can see Kayunga District, where the kabaka was scheduled to travel, north of Kampala. Image: Sonko, R. & Njue, E. & Ssebuliba, James & Jager,. (2022). The horticultural sector in Uganda.

[13] When describing regions of Uganda, I use the government's broad administrative regions: North, Central, East, and West. Central is capitalized here and throughout the chapter to reflect this

When this visit was announced, President Museveni addressed Ugandans on national television to warn that the *kabaka* should not go to Bugerere, as he could not guarantee the *kabaka*'s safety. Ssebanyala Baker Kimeze, the king and cultural leader of Banyala, did not want Kabaka Mutebi to visit, as the *ssebanyala* viewed this visit as a direct threat meant to intimidate his small kingdom's autonomy. While the *ssebanyala* feared his kingdom was vulnerable to a hostile annexation because it was in an area that Baganda considered part of their kingdom's physical territory, many Baganda accused President Museveni of allying with the *ssebanyala* to undermine their king and limit the scope of his influence. Rather than accept the authority of the president of their country, many Baganda instead showed that their ultimate loyalty was to the *kabaka*. Nobody, not even the president, could stop the *kabaka* from traveling where he intended, and communication networks began to encourage collective action. The Prime Minister, or *kattikkiro*, of Buganda, then J. B. Walusimbi, was scheduled to travel to Kayunga along Gayaza Bugerere Road in order to prepare for the *kabaka*'s visit. His vehicle was stopped and turned away by Ugandan military forces at Ssezzibwa bridge, the point at which Bugerere county begins. Realizing the government was serious in their threats to block the visit, leaders within the community urged Baganda to take to the streets to show that the *kabaka*'s word was final, and if the government would not provide security for him, then the *kabaka*'s subjects would do so. Luganda language radio stations took advantage of their ability to directly communicate with Baganda across the city when they heard Prime Minister Walusimbi was stopped by the military, repeating on air a Ganda proverb, "*Alikaabya kabaka amaziga ndi mukaabya musaayi*", literally translated to "Whoever makes the king cry/shed tears, I will make him cry/shed blood". CBS radio, a Luganda language station owned by the Kingdom of Buganda, was accused by the government of inciting riots and was forcefully shut down for more than one year (Reporters Without Borders,

2016). Ssubi radio station, which had the slogan, “Lediyo y’abazzukulu ba Buganda”, or “Radio of the grandchildren of Buganda”, never returned to the air (ibid.).

Because Kampala is located within the Kingdom of Buganda, people began to speak of the land in terms of ownership. Paul Tumusiime, an Munyankole man who was in Kampala during the 2009 strike, explained, “Museveni was called the person who rents. Not the landlord. The landlord is the *kabaka* and then the president is just the renter. So, they were saying that the renter can’t stop the landlord.” This language of ownership, of who had the right to reside on the land, brings to mind theories of autochthony (e.g. Ceuppens and Geschiere 2005; Geschiere 2009; McGovern 2011; McIntosh 2015). While anthropologists separate indigeneity from autochthony, often sympathizing with the former and showing the dangers of the latter (Gausset et al. 2011), the contemporary case of Baganda’s claims illustrates that the relationship between the two is often slippery. By asserting Kampala to be part of their land, many Baganda participating in the strike were explicitly demanding that other ethnic groups recognize the city as theirs at the expense of the rights of those other groups. The historical dominance of the kingdom of Buganda, and its unique relationship with the British (Reid 2002; Reid 2017), makes it difficult to argue that they have been a particularly disenfranchised ethnic group in Uganda. The linguistic dominance of Luganda within Kampala that persists today indexes the group’s cultural control within the city. Yet, because President Museveni and his entire ruling regime are viewed as ethnically Banyankole, many present-day Baganda speak about their existence in Kampala in terms of indigeneity. They claim that their ancestral home is being threatened by an overreaching national government, in power since 1986 before the majority of the nation’s citizens were born, that is seeking to strip the kingdom of Buganda of any cultural, political, or economic autonomy that their “devolved” system should preserve. Despite Luganda remaining the lingua franca within the markets and in

government buildings, stories also circulate about nepotism occurring when job applicants speak Runyankole to Banyankole shop owners. In other words, regardless of the power the kingdom exerted in the past, Baganda are now claiming that they do not have the same rights and freedoms that they once had in their historical territories.

As Golooba-Mutebi (2011) has before written, the enormity of the response to the *kabaka*'s blocked visit is a clear example proving that the "Buganda question" is far from settled. While President Museveni and his ruling NRM may have thought reestablishing the monarchies in Uganda would appease potential voters, giving the Baganda some semblance of control over their cultural life,[14] it remains clear that time has not diminished the importance of the Buganda kingdom. "The tremendous loyalty it commands cannot and should not be dismissed as only a reaction to the incompetence of the central government" (ibid., B-12). The unrest that has followed recent presidential elections and protests in response to hikes in university fees has been well documented, but the violence that followed President Museveni's pronouncement about the *kabaka* convincingly shows that the dissatisfaction with the government cannot be blamed on material conditions alone for Baganda who participated. While protests over a hike in tuition or the recent social media tax force people to pay money that they simply do not have, a blocked visit for National Youth Day did not affect the livelihoods of those protesting on behalf of their king. During the 2019 protests at Makerere University, which took place while I was conducting fieldwork, students justified their actions to me in material terms and accused the government of mismanagement and corruption that has led to mass unemployment. The language used to describe the strike of 2009 also had elements of this as Baganda accused President Museveni of corruption, but it was disrespect that was foregrounded in every oral history account I gathered. In asserting

[14] Also see the Introduction for a discussion of Obote's decision to abolish the historic kingdoms of Uganda

his authority over the *kabaka*, underlying tensions between Baganda and Banyankole erupted, with the latter being blamed for the actions of the president. In many ways, Museveni was seen as the king of the Banyankole rather than the president of the entire country.

2.2 History and Betrayal

For many Baganda, the incident of September 2009 could be traced to decades prior during the early days of Uganda's independence. When speaking about the kingship with Ganda monarchists today, Ssekabaka[15] Muteesa is sure to be referenced in conversation, as he was forced into exile in Great Britain when the monarchy was abolished by President Milton Obote in 1966 as Obote attempted to unify the new nation. According to Arthur Baliruno, a Muganda who supported the actions taken by Baganda during the strike, Obote's seizing of power for a second time in 1980 "did not please the Baganda". His unofficial version of history was shared by many Ganda men with whom I spoke:

> "After Obote's reinstatement, the Baganda planned to restore the monarchy and went to the bush to fight under the leadership of Kayira, head of Uganda Freedom Movement, and George Nkwanga, head of Federal Democratic Movement. They were later joined by Museveni who convinced them to join the National Resistance Army, promising them he would restore the monarchy in Buganda when he overthrew Obote.
>
> After Museveni took power, he restored the Buganda monarchy and brought Kabaka Ronald Mutebi back to the country to reinstate him as the king of Buganda kingdom, just as he promised Kayira and Nkwanga in the Bush War. But, not all that was promised to the Baganda was given to us. In Kayuga, there was a chief under the *kabaka* called the *ssebanyala*. To break up the Buganda kingdom, Museveni brought back the chiefdom system and created small kingdoms within the Buganda kingdom, and he put in the constitution that no one was allowed to create a chiefdom without getting permission from the "king" of any chiefdom. This was unacceptable because there is only one chiefdom in Buganda, ever since Buganda became the kingdom that it is today in the 1800s. The *ssebanyala* is not a king and does not have his own kingdom. He was a chief under the

[15] Term for a former *kabaka*

> *kabaka*, but through Museveni's constitution anyone can create their own kingdom or chiefdom.
>
> In 2009, the *ssebanyala* said he had not received an official letter from the *kabaka* of Buganda requesting to let him come to Bugerere, so he felt that the *kabaka* was undermining him. But the *ssebanyala* is not a king. He is a chief under the *kabaka*, and has no right of authority over him."

In the description offered by many Baganda, the Banyala are not a distinct ethnic group at all, but traitors who respect the authority of a false king. Attempting to quell threats of Baganda separatists, reintroducing chiefdoms made it possible for ambitious leaders within the historical Buganda territory to exert control. The *ssebanyala* is thus portrayed as a conniving, power-hungry chief, usurping authority that the *kabaka* should have maintained as he took advantage of Museveni's constitution to create a kingdom where there never had been one.

The threat of being perceived as a traitor was not lost on ethnically Ganda military personnel. Nanfuka Grace claimed that she was friends with one of the commanders who stopped the Prime Minister of Buganda at Ssezibwa Bridge, and her refusal to name him reinforced the severity of his actions. The commander, she said, had no choice but to obey the order to stop the *kattikkiro*, yet after doing so, he resigned from the army and does not want people to know he was ever a part of the Ugandan military. Though simply following the orders he was given, the commander could not reconcile being a soldier and a Muganda when the two identities were at odds with one another. Rather than remain in the military and possibly receive orders that went against the *kabaka*'s wishes, the commander demonstrated his loyalty to his king by abandoning a potentially treacherous post altogether. Baganda ethnic solidarity begins and ends with deference to the monarchy.

2.3 "Bbaffe", Our Husband

When people first began to speak to me about the events that transpired in September 2009, Baganda and non-Baganda alike often stressed the importance of the *kabaka* by telling me that even Baganda men refer to the king as their collective husband, "bbaffe". Samantha Mwanga, a Muganda woman who vividly remembered the strike because she still had a "fresh scar" from the birth of her son, said, "Baganda are so loyal to the *kabaka* to the point of crazy." When I asked her why Baganda men and women would refer to him as their husband rather than father, the answer revealed beliefs about kinship and authority. Samantha explained that calling the *kabaka* father would somehow put him on the same level as other men, as a man grows up under the power of a father but eventually will become a father himself. Once the son becomes a father, he is no longer subjected to the rule of his father, but builds a household of his own in which he then becomes the head. Husband is also the chosen kinship term for a woman, as a daughter will eventually become an adult and not be in the same home as her father; a husband will take the place of the father as head of household. In calling their king their husband, every Muganda was ensuring the *kabaka* was always in a position of authority regardless of their gender, and she used the fact that a husband will always be the source of authority in the marriage to support the use of this kinship category. *Bbaffe* is a term that shows men and women equally defer to their king.

Samantha blamed the chaos of the 2009 strike on the "crazy" loyalty many of her fellow Baganda feel towards their *kabaka*. On the first day of the strike, she did not know the extent of what was happening, as there are often strikes throughout the city that do not immediately affect quotidian life. In one of the first trips that she made outside of her house since giving birth, she went to buy groceries at a small market near her home when she heard gunshots nearby. She, alongside a dozen or so other people in her vicinity, ran into the nearest building looking for

shelter, which happened to be a retail store. “The store was owned by a Munyankole woman,” she explained. “I’ll never forget her. She told us to leave, with gunshots flying outside!” As she was running back to her house, she witnessed men throwing stones at police vehicles. When her house was within sight, she saw a man with a gunshot wound in her neighbor’s yard, and she quickly realized that this was not an ordinary moment of unrest.

As she and her family stayed in their home for several days waiting for respite from the turmoil, her maid[16] wanted to buy fresh ingredients from outside because they had been having rice and *posho*[17] for every meal. Despite Samantha’s insistence that it was unsafe for her to leave, the maid was hoping to escape quickly to buy some *matooke*[18] and greens. She came running back inside their home just minutes after she left, frightened at hearing gunshots at close range, and she reported the same scenes that Samantha had witnessed two days prior. Men were still fighting with police and walking in groups, patrolling the area. Luckily, Samantha’s family had enough supplies to get them through the week until it was safe enough to return to the markets, but for working-class people who lived day to day, many were forced to try and find food outside and were confronted with an atmosphere of unrest and violence.

Historians of Buganda agree that clans played a foundational role in the kingdom’s founding and reflect the gendered dynamics of Baganda identity (Musisi 1991, 764); in cultural and everyday life for many Baganda, the importance of clans continues to be felt. When people first began speaking to me about the events of 2009, every person reported an important command that was heard throughout the city at Baganda roadblocks: “*Tambula nga omuganda*”. Literally translated, this phrase means, “Walk like a Muganda”. For non-Baganda who learned Luganda

[16] When using the language of interlocutors, I employ the term ‘maid’, which is the English word used by people who employ women to clean their homes, cook, and/or look after their children
[17] *Posho* is ground maize or sorghum flour
[18] *Matooke* are green bananas, the preferred starch for most Ugandans from the Central and Western regions

while living in Kampala and knew little of Ganda cosmology, they would try to physically walk in ways that mimicked how they imagined Baganda walk when groups of Baganda protestors dictated this command. When they began to do this, they would be beaten, because the phrase actually refers to Baganda clanship and lineage, and being unaware of this revealed a person to be from a different ethnic group. In response to the command, a person is supposed to talk about one's ancestors. An appropriate response to the command would be, "I am the son of X, who is the son of Y…" continued until reaching the clan's founder, who is considered always to be alive. Samantha said she never had much interest in learning how to do this; it takes a great deal of effort to memorize the names of all the ancestors going back to one's clan founder. Samantha's lackadaisical attitude is an important reminder that the strike of 2009 was certainly not without internal divisions, and like any collective action, cannot be seen to represent the entire community of Baganda in Kampala. However, she did note that all of her brothers took a great deal of pride in this growing up, and they learned how to *tambula nga omuganda* from their father and passed down this knowledge to their own children. Even within the same family, the importance of ethnicity is debated, and the assertion of its significance often falls on gendered lines. Especially within a patrilineal system, its maintenance is critical for the men who are to inherit the powers that accompany it.

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2.4 Ankole Privilege, Real or Imagined

In the above conversations with Samantha Mwanga, one can see that despite her apparent lack of loyalty towards the *kabaka* during the strike, she placed blame on the Munyankole woman who owned the store where she initially hid when events first unfolded. Even if Samantha was not

(in her own words) "loyal to the point of crazy" to her Ganda ethnicity in her mind, she nonetheless categorized others according to their ethnicity. This reminded me of casual conversations throughout Kampala, where Banyankole are often referred to as the ethnic group who not only control the government, but also amass all of the wealth in the country at others' expense. While it is true that the government owns and benefits from various companies in the country, the frustration that people in Uganda feel towards the ruling regime has made every Munyankole a target of suspicion, regardless of class or occupation. There were many non-Banyankole who reported to me, with absolute certainty, that the government paid every single Munyankole for their support in cash every month. The reality of the situation is, of course, much more complicated than each individual Munyankole benefiting from President Museveni's policies, and there is no evidence of monthly cash payments to working-class Banyankole. Like the rest of the working- and underclass people in Kampala and the country more broadly, many financially precarious Banyankole are simply struggling to keep their heads above water, without any extra financial assistance from the government. Policies seen as unnecessary attempts to profit unfairly from citizens that frustrate Baganda, such as the social media tax,[19] are equally frustrating to Banyankole, many of whom do not support the regime in power and are equally eager for change in their country. Yet, September 2009 made it clear that no Munyankole was safe from being a target.

Christopher Muhwezi was one such Munyankole who learned that ethnicity can inspire violence, and he was working as a butcher at the time of the strike. His best friend was an army officer who happened to be a Muganda, Robert Kabatsi. Having known Robert for many years,

[19] See Rebecca Ratcliffe and Samuel Okikor, "Millions of Ugandans quit internet services as social media tax takes effect," *The Guardian,* February 27, 2019. https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/feb/27/millions-of-ugandans-quit-internet-after-introduction-of-social-media-tax-free-speech (accessed January 12, 2021)

there was no reason for Christopher to fear his friend would harm him because of his ethnicity. While stereotypes about particular ethnic groups are abundant, as they are in any given country throughout the world, friendships transcend the boundaries that are thought to exist between groups imagined to be antagonistic. Without much reflection, Christopher assumed his friendship with Robert was not subject to political or cultural pressures from outside.

On the first day of the strike, just hours before all businesses in the city closed as violence erupted, Christopher opened his butcher shop in the morning like he always did. As he was preparing for the day, cutting meat and lighting charcoal fires to cook for customers who ordered prepared food, Robert walked into his store. Robert said, "You see this gun? It might kill a Munyankole this night, tonight." The seriousness of this proclamation made Christopher fear that his best friend may take his life. Christopher did not yet know about the *kabaka*'s blocked visit when Robert came into his store, adding to the confusion of the encounter. With those words, Robert reminded Christopher of the importance of ethnic identity in Kampala, and the ways in which belonging to one group can be seen as an immutable state of being.

In the end, it is rumored that Robert's gun did kill a Munyankole that night. He had a young boy who was a Munyankole working at his home as a gardener, and the next day, people claimed that the body of the boy was found outside of Robert's home with a gunshot wound. Christopher is certain that his former friend killed the young boy. "A Muganda, it does not matter who, he can kill you when something happened and they're now fighting with other Baganda," Christopher explained. "They can kill you. They don't care if you are a friend. *When you're a Munyankole, you're a Munyankole. When you're a Muganda, you're a Muganda*" (emphasis mine). His insistence that one's ethnic identity is final shows how it can function as a permanent divide between people. The latent resentments and tensions meant his friendship with Robert would

always be contentious, and the strike was the match that lit the flame. The debacle with the *kabaka* showed the extent to which Baganda were loyal to their king and their own imagined community, and such loyalty often comes at the expense of those who are perceived to threaten one's own group.

2.5 Deep Words

David Mbabazi moved to Kampala from Ntungamo District in the Western Region of Uganda in 1998, and is also a self-identifying Munyankole. Like many migrants from other parts of the country, he left his home in search of employment opportunities that are absent in what many refer to as "village life". Without secondary education, such opportunities were limited, and he began selling watermelons from a cart that he pushed in town, which he was still doing when I met him more than two decades later in January of 2020. The dominance of Luganda allowed him to learn the language quickly, as it is closely related to his first language, Runyankole. Having been residing in Kampala for 11 years by the time of the strike, he was fluent in Luganda and spoke it every day to customers, friends, and neighbors. Though both he and his wife are both from Ntungamo district in Western Uganda and speak Runyankole together, his children, having been born and raised in Kampala, will only speak Luganda in their home.

Despite this, David reported that Baganda had devised many different ways to distinguish whether or not someone was a Muganda. In addition to demanding someone *tambula nga omuganda*, David also said that the groups of Baganda who were stopping people on the street would also ask them to say "deep words":

> "They have their tricks, they have their inside [knowledge], they have their deep words […] they have their names that when I speak my name, you can know that I'm from this place. […] They can ask you another thing, um, you speak the word 'omufaraso'.

> Omufaraso is like the related words, like, in Western [languages], they call 'omufariso' 'omufarasi', so it is like similar but the accent can change very small, so that's where they can know. There's a place called 'Namungoona', a Munyankole, he can't speak [pronounce], he can't say 'namungoona', he says 'namugona' [with a hard G]. Yeah, that's how they know. So when they know that you're not Muganda, they know that you, the president from your tribe is the one who, who forced our *kabaka* to not do what he wants to do. So you have to get your canes."

While there are physical features that people associate with particular ethnic groups, this demand to hear certain words from people allowed for greater distinction than appearance alone allowed. And, of course, assumptions based on physical features are often proven false; an accent was believed to be a foolproof way to determine if someone was a native speaker.

Identifying foreigners through "deep words" is not a new phenomenon, nor is it unique to Baganda. On the island that encompasses the Dominican Republic and Haiti, what is now known in history as the "Parsley Massacre" resulted in over 10,000 deaths of Haitians in 1937: "During these days of terror, the fatal ethnic status of the victims was confirmed by their inability to pronounce 'parsley' in Spanish (*perejil*) as a sprig of the herbaceous plant was waved before their eyes" (Marxsen 2017, 108). The weaponization of language continues to persist in contemporary contexts across the globe, and one does not need to look to sub-Saharan Africa how effective a weapon it can be. In the 2016 presidential election, Donald Trump's campaign stressed the importance of speaking English in the United States, which many interpreted as a not-so-subtle way of promoting American identity as white, Anglo-Saxon identity.[20]

Written over two decades ago, Daniel's (1996) account of ethnicity and language in Sri Lanka is still pertinent. In his exploration of Sinhala, he says, "Race and religion, though present in ethnic conflict, cause embarrassment to many. Not so with language. It is gallantly

[20] See Shane Goldmacher, "Trump's English-Only Campaign," *Politico*, September 23, 2016. https://www.politico.com/story/2016/09/donald-trumps-english-only-campaign-228559 (accessed January 19, 2023)

unembarrassing" (ibid., 15). Thus, while members of the ruling regime in Uganda often sound like anthropologists by stressing the colonial origins of ethnic identity and "tribal" differences, and people in Kampala are quick to admit that there are many exceptions to the stereotypes regarding various groups in the country, the ever-present topic of Luganda dominance persists. Accusations of the political and economic hegemony of Banyankole circulate, but in everyday life throughout the city, Luganda has not been usurped by Runyankole. Faulting someone for their inability to speak a particular way seems less of a direct threat than pointing to a person's racial or ethnic identity, particularly when identities are fluid and far more complicated than the label of Munyankole could encompass as we shall see in Chapter 3. By ignoring the fact that Western Uganda encompasses dozens of languages and ethnic groups, Baganda who partook in the strike of 2009 were actively constructing a monolithic people that embodied President Museveni's insult to their *kabaka*: "The blueprint for this construction is to be found in linguistic nationalism" (ibid., 17).

Even though David could say these "deep words" properly, he was still incredibly frightened to go outside and his voice was uneasy as he described the days of unrest. He and other neighbors who were Banyankole hid inside a shared room, and when they had to leave the room for any purpose, including trips to the outhouse, they would move together in groups of at least 5 people so that if they met a group of Baganda patrolling the neighborhood, they would at least have the chance to fight and run. A person could not walk alone, particularly if anyone in the neighborhood was familiar enough with that person to know his ethnic identity.

2.6 Ganda Im/mutability, Past and Present

Like David, Paul Tumusiime is a Munyankole who moved to Kampala in search of work and has been living in the city since 2007. At the time of the strike, he was working at a soda depot, delivering orders to local stores and restaurants on foot by loading crates of drinks on a bicycle. His positionality, however, differed significantly from David's because of his kinship network. While he spent much of his childhood in Western Uganda, he had an uncle who worked in Mukono, a city about 20 kilometers east of Kampala in Central Uganda within the Buganda Kingdom, and he would stay with this uncle during school holidays. He grew up speaking both Runyankole and Luganda, and his wife is a Muganda from Mukono; they met one summer when he was working with his uncle. Though he had only been in Kampala for 2 years at the start of the strike, he was comfortable with his Baganda neighbors and coworkers largely due to his own blended family of Banyankole and Baganda. A devout born-again Christian who never misses a church service, his Banyankole friends in the city have two nicknames for him that gently poke fun at his solid faith and fluid ethnicity: pastor and Muganda.

Despite being married to a Muganda woman and speaking Luganda without hint of a Western accent, Paul recalled difficulties of his own during the strike. Unlike other Banyankole who spoke to me about the 2009 events, Paul was entirely sympathetic to the *kabaka*'s request to visit Bugerere, and he thought that President Museveni should have allowed him to go. He insisted that it was not only Baganda who were upset with the president, but that many people regardless of ethnicity saw Museveni as overstepping his authority. Though Banyala do not accept the authority of the *kabaka*, Paul pointed out that Bugerere was technically part of the *kabaka*'s land, and Museveni had no right to tell the *kabaka* that he was not allowed on his own land. For Paul,

this was not a partisan issue or one of "ethnic patriotism" (cf. Peterson 2012), but was rather another example of a corrupt authoritarian government exerting control where it should not.

Yet, despite his sympathetic view and his Baganda family members, Paul was also left to fear for his life. Initially, he did not think he was in any danger when events began to unfold, and he was not afraid to venture out to work the first day of the strike. When it became clear that the situation was serious and all businesses were ordered to close, he realized that the groups of Baganda were not only looking for any person who was not a Muganda, but that they were specifically seeking out Banyankole. If someone recognized a person as a Munyankole, there was nothing that Munyankole could do to gain any sympathy: "When you say that, 'Museveni should let the king go!' Then they said, 'No! You are a spy! You are Munyankole too because the person who is from your place is the one who refused our king to go, which means you are just a spy.'" If a Munyankole openly supported the president, he was a clear target, but according to Paul, a Munyankole supporting the *kabaka* was subject to greater suspicion and a more brutal punishment. Paul said that people who were from other ethnic groups, such as Basoga and Bagisu, were allowed to pass if they showed proper deference to Baganda groups that were stopping people. But, a Munyankole was seen as incapable of being an ally. They must be spies, and Paul claimed that the punishment was sometimes death.

It is useful to flesh out Paul's subjectivity keeping in mind what Mike McGovern has called "the politics of mutable identity" (2012, chapter 2). McGovern questions the assumptions of the "oil-and-water thesis" of Mande and Loma ethnic groups in the forest region of Guinea. While historians and other scholars assumed Mande and Loma to have been distinct ethnic groups that "maintained their separate identities and statuses passed down (patrilineally) as portable, immutable identities" (ibid., 48-9), McGovern provides convincing archival and ethnographic

evidence that "many individuals in this region shifted their ethnic/linguistic/religious identities at least once over the generations" (ibid., 49), complicating any assumption that present-day animosities are always or especially ideologically or historically informed.

The alternative account of the history of ethnicity provided by McGovern offers a way to question the immutability of ethnic identity without dismissing its significance, both before and after the violence of colonialism. As in other formerly colonized places, the politics of identity changed dramatically in Buganda and all of East Africa after the arrival of the British. Mamdani has, of course, called into question whether ethnic identities as we know them today even existed before the arrival of the British:

> "Did tribe exist before colonialism? If we understand by tribe an ethnic group with a common language, it did. But tribe as an administrative entity that distinguishes between natives and non-natives and systematically discriminates in favor of the former and against the latter – defining access to land and participation in local governance and rules for settling disputes according to tribal identity – certainly did *not* exist before colonialism" (Mamdani 2012, 73, emphasis his).

His dismissive tone implies ethnicity's relative unimportance before British administration, but Holly Hanson's (2003) deep history of the kingdom of Buganda arrives at a different conclusion. In a refutation to the Marxist analyses focusing primarily on economic incentives that preceded her, including Mamdani's earlier work on class formation in present-day Uganda, she instead focuses on power, claiming that in precolonial Buganda, there was a particular association between power, love, and obligation. Rather than focus on disruption from outside Buganda in Ganda identity formation, she locates the uniquely Baganda system of obligation in two locations: banana gardens, and royal courts (Hanson 2003, 6). She argues throughout her work that banana gardens, leading to sedentary homes, were key in the creation of the reciprocal obligations formed between landowners and workers in the kingdom. The royal courts were equally important in maintaining the hierarchical system of power in the region, with roads leading directly to the king, which

allowed for a regular flow of tribute to the court. She is challenging Marxist notions that land ownership is necessarily exploitive; instead, land ownership in pre-colonial Buganda is painted as a system that allowed for patron/client relationships rather than a bourgeoisie/proletariat dynamic. Unique to the Baganda system, the clients had the ability to move from farms where they worked if the landowners were mistreating them. The openness of such a system incentivized good and fair treatment of workers to retain their labor, according to Hanson.[21]

Tracing the hierarchical patronage system in Buganda to 1000AD, she says, "Power in the early Ganda kingdom was diffuse, always visible, and constantly negotiated" (ibid., 52). The *kabaka* kingship, which was at the heart of the 2009 strike, was established before 1600 and predated British colonialism by centuries. Her argument is not that the hierarchical system in place was particularly vulnerable to the manipulation of British indirect rule, which is what other historians have argued (e.g. Reid 2002). In fact, having so many chiefs in place actually created a competition for followers, again reinforcing her idea that it was in leaders' interest to treat their workers favorably because these workers could leave and pledge allegiance to another competing chief (Hanson 2003, 63). But, the changes that came with increased contact to groups outside the kingdom led to serious civil disorder. The caravan trade reached Buganda in the latter half of the nineteenth century, which Hanson argues "transformed the practice of utilizing the labor of war captives into more aggressive forms of slave raiding" (ibid., 97). Likewise, in their first interactions with Europeans, she claims that from the initial contact with the White Fathers, the king of Buganda and the missionaries had a fundamental misunderstanding as to what the ownership of land entailed. King Muteesa offered the missionaries land, because giving the White Fathers land meant that they were obligated to enter a reciprocal relationship with the king. Yet,

[21] See especially Chapter 2, "Creating Relationships with Gifts of Land: Lineages, Chiefs, and Royals interact to Make the State, ca. 900-ca. 1700"

because the missionaries were unfamiliar with the local cosmological system, they interpreted the gift as one of private property (ibid., 9). This was just one instance of foreign intervention slowly bringing about the disintegration of the association between land and obligation. For her, colonialism did not bring about the invention of "tribes", but it did lead to irreparable damage to existing systems of belonging. Implicitly, and at times made explicit, she is arguing that all was right and peaceful in Buganda before its contact with outsiders. Ethnicity was not created, but rather destroyed.

Using Paul's positionality in the present, I am proposing that the competing claims laid forth by Mamdani and Hanson do little to render the ways in which ethnicity was both important and negotiated in the past. In suggesting a romantic or unimportant role played by ethnic belonging, the present moment appears to be a rupture from the past and colonialism is the sole agentive force in the present. But, Ganda identity did allow for the inclusion of outsiders, while the expansion of the kingdom simultaneously led to Ganda nationalism. As Richard Reid has written, the wars fought by the Buganda kingdom in the nineteenth century, and the enslavement of non-Ganda peoples who were conquered by Ganda forces, allowed enslaved people and their descendants to "become" Ganda (2002, 115). This process was not entirely unlike the ways in which McGovern argues Mande and Loma people switched ethnic affiliations throughout generations, though Reid suggests foreign-born people did maintain a relative degree of difference even after they 'became' Ganda (ibid.). That differences remained between foreign-born Ganda and native-born Ganda enables an understanding of present-day violence and prejudice that is indeed deeply informed by British violence and a deepening of ethnic tensions resulting from colonial rule, but simultaneously reminds us that such tensions are not entirely new. During the

violence that erupted in 2009, Paul's story reveals the limits of becoming Ganda, even with his wife and children accepted as such.

The lack of protection Paul's kinship ties offered him provides an illustration of a central concept throughout this dissertation, that of what I call *contentious kinship*. Though Paul was not in direct conflict with his wife, their marriage *itself* is a site of contention in the capital of Kampala, where there is often mistrust and resentment amongst Banyankole and Baganda. It was not as if the strike of 2009 changed their relationship, but it did bring to the surface the limitations of their mixed ethnicity marriage. Paul could not ask for his wife to vouch his credibility as a Munyankole sympathetic to the *kabaka* or he would risk other Baganda accusing her of being a traitor (cf. Kelly and Thiranagama 2010); likewise, his wife could not contest the collective agreement her co-ethnics had reached in which they blamed all Banyankole for the actions of President Museveni or she would out herself as being a potential collaborator. The contentious kinship that will be explored in settings throughout Kampala is deeply informed by the contentiousness of the cosmopolitanism of the city, as the strike elucidates. While the diversity and cosmopolitanism of Kampala does allow for friendships and kin relations that cross ethnic boundaries, and people from across the country are exposed to people and cosmologies that they otherwise would not know, latent tensions informed by the distinct history of Uganda make these relations contentious.

With all of the markets remaining closed, Paul and David both reported that people who were out of food and fearing starvation would still venture out in search for supplies, especially because nobody knew how long the strike would continue. As Paul put it, "You decide either I die walking, or I die hungry." Describing it as an escape, Paul had to emerge from his room on the third day to buy *posho*. Smaller roadside shops would open and close throughout the day, boarding up their windows when the violence was near and opening when it dissipated, but a person could

not run to just any shop. If the nearest shopkeeper was a Muganda with whom you were familiar enough that they knew your place of origin, you had to carefully avoid that person, as they would tell other Baganda shopkeepers not to serve you. Banyankole were safest going to shops that were run by a fellow Munyankole, but if there were none close to one's home, difficult decisions had to be made. In the midst of the chaos, many had to randomly decide which shop was safest, and if a shopkeeper suspected a customer of being a Munyankole, that customer had to immediately run home to avoid a potential beating. Again recalling Samantha's story above of a Munyankole shopkeeper kicking her and other Baganda out of her store despite gunshots nearby, it is a possibility that the shopkeeper was as fearful of her own customers as they were of the gunfire.

2.7 "We Need Ours"

Though Paul and David were recounting events of over a decade ago, the swift anti-Banyankole sentiment that swept through Kampala and all of Central Uganda is always threatening to resurface. While I was conducting fieldwork, explicit and implicit campaigning was happening for the 2021 presidential elections. Many of the people with whom I spoke insisted that voting was a waste of time, as Museveni would always find a way to win. Several were absolutely certain that Kizza Besigye[22] won the popular vote in the 2016 election. "We go to bed thinking Besigye wins, we wake up to Museveni as president again!" Simon Tugume, a Munyankole *boda* driver explained. Simon said that he went to bed the night of the 2016 election so happy, expecting

[22] Besigye is a longtime opposition leader and head of the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) who challenged Museveni in every presidential race since 2006 until the most recent election in 2021, when he supported Wine's campaign. He was a medical doctor who joined Museveni's National Resistance Army against Tito Okello, and Okello ousted Milton Obote and ruled for 6 months before the NRA then overthrew him. See Reid 2017, Chapter 2 for an overview of this complicated period.

celebrations and long-awaited change, only to wake up to Museveni staying in power, the same man who had been in power when he was born.

The 2016 election also saw Amama Mbabazi, former Prime Minister under Museveni, challenge Museveni for the presidential nomination from the NRM. Ultimately unsuccessful in this attempt, he ran for president as an independent. Like Besigye, Mbabazi was a former friend and supporter of Museveni, and he was one of the founding members of the NRM. Though not a Munyankole, Mbabazi is also from Western Uganda, Kabale District. Isaac Kayemba, a Muganda who worked as a security guard at a private residence, was not excited about the prospect of either Mbabazi or Besigye. Unlike Simon, Isaac did not believe the country would change in any meaningful way, saying, "I cannot vote out Museveni for another Museveni." Having all been involved in the NRM, Isaac thought they were all Westerners and described them all, including Mbabazi, as Banyankole rulers. Though their ethnic identities are not identical in actuality, Isaac's perception of them as belonging to the same group made him believe that they would all be equally corrupt.

Much about the 2021 election proved unprecedented long before any voting was done. For the first time, the main challenger was not another former soldier from Western Uganda, but Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, popularly known by his stage name of Bobi Wine. A young, charismatic self-proclaimed "ghetto president" who grew up in the "city slums", Ssentamu was exciting the youth in ways that other challengers in the past were unable to do. He exploited his existing fame as a singer and leveraged his networks to become the international face of life in Uganda after Museveni. Trademarking his campaign the People Power movement, with his followers donning red berets and raised fists, it was a serious force throughout the entire duration of my fieldwork.

"*Osobola!*"[23] was the simple but effective rallying cry, and "Free Bobi"[24] was spray painted on surfaces all throughout Kampala.



Figure 5: "Tukooye M7" (We are tired Museveni); "Free Bobi"

[23] Luganda phrase meaning "You can do it!"
[24] This phrase was popularized after Ssentamu has arrested by the police in 2019 for holding an illegal assembly



Figure 6: "Free Bobi Concert"



Figure 7: Imagie of Bobi Wine



Figure 8: "Free Bobi Kyagulanyi"



Figure 9: 3 boys supporting Wine; middle shirt reads "Omukisa gwa Uganda" (The hope of Uganda)

It was also clear that Ssentamu's campaign was getting under the skin of Museveni, who made wearing a red beret a crime that was punishable by lifetime imprisonment,[25] and who people throughout the city accused of "using teargas like water" to break up any crowd he suspected of being political dissidents. While riding on a *boda* every day to conduct fieldwork, my Munyankole driver would often point out groups of young men and say that they were People Power, with a hint of disapproval. Significantly, Ssentamu is a Muganda, and though Baganda youth were excited at the prospect of having him as their president, many Banyankole did not share in their exuberance.

Simon, David, and Paul all expressed fear at the thought of Ssentamu winning the 2021 presidential election. All three were struggling, living day to day on very low earnings and sometimes having to borrow money for school fees for their children, and they all agreed that change is necessary for the people of Uganda. Museveni had been in power for too long without delivering any of his promises to the poorest Ugandans, and they were tired of the president despite superficially sharing his ethnicity. But, they were convinced that the president of Uganda should not be a Muganda. "The Baganda keep saying that if Bobi Wine leads, you Banyankole must go!" Simon said to me. He continued, "It's very bad. But, but even as I say it is bad now, I think it will be worse. Because they keep saying that we need ours, we need ours, we need ours. They keep demanding. They keep demanding."[26] Confirming this with a head nod, David said that even his Baganda neighbors, who see him struggling to pay rent every month, trying to earn a living wage

[25] See "Uganda bans red beret, Bobi Wine's signature headgear," *Al Jazeera*, September 30, 2019. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/09/uganda-bans-red-beret-bobi-wine-signature-headgear-190930150137387.html (accessed January 5, 2021); also see Chapter 6 for deeper analysis of this ban, and of politics and aesthetics of the Wine campaign.

[26] Similarly, Arieff and McGovern (2013) have written about ethnic grievances and slogans surrounding the 2010 election in Guinea. While the political histories of Guinea and Uganda are distinct, most notably because of the former's socialist past, the slipperiness of 'the truth' about the targeting of ethnic groups in the past unites them. Victims and perpetrators are not mutually exclusive categories in either place, and this is perhaps true in any setting.

by selling watermelon, refuse to believe that he is not benefiting from the NRM being in power. Like Isaac refusing to vote for Mbabazi or Besigye because they are Westerners, the Banyankole who I spoke with in Kampala felt that they would vote for Museveni over Ssentamu, even though they feel so strongly against the former. The language that they claimed Baganda were using as they described what would happen if Ssentamu took over is nothing short of genocidal.

Other anthropologists have written about moments or events that cause ruptures with the past, "critical events", as Veena Das explored in the Indian context (1995). Sharika Thiranagama's account of the Eviction in Sri Lanka (2013, Chapter 3) is another work that makes use of this analytic framework to explore how events can create entirely new categories of ethnicity and imaginaries of the self. The ways in which it is remembered by the people in Kampala show that the Baganda strike of 2009 was indeed an important event for all who experienced it, yet it was critical not in creating new divisions or categories, but in reinforcing the separations and resentments that exist between Baganda and Banyankole. Rather than spark new understandings of ethnicity, lines of difference were cemented, and the Buganda question remains a threat the stability of the Ugandan nation.

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2.8 A Different View

Without ties to Baganda or Banyankole, Jacob Asiku's recollection of September 2009 was radically different. I met Jacob at Furaha Babies' Home, one of my main sites throughout fieldwork, where he worked as a security guard. A Lugbara man from Arua, he was no longer a young man when I met him, and the eldest of the male employees at the orphanage. He was also the only one who wore a hat of any sort, donning a plain, white baseball cap to work every day.

Very slim with visible signs of aging in the form of face wrinkles and grey, receding hair, he nonetheless stood strong and confident, and he had travelled to Central Uganda for a few months every year to work during the sugar cane harvest since the 1990s. By the time of the 2009 strike, he was living and working full time as a security guard in Kampala with his wife and children.

After greeting Jacob at the gate every day when I entered Furaha for a few weeks, I attempted to converse with him in Luganda. This was before I spoke with him at length about his life and background, and after exchanging general Luganda greetings, I was surprised when he switched to English and revealed to me that he did not understand what I was saying. Though he had been living in Kampala for more than a decade, he still could not speak Luganda, and this discovery allowed for him to explain to me that he was continually perplexed at how Baganda viewed the people of Arua, his home. Jacob explained that when you cross into the district of Arua, there is a physical gate with an army checkpoint, and all vehicles are stopped and inspected. The gate, he said, was a way for the government to assert that they were in control of a region deemed violent and 'uncivilized' by the ruling regime. Much of the disdain for the people in the West Nile sub-region can be traced to it being the birthplace of the infamous Idi Amin, the brutal dictator whose reign in the 1970s has inspired popular films and documentaries, making him known to the outside world as one of the cruelest leaders in recent world history.[27] Within Uganda, the violence he inflicted on virtually every ethnic group in the country continues to be a source of pain and resentment. In ways that mirror Banyankole being blamed for the actions of President Museveni in the present, the people of West Nile are somehow seen as responsible for the violent actions of Idi Amin's reign.

[27] See for instance the popular film from 2006 *The Last King of Scotland*

While the violence of the Amin regime was not something that was disputed by him, or by other Lugbara people with whom I spoke, the violence was not necessarily what was foregrounded in their descriptions of his reign.[28] On the popular messaging service WhatsApp, videos of Idi Amin's speeches stressing the importance of keeping Uganda for Ugandans were immensely popular while I was in the country. Two young men who worked as security guards at an apartment complex would often share such videos and were clearly invested in the hyperbole and anger in Amin's claims, as he blamed the ills of the country on the South Asian population and European extraction. One of the young men was a Lugbara man from Arua, and the other a Teso man from Soroti; the stereotypes and colonial legacies of Northern men being soldiers and security forces remain embedded in the fabric of everyday life in the city, and many employers preferred men from the North providing their security. One evening, I asked them about the videos they were watching, and they replied with great enthusiasm that Idi Amin was the country's best president. Though they were both in their 20s and did not experience firsthand the violence of his reign, they spoke about those years with great nostalgia and a longing for his promises of, dare I say, making Uganda great again, to be fulfilled. When I asked them about the specific policy of all foreigners being expelled from the country, Muhammed, the man from Arua, replied that Idi Amin was right to take such drastic measures. "They all should go," he said, wishing for a present-day expulsion, "and then the qualified ones can come back." This incident and the accompanying sentiments are further discussed in Chapter 6.

Throughout the city, and specifically on the helmets of *boda* drivers and the windows of white vans that serve as overcrowded taxis, there were photos of Idi Amin, Muammar Gaddafi,

[28] Again, one can find parallels between this and the analysis of Arieff and McGovern (2013) in the Guinean context. Even when violence in undisputed in history, the necessity and targeting of such violence can always be called into question.

and other dictators of years past. The drivers of *bodas* and taxis were not yet born when Amin was in power, and many were too young to even properly remember the details of Gaddafi's regime or his death. Yet, these photos that were unironically displayed throughout the city suggested a longing for a leader who would take charge of Uganda and make revolutionary changes to a system that was not benefiting them. Many young men, regardless of their ethnic background, recalled Gaddafi's time as the leader of Libya by mentioning his policy of delivering milk to citizens, which they believed illustrated his ability to take care of his own people. "Every morning, you would wake up with milk at your door," people reported to me, with pride in their voices as if they were recipients themselves of such deliveries. As Uganda seeks to modernize and increasingly finds infrastructural investors from China, people in Kampala have grown frustrated and are convinced the Chinese are unjustly profiting from Uganda's resources. Any sort of social welfare mirroring milk deliveries is absent, and instead, Ugandans are facing increasing fees for their children's schooling and rising rents. Amin and Gaddafi, they insisted, would not have allowed for such exploitation, evidenced by Amin's infamous expulsion of Asians from the country. Muhammed's unabashed endorsement of such a policy shows the deep mistrust of outsiders that persists today.

While migrant workers from the North largely agreed that the violence inflicted by Amin and Obote was not something to romanticize, their own experiences of war and uncertainty affected their view of Kampala. As discussed in the Introduction, the North is an ethnically diverse region, and different regions and accompanying groups of people in the North have distinct histories. But, what binds all of the disparate groups from the North together in Kampala seems to be their experiences of underdevelopment and violence. From the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Gulu to deadly cattle rustling in Karamoja, ethnic minorities from the North often spoke about their homes in terms that actually stressed the precarity of those homes while simultaneously

expressing a longing to eventually return. This is not because the precarious position of their home region is necessarily desirable, but because they believe such positions stem from being assertive. Rather than accept life as handed to them, ethnically Karimojong, Acholi, and Lugbara men and women reported to me that "our people" were unafraid to fight when they are wronged. While the nostalgia for a "strong man" like Amin or Gaddafi was shared amongst young people from every region of Uganda, Banyankole and Baganda would almost always bracket their praise, saying such things as my *boda* driver, Simon, did one day, "Amin was a great president. The only thing is, he killed to many people." The attention to the violence of the regime was always present amongst those from the West and Central regions, while such violence was not emphasized by most people from the North with whom I spoke.

After months of exchanging greetings and stories about his home and his language with me, Jacob asked me to do him a favor. "When you go for your Luganda lessons, will you ask your teacher what 'walk like a Muganda' means?" His question came before my oral history collections of the 2009 strike, and though people had mentioned the events of the strike to me at that point, the specificities remained unknown to me. Perplexed, I asked him if people had ever told him he walked like a Muganda. "Some years back, when those Baganda were upset the *kabaka* couldn't go and visit some place, they were stopping people all over Kampala and telling them, '*Tambula nga omuganda*'. To this day, I don't know what it means to walk like a Muganda," he explained.

Realizing he must have been talking about the Bugerere County visit, I promised him that I would investigate, and I asked Baganda interlocutors about the curious phrase. The following week, I reported back to him that when Baganda are told to walk like a Muganda, it is actually a command to name your patrilineal ancestors all the way back to your clan's founder. He laughed, and because I had then spoken with Banyankole who conveyed the 2009 events with a great deal

of fear, I asked him if he was terrified during the strike. I assumed, because he was not a Muganda, that he also had to stay in hiding throughout the duration, as had been reported to me by self-identifying Westerners, and I wondered if he had also been subject to violent threats. In response to my concern, he laughed out loud.

"No, they would not try to beat me," Jacob said with a laugh. I asked him what he did during the strike, assuming he had to stay home even if he was not fearful of Baganda roadblocks and patrols. Though he reported the very same scenes as Baganda and Banyankole interlocutors, his affect could not have been more different. He talked about burning tires and makeshift civilian checkpoints, but said that he continued to wander throughout the city and even showed up to work while his fellow employees hid because no Muganda would ever ask him where he was from. From his bodily aesthetic markers, everyone who passed him knew he was from the North, and his identity made him fearless. He noted his "black skin" and "thin nose" as two features indexing his Northern ethnicity and had no desire to "pass" as a Muganda. "You know these Baganda, they are afraid of gunfire," he explained. "So as soon as they hear a shot, they scatter." President Museveni's heavy-handed response to the strike worked quite quickly to disperse the crowds of people who were protesting on behalf of the *kabaka*, but such a response would not have worked had the protestors been from the North, Jacob insisted.

2.9 Ekikoko: Insects that Bite You

A Muganda man named Godfrey worked as the cook at the guesthouse on the property of Furaha Babies' Home, where Jacob worked as a security guard. An additional revenue stream, the guesthouse was used both by international volunteers who were working at the orphanage, and it also was used by international guests who were just passing through Kampala as tourists. Many of

the people staying at the guesthouse who were not volunteering at the orphanage expressed a desire to help the children financially, hoping the room and board that they were paying would be used by the orphanage to buy necessities and make repairs to the building. Godfrey is ever present at Furaha, using his charisma to charm guests as he shared stories of his own children and wife. He went out shopping for the ingredients to be used nightly for meals and always made sure to ask the guests who were staying their preferred menu on any given evening. He would get excited when curious guests would ask him to make the Ganda staple of *matooke* and groundnut sauce, in no small part because he got to share in his favorite meal.

Despite my attempts to dive deeper into Godfrey's life, there were many details about his background that remained opaque. One day, I heard him screaming, "*Wewe! Wewe!"*[29] as he chased one of the children at the orphanage. I asked him if one of his parents was Kenyan, but instead of answering me directly, he gave me a speech about Kiswahili, and how Ugandans did not like speaking it because it was the language Idi Amin's soldiers used. He repeated a popular joke: Kiswahili was born in Tanzania, became middle-aged in Kenya, and was sent to die in Uganda, shaking his head and grinning as he complained no Ugandans wanted to learn the language. He then pivoted, asking me if I knew that his wife was Ganda royalty, insisting that she was from an important clan and that his daughters were princesses. Remembering I had joined him as a fellow parent since I had first met him back in 2017, he turned the conversation back to me, asking, "Where is your baby now? Do you have a maid? Where is she from?"

I told him that I did have someone who took care of my son, Gyata, and that she was from Lira.[30] "Yes, it is good to get someone from North. Here, people are too desperate," he said. I

[29] *Wewe* is the Kiswahili word for 'you', contrasted with the Luganda word *ggwe*

[30] Lira is a city in a district bearing the same name, and the ethnic majority there is the Lango group. Like the Acholi, Karimojong, and Lugbara, interlocutors (including those of Lango ethnicity) describe Lango as "fierce" and "stubborn". Bordering Gulu, Lira has also suffered at the hands of the LRA.

pushed back against this, confused by his choice of words when the common refrain for people from all over the country was that the North was the country's poorest region. How could people from Central be more desperate than people from the region that was notoriously poor and often viewed as violent? "Yes, they are poor," he explained. "But, they are patient. People from Central want too many things."

The people I met from Central and Western Uganda who had extended contact with people from the North would relay similar messages about Ugandans from the North. While Godfrey's use of the word "patient" was not the most popular adjective, everyone I spoke with insisted Northerners were hard working, and in general, trustworthy and dependable people. Simon, the Munyankole *boda* driver who went to bed on the night of the 2015 election believing Besigye would win, was particularly shocked to learn just how diligent people from the North were when he moved to the city. Because of the seemingly senseless violence inflicted by Amin, Obote, and Okello, Simon told me that rumors of Northerners being cannibals circulated widely in his home region. Beyond assumptions about eating human flesh, Simon also told me that the Banyankole he grew up with called Northerners *ekikoko*, which is the general term for small biting insects. "If a child is playing and there are red ants, we say, 'Watch out for the *ekikoko*!'" But, after living in the city for so many years, Simon has stopped calling Northerners *ekikoko*, and realized that people from the North could not be the ones who ate other human beings. "Now, I know it is not the Northerners who eat people. But the Baganda, they do." In the contentious cosmopolitanism of the city, the prejudices and stereotypes that he first heard in his small village were redirected onto new groups with whom he had challenging interactions.

The word *ekikoko* was not only used by Simon, but other Lugbara people who moved to Kampala also reported to me that Westerners called them this word. It was not a secret; the

descriptors that was used circulated freely, and the open knowledge of such dehumanizing language adds to the layers of mistrust and resentment that are already present in the capital city. I am particularly interested in what it means to think of another group of people as less than human, as a pest that stings you and leaves you with red bumps; working with this logic suggests people inhabiting such a category should be brushed away as quickly as possible to avoid pain. Simon's decision to stop using such a word to describe people shows that it is not simply a word void of meaning, but one that has ramifications for how you view those given the label. The belief that Northerners were so violent that they could possibly eat people did not simply dissipate when he realized many from the North were friendly and hard-working, but it was redirected to those from Central region who call Kampala home.

Though I have labeled the language used by Baganda to describe their grievances against Banyankole as genocidal, such tragedy has thankfully been avoided thus far. The literature that has analyzed the Tutsi genocide in Rwanda, bordering Uganda, has paid close attention to the labels that were given to Tutsis in the leadup to the violence.[31] Much has been written about the use of the word "cockroach" to describe Tutsi and the dehumanization that accompanies such labels. In particular, Malkki's work continues to stand as an exemplary window into ethnic nationalism that can be harbored and maintained outside of one's home. In one of the first works to interrogate the cosmologies of refugees, she argues that Hutus confined to refugee camps could have a "purer" idea of what it meant to be Hutu, as opposed to Hutus in town. Those who were in refugee camps could imagine an ideal category of Hutu and perform it as such (cf. Askew 2002) without having to interact with outsiders who might challenge such ideals. Conversely, those who

[31] See Chapter 3 for a detailed description of the historical connections of Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda and Burundi to Iru and Hima in Uganda

lived and worked in the town did have to forge relationships with others; the "purity" of ethnic identity, and its accompanying cosmologies, could not be maintained.

The Northerners in Kampala were not in exile in a different nation state, but their experiences of feeling displaced are not unlike Malkki's Hutu interlocutors. Because people from Northern Uganda who came to Kampala for work were thrust into an ethnically diverse city where they had to quickly learn how to make a living to provide for their families back home, it would be logical to assume their experiences aligned more closely with Malkki's town interlocutors than those she met at the refugee camps. Yet, despite the cosmopolitanism of Kampala and the ways in which people from various ethnic backgrounds are forced to live and work together, this did not lessen the "purity" of ethnic cosmology or their longing for a home that was deemed safer and more welcoming than the city in which they currently resided. In complicating who could potentially be a cannibal, or which group was so unworthy or amoral that they deserved the title of *ekikoko*, what was complicated and muddled was the classification of others. Despite the constant interaction and deep friendships that turned into kin bonds with people who spoke different languages and were culturally distinct from themselves, people fervently argued about the ways in which other groups behaved. Instead of finding ways to complicate their own identity, people reassigned stereotypes and resentments onto others as a way to strengthen their ties to their allies in the capital city. Ethnicity was something to be negotiated and was often a hindrance to cosmopolitan aspirations of a "modern" life offered by Kampala; the cosmopolitanism and kinship formed therein was contentious.

Chapter 3

Milk and Bones

Despite living in Kampala for several years and knowing many people from Western Uganda, Judith Owuor referred to everyone from the entire Western region as Banyankole.[32] The Western region of the country is comprised of a diverse array of ethnic groups[33] with distinct languages and cultural norms, but Judith's categorization of all Westerners as Banyankole is hardly unique. Throughout Kampala, many people from across Uganda group all Westerners as Banyankole,[34] all Northerners as Acholi,[35] all Central people as Baganda.[36] For members of the underclass from the West of the country, the association with President Museveni, who has been in power since seizing it after a prolonged civil war in 1986 and is a self-identifying Munyankole, is not always a welcome one. Despite working-class Banyankole living in Kampala with ethnically diverse neighbors and renting units in the same precarious conditions as those around them, many people suspect all Banyankole benefit from the current regime. Their shared ethnic identity with a president viewed as corrupt somehow implicates them.

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[32] Banyankole refers to the ethnic group from the Ankole kingdom; Munyankole is singular and refers to one person; Runyankole refers to language.

[33] Though imperfect, I have decided to use 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic group' in this chapter to discuss Ankole identity. While the other chapters of the dissertation use the term without qualification for categories such as 'Baganda' and 'Lugbara', this chapter will elaborate the complexities of Ankole and the distinct identities that this category encompasses.

[34] Much of this chapter focuses on Banyankole, but it is important to note that other ethnic groups in the region include Banyoro (further discussed below); Bakiga; Batooro; Bakonzo; Basongoro; and different self-identifying communities of the Rwenzori mountains and its foothills. This further illustrates the misleading approach to naming all Western Ugandans as Banyankole.

[35] Acholi refers to people and the language spoken concentrated in Gulu, Kitgum, and Pader. Acholi is also the group associated with the infamous Joseph Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army.

[36] Baganda refers to the ethnic group from the Buganda kingdom; Muganda is its singular form; Luganda refers to language.

Judith was scolding her friend, Simon Tugume, for refusing to blame all of the ills of the country on his "grandfather", suggesting Simon forgives President Museveni too easily because of their shared ethnic identity. Simon pushed back and explained that even though he was a Munyankole, he was not a Muhima,[37] which meant that the president would not even consider Simon to be a part of his group. Judith was perplexed and needed clarification, never before having heard of distinct identities amongst Banyankole. Simon told her that though he and President Museveni were both from Ankole, they were not the same, and that people familiar with Bahima and Bairu would immediately know that President Museveni belonged to the former group and that Simon belonged to the latter by appearance alone. The Bahima were milk drinkers and cattle keepers, while the Bairu were cultivators who worked the land. But the differences between the two ran deeper than their respective occupations, and were visible on one's body.

"You know, when you drink milk, it changes the body," Simon explained. Speaking about the discrimination many Bairu face at the hands of Bahima, he also noted that a rich Muiru who acquired cattle could become a Muhima, escaping the label as lesser peasants that Simon claims Bahima have assigned the group. The milk that a former Muiru drank would help him transition into a Muhima, changing his physical appearance. He gave the example of warm, unpasteurized milk darkening one's gums; the blacker the gums, the surer the sign that a man is a Muhima.

Unsurprisingly, the story was not as simple as it first appeared. After telling Judith all the ways a former Muiru's body would change with milk, he ended with a warning: "But, you cannot change bones."

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[37] Hima and Iru are distinct groups in Western Uganda, and their history is explored below. Bahima and Bairu refer to the groups; Muhima and Muiru are the singular terms.

Within the ethnically diverse, cosmopolitan city of Kampala, Uganda, this chapter explores the ways in which perceptions of ethnic identity are a constant source of consternation for those living there. I argue that ethnicity is simultaneously fixed and fluid, and find the term Oobleck useful in understanding how ethnic categories manifest in Kampala. The term might seem odd for those familiar with it: Oobleck refers to the goop resulting from the grade-school experiment of mixing cornstarch with water to demonstrate a non-Newtonian fluid. An example of a Newtonian ideal liquid is water, which retains its flowing property regardless of whether it is being poured, mixed, or slapped. Oobleck, on the other hand, can behave like water in some instances, and act as a solid in others, depending on the amount of pressure being exerted on it at any given time. If you pour Oobleck from one container to another, it might behave exactly the same as water. However, if you fill a basin with Oobleck and slap it, it will stiffen, behaving as though it is a solid structure; your hand will feel like it is hitting concrete. Crucially, when something falls into a non-Newtonian fluid, the more forcefully you try to pull it out, the tighter the mixture grips the object.

While the catastrophic effects of colonial conquest undoubtedly shape the current iteration of ethnicity in Uganda, this chapter ethnographically renders how ethnic categorizations shape quotidian life in the present, showing how these categories shift from liquid to solid forms depending on the amount of pressure being applied to one's ethnic identity at any given time. Interrogating the identities of Bahima and Bairu necessarily problematizes the all-encompassing category of Banyankole, which is the group that was the target of Baganda resentment in Chapter 2. Though theories of cosmopolitanism have emphasized the fluidity of identity that arises from relationships forged between people from disparate groups, this chapter also highlights the moments when ethnic identities are solidified rather than dispelled in an urban setting. Specifically, I use stereotypes regarding the foods people eat and their bodily features to demonstrate how

individuals come to categorize others. After discussing historical iterations of Bahima and Bairu in Uganda and engaging contemporary anthropologists' work in the region, I then show how these categorizations prevent a cohesive Banyankole identity. Challenging the theorization of shared space and increased exchange with diverse groups of people inevitably leading to tolerance, this chapter also shows how Kampala nonetheless provides a shared sense of (un)belonging amongst migrants from across Uganda who relocated to the city for employment. I conclude that the common search for a meaningful life in Kampala challenges the relativistic stance that depicts ethnicities as distinct cultural groups, revealing the ways in which shared motivations transcend categorization.

Though I have explained the nuances of ethnic terms in the footnotes above, I will also share this chart for easy reference. There are people throughout the chapter belonging to groups outside of the four mentioned below, but these appear with greatest frequency.

Region/Kingdom	**Group**	**Singular (**one person)	**Language**
Ankole	Banyankole	Munyankole	Runyankole
Buganda	Baganda	Muganda	Luganda
Parts of Western Uganda	Bahima	Muhima	
Parts of Western Uganda	Bairu	Muiru	

Table 3: Categories in Ankole and Western Uganda

3.1 Contextualizing Bahima and Bairu in Present-Day Uganda

Ethnicity in East Africa is a well-traversed topic, explored ethnographically and theoretically by historians and anthropologists for decades. Mahmood Mamdani is arguably one of the most influential contemporary theorists of ethnicity in Uganda, and his early work

interrogates differences in class systems to account for "collaborators" with the British during colonialism (1976). Using cultural differences between the kingdoms of Buganda and Bunyoro as an example, which have similar climates and resources, he argues that Bunyoro's rigid social structure did not allow for any sort of equitable distribution or acquisition of property. Calling Bunyoro a "caste society", he explains that the lower caste in the region did not have the same access to property ownership that the ruling caste did (ibid., 29). Though his later work explicitly focusing on ethnicity appears to separate itself starkly from his Marxian analysis of class formation, his commentary on Bunyoro's social structure foreshadows some of his later projects. In defining Bunyoro as a "caste" society, he insists that the hierarchical nature of such a social system separated the lower and upper castes as distinct *races* (ibid., 28; racialization language also appears in his later work on Rwanda). In Bunyoro, the two groups in the region, Bahima and Bairu, were so distinct that there could be no incorporation of one group into the other, and upward mobility was impossible.

Mamdani's analysis of Bahima and Bairu in Bunyoro is compelling and a precursor to his work on the Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda, but it is incomplete when considering the contemporary effects of these labels in Kampala. The categories of Bahima and Bairu are not limited to those within the Bunyoro region, and as the chapter's opening vignette shows, are also found in the Ankole region. Writing in 1949, the Canadian anthropologist Kalervo Oberg explains,

> "The Banyankole, who live in western Uganda, East Africa, are made up of two ethnic groups, the Bairu and the Bahima. The Bairu, who number about a quarter of a million, are Bantu agriculturists. The Bahima, on the other hand, are Hamiticized negro cattle people of north African origin. Although numbering only about ten thousand, the Bahima were able, before British control, to dominate the Bairu and rule them as serfs" (107).

Oberg's rather disturbing language reveals just how stark the difference between the groups was believed to be by colonial officers, informed by the Hamitic hypothesis that posited all "civilized"

African groups to be "black in color without being Negroid in race" (Mamdani 2001, 79). The Hamitic hypothesis, which continues to have profound effects on the region today, theorized 'white' Africans migrated from the north and were responsible for all civilization on the continent. Early proponents of the hypothesis believed it was supported by a story involving Noah's sons in Genesis (9:20-27): Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and Ham had a son named Canaan. After Noah became drunk from wine, Ham saw his father naked and reported Noah's state to his brothers, Shem and Japheth. Rather than look at their naked father, Sham and Japheth instead averted their eyes and covered Noah's nakedness. When Noah awoke and learned what Ham had done, he cursed Ham's son Canaan and all his future descendants. Some Europeans interpreted the curse of Canaan as black skin, and they would eventually come to believe any "civilized" nonwhite society must be the descendants of Canaan.

The story of Noah and his sons was used as justification for crimes against humanity for centuries. It was referenced to validate chattel slavery, as a way for Napoleon to explain away Egypt's civilization, and as a source of support for scientific racism; it was also able to morph into a way for Europeans to grapple with the societies they found in sub-Saharan Africa. As Edith Sanders put candidly,

> "The late nineteenth century provided two new ideologies which utilized and expanded the concept of the Caucasoid Hamite: colonialism and modern racism. Both shaped the European attitude to Africa and Africans. The travellers found a variety of physical types in Africa, and their ethnocentrism made them value those who looked more like themselves. These were declared to be Hamitic, or of Hamitic descent, and endowed with the myth of superior achievements and considerable beneficial influence on their Negro brothers. **John Hanning Speke was seminal to the Hamitic hypothesis which we know today. Upon discovering of the kingdom of Buganda with its complex political organization, he attributed its 'barbaric civilization' to a nomadic pastoralist race related to the Hamitic Galla, thus setting the tone for interpreters to come**. The Hamites were designated as early culture-bearers in Africa owing to the natural superiority of intellect and character of all Caucasoids" (1969, 528, emphasis mine).

The ideologies that Sanders elaborated above are clear in Oberg's writing about Banyankole. Stressing the 'north African origin' of the Bahima, Oberg was highlighting that the origin of Bahima was not in the sub-Saharan, and was thus a superior and racially distinct group to the Bairu 'serfs', who he claimed Bahima were able to dominate without help from the British. As others have written, the Hamitic hypothesis served to legitimate European colonization's divide-and-rule strategy, which necessitated hierarchy amongst indigenous populations (e.g. Chretien 2003; Robinson 2016; Taylor 1999). The inequity between Bahima and Bairu were themes in Mamdani's earlier work on class formation, but the seemingly immutable differences between the two groups, coupled with the inability for the lower caste to own property, did not facilitate a working relationship with British colonialists. Rather, Baganda, the ethnic group of the kingdom of Buganda 'discovered' by Speke that is referenced by Sanders above, would come to be a group that was both favored and manipulated by British rule. The importance of private property and governance that the British emphasized allowed Baganda chiefs to become landlords, accumulating wealth through rent and taxes on goods produced on the land (Mamdani 1976, 121). Such accumulation did not provide the same incentive in places like Bunyoro or Ankole, according to Mamdani, because the social structure was too rigid to be manipulated.

The complicated history of relationships between agriculturalists and pastoralists in the African Great Lakes region gained particular prominence as people attempted to understand the events leading up to the Rwandan genocide in 1994. Throughout academic literature exploring the category of Tutsi, the term used for pastoralists in present-day Rwanda, it is noted that the group is similar to Bahima:

"The names 'Hima' and 'Tutsi' have been recorded in the literature of the Great Lakes

> region ever since the nineteenth century. Both are ethnonyms accepted by the populations they designate and whose etymology remains unknown. At the time, the label 'Hima' was applied to all the herders of southern Uganda and northern Buhaya, to certain herders in Karagwe, and also to certain herders only in Rwanda and Burundi. The label 'Tutsi' had the same meaning, and was found in Rwanda, Karagwe, Burundi, Buha, southern Buhaya, and beyond, in northern Tanzania as far as Tabora" (Vansina 2004, 36).

From the literature, one can surmise that Hima and Tutsi are, at the very least, closely related pastoralist groups. It is always critical to interrogate the accuracy and utility of contemporary ethnic categories, but the work of some scholars in the region often reinforces the idea of a rigid separation between cattle-keeping people labeled Tutsi and Hima, and agriculturalists labeled Hutu and Iru. Lemarchand states, "In both kingdoms, the invading tribes were Tutsi or Hima pastoralists. Although their origins are not firmly established, their physical features suggest obvious ethnic affinities with the Galla tribes of southern Ethiopia" (quoted in Malkki 1995, 23). The language of racialization does not disappear in contemporary work: "There is no doubt that present-day Rwandans really encompass three different biological 'populations' and that whichever scenario is adopted to account for this fact, the differences among the groups run so deep that they must extend back millennia rather than centuries" (Vansina 2004, 38). The importance placed on the racialized differentiation of pastoralists from agriculturalists in the African Great Lakes region continues to have effects in the contemporary context. While the negative consequences of being viewed as a "lesser" racial category may be self-evident, the narrative of pastoralists coming from outside of the area has been used for destructive purposes against Tutsi and Bahima. For Hutu, historical evidence of their presence in the area predating the pastoralists has been used in campaigns of autochthony, cited as proof that they are the true owners of the land. Campaigns of violence against the Tutsi, including the 1994 genocide, are justified by the narrative of Tutsi being foreign invaders who robbed Hutu of their land.

Interrogating the differences amongst those labeled Tutsi in Rwanda and Burundi provides some context to the ways in which 'Hima' has come to function in Uganda. Malkki (1995, 22) cites sources that argue in Burundi, the categories people come to identify with are more complex than an all-encompassing Tutsi identity. Rather, there are Tutsi-Abanyaruguru and Tutsi-Hima, the latter of whom are looked down upon because "there are also impoverished Hima who are cultivators" (ibid.). However, an elder Muiru man living in Ntugamo with family in Rwanda and Burundi contested this, which helps shed light on the complications and, at times, inaccuracies that come with attempts to categorize people. This man, Enoch Muhoozi, contends Tutsi-Abanyaruguru and Tutsi-Hima should not be viewed as two separate groups, and denies that there are any Tutsi-Hima working as cultivators. While both are "cattle people", to use his words, Tutsi-Abanyaruguru are distinguished from Tutsi-Hima because of the former's shared lineage with Tutsi royalty. From Enoch's descriptions, Tutsi-Abanyaruguru are considered the aristocratic class of Tutsi in Rwanda and Burundi, but cannot be differentiated from Tutsi-Hima on the basis of occupation or wealth.

Throughout fieldwork, the slippage between Tutsi in Rwanda and Hima in Uganda was something that was discussed in everyday conversation, but it was apparent that people felt the former were foreigners and the latter were true Ugandans. For instance, I asked many self-identifying Bairu working in Kampala if Tutsi and Bahima were the same, and almost all of them initially answered affirmatively. Yet, when they were given a chance to elaborate, they explained to me that people could tell the difference between the two groups in their home villages because of certain bodily characteristics. Tutsi women, in particular, had features that contrasted them from Bahima women, namely "calves that are straight", as Simon explained to me one day. In colloquial Anglo-American terms, it was thought Tutsi women had "cankles", which was a physical

indication that the women drank milk and did not have to work. The lack of curve in the leg is an aesthetic marker of not having to dig, signaling their superior "material conditions of existence" (Bourdieu 1985, 53). For Bairu or Hutu women who must cultivate the land, such signs of luxury are impossible. When I would press further, asking how they could possibly know the difference between a Tutsi and Muhima woman if neither of them cultivated the land and thus both would have "straight calves", people assured me that while both groups of women did indeed have "straight calves", the calves and buttocks of Tutsi women were even more pronounced than Bahima women.

Though on the surface it seems as though Tutsi and Bahima are labels that suggest similar qualities and people in the contemporary Ugandan context, the importance of the assumed origins of the two groups was especially emphasized in conversations surrounding President Museveni, a self-identifying Munyankole. When people sought to insult President Museveni, I would often hear accusations of him being a Tutsi, and thus having no legitimate right to rule the country. Almost daily, people would tell me that President Museveni was actually a foreigner, and his foreignness was used to explain the corruption of his regime. Any person who was a true Ugandan, they insisted, would not steal from his own people the way he did.

3.2 National Politics and Banyankole Disunity

The complicated categories of Bahima and Bairu preclude satisfactory definitions, evidenced by the different ways people have attempted to define the two groups. As the above discussion has already noted, Mamdani referred to the groups as castes and even distinct races, while other have preferred the label of ethnicity to describe Bahima and Bairu. None of the existing labels of identification, I would argue, fully allow for an understanding of the ways Bairu and

Bahima identify as distinct groups while simultaneously identifying with accompanying regional ethnic groups, especially when people have migrated from their home regions into cosmopolitan settings. Put simply, the categories of Bahima and Bairu transcend satisfactory categorization as identities. For instance, in Kampala, people from the Ankole sub-region in Western Uganda were marked as Banyankole regardless of whether they were cultivators or cattle keepers. Likewise, those from the Bunyoro sub-region were viewed as Banyoro, but Banyoro also identified as either Bahima or Bairu. It is true that the general caste difference, to use Mamdani's term, remains valid across different sub-regions of Uganda: everywhere, it generally holds that Bahima are cattle people while Bairu are agriculturalists, but there are also distinct ethnic differences amongst those two categories depending upon where Bairu or Bahima live. In a setting such as Kampala, where there are dozens of languages spoken and migrants from across the country and the world, those unfamiliar with Western Uganda generally do not classify people as Bahima or Bairu. Instead, they classify people based on the larger ethnic group of whichever region they originate and the language they speak. To keep the example of Banyankole and Banyoro, a Muiru from the former group and a Muiru from the latter group would speak Runyankole and Runyoro, respectively. Many of the languages in Western and Central Uganda are in the Bantu family and people often understand a number of languages from surrounding regions, but the languages are nonetheless distinct, and the language people speak within their homes often indicates their home region and larger ethnicity.

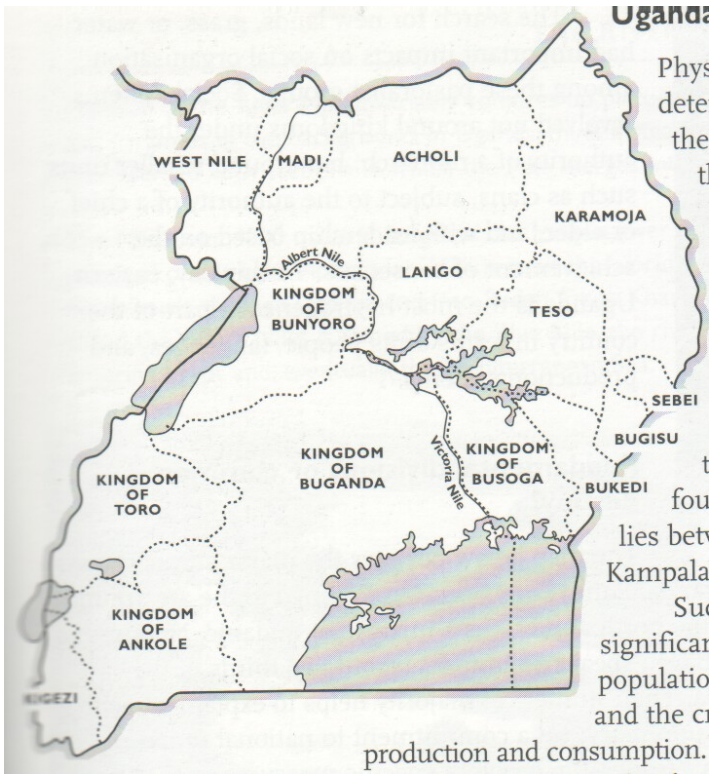

Figure 10: Map of Uganda showing historic kingdoms. Image from Colin Macuratorial

The significance of sub-regional ethnic affiliation in Uganda becomes even more apparent when considering the reestablishment of the country's historical kingdoms in 1993. In the territory that encompasses present-day Uganda, there were several kingdoms with political, cultural, and economic autonomy before British colonialism. When Uganda won independence from the British in 1962, the federal system that the first constitution established granted a degree of autonomy to the kingdoms, signaling their importance. Fearing the threat of "ethnic patriotism" (cf. Peterson 2012) inspiring separatist movements in the newly sovereign nation, Milton Obote abolished the kingdoms during his first reign as president in 1966. The influence of the kingdom of Buganda is evidenced by Obote's decision to not only abolish the kingships in the country, but to also attack the king of Buganda, Kabaka Mutesa II, at his palace in Mengo; Mutesa II was forced to flee the country and was eventually granted asylum in the United Kingdom. Though academic literature

has emphasized the importance of *kabaka*'s return to Uganda after nearly 3 decades in exile, Buganda was not the only kingdom which had its monarchy restored. The kingdoms of Bunyoro, Toro, and Busoga also saw a return of kingship in their respective sub-regions. Though their monarchies have received relatively less attention than Buganda, Museveni's decision to bar every kingdom's monarchs from politics and officially designate them as cultural leaders suggests the ruling regime fears the influence the monarchies continue to hold (Reid 2017, 284).

For Banyankole, the significance of the Ankole Kingdom can be traced to the consolidation of smaller territories during colonialism. It was not until 1898 that Mbarara became a center of governance, and British administration misnamed the original Nkore Kingdom as Ankole; the Nkore kingdom covered a relatively small area of territory, but expanded under British rule as the *mugabe*, or king of Nkore, consolidated power of neighboring areas (Morris 1957). Despite its historically recent creation, it is telling that President Museveni did not restore the kingship in his home region of Ankole, as "critics argue that as a Munyankole he would never have countenanced a restored king in his own district" (Reid 2017, 284.). In other words, royalists from Ankole feel the president's decision was based on his authority over Banyankole being undermined by a king, further supporting the significance of the monarchy in the sub-region. Returning to the Oobleck analogy, the return of Ankole's monarchy might exert a pressure too great for Museveni to bear, solidifying Banyankole identity and uniting it under its king. The president could not risk allowing a king to hold influence over a reliable voting bloc in his home region.

As seen in the image above, distinct kingdoms do not cover the entirety of present-day Uganda's territory, but comprise much of the Western and Central regions. The significance of the kingdoms and the intense loyalty many people continue to feel towards the respective monarchies in the country influence my decision to use the term 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic group' to describe

people from particular regions. But, there is a more pressing reason why I chose to keep using the term 'ethnicity', as imperfect as it is:

> "Ethnicity…helps us to imagine culture as being simultaneously 'at home' and as 'home' itself, the place where we originally came from, which first stamped us with our original identity, from which there is no escape, and to which we are bonded by ties that are inherited and obligatory, the separation from which is painfully repeated in every other subsequent loss that we experience" (Hall 2017, 107-108).

Taking Stuart Hall's seminal work on race, ethnicity, and nation, it is this definition of ethnicity that I find most compelling, and see parallels and overlaps with how Ugandans spoke and felt about their home regions. His choice of the word 'obligatory' to describe ethnicity also convincingly shows the intersections of ideas of ethnicity and family or kin relations: for migrants in Kampala, they were obliged not only to the place from which their families originated nor a particular monarchy, but were there precisely because of the obligations they were attempting to fulfill to their families. Though anthropologists have largely agreed to remove 'culture' from our shared lexicon because it implies a homogenous, unchanging people in a sedentary place, Hall's use of ethnicity allows us to escape such a static picture of separate groups because of his emphasis on origin, inheritance, and obligation. As other literature exploring diaspora has argued (Lavie and Swedenburg 1996; Levy and Weingrod 2005), the notion of home and the group that accompanies it is even more important for those that have moved away, as is the case for migrant workers in Kampala. Though they may not have left their home country, the prevalence of stereotypes circulated about various groups in the North and West of the country heightened many migrants' pride and defense of the homes that they left behind. The physical distance from the place motivated migrants to strictly adhere to practices that they most closely associated with their home regions, necessitating a conservativism that was often more pronounced than those still living there.

It is important to keep in mind that Banyankole, Banyoro, Batooro, and other groups from Western Uganda also identify as ethnically Bahima or Bairu in order to fully appreciate the multiple identifications and loyalties that are simultaneously held by people. When people from these regions migrate to Kampala, they are interacting with people from other parts of the country who know of their respective kingdoms but are unfamiliar with the categories of Bahima and Bairu. While other groups may classify a Munyankole as being a part of the Banyankole group alone, self-identifying Bairu in Kampala unanimously reported feelings of mistrust towards Bahima from the Ankole region who were living in the city. There is a constant tension and negotiation that comes with being a part of a kingdom in the country, with distinct livelihoods, monarchies, and languages, while also feeling the stark separation between the cattle-keeping and agriculturalist populations.

The opening of this paper elucidated Simon Tugume's theory of ethnicity amongst Banyankole. Though he said milk can change the body and suggested a Muiru who acquired cattle and drank milk could effectively become a Muhima, he was acutely aware of the differences between the two groups. Simon worked as a *boda* taxi driver, and on mornings when it was raining too heavily to drive, we often would have tea together. On several occasions, he explained to me just how stark the separation of Bairu from Bahima was in his village in the Ntungamo District, which is located in the Ankole sub-region. Simon said that Bahima own all of the land in his village, and while in the past Bahima would focus only on their cattle, the demands of modernity have forced many to find opportunities to generate cash revenue. Because Bahima are now sending their children to school and many are eventually attending universities, Bahima have begun to lease land to Bairu to pay for school fees. The power differential is ever present, and according to Bairu interlocutors in Kampala, Bahima treat Bairu as "no different than dogs". Viewing them as

lesser peasants, Bahima do not tolerate any behavior from Bairu that can be interpreted as disrespect. According to Simon, and reiterated by numerous Bairu with whom I interacted in Kampala, a Muhima has the power to make a Muiru "disappear". "When a dog bites you, you can just kill it," as Simon bluntly declared one morning. Even if they do not kill you, the landlord Muhima has the power to allow his cattle to come and destroy the renter Muiru's garden on the plot of land they are renting, and with it their livelihood. Whether real or imagined, it was reported that the fear of retaliation makes deference the standard mode of behavior amongst Bairu family members in Ntugamo and other Ankole districts who rent land from Bahima.

3.3 (Almost) Becoming Hima

Despite these injustices, Bairu were clear that there *were* ways for them to acquire wealth and cattle, and become known as Bahima. If Simon were to become rich after working in Kampala, he could purchase cattle and land and people in his hometown would switch their categorization of him from a Muriu to a Muhima. From their newfound possessions in the form of land and livestock, to changes in their outward appearance from milk drinking, Bairu insisted that the differences between them and Bahima were not entirely impossible to overcome. While the hierarchy explored by Mamdani is indeed a critical aspect of life for Banyankole, the rigidity he wrote of was not entirely final and there are elements of fluidity, with Bairu able to change their bodies through food consumption. Warm milk that one drinks straight from cows immediately after milking causes a man's gums to darken, according to Simon and his friends, while the different butters and yogurts eaten by women would cause their buttocks and legs to become fat.[38]

[38] Fat, as a descriptor, was not used with the same moral valence that often accompanies it in the US context.

Bairu reported that milk is so important to Bahima men that they call their favorite milking cow their mother, because when they are grazing in the field, they will take milk straight from the cow without first going into a cup or even one's hand. This milk is also what separates the different forms of speech between the two groups; though it was never clear to me exactly how this would actually come to be, people repeatedly told me that the milk Bahima drank caused them to pronounce "tss" where Bairu would say "ss". A person with a trained ear could even hear differences between the two groups, and because their occupations require such deep knowledge of cattle or the land, there are also words that exist only amongst Bahima or Bairu. This leads some to explain the distinctions as Ruhima and Ruiru, indicating two separate languages.

The ways in which milk is consumed by Bahima men and women are gendered, and theories about how milk affects women's bodies in particular are circulated far beyond the borders of the Ankole kingdom. A Lugbara woman from the West Nile region of Uganda, Immaculate Adiga, worked as a caregiver at Furaha Babies' Home, an orphanage in Kampala. I often worked alongside her when I visited the orphanage, which was one of my field sites, and we chatted as we fed the infants their afternoon bottles. She did not have many laudatory things to say about Banyankole, but still she insisted that I visit the Ankole region, describing it as "the Switzerland of Uganda" with real mountains, unlike the "small hills" of the Central region. More significant than the scenery was the milk: "If you go there and ask for water, they will bring you milk," she explained to me one day as we prepared to feed the children. She was also adamant in her opinion that Banyankole have the best skin, and the milk they drank was once again used as the reason for their smooth skin. The effects of the milk also manifested in other unexpected ways for Banyankole women. According to Immaculate, men from all over Uganda aspired to have a sexual encounter with a Munyankole woman, saying "the bed will be soaked". This, she said, was because of the

yogurt-like milk products that they drink, which cause excess wetness. Though they offer guests regular milk to drink, the special yogurt drinks are rumored to be reserved for Banyankole women alone.

Banyankole's yogurt-like drinks that seem to be known by Ugandans from across the country are also said to be responsible for the literal shape of Bahima women, and these yogurts are so potent that men are discouraged from drinking certain types. *Amacunda* is one such yogurt-like product that is consumed by women only. The yogurt-like *amacunda* is made from the leftover milk that remains after butter is churned, and it is ready to eat after sitting in a calabash for 3 to 4 days to sour, depending on the weather and season. When the weather is hot, approximately 10 hours prior to *amacunda* being ready, *amakamo* is ready, and it is especially expensive because "it is like drinking milk and yogurt and butter all in one", and must not be shaken. The luxurious, buttery *amakamo* can be consumed by men. While Bairu women are expected to cultivate the land, Bahima women's labor was seen by Bairu as being solely occupied with making different sorts of milk products. Men were discouraged from *amacunda* because the fat content would cause their bodies to become "curvy" like a woman. The different ways in which milk products are consumed by Bahima exemplify how the very substance itself can function as oobleck, changing its form and effects.

And yet, the unchangeable bones made it so that a Muiru could *appear* to be a Muhima, and be *treated* as if he were one, but could not *actually be* a Muhima. This is not because of some innate "Bahima-ness", even though Simon's appeal to one's bones may suggest that, but because of the lifestyle, rituals, and secrets known only to Bahima. A widely circulated and accepted stereotype about Bahima men is that they are very tall, but this height was not seen as a matter of genetics. Instead, many Bairu insist that Bahima men grow tall because they do not have to work

hard when they are young, and they drink more than they eat, thus allowing their bones to elongate and strengthen from birth. As such, the bones of a Muhima will remain strong and long when the reverse happens and a Muhima loses their wealth and identity as a cattle person.

When a rich Muiru who is passing as a Muhima has children, however, the children truly *will be* Bahima. This is because the children will be born amongst the cows, drinking warm milk from the very beginning;[39] they would also be free from the physical labor that Bairu children are expected to perform, allowing for the elongated bones that are so important for the height of Bahima. As importantly, the children of the rich Muiru passing as Muhima would attract Bahima husbands and wives. The marriages, and living with true Bahima, would enable the rich Muiru's children to know the secrets of Bahima and partake in their rituals in ways that would be impossible for their parents. But, there remain rumors that a true Muhima would never accept children that were not 'pure' Bahima, even if they married someone from a mixed background.[40] These rumors serve as evidence of the ways in which the divide between the two groups is imagined to by some to be innate and insurmountable.

In Kampala, these divisions are further complicated precisely because most people from outside of Western Uganda simply are not aware of them, and thus are classifying people based on their ideas of shared ethnicity. The mistrust and exploitation that takes place in rural settings does not disappear in urban Kampala, and Simon and his friends often grumbled about Bahima who had connections to President Museveni who were profiting off his corrupt regime. As for middle-class Bahima in Kampala, Simon cast doubt on their true identities, explaining that a "real"

[39] Carsten's (1997) work was profoundly influential as I explored the role of milk in this chapter, and the role of food more broadly and how it affects/creates relationships throughout the dissertation.
[40] I do not feel comfortable divulging the information with which I was entrusted, though there are a number of early articles that appear in places such as the *Uganda Journal* that support what many Bairu revealed to me. Bairu who indulged such secrets with me insisted that I could write about them, but because I spent my time with working- and underclass Bairu and not Bahima in Kampala and am thus already admittedly biased, I am purposefully omitting these secrets to preserve them if they are true.

Muhima would never come to Kampala to live a regular city life, asking, “Where will they drink the hot milk from?” The love of cows that all Bahima were said to feel would prevent them from leaving plentiful herds, making Bairu in the city suspicious of Bahima who migrated to the city for white collar work. Simultaneously, stories of any Banyankole getting hired after speaking Runyankole at Banyankole-owned businesses abound throughout the city, and Baganda were especially suspicious of certain shopping centers where Runyankole was spoken amongst employees. For instance, a grocery store in Ntinda, Capital Shoppers, attracts many members of the upper-middle class and expatriates from North America and Europe because of its abundance of imported groceries. Many Baganda reported the prevalence of Runyankole spoken by employees as proof that it was a Banyankole establishment, and insisted the hiring managers at the store would choose to employ any person who spoke their language over a Muganda who spoke Luganda at their interview, regardless of their qualifications. Yet, working-class Bairu did not even dare to enter the store, saying it was a space reserved for rich people. The perception of them having an advantage because of the ethnicity assigned to them by others was often exaggerated or altogether untrue. Inequity and divisions amongst members of various groups was not often at the forefront of people’s imaginations in quotidian conversations, and instead were generalizations regarding which groups were powerful, culturally dominant, or ‘backwards’. Mirroring the contentious cosmopolitanism that exists in Kampala, the labels placed on different ethnic groups were contentious categories.

3.4 “Matooke is not food for people in Lira”: Food and Person Beyond Banyankole

Though it is, again, always important to question the validity and usefulness of ethnic categories, the assumptions people made about others because of their ethnic identification were

openly talked about in everyday life. As referenced above, President Museveni's identification as a Munyankole contributes to the open hostility many non-Banyankole in Kampala express towards the group, while also adding to the frustration Bairu feel towards Bahima. Aside from making the men grow tall and the women curvy, discussions about the abundance of milk in the Ankole region inevitably led to discussions about the abundance of money flowing into the region. Many people believe that the current regime favors Ankole, and there have been a number of infrastructure projects spurring economic growth, evidenced by the city of Mbarara becoming the second-largest city in the country. All of the money and milk in the region make Banyankole particularly susceptible to laziness, many insisted, including self-identifying Banyankole in Kampala.

Linking food consumption to character was not something that was done only to explain the behaviors and character of the haves, but was also regularly done to describe the ways of the have nots. Immaculate, the Lugbara woman who worked as a caretaker at Furaha Babies' Home who first told me about the effects yogurt-like drinks have on Banyankole women, spoke often of Lugbara being "the most hated group in Uganda." Lugbara are from the West Nile region of Uganda, a place associated with the infamous Idi Amin. Similar to the ways in which people mistrust Banyankole because of their association with current President Museveni, it seems people from West Nile cannot escape their shared geographic origin with Amin.[41] Immaculate insisted that any time there was a character in Ugandan cinema or popular culture who was "ugly" or "very black", people would assume that person was Lugbara. But, more important than physical appearance were the stereotypes about what Lugbara ate. Immaculate moved to Kampala when she was still in grade school, and she remembers that her classmates would avoid her and accuse

[41] Lugbara living in Kampala had disparate views of Idi Amin. Immaculate was quick to separate herself from him, clarifying that Amin was *not* Lugbara, as many assumed, but correctly identifying him as Kakwa. Other people from West Nile, particularly young men, claimed Amin with some degree of pride for reasons that are discussed in Chapter 6.

her with disgust, "You eat bats!"[42] Her home region was seen as one where people ate taboo meat, where the most ferocious and bloodthirsty soldiers hailed, and where Ebola and viruses like the one bearing its name thrived. The disgust with which people accused her of eating "all types of birds", however, is what stood out to her the most. Though she had been living in Kampala for more than two decades and moved there before her teenage years, those formative moments made her realize that the capital could never be her home.

Unsurprisingly, one of the most prominent stereotypes about people from West Nile concerned their predisposition for aggression. In the orphanage where Immaculate worked, the all-women caretaking staff were quick to tell her about all their previous Lugbara coworkers who were always looking for a fight. Rather than deny some inherent violent tendencies amongst Lugbara, Immaculate would simply laugh at such stories and reply that she was not surprised their former coworkers seemed to be antagonistic. She would nod along when her Baganda and Banyankole colleagues gossiped about people from Northern Uganda being stubborn and fierce, but her acceptance of such labels was complex. It seemed she agreed that Lugbara people were stubborn, to use a favorite descriptor amongst the caretakers, but Immaculate in turn thought her coworkers from Central and Western Uganda lacked the necessary aggression to fight against President Museveni and his corrupt regime. Though the rest of the country might look at Lugbara and West Nile with disdain, she insisted that they would meaningfully resist Museveni if he ever tried to rule their region the way he governed Kampala. The aggression was tied to ideas about Lugbara blood, and Immaculate explained that people from all over the North, including Acholi and Karimojong, had "too much blood" because of the greens people ate in the region. "Too much

[42] The significance of this accusation can be seen in the most recent Ebola outbreak in West Africa, where media sources blamed the consumption of bats and other bushmeat for its transmission. See McGovern 2014 for an excellent analysis of the link between food and disgust in this context.

blood" might be better translated to "hot blooded", to use the Anglo-American vernacular meaning quick-tempered, and is also one of the descriptions meant by the caretakers at Furaha when they used the term "stubborn". The greens that Lugbara and other Northerners ate were thought to do more than influence the temperament of the people there: the extra blood also made them strong enough to survive anywhere. This was especially important because the North was vulnerable to food shortages in ways the Central region never would be, according to Immaculate and two of the other caretakers, Sara and Esther. Joking that Baganda could never know famine, they all agreed food from all different regions of the country was brought to Central because of Kampala's location in the region. Yet, even when food was scarce and they were on the verge of hunger, Northerners' extra blood enabled survival.

A favorite staple food amongst Baganda and Banyankole is *matooke*, or green bananas, and the significance of the food and the ways in which it is grown has been theorized by scholars as contributing to the social and political systems in Central Uganda.[43] *Posho*, on the other hand, is made from ground maize or sorghum flour, and is the staple of the North; while *matooke* was unmarked in Kampala, the consumption of *posho* was believed to have profound effects on one's body. *Posho* has not been the subject of rigorous academic musings concerning its role in sociopolitical development where it is eaten,[44] but the food's role is often discussed amongst Ugandans when seeking explanations for people's bodily strength. At Furaha, the children who grew strong were said to have bodies as if they were eating *posho*, and whenever I expressed

[43] See, especially, Schoenbrun 1998 and Hanson 2003.
[44] Central Uganda is ideal for growing bananas, which require a hot and humid climate and significant rainfall. In some regions of Northern Uganda, extended dry seasons and regular droughts prohibit banana plantations. The heartiness of sorghum crops, which better withstand drought and dry conditions, mirror the stereotypes of the heartiness of Northern people.

fondness for Karamoja or Northern Uganda more broadly, *posho* was constantly referenced as the source of their strength.

Over tea one morning, Simon expressed a longing for his favorite food to Judith and me after going through an extended period of time unable to afford to purchase *matooke*. "But, *matooke* is not food for people in Lira," he said, a hint of disbelief in his voice. Judith, herself from Lira, laughed in agreement. I asked for clarification, thinking that *matooke* must not be grown in that area of the country, but Judith said that it was available in the region and people did eat it occasionally. Simon explained that people in Lira eat *matooke* with morning tea, the way we were currently eating biscuits and bread. In other words, he was under the impression that people did not treat *matooke* as a meal, and Judith confirmed that it was not the preferred meal for most Lango. Giving us an analogy from his region, Simon said Banyankole treat cassava the same way Lango treat *matooke*, as something that was merely a snack. At this, Judith sucked her teeth and shook her head in disapproval.

The differences between preferring *posho* or *matooke* and the accompanying stereotypes are indicative of larger structural issues in Uganda. The Northern regions of the country are seen as "primitive" and underdeveloped, and whenever I shared with people that I spent years living in Moroto town in Karamoja, they would express shock, disbelief, or some combination of the two. For working-class people, they simply could not imagine a *muzungu*[45]-adjacent Westerner voluntarily living in a region associated with cattle raiding and nakedness; for educated middle-class people, their first question was some version of, "Do they drink blood because there is no food or water?" The collective imagination in Kampala about those who live in the North often borders on disturbing, but their food epitomizes strength. These associations show that strength

[45] Luganda and Kiswahili (*mzungu*) word for 'white person'

and civility are not mutually constitutive, and that too much of the former can be imagined to inhibit the latter.[46]

It is significant to note that stereotypes and assumptions about various groups of people in the country is not unique to Kampala. Every migrant worker with whom I spoke reported the circulation of such stereotypes in their home regions, even those from rural settings who had little contact with other groups before moving to the city. The prejudices against others were easy to maintain in relatively homogenous places, and one might imagine that somehow these prejudices would lessen with increased diversity. Despite interactions with people from disparate ethnic groups, the everyday interactions between people of various ethnicities afforded by the cosmopolitanism of Kampala did not lessen the stories people told about certain groups even when deep relationships were forged between individuals. When a person encountered someone from a group deemed repugnant who broke from preconceived notions, one of two things could happen: the first possibility was that the person was seen as an anomaly, and thus there was no change in the perception of the group as a whole. Within this possibility is the potential for the individual from a repugnant group to do something seen as amoral after a period of friendship, thus reinforcing the idea of said group being dishonorable. The second possible outcome was a strong bond forming between members of groups that had previously been averse to one another, and these relationships forced people to reconsider their feelings towards said group members. In the section below, I will give ethnographic accounts of both possible outcomes, and ultimately argue that rather than eliminate prejudicial thoughts, cosmopolitanism instead encourages these thoughts to be redirected onto others.

[46] See Kasozi 1994; the idea of Northern Uganda being warlike and nonstratified has been theorized by him as being a direct result of not having a hierarchical system where the decision to use deadly force is decided by a monarch

3.5 Cosmopolitan Discriminations

Taking Kwame Anthony Appiah's (2006) theorization of cosmopolitanism as a starting point, Kampala seems to be an ideal locale for fleshing out some of his ideas. The people with whom I worked did not possess passports and so were not jet setters, but as Appiah points out, "The well-traveled polyglot is as likely to be among the worst off as among the best off – as likely to be found in a shantytown as at the Sorbonne" (ibid., xviii). The members of the Kampala underclass who became my interlocutors and with whom I spent most of my time were making less than 100 USD per month, unable to afford the luxury of international travel. Yet, those driving motorbike taxis to make a living conversed with American missionaries and Dutch NGO workers; those working in orphanages and children's homes were no strangers to British and French and Spanish volunteers; those who cleaned homes often took jobs working for families of the Indian diaspora or European expatriates. And of course, every person was interacting with people from numerous ethnic groups who migrated to Kampala from across the country in search of employment. Quotidian interactions and curiosities that led to conversations about people's lives and the places they called home made every person with whom I interacted a global citizen of sorts, always aware of the larger world and the global forces that brought people to Kampala. Though the linguistic dominance of Luganda can sometimes conceal the diversity of languages spoken in the city, there are people from all over the country and indeed the world navigating Kampala, and each other.

Beyond the superficial story of acceptance and tolerance that comes with various groups living together, Appiah's philosophical move that I find most compelling is his assertion that cultural relativism is a product of Positivism by way of Hume. Appiah is not entirely incorrect in his depiction of cultural anthropology defaulting to relativism, and is thus making an important

intervention in calling attention to the dangers that lurk beneath relativism's surface. In separating beliefs and desires, Hume claimed that desires cannot be good or bad, and Appiah argues that this is the foundation of the cultural relativist conclusion that desires are context specific, and therefore cannot be criticized. While I lack the desire to delve further into Hume, I am going to boldly (and perhaps for fellow anthropologists, shockingly) assert that I largely agree with Appiah's desire for some sort of objectivity: "…there are some values that are, and should be, universal, just as there are lots of values that are, and must be, local" (xxi). I understand the use of the word 'should' might seem to be contrary to the work of anthropologists, but I would argue universal values *are* apparent in Kampala, despite the ways in which people assert their differences from other groups. By focusing on this aspect of life in the city, I propose that we can move beyond a relativistic stance of disparate groups being unable to understand one another. Cultural relativists may have given us the ability to stop seeing others as 'less than', but they have also made others to be seen as so different from us that engagement sometimes becomes impossible.

The migrants who came to Kampala looking for employment reported a lack of jobs in their home regions, and the overwhelming majority of people I met from the North and West of the country left immediate family members and extended kin networks to be in the city. There are, of course, middle-class migrants from the country who come to do white-collar work, but I spent much of my time amongst those precariously employed: caretakers, house cleaners, security guards for private residences, and motorbike drivers. Without stringent regulations, there were reports of families paying live-in housekeepers as little as 50,000 UGX[47] per month, and motorbike drivers could actually lose money some days if the weather did not permit riding or they had to pay bribes to police officers or other officials. Such financial precarity was stressful not only for

[47] Approximately 15 USD

the individuals making such meager wages, but the entire network of people these individuals moved to Kampala to support. With children's school fees to pay the main source of stress, the relationships forged between migrant workers provided a source of support during times of uncertainty. These relationships forced people to reconsider the stereotypes held about different groups of people: a Munyankole who was convinced that all Lugbara were cannibals was surprised when Immaculate was among the most diligent and considerate of coworkers at Furaha, for instance.

The experience of financial and material insecurity was shared amongst those of the underclass, regardless of their region of origin. Bonds that were formed not only crossed ethnic lines between groups imagined to be antagonistic, but they also crossed from friendship to kinship. Taking McKinley's (2002) definition of kinship as "moral obligation" one feels to another, the relationships between migrant workers empirically demonstrated this, as people forfeited their meager salaries for those who needed emergency surgery; made it a priority to share favorite meals with one another; worked extra shifts without any demand or expectation of money for people who needed to travel back home. Because the overarching reason for their move to Kampala was to provide financial assistance to their families back home and they were often unable to do so, these new kinship bonds acted as more than a source of emotional and material support. While Hall's definition of ethnicity used throughout this chapter also appeals to people's obligations, the *moral* obligation of kinship overrode the obligation to one's ethnicity. When a kin bond was formed between members of antagonistic groups, the bond trumped prejudices. To return to Appiah's appeal for universal values, I propose one that transcended all categorizations of people and that kinship helped fulfill: the search for a meaningful life. Regardless of the assumptions people held towards various groups, the search for meaning away from home allowed for an openness that

would not have existed otherwise. When migrant workers were unable to fulfill their purpose to send sufficient funds back home, it was the relationships forged between one another that provided motivation.

However, this was not a romantic story of stereotypes and prejudices being overcome and people living in perpetual peace. Like the other ethnographic accounts of kinship forged in this dissertation, the bonds that migrant workers created with one another were those of contentious kinship. While the moral obligation theorized by McKinley was on display through empirical examples of self-abnegation amongst workers in the city, migrants' search for a meaningful life was precarious. When the possibility of forming a kin relation with a member of a previously unfavorable group presents itself, the unsaid prejudices from the stereotypes that are circulated become the source of the contestation.

Returning to the previous section's first possible outcome of meeting a person from a repugnant group reinforcing ideas about that group, I will turn to a story about Jopadhola, an ethnic group from Eastern Uganda. They have come to be the target of particularly harsh stereotypes within Kampala, and a story that I heard from people sums up others' imaginary of Jopadhola: during a time of financial collapse in Uganda, when the Ugandan schilling was very weak, people would carry currency in large bags and boxes. At a hospital in Kampala, the body of a young child in a plain wooden coffin was stolen, and police searched for the criminals responsible. According to the legend, a group of Jopadhola looking to steal money did not realize the small box contained a body, and they assumed it was a box filled with cash. Such egregious acts of thievery were so common that a prison had to be built in Kampala just to house Jopadhola criminals, it was said. The truth of these stories matters little to those convinced of them, and shows how even small groups with little power in the country can be the target of such anger and suspicion.

Despite the rumors of Jopadhola being thieves, Judith, the woman from Lira who teased Simon about his 'grandfather' Museveni, befriended a Jopadhola woman when she was living in the Kamwokya neighborhood of Kampala. The woman, Esther, was Judith's neighbor, and Jopadhola speak a language that is mutually intelligible with Lango, Judith's native tongue. Immediately feeling a degree of comfort with Esther because she could speak her own language with her, she soon considered her a dependable friend. If she had to run an errand or was visiting friends in the area, Judith trusted Esther to watch over her room, making it easier to come and go without having to take the time to lock up for short trips. Both were working as house cleaners at the time, and they would chat about grievances against their employers and the strange habits of upper middle-class Ugandans.

Devastatingly, this bond was not lasting. When Judith went to the market to buy ingredients for dinner one evening, Esther stole 300,000 UGX that Judith had been saving to take home to Lira. From this, Judith concluded that "there is not even one good" Jopadhola, and refused to befriend any person who identified as such. Despite years having passed since the transgression, and despite admitting that there are of course thieves even back home in Lira, her interactions and proximity to Jopadhola is what made this group a target of her abhorrence. Because of these interactions, Judith and others like her were constantly constrained by ethnic identifications, stereotypes and prejudices, and chance meetings with people who happened to be a part of ethnic groups that were deemed amoral by others. For every exception that was made, stereotypes were proven correct and solidified.

Yet, to come to the second possibility of stereotypes against particular groups being reassessed or eliminated, there were also bonds formed between people that were so strong, entire prejudices were let go. Teddy Lwanga, a Muganda who worked in the laundry department at

Furaha Babies' Home to be further discussed in Chapter 4, had heard nothing but terrible things about Karimojong. She always heard that Karimojong were beggars, especially because people from Karamoja were often portrayed as being the most desperate. In Kisenyi, referred to as a "slum" and down the literal hill from Furaha, a few entrepreneurial young men made a business out of giving "slum tours" to the people who came to volunteer at the orphanage. Most of the volunteers who they took to the neighborhood were international visitors from Western and Northern Europe and North America, but there were middle- and upper-middle class Ugandans who would tour the area as well. I accompanied several groups on these tours, and the men would point to Karimojong in Kisenyi every time. At an area concentrated with grinding mills where maize was ground into *posho*, they would emphasize that the women loitering in the area looking for corn kernels were Karimojong trying to gather enough maize to feed their children, thus showing the most impoverished amongst the impoverished. The Ugandans looked at them with the same pity as the foreigners, and this image of Karimojong as the worst-off was exacerbated by Ugandans in the development sector repeatedly saying, "We cannot wait for Karamoja for the rest of the country to develop." These ideas, in turn, raise people's suspicions that Karimojong are prone to stealing.

When Jacinta Odong first arrived at Furaha to work as a caretaker, Teddy was taken aback by her charisma and spirit, so unlike the desperate beggar image Teddy had come to associate with Karimojong. Jacinta was tenacious and hard-working, and fiercely loyal to those she considered friends. Luckily, Teddy was someone Jacinta counted as her friend, and the two of them would often help with each other's tasks. Whenever there was a party celebrating the adoption or fostering of a child at the orphanage, the caretakers would get cake and soda, and Jacinta would always make sure to save some for Teddy. If Teddy needed her shift covered because one of her children

was sick, Jacinta would cover her shift without demanding any sort of compensation, despite working in a different department. Always aware of the orphanage administrators keeping tabs on the workers, they would also warn one another if the proprietor or social workers seemed to be in sour moods, and run to tell the other to be on their best behavior if administrators had entered the building. Their bond led Teddy to realize people in Kampala were wrong about Karimojong. Though the poverty that many experienced was evidenced by their concentration in places like Kisenyi, Teddy was angry that some of the caretakers and other women employees at the orphanage attempted to get Jacinta fired simply because of her ethnicity. Whenever donations went missing, Jacinta was always the prime suspect, and many of her coworkers were quick to point their fingers whenever incidents of theft occurred. "The ones talking are the first to steal," Teddy explained to me once when Jacinta was accused of stealing tins of baby formula. Rather than try to make Jacinta a saint, Teddy instead showed that her friend's behavior was not out of the realm of ordinary, and should not be judged as such.

Though Teddy reevaluated her prejudice towards Karimojong and viewed the entire group with more understanding since befriending Jacinta, the frustration that came with meager wages, four children to financially support, and a difficult work environment made her search for reasons for her austere living conditions. Teddy was one of the many people in the city who expressed intense frustration towards President Museveni, and hated him with an intensity that was often displaced on to people she believed belonged to his ethnic group, Banyankole. The suspicion that all Banyankole must be paid for their support of the president even made her question the true ethnicity of one of the teachers at Furaha, Teacher Jackie. Jackie identified as a Muganda and spoke Luganda without hint of a Western accent, but because she was the most financially secure of any employee at Furaha, Teddy questioned her true origins. While folding laundry together one

day, she reported to me that Jackie's "big bottom" and "long nose" gave her features of a Munyankole. The time and energy exerted on uncovering Jackie's true identity perplexed me, but I came to realize that others were spending a comparable amount of time worrying about Jacinta and her reputation for stealing. Freed from stressing over Jacinta, Teddy was *not* free from stressing over people's ethnic categories in general. Instead, her anxiety was redirected to the person deemed spoiled and brazen for spending money every single day on lunch from outside of the orphanage to eat in front of coworkers who could never afford such luxury.

3.6 Conclusion: Unchanging Bones

Returning to Stuart Hall's discussion of ethnicity as being something that "first stamped us with our original identity" (Hall 107), migrant workers in Kampala continually referred to their ethnicity as their "true" identity. Stereotypes, both positive and negative, were regularly affirmed by self-identifying members of various groups: Banyankole did not have a problem admitting milk both made their skin beautiful and made some people rather lazy; Lugbara people laughed and agreed when people accused them of being 'stubborn' and ready to fight. Many could not disentangle ideas of ethnicity with romanticized notions of home, as Hall's definition of ethnicity suggests. The often harsh physical environment in Arua was transformed into a place of beauty and peace in the memories of Lugbara interlocutors. Yet, the cosmopolitanism of the city simultaneously reinforced and challenged these identities as people interacted and new relationships were forged. This is most clearly illustrated in the case of Banyankole, who bear the burden of sharing an ethnic identity with President Museveni. Many migrants in Kampala from the North, Central, and Eastern regions of Uganda are unaware of the power differentials between Bairu and Bahima, the two respective 'castes' in the region, to use Mamdani's term. As Simon's

theory elucidates, the two groups are so different that their bones are not even the same. Yet, even with the mistreatment of Bairu at the hands of Bahima and the complicated history of cattle keepers clashing with cultivators in the region, there are people who identify as Bairu and Bahima from the Ankole sub-region who show loyalty to the monarchy. This, I believe, is important in highlighting how a shared "original identity" (ibid.) nonetheless binds people together even in the midst of severe inequity and seemingly insurmountable difference.

The importance of food in discussions of ethnic groups illustrates how ethnicity is not simply a matter of artificial grouping for migrant workers. The consumption of certain foods changed people's bodies, allowing their bodies to retain their ethnic origin, or, in the case of Bairu becoming Bahima, enabling them to perhaps escape a lesser categorization as they acquire new bodily markers. And yet, as Simon's warning reminds us, one's origin can never be fully escaped. While one can change certain aspects of one's body, one can never change the bones. Constantly confronted with its Oobleck nature, ethnicity can be liquid and changeable, but when there is a change in pressure, it will solidify. In the cases of such solidification, the stakes of ethnic identity also shift: rather than simply function as a romanticized memory of a place to call home, ethnicity takes on a political character. It becomes less about one's own group and home, and more about other people's identities.

Insisting that certain characteristics of various ethnic groups were unchangeable, the cosmopolitan nature of the city and the diversity of its inhabitants did not lead to some inevitable acceptance of people's differences. The cosmopolitanism of the city, as argued in the previous chapter, was that of contentious cosmopolitanism, and lingering assumptions and prejudices threatened the maintenance of relationships. People did indeed change their minds regarding the morality of different groups, but in searching for reasons for the material constraints migrant

workers faced, suspicion became a part of the cosmology of the city. The universal values that Appiah appeals for in his work on cosmopolitanism exist in Kampala: every migrant who arrives in search of work to fulfill moral obligations to their families back home is not only looking for cash. To pay for the children's school fees or their parents' medical bills is not simply a matter of everyday duty, but a quest for meaning. When duties are unable to be fulfilled, or when the precarity of their lives feels overwhelming, the search for meaning morphs into a search for why they are lacking. Here, Appiah is wrong. Ideas about others continue to proliferate, and even when values *are* universal, that does not mean they do not come without expense to others.

Chapter 4
A Woman's Work; A Mother's Love

Priscilla Natukunda[48], one of the two full-time nurses employed by Furaha Babies' Home, headed to the washing area to mix formula for the infants' 3pm feeding. While the caretaking mamas were busy bathing each baby, applying petroleum jelly on their freshly washed skin, and changing them into clean clothes for the afternoon following their midday naps, Priscilla grabbed eight clean bottles soaking in tubs of water that had been purified with chlorine tablets. Scooping different amounts of powder into the bottles, she then poured more or less boiling water into each respective bottle, depending on the amount of formula that was deposited. She was doing this so as to only use the necessary amount of formula, and she knew exactly how many milliliters of milk each individual baby would drink. She was as discerning when selecting rubber nipples to top the bottles, putting those with bigger openings on the bottles older babies would drink and searching for smaller tops for the newborns. When the temperature of the liquid was judged to be right, she carried the bottles in a round plastic basin to the infant room, where the newly cleaned babies were fussing in their beds.

The nurses at Furaha were busy throughout the day, as they were charged with making the infants' food, keeping track of donations, distributing medications, and taking seriously ill children to the nearby hospital. But, Priscilla seemed to always be present for the 3pm feeding time, and paid special attention to one particular baby: her daughter. When newly admitted children arrived at the orphanage, the women who worked at the facility could take a child as their own. While

[48] This, along with every name in the chapter, is a pseudonym; identifying characteristics have been anonymized

every child called each female staff member "mama", common in many sub-Saharan African settings, the term "son" or "daughter" was reserved for particular children whom the staff had chosen. The relationships between mamas and their sons and daughters varied, as any category of kin relation varies depending upon individuals' temperament and commitment to such a relationship. This chapter will illustrate that there was a qualitative difference in care that mamas reserved for their own children, but these relations do not exist without tension, from the mamas' financial precarity disallowing them to properly care for their biological children, to issues of 'racialization' and ethnicity. Using McKinley's (2001) definition of kinship as "moral obligation" and taking these bonds as examples of 'real' kinship rather than fictive or metaphorical kinship, the particular structures and restraints of the orphanage add pressures unique to the mamas and their children. I theorize the orphanage as a place where every kin bond forged is one of *contentious kinship*.

Musawo[49] Priscilla's daughter was still an infant when people began to question her eyesight. The baby's eyes were large, and whenever she was awake, she would not only open her eyes, but stretch them as wide as possible at any given time. While she was a perfectly happy baby, and especially interactive when physical touching was involved, her eyes seemed to have a greyish film covering them, which some people thought might be cataracts. Whenever any of the caretaking or office staff would visit the infant room, they would remark upon the strangeness of her eyes, with some openly mocking the child's appearance. One mama who worked in the laundry room would make her eyes unnaturally wide, pushing them open with her index fingers and thumbs, and chase other mamas around the room pretending to be the baby. Yet, Priscilla remained firm in her assessment that her baby did not need any special corrective treatment, and explained

[49] Luganda word for nurse, which was used out of respect every time a worker addressed her; this distinguished her from all over the other women who were called *mama*

to me one day that she knew the baby was not blind because she had previously worked with blind patients as a nursing student. The truth of this did not actually matter, but she was using her position of authority to dismiss the other mamas, all of whom lacked her expertise, as misguided. She was convinced that her daughter could see when she held toys in front of her, and Priscilla said the baby followed her hand when she waved it from side to side. Reminiscent of so many parents who find ways to normalize their children in an attempt to shield them from scrutiny, or those who are in denial of their child's problems in the hopes that they disappear, she was a protective mother whose body stiffened whenever anyone remarked upon the child's eyes.

Yet, this protectiveness did not mean that Priscilla saw no differences between her daughter and the other children at the orphanage. While she would swoop in whenever anyone dared question the baby's eyesight, scolding them for their ignorance, she joined the others in one of their collective assessments: the baby's ethnicity. Herself a Munaynkole[50] woman, tall in stature with a wider build, she would often remark on the skin tones of the children, though I had never before heard her directly speak about her daughter's skin. Knowing I had previously lived up North in Karamoja, she said to me one day as she fed the baby her afternoon bottle, "She looks like one of them." Needing more context, as this was said randomly without reference to my former place of residence, I asked her for clarification. She explained that she and the other mamas were certain that the baby was "one of them" from up North, and she put down the bottle that she was holding in order to place her own arm next to the baby's for comparison. She commented on how dark the baby's skin was, and started chuckling softly. If the baby was from Central or Western Uganda, surely her skin would be closer to that of her mother. Priscilla could use her expertise to correct

[50] Munyankole (plural: Banyankole) refers to ethnic group from the Ankole region in Western Uganda

her fellow coworkers' assumptions about her daughter's eye health, but her skin? Her skin was immutable, even as the baby was too young to hold up her head.

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In the two previous chapters of this dissertation, the ways in which ethnic difference are foregrounded in people's interactions and imaginaries in Kampala were explored. This chapter also interrogates ethnic difference, but it does so in terms of care work and kinship formation. I argue that women working in the orphanage where this chapter takes place often extend care beyond what is merely expected of them as employees to young children who are presumed to be from repugnant groups; while the children's origins are a mystery in cases when they are abandoned, assumptions made about their ethnicities began from the very moment they entered the orphanage's gate. Despite the care and kinship that the setting enabled, ethnic difference was constantly referenced to explain behavior, both for the children and their caretakers. There were certain ethnic characteristics people in the orphanage insisted were immutable and would remain present in people regardless of who raised them. Within the confines of Furaha Babies' Home, ethnicity was used as a way to speak about the places the caretakers called home (Hall 2017), while also morphing into more politicized categories when used in disparaging terms about other women. Like other works in far different settings, I argue that people attempt to sort through state violence in unexpected ways,[51] in this case through kin bonds. Finally, this chapter also shows the ways in which kin bonds between mamas and their children at the orphanage motivate the women amidst

[51] Here, I am thinking of Mueggler 2001 and Buyandelger 2013. In their respective accounts of people's experiences of the violence of the socialist regimes in China and Mongolia, both render the ways in which such violence affects people's spiritual realms.

financial and emotional precarity. Despite the orphanage's unique circumstances that force mamas to care for children destined to leave and the added pressures that come with the knowledge that they will lose contact with the sons or daughters that they raise for years at a time, the contentious kin bonds forged are what give life meaning, especially in times of crisis.

4.1 The Orphanage

Furaha Babies' Home continues to provide care for children amidst a country- and worldwide transnational adoption reckoning. Adoption advocates and abolitionists alike cite the Children Act Amendment, passed by the Ugandan Parliament in 2016, as a key piece of legislation with profound effects for Ugandan children. As Kristen Cheney (2007) has written in her ethnography focusing on Ugandan children whose kinship networks have been affected by the HIV epidemic, the "nuclear family" is an unsatisfactory standard often imposed by international organizations and development workers. The Children Act Amendment was interpreted by some as a way to prevent the prioritization of the nuclear family by allowing extended family members to care for children who lost parents. Many adoption scholars, focusing on areas across the globe, have shown with great detail and care how historical forces have combined with neoliberal policies to encourage a "trade" in children of sorts, as non-white children from the Global South are adopted by white parents from the Global North. After horrific stories of Ugandan children being trafficked by adoption agencies emerged,[52] the Ugandan government intervened and passed the

[52] See Jessica Davis, "The 'orphan' I adopted from Uganda already had a family," *CNN* Opinion, October 13, 2019. https://www.cnn.com/2017/10/13/opinions/adoption-uganda-opinion-davis/index.html. Despite doing a fair amount of research on adoption beforehand, she realized that her adopted daughter was not an orphan at all, but had a mother and extended family who believed she was being sponsored. After learning of her biological family, Davis made the decision to reunite the child she adopted with her biological family. Similar stories emerged of mothers in rural areas across Uganda tricked into sending their children away for 'schooling', only to learn later that their children were adopted; unfortunately, Davis's decision to reunite her child with her biological mother is an exception, and many children were never to be seen by their biological families again.

Amendment as a way to prevent such cases in the future. The Amendment clarified the term "guardianship", a legal category previously granted to international adopters that lawfully enabled them to leave the country with their adopted children. Before this practice came under scrutiny, non-Ugandans were able to stand before a judge and make their case for guardianship without providing exhaustive evidence of the child's status as an adoptable orphan. Citizens of North American and European nations could fly into the country and be granted guardianship in a matter of weeks, which then allowed them to cross international borders. Clause 11 of the Amendment significantly changes this, and only Ugandan citizens are able to be granted guardianship. A child is eligible for adoption after all options for extended kinship care have been declared impossible, and this includes Ugandan and non-Ugandan citizens. For non-Ugandans who want to adopt a Ugandan child that has been orphaned, they can only do so after fostering a child in the country, under the supervision of Ugandan social workers, for one year. This requirement prohibits nearly any potential adoptive parent from considering adopting a child from Uganda, as most cannot or will not commit to living in the country for such an extended period of time.[53]

Yet, despite (or perhaps because of) considerable changes to the legal rights of children, orphanages remain in Kampala. In the absence of structural changes that would allow for biological extended family members to care for orphaned children, orphanages will continue to exist. While other work has focused on the orphanage as a site of confinement,[54] this obfuscates the multiple outside forces that penetrate its walls. With funding and leadership from the Anglican Church of Uganda; volunteers and donations from evangelical circles in North America, Europe,

[53] Exceptions are, of course, made for Western people who adopt Ugandan children. During fieldwork, I witnessed the adoption of 2 children from Furaha to a Canadian couple, as well as the beginning of the process for a German woman. Though they did not abide by the strict rules of Clause 11, they were nevertheless subject to strict policies that did not previously exist.

[54] See, for instance, Leinaweaver 2008 Chapter 3

and Australia; diverse staff members from across the country who came to Kampala for employment; legislation from the state seemingly barring transnational adoption; and its exceptional title of the first orphanage in Kampala, Furaha Babies' Home is a microcosm of the four domains of kinship, economics, politics, and religion smashing together. This particular orphanage, which I visited every day and served as one of my main research sites, is one such orphanage that will continue to exist until legislation and structural reform renders them unnecessary. The term 'orphanage' itself is misleading for the majority of the homes that are in Kampala, however. Many of the children housed at Furaha have natal relatives that know their whereabouts, and such family members visit some of the kids. Rather than be a home solely for orphaned children, Furaha sometimes functions as an in-between for parents and guardians who do not have the means to care for a very young child. Licensed to care for children until the age of 4, the social workers at the children's home work towards reuniting most of the kids with their families before their fourth birthday. If this proves impossible, efforts are made to find foster parents for the older children. In rare cases where fostering or reunification proves impossible, the children are still forced to leave Furaha once they reach the age of 4, and are transferred to other homes that are licensed to care for older, school-aged children.

Its location in Kampala is also of significance. Much of the historical and anthropological literature that has focused on Uganda tends to center Buganda more than any other region of the country (i.e. Earle 2017; Hanson 2003; Kagwa 1934; Ray 1991; Reid 2002; Scherz 2014), and Furaha Babies' Home is located in Mengo, Kampala, within walking distance of the *kabaka*'s[55] palace. The lingua franca amongst workers is Luganda, and the director and the administrative staff members, including the social workers who place the children with foster families, are

[55] Luganda word for king, the cultural leader of the kingdom of Buganda. See Chapter 2 for details on the significance the kingship continues to hold for Baganda today

ethnically Baganda. While approximately half of the mamas employed are also Baganda, the remaining members of the all-women caretaking staff are diverse in their places of origin, and all migrated to the city in search of employment opportunities. Despite its location in the heart of 'Bugandaland', as the non-Baganda mamas called it, Furaha itself actually forces one to decenter Buganda, as women from all over Uganda were responsible for the everyday functions of the orphanage. The diversity also revealed tensions that arise between the workers, with ethnicity being blamed or celebrated for everything from work ethic to eating habits. While it is not the intention of this chapter, or this dissertation more broadly, to reinforce notions of ethnicity or suggest the ways in which ethnic groups in Uganda have been categorized were ever based on inherent differences, quotidian language deployed at Furaha by the mamas continually referred to people's ethnic groups and their accompanying stereotypes. This language, and the beliefs that accompanied many people's words, often affected how both mamas and children were treated.

The Anglican Church's role in financially supporting the orphanage, and Furaha's own insistence on it being a Christian establishment, is also not without consequence. The Anglican Bishop of Namirembe, Wilberforce Luwalira, has been one of the board members of Furaha for years, and the orphanage stresses its Christian mission of caring for children with "Christ-like love". The Church quite literally looms over the orphanage; Namirembe Cathedral sits atop the hill on which Furaha is located, and the children are sometimes taken to the church grounds to play. Their identification as Christian, in turn, has also inspired relationships with a diverse array of churches across the globe, expanding far beyond the Anglican Church network. An evangelical Baptist church in Ontario, Canada has even established a Furaha Canada mission, raising thousands of dollars every year to send to the orphanage, and sending volunteers on an annual basis to see where their donations are being put to use. They have provided everything from new

wooden beds and cribs to a van for field trips. Importantly, Christian establishments are expected to hire employees who exemplify Christian values, and the international volunteers act as the eyes and ears of donors to ensure the sanctity of the place. Though a number of the women working as caretakers are single mothers, pregnancy outside of the institution of marriage was not tolerated once they were working as employees of the home. *Musawo* Priscilla, still unmarried and in her mid-twenties, had been working as Furaha's nurse for nearly 4 years when it was revealed she was pregnant in 2019. She hid her pregnancy for as long as possible, until the proprietor began to ask questions when she began to show. Despite her dedication to her job, her daughter with the big eyes was left without an advocate when the director of the orphanage was forced to fire her; her crime of bearing a child out of wedlock had to punished.

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4.2 Contentious Kinship in Practice

Anthropological literature now has rich accounts that focus on the ethics and profound social and political effects of adoption.[56] In this chapter, however, I focus not on the children's relationships with their biological or foster parents, but I will ethnographically render the mamas relationships with the children housed at the orphanage, the children for whom they are paid to care. Issues such as economic disparity and the structural concerns that allow for orphanages' existence are obviously important, but until they are obsolete, it is also important to understand how relationships within them are forged and maintained. Interrogating these relationships, I do

[56] See Briggs 2012; Carsten 2000; Dorow 2006; Herman 2002; Howell 2001; Kim 2010; Leinaweaver 2008; Marre and Briggs 2009; Volkman 2005; Yngvesson 2007

not take them to be "fictive kin", but following McKinley's definition, hope to show their "moral" and "unquestioned obligation" (2001) towards another person exemplify kin bonds no more metaphorical than biological or legal relationships. While holding on to this theorization, I will also show the tension that arises when caring for children who are destined to leave the orphanage. Sharika Thiranagama and Tobias Kelly have argued that intimate relationships, including kinship bonds, offer a source of support and care, but are also at heightened risk of betrayal and disloyalty (2012). They were writing specifically about the context of the nation state and its citizens often violently deciding who is and is not counted as a loyal subject, and exclusionary ethnic violence in the name of building a Ugandan state is no different.

In the more intimate setting of the orphanage, the remnants of such violence affects how people relate to one another, but the betrayal and disloyalty must be adjusted for the caretakers at Furaha. The relationships of kinship that the mamas formed with their sons and daughters inside the walls of the children's home did indeed provide care and the unquestioned obligation McKinley writes of, but the betrayal for the mamas was not only a possibility. It was a guarantee. The betrayal did not come in the form of their children purposefully hurting them or withholding their love, but it came from the knowledge that these children would eventually leave and no longer be theirs. Despite this, the empirical examples of self-abnegation and sacrifice demonstrate the strength of the bonds that are formed at Furaha. Following feminist anthropologists who have studied transnational care worker networks (i.e. Constable 2009; Liebelt 2012), I hope to show such bonds and relationships cannot adequately be studied through a lens of the commodification of care alone.

Foundational kinship work interrogates structure (e.g. Evans-Pritchard 1951; Levi-Strauss 1969; Morgan 1871), emphasizing the importance of descent and classification. The complex

charts that paint the pages of these works illustrate the complexities, and distinct cultural ways, that people label and relate to their natal kin; and, work on marriage showed how alliances were forged or challenged through such unions. More recent work has explored how kinship works in practice, including the dark sides of kinship. Rather than highlight the presumed community that comes through the networks into which we are born, kinship scholars now grapple with the complexities that arise within families precisely because of their closeness. The adoption literature cited above gives illuminating examples of familial tensions through a discussion of adoptive parents and their relationships with adopted children, showing how love and affinity are not always the basis of even "chosen" family.[57] In Weston's (1997) classic work on queer kinship, her interlocutors continue to classify their chosen kin on different terms than their biological kin, providing evidence of the enduring idea that our natal kinship bonds somehow endure even when family members are estranged. My research emphasizes the permanency of kinship bonds forged in the temporary space of the orphanage despite their contentious nature. While the term "contentious" is normally used to describe the relationships *between* people, recalling conflict and arguments between individuals or groups, the term as I use it diverges from this. Instead, I am using contentious to describe the bonds themselves; it is the relationship *itself* that is a source of controversy, antagonism, and ambivalence. The circulation of stereotypes and the resultant tensions threaten the formation and maintenance of bonds, but kinship is forged despite these circumstances. In the particular setting of this chapter, the women who work in the orphanage and the children cannot remain together because the children eventually leave the orphanage. This

[57] When using the term 'chosen family', Weston's (1997) work is often cited in anthropological literature. It is critical to note, however, that Weston dismisses the idea that adoptive families offer a divergent model of the nuclear family in her ethnography of queer kinship in the San Francisco area. She is foregrounding her interlocutors' accounts of betrayal from the biological families into which they were born, arguing that the shared experience of "coming out" made the families that members of the queer community chose enduring and accepting. I would assert that the "chosen families" created through adoption are especially vulnerable to betrayal, particularly for transracial adoptees who do not share a racial identity with their adoptive parents.

guaranteed separation does not dissuade caretakers from forming permanent kin relations with the children.

4.3 Roles of Mamas

The all-women caretaking staff at Furaha have various roles throughout the orphanage. Home mothers are the women that are most directly caring for the children: feeding, bathing, clothing, and supervising them throughout the day. Others are responsible for the laundry, for cooking, and for cleaning, respectively. While the home mothers have the most contact with the children during the day, all of the mamas are able to take specific children as their own, and I was especially interested in seeing how non-home mamas exemplified care work in ways that transcended direct contact with the kids, which I will now illustrate.

The mamas tasked with laundry were working continuously throughout the day, as the children's daily schedule included 4 changes of clothes: they dressed for classroom time when they awoke in the morning, changed into nap clothes after they ate lunch, dressed for outdoor playtime after their afternoon nap, and changed into pajamas after their dinner and bathing routine. When spending days with the laundry staff, I was confused as to why they spent so much time hand washing clothes before putting them into the industrial laundry machines that had been donated by charitable organizations in recent years. Mama Lucy, Mama Barbara, and Mama Isaiah would rotate their duties of hand washing the children's clothes, hanging them to dry on the clotheslines and gates scattered across the property, and folding and sorting every piece of clothing by size, but regardless of who was in charge of which respective task, they were equally meticulous in their technique.

Hand washing the children's clothes was a particularly taxing activity and took place in a very small room where no more than 2 people could fit comfortably at any given time. The floors were tiled, and a long, deep sink with a barrier in the middle separating it into two was the only item filling the room. When Mama Lucy was tasked with washing duties, she would fill up one side of the sink with water and Ariel detergent and soak as many pieces of clothing as possible. On the other side, she would rhythmically scrub one item at a time. While it would have been more than understandable if she treated every shirt or pair of trousers the same, quickly rubbing them together with her hands before depositing them in the industrial barrel that sat on the left side of the sink, Mama Lucy was far more careful in her washing. Despite throwing all the clothes into the washing machines after her initial job, she would study each piece of clothing with the utmost care, looking for stubborn stains that needed extra attention. When such a stain presented itself, she would get a brush, dip it in the soapy water where the as yet untouched clothes were soaking, and rub the brush back and forth vigorously to remove the blemishes. The more mornings I spent with Mama Lucy, trying and more often than not failing to assist with the laundry duties, the more I realized that this was not a mindless activity of muscle memory. On one such morning, when I was scrubbing a pair of jeans, she watched my efforts out of the corner of her eye as she was washing another item of clothing. Despite my thorough washing of the legs, she was dissatisfied with the job I had done, as the child who previously wore the jeans must not have been tall enough to comfortably fit in them. Seeing the dirt around the hemline, she brushed the bottom of each leg until there was nothing but clean, blue denim remaining. She was making sure that every child who wore the clothes that she touched looked clean and presentable.

Women who worked in the kitchen were likewise busy throughout the entirety of the day. Mama Inid, Mama Annette, and Mama Grace alternated their tasks of cooking for their fellow staff

members, making meals for the children, mixing porridge for the babies and toddlers, as well as preparation work, which included peeling Irish potatoes, sorting and cleaning beans and rice, peeling *matooke,*[58] and chopping onions and tomatoes. The physical conditions under which the kitchen staff worked never ceased to surprise, and admittedly trouble, me. The kitchen was a small, self-standing building in the back of the orphanage, with a wall in the center of the building separating it into two sides. At any given time of day, there were charcoal and wood fires burning on both sides of the kitchen filling the building with smoke, and when temperatures rose during the dry season, it became unbearably hot inside. As with the women who worked the laundry, the kitchen staff were also detail orientated in their cooking tasks, ensuring the food they cooked for each other and for the children was as high of a quality as their ingredients allowed.

A kitchen task that became a part of my daily routine was sorting dried beans for the staff's lunch. When I first saw Mama Inid sorting beans, it seemed as though it was nothing more than busy work, a rather mindless task that did not require much concentration. Yet, my initial efforts quickly made me realize that it was a task that needs careful consideration, and is absolutely one that falls under the category of care work. With a plastic pail filled with beans at her feet, Mama Inid dumped 2 or 3 cups of beans onto one side of a plastic tray. She would then push with her fingers the unblemished whole beans to the opposite side of the tray, while plucking any stones, sticks, leaves, or "bad ones" that she deemed inedible and throwing them into a dustbin beside her. Working her way through the entirety of the beans, she then dumped the sorted beans into the large aluminum pot that would serve as the place where the beans would be washed and cooked. She repeated this process until the entire pail was empty, which could sometimes take upwards of 2 hours.

[58] Green bananas that boiled and serve as the staple starch for Western and Central Uganda

While the children had a variety of meals throughout the week, which included fish, rice, *matooke*, and groundnut sauce, the mamas had the same lunch every day. As I settled into a daily routine at the orphanage, I would share their daily meal of *posho*[59] and beans with the women, and they would joke that I could eat such a large helping of *posho* because of the time I had lived up North in Karamoja.[60] Though the women ate without complaint, those from the Western and Central regions of the country would often voice their preference for *matooke*. I understood their desire for a different dish, as the redundancy of the lunch did not leave much room for excitement over the food. Yet, when Mama Grace took her month-long leave and a home mother was asked to help with the kitchen throughout the duration of Grace's absence, there was suddenly a universal desire for Mama Grace's version of *posho* and beans. Mama Rebecca, a home mama who was called in to cover for Grace, did not possess the same level of skill in the kitchen, and she was obviously self-conscious about her cooking. In her first days as a cook, she was looking for approval from those of us who ate her lunch, but it was difficult to give her an enthusiastic reply. Day after day, mamas commented on her mistakes: instead of frying onions and tomatoes and boiling the beans only after cooking the vegetables as the dish's base, she would simply boil the beans on their own, rendering them flavorless. Without a vigorous stirring of the maize flour as it was added to the boiling water, the *posho* became lumpy and overly dry and hard. On a particularly bad cooking day, Mama Rebecca had added salt to neither the beans nor the *posho*. In the dustbin behind the orphanage, there were mounds of uneaten *posho* and beans, which women attempted to hide under biscuit wrappers so as not to offend her.

[59] At the orphanage, *posho* was ground cornmeal, but it can also be made with sorghum. Though it is eaten throughout the country, it is the preferred starch of most people from the North

[60] See Chapter 3 for a discussion of food, bodily changes, and ethnic identification

The women who laundered the children's clothes and cooked their food did not have time to physically engage with the children often, and the places where they had to work were separate from the classrooms and front yard where the kids spent their time throughout the day. To volunteers and visitors, so many of whom passed by the busy orphanage on a daily basis, the kitchen and laundry staff were largely invisible and their labor unacknowledged. While ethnographic work has often focused on individuals' homes as a site of care, with Block (2014) convincingly arguing that it is impossible to know the extent of kinship and care that takes place within a home without being a part of such an intimate network of care, I argue that Furaha should be seen as both an institution and as a home. For most of the women working at the orphanage, these two categories blur into one another, as many lived on the premises of the children's home. Set behind the main building up a short but steep hill are three 2-room dwellings where the women stay, either to save money on transportation costs, or, more often, because they come from different districts or regions throughout the country. On their off days, the women were within eyeshot of the children, and the kids greeted them as they washed clothes, cooked, or gardened. Leaving their work at home, as the Western saying goes, was not possible. Work was home, and vice versa.

4.4 "How can we care for children when our own children are dying?": Teacher Phoebe

Teacher Phoebe Lwanga had been promoted in the two years that lapsed in between my first and second visits to Furaha. Initially a home mama who was known for her work ethic, charisma, and skilled handling of the children, in 2018, one of the classroom teachers left Furaha for a job at a government school. After putting out a call for applicants, the orphanage's proprietor, Barbara Musisi, explained to Phoebe that they could not offer a very competitive salary, and so the applicant pool for the job did not present many qualified candidates. Because Phoebe was so

skilled with the children, Barbara offered her the position on a trial basis despite her lack of educational qualifications, and Phoebe quickly proved herself to be a worthy preschool teacher, though her lack of education made her a target of jealousy and suspicion from the other mamas who had been working at the orphanage for decades without ever receiving a promotion.

Teacher Phoebe was still referred to as Mama Nicole[61] by other mamas when I arrived in June of 2019, despite Nicole leaving the orphanage to be reunited with her biological uncle at the beginning of 2018. The persistence of this title is a testament to the relationship she had with her daughter, and Phoebe did empirically have a special relationship with Nicole. I saw their relationship when I stayed and worked at the orphanage in 2017, and every evening after the children's bathing routine, Phoebe and Nicole performed a special choreographed dance together as Phoebe dressed her in the warmest pajamas that she had specially picked out. Normally shimmying, clapping, and spinning around before collapsing into a hug while being changed, Nicole would search for Phoebe any time the latter happened to have an evening off, or was busy in another part of the orphanage and unable to attend to the nightly bathing and changing routine. When this happened, Nicole would whine persistently before finally relinquishing control to one of the more forceful mamas, who would demand she dress for the evening without any more fuss or fanfare.

Phoebe was also selfless in ways that transcended the ordinary with Nicole. The orphanage regularly receives donations of biscuits and soda, and these are distributed to the children during their afternoon playtime. The biscuits received are normally standard glucose cookies that are also provided to the workers to have with their tea, but one day during the summer of 2017, the home

[61] As is the case when women give birth to a child, when a woman at Furaha takes a child as her own, her title can change to the mother of that particular child. At Furaha, however, this was usually reserved for the most dedicated mothers; for example, Mama Isaiah, one of the women who worked in the laundry room, maintained the name of her biological son rather than the son she had at Furaha

mothers were excited to discover a donation of hazelnut filled pirouette cookies. Because there were too few cookies to distribute to all of the children, the mamas decided to only give these special treats to the very oldest children, and took the remaining sweets for themselves with permission from the nurse, who is in charge of donations. With the redundancy of life the same at Furaha as it is in any other workplace, this change of routine put all of the mamas in jovial moods that morning, as the accompanying sweets made their tea all the more enjoyable.

During afternoon free time, some of the mamas distributed the pirouette cookies to the very oldest kids, but they did not seem to have the same excitement as the mamas over these new, fancy cookies. They treated them as they would have any other biscuit, and none of the children asked for more or expressed extra satisfaction over having had a treat that the younger kids were deprived. Nicole was one such child deprived of tasting the cookie, as she was still only 2 years old at the time. A bit disappointed by the reaction of the kids, I walked over to Phoebe and chatted about nothing in particular. When Nicole came near us, Phoebe called her over and Nicole sat on her lap. Letting her know she had something special for her, Phoebe pulled a cookie out of her apron and gave it to the girl to enjoy. Perhaps she just liked the taste more than the older kids had, or perhaps it was Phoebe making it seem as though she was letting her in on a special secret, but Nicole ate the cookie with what I only feel comfortable describing as delight. After receiving a second cookie from Phoebe, Nicole ran off, eager to eat her special treat in front of her age mates, who looked on with envy. This type of giving was typical behavior for Phoebe and Nicole, and while the other mamas also treated their own children qualitatively different than the others, Phoebe made sure anything extra she received, Nicole also benefited from.

Fast forwarding to September 2019, over a year after Nicole's departure from the orphanage, when a days-old baby girl was admitted to Furaha, Teacher Phoebe quickly claimed

her as her own. This was the first child she had taken since Nicole's departure, and Phoebe relished the opportunity to have another girl to pay special attention throughout her days. Despite the baby being too young to sneak snacks or dance with, the care she provided her littlest daughter was obvious and intense. With the baby cradled in her left arm one day, I came across Phoebe frantically searching through the drawers in a dresser in the infants' room. Seeing me, she explained, "I am looking for the hand socks." I looked down at the baby in her arm and realized that Phoebe had dressed the baby as if the temperatures were sub-zero. She had on two sweaters, fleece pants, thick socks, and a winter hat, and Phoebe had a blanket over her shoulder that she wanted to wrap the baby in after finding the "hand socks". Phoebe was concerned because the baby had a cough, and was making sure her body was kept warm enough to fight off the cold she seemed to have caught.

Phoebe was also attentive in even more minute ways. As a home mama was changing the baby's diaper one day, Phoebe came over to inspect the work. She explained to the other mama that they had to be more careful when changing the baby's diaper, because she was suffering from some sort of rash. In order to save the resources they have, the home mothers who care for the infants do not use disposable wipes when changing diapers that contain only urine. Phoebe said that a wipe needed to be used every time in order to ensure her daughter was kept clean enough to stave off any potential bacteria. When the home mama protested, as there was no obvious rash or irritation, Phoebe pointed to a tiny spot that seemed to be slightly discolored, and was so worried about the baby's potential discomfort that she called the nurse over to give her medical opinion on the matter. The nurse did not think there was anything wrong and agreed with the home mother that the baby was just fine, but Phoebe was undeterred in her insistence that her daughter needed extra care. For the next few days, at scheduled changings, Phoebe would come over to the infant

room and change her daughter herself, using a disposable wipe every time despite the looks of judgment cast by the other mamas.

Though to the administrators and volunteers Phoebe was one of the most attentive teachers and caretakers, the loyalty she always showed to her work was tested when her biological daughter, Purity, was suffering from fibroids. This was not a mild case; Purity had been suffering since the birth of her 3-year-old daughter, but because it was not deemed an urgent case by the doctors that had seen her, she was forced to deal with the pain. When the pain became unbearable in November 2019 and Phoebe took Purity to a private clinic to see what could be done, they said the surgery would cost 2 million Ugandan shillings. How Phoebe would ever be able to afford such a surgery on a meager salary of 300,000 shillings per month, she did not know. Noticing a change in her demeanor one Monday morning, I asked her what exactly was going on, and she explained the situation at home. Phoebe lived on the premises of Furaha during the week to save money on transportation, but she was also the primary caregiver to three biological children and two grandchildren. She rented a room for them in the Wandegeya neighborhood, and slept there with them on the weekends. Explaining the pain her 26-year-old daughter was in when she left her earlier that morning, Phoebe said she had no choice but to bring her to Mulago, the largest government-run hospital in Kampala, that very day.

Because presidential elections were coming up in February 2021, Phoebe hoped that the people at Mulago would treat her daughter for free as government-run hospitals are technically meant to do. In an election year, the women at the orphanage explained, the government tried to be kinder to its citizens; in ordinary years, you had to provide bribes in order to get proper treatment, and with the salaries provided by the orphanage, Phoebe could not afford to offer anything to the doctors or hospital staff for preferential treatment. Afraid of being punished or

even terminated for asking for time off to help her daughter, Phoebe asked the other two teachers to cover her class for her while she took Purity to the hospital.

When the doctors saw Purity and looked at the results from scans they had ordered, they admitted her to the hospital immediately and said she needed surgery. For the next 5 days, Phoebe stayed with Purity at the hospital and waited. Every day, they were told that they could expect the surgery to take place that very day, and every day, they were forced to wait as more pressing cases were resolved. Women who came in days after Purity, and in conditions that at least outwardly appeared to be less severe, were having their procedures done and leaving the hospital while she was stuck on the same bed for days. In reporting this to me, both Phoebe and the other women at the orphanage felt that this was unfair, and that the real reason Purity's case was being overlooked was not the severity of the case, but the lack of money they had to offer the surgeon.

Regardless of whether their financial situation was the real reason for the lack of care Purity was receiving, the stay at the hospital was not easy. Phoebe had to provide food for Purity, and she was also mistrustful of the two other teachers who had agreed to cover her classes for her. In the middle of the week, when Purity was still admitted at Mulago, Phoebe appeared at Furaha looking exhausted and frazzled. She explained to me that she was there because Teacher Jackie had called her and said that Barbara, the proprietor of the orphanage, was inquiring about her whereabouts. Rather than trust her co-teachers to convey the urgency of her daughter's condition, she came to the orphanage herself to relay the current situation. Though Barbara seemed to be sympathetic, Phoebe was worried her absence could be used against her somehow.

At long last, Purity was finally taken to the surgical gallery at the week's end and Phoebe was thrilled that her daughter's pain would be alleviated. She was told that they were doing a procedure to remove the fibroids from her uterus, which were causing stomach pain, back pain,

and very heavy bleeding every month. But, the elation quickly faded when the doctor consulted Phoebe after the surgery. When they cut Purity and began the operation, the doctor explained that the fibroids were very large and more severe than the scans had even indicated. They were covering her entire uterus, and ultimately, they made the decision to perform a total hysterectomy, which was the only guaranteed solution to her problems. At 26, she would never have another child. It was not an outcome they had been prepared for.

After the surgery, Purity was sent home to recover. In their rented room in the Wandegeya neighborhood of Kampala, it was not easy for her to rest. Her 6-year-old son and 3-year-old daughter were being looked after by her younger sister, 16-year-old Grace, who had to stop going to school in order to take over as caregiver. Having had an abdominal hysterectomy, Purity's scar was at least 6 inches long, and the thick stitches that ran vertically down her stomach were being tested every day. An abdominal hysterectomy is an invasive surgery from which it takes 6-8 weeks to recover,[62] but her living arrangement did not allow her to avoid certain physical activity. Their room was one of several in a long concrete dwelling, and there was a very large step down to get into the room; I, for instance, could not step down without assistance, and every time Purity had to leave the room, she was straining herself. She had to go up and down any time she needed to visit the outhouse that was shared among all of the building's residents, and she also had to leave the room to bathe and wash the site of the incision to keep it clean. Living in close quarters with other people, and just steps away from a number of shops and food vendors, there was never a moment of silence, and smoke from charcoal cooking fires just outside their door would often fill the room.

[62] From the UK's National Health Service: "A hysterectomy is a major operation. You can be in the hospital for up to 5 days after surgery, and it takes about 6 to 8 weeks to fully recover." "Overview: Hysterectomy." *NHS*, February 1, 2019.

Teacher Phoebe saw the concerned look on my face when I visited her and Purity the weekend after the surgery, and she asked, “How can we care for children when our own children are dying?” Phoebe was one Furaha employee whose devotion to the kids was unquestioned, by fellow mamas, administrative staff, and volunteers. Despite her attachment to the children at the orphanage, she relayed frustration that her job did not pay her enough to care for her biological daughter, and in fact did not even pay her enough for her to travel from Namirembe to Wandegeya every day so she could care for her after the surgery. The orphanage’s proprietor did not offer her an advance on her paycheck, nor did she offer to advocate on her behalf to the board members in an attempt to pay for better care for Purity. Instead, Phoebe had to rely on her 16-year-old daughter to perform all maternal duties to her older sister, niece, and nephew. And, while Barbara seemed to be perfectly sympathetic to the plight of her employee when confronted with its severity, she never offered her any additional time off. Phoebe also suspected that her living situation was hampering Purity’s recovery, and she worried the wound would become infected or reopen because of all the walking and straining. She felt she had no choice but to send Purity to the village where her mother lived, so Purity could get some proper rest and not have to deal with the chaos of their Wandegeya neighborhood. Throughout the difficult days of recovery and follow-up appointments, Phoebe diligently came to work every day and stayed on Furaha’s premises during the week, but her interactions with the children in her classroom were noticeably different. Before the incident with Purity, Phoebe was the only teacher who seemed to have actual lesson plans for the smallest children. She would spend one day teaching them how to throw and catch a ball, other days focusing on colors and shapes, and sometimes she would count objects in the room with them. During the weeks following Purity’s surgery, such organization was totally absent from her classroom.

After sending Purity to the village 2 weeks post-surgery, Teacher Phoebe's focus at work was still not what it once had been. While she was perfectly cheerful to the children, she did not have a structure to the hours that the kids were in her classroom. Instead, it was all free play, all of the time, with one important exception: her daughter. Infants are not permitted in classrooms until they can sit comfortably on their own and pick up toys and other objects, and Phoebe's daughter was still only 2 months old when Purity fell ill. She was not strong enough to sit independently, and was too young to interact with the other kids in Phoebe's classroom, but Phoebe insisted that her daughter join her in class every day in order for her to get a head start on learning. Before Purity's surgery, she never took her daughter into class with her, but in the days that her biological daughter was away in the village, she said that she needed her other daughter by her side. She did not simply take the infant to class and lay her down as Phoebe interacted with the older children, but she was actively engaging her the entire time. Any time she interacted with the other children in her class, it was through her daughter, asking the older kids to show her their toy, kiss her, or teach her how to sit and walk. Phoebe was constantly making sure her daughter was comfortable, while simultaneously ensuring she was being challenged in ways that would make her physically stronger in preparation for when she would be in the classroom by herself. She was putting her in a walker before her legs could reach the ground, sitting her against the wall surrounded by stuffed animals to cushion her inevitable falls, and having the older children support her when 'sitting' in the middle of the room. When the baby was tired and needed a break, Phoebe would put her in a swing to sleep, but never took her back to the nursery where she was meant to be. Despite her voicing frustration that her work was preventing her from properly caring for Purity as she recovered from such a life-altering surgery, Phoebe's obligation to her newest, youngest daughter strengthened. She could not take care of her biological daughter as she wished, but she could

remain firmly committed to her baby daughter in her home away from home. In this way, her bond with her child at the orphanage was as much aspirational as it was contentious (cf. McGovern 2012); without the ability to ease the pain of her natal daughter, working to be a dutiful mother for the baby allowed her to at least partially fulfill her maternal obligations.

4.5 Attempted Refusal: Mama Jacinta

"How come the past tense is always longer? / Is the memory of a song the shadow of a song or is that too much?" – Ocean Vuong, "Beautiful Short Loser"

Mama Jacinta's life is as complicated and cosmopolitan as Kampala itself, and her eventual refusal to take children at the orphanage as her own is likewise mirrored by her experiences with her biological children. Having first met Jacinta back in 2017 the first time I conducted fieldwork at Furaha, it was clear that she was assertive and bombastic, and this made her a rather controversial figure at the orphanage. With her biological children and permanent home based in Luweero, a two-hour taxi ride from Kampala, she lived at the orphanage throughout her working days. Both her coworkers and the various volunteers at Furaha were divided in their assessment of Jacinta, a home mama whose maternal instinct was not among her most obvious traits. Some saw her as a source of life and laughter, while others were less fond of her strong personality. A complaint that many white, international volunteers repeated to me was that she did not seem to know the name of every child at the orphanage and instead would call individual children by saying, "*Gwe! Gwe!"*[63] While the "tough love" style that a number of workers displayed was an evergreen concern for the Americans and Europeans that were volunteering on the premises, Jacinta seemed to bother them further still because of her lack of connection to most of the children.

[63] Luganda word for 'you'

Thus, when she would pry babies away from volunteers' hands because she worried they would be spoiled and cry to be held too much, she was not a favorite among the young women who felt it their right to do as they pleased.

But, Jacinta was warm, hilarious, and fiercely protective of the people she chose to keep within her circle. A Karimojong woman who left the region when she was a young mother, she was excited that I had previously lived in her home region, and was always quick to exclaim the Karimojong greeting to me, "*Ejoka*, my sister!" Whenever there was a celebration at Furaha that involved the sharing of cake, Jacinta would search for me and insist that I take a slice. One day, when one of the children had a sendoff celebration because they were being adopted, she found me when I was sorting beans and put pieces of cake directly into my mouth despite my objections. Mama Alice, a Muganda woman who was one of the people endeared by such tactics, saw this in passing and laughed, saying, "Look at this Karimojong woman!" Her ethnicity seemed to explain her larger than life tactics for her friends and her foes alike, as it was referenced daily by the other women whenever she acted in a way deemed outrageous by the others.

Like the other mamas, she also had chosen children that she considered her own throughout the years. In a strong departure from the way she treated the other boys and girls at the orphanage, her children received special treatment in the form of extra snacks, the bending of rules, and unending affection. In 2017, her daughter at the orphanage was a 2-year-old girl with wide, kind eyes and a temperament many commented was the exact opposite of Jacinta. The girl was shy and meek, and it took much time and effort to get a smile or any sort of reaction out of her. While Jacinta was quick tempered and unafraid to confront people who she felt wronged her, her daughter was not necessarily the victim of bullying, but she was often left without special toys or snacks because she was too timid to speak up if she was inadvertently left out. Some of the children

possess a charisma that make them among the favorites of many staff members and volunteers, but Jacinta's daughter was overlooked most of the time by both respective groups. She blended in with the background, and was forgotten in doing so. This made Jacinta an even more vocal defender and guardian of her daughter. When donations of biscuits and soda were distributed to the children on special days, Jacinta made sure her daughter received her fair share, and similar to Phoebe's treatment of Nicole explored above, could even be seen taking extra sweets to give to her later. She had been the mother to the child since the child's very first day at the orphanage, and even to those who criticized Jacinta's lack of care for every child commented on her fierce loyalty to her daughter.

At Furaha, the women's work schedule consists of 11 months on duty and one full month off. This allows women to travel to their respective homes, and all of the women take advantage of their month off to visit their relatives scattered across the country. When Jacinta's off month came at the end of the year in 2017, she had no idea that her daughter had made it to the top of the list of children to be adopted; it is rumored amongst the mamas that the administrators purposefully keep such news from them because they worry about the possible consequences of the women loving the children too much. She was traveling up north to Karamoja when Mama Babirye called her to tell her they were taking the girl away, and Jacinta was forced to mourn the loss of her daughter without any sort of goodbye or closure. Whenever she spoke about the departure of her daughter, the theatrics of her voice and body language actually disappeared. Instead, her brow furrowed and she pursed her lips, remarking quietly over and over, "They didn't even call me to say goodbye to my baby." A white Canadian woman, Maureen, who is a member of the Baptist church in Canada that established Furaha Canada, visits the orphanage annually and decided to sponsor Jacinta's daughter after she was adopted, paying her school fees and for all of her medical

expenses. Every time Maureen visits Furaha, they arrange for her to take a trip to see Jacinta's daughter so that she can see the academic and emotional progress the girl is making, and how devoted her adoptive parents are to her care. Jacinta, of course, is not afforded such opportunities; the severing was final. It was inevitable that her daughter would eventually leave the orphanage, and it was impossible for her to adopt the child. Knowing these truths did nothing to lessen the emotional toll that her daughter's departure left on her. The severing of kin ties was amplified by the clear lack of respect on the part of the administration, who expect the employees to provide selfless care without trusting them with any information about the children with whom they spend every day.

But, this was not the first time Jacinta lost a daughter to an unknown place. While she was still a teenager living in Karamoja, she gave birth to her two eldest daughters, the father of both a Karimojong man who was unable to provide the "modern" life that Jacinta envisioned for herself and her children. When a Musoga man who lived in Kampala came to her home as a guest of her uncle, she told him that she aspired to leave Karamoja and go south to the city to earn money. Though this is not an uncommon refrain all over the country where rumors of the riches that can be made in Kampala circulate, the man took Jacinta seriously and offered to take her to his home and help her find a job. She asked if she could bring her daughters along with her, and the man answered affirmatively. Her uncle knew the man, trusted him, and approved. It seemed too good to be true.

When they arrived in Kampala, the man's true intentions were revealed. He forced himself on her, and legally married her. He forbade her from making friends and strictly limited her time away from the house. With him, she had two more children but any sort of upward mobility seemed beyond her reach, and as the years passed, she thought of ways to gain her independence. Because

she did not have the knowledge or connections to navigate Kampala, the man she married had total control over her and her children's lives.

Having been born and raised in Karamoja with her mother and siblings, the only thing she knew about her father was that he was not a Karimojong man. Despite the lack of information, she decided finding her father might be the key to gaining the sort of financial independence that she had originally left Karamoja to earn. After speaking with her other family members and doing a bit of detective work, she found her father, a Teso soldier who was in the later years of his life by the time she met him. Immediately accepting her as his daughter after recalling his affair with Jacinta's mother, he was eager to make up for the years he was not present for her, and she revealed to him the intricacies of her journey away from home. He encouraged her to leave her husband and not to return up North, but to find a place she felt comfortable away from the city, as her father believed it to be impossible to cultivate a good life in Kampala. By that time, Jacinta agreed with that sentiment, and even when she was working at Furaha, she would often talk about the dangers of working in the capital of "Bagandaland" and would leave Furaha's property whenever she had two consecutive off days. Eventually, she settled in Luweero and her father left her enough money to buy land and build a permanent home for herself and her children. She cultivated a garden and became embedded in her new community, and her children exclusively spoke Luganda, not understanding their mother when she spoke on the phone in Ngakarimojong with her relatives up North. While she would joke that her children were "lost" and had never even accompanied her when she visited her mother or sisters, there was also such relief that her children had the comforts of schooling and a home. The climate and lifestyle were far removed from what Jacinta experienced during her own childhood, and she took the easier life she was giving her children as a mark of success.

Her husband, however, was not going to let her live such a comfortable life without a fight. He found her home in Luweero, and began showing up often, claiming the land as his own and threatening to sue her if she did not compensate him or relinquish the land to him. Jacinta would call the police so often when he arrived in a violent, frenzied state that they stopped showing up, deeming her complaints to be nothing more than private domestic incidents between husband and wife that did not need intervention. One evening, after showing up in a fit of rage, he went into Jacinta's eldest daughter's room and raped her.

Unable to cope with the assault or stay in her home where she knew her rapist would return, Jacinta awoke to a note left by her daughter. Years before her daughter at Furaha was taken without even a goodbye, Jacinta's eldest biological daughter had also left her without a chance for a final embrace. In her note, she told Jacinta what had happened the night of the assault, and explained that she was now off to Nairobi, Kenya, to cultivate a new life in a new country. She was 17, and Jacinta had not seen her since. Others have written about ghostly presences of family members no longer a part of homes (Carsten 2007), and Jacinta's home was no exception. She kept the small piece of paper with her daughter's handwriting, and it was nearly translucent from her fingers' oils wearing away at it. But, she simply could not put the note away for safe keeping. Touching the paper and seeing the note transformed her daughter from a ghostly presence to a material presence.

After losing two daughters, Jacinta decided she was done taking any more children as her own at the orphanage. Her refusal to name any child as her son or daughter was unusual, as even mamas who were not particularly attentive to their own children at the orphanage nonetheless named one or two as theirs at any given time. The lack of naming, a protection measure against losing yet another child, was not entirely foolproof, however. In 2019, it was clear that one little girl was her favorite. Jacinta could often be seen walking hand in hand with a 3-year-old girl, who

was so dissimilar to the daughter she lost back in 2017. This girl was spunky and self-assured, picking fights with the boys and stealing the favorite communal toys from the other girls. Witty, vocal, with wise but mischievous eyes, the other mamas labeled the little girl as being "clever but bad", and it seemed as though Jacinta was again attracted to a little girl who was not among the workers' favorites. After witnessing her favoritism, I accused Jacinta of breaking her self-imposed rule, telling her one day that the girl was her daughter. "That one?" Jacinta asked, disbelieving my interpretation of her affections. "You didn't know that one is a Karimojong? That one is not my daughter. She is my sister."

Jacinta knew that the spunky young girl was Karimojong because her biological mother often visited her. Like so many from the Karamoja region, the girl's parents decided to migrate to the city in order to earn money, which was difficult to do in the home they left, a neglected pastoralist region that is often talked about as being the most "backwards" in all of Uganda.[64] Very young and without a permanent home in the city, the girl's mother and father left the child at Furaha in order to find stable jobs and a home, but they made sure that their daughter always knew they were coming back to get her. Jacinta, then, did not feel pressure to be a parent to the girl, but was satisfied that she could develop a kin relation without setting herself up for the same sense of loss that accompanied her previous daughter at Furaha. Her Karimojong sister needed no protection from her, and any time she behaved wildly, Jacinta would say, "That one is a Northerner!" Knowing where she came from, Jacinta was confident the girl could take care of herself.

[64] To provide an illustration of the ways in which educated and middle-class Ugandans spoke about Karamoja: when a woman who was the head of a USAID project in Uganda came to the orphanage to volunteer some of her time, she spoke to me about the difficulties her country faced when it came to poverty alleviation and 'development', more broadly. She said, "We have a saying here: we cannot wait for Karamoja to develop". Whenever non-Karimojong in Kampala learned that I had lived there for several years, their first questions were inevitably, "What did you eat?" And "Are they all naked?" Both questions highlight the stereotypes of poverty and primitivity that are pervasive amongst non-Karimojong Ugandans.

Though Jacinta did not take the girl with the fiery personality as her daughter, her shared identity as a Karimojong in a country that was often hostile towards that particular group made her connected to her in ways that transcended the orphanage setting. *Musawo* Priscilla had acknowledged that her dark-skinned daughter was ethnically dissimilar from her, but she chose her as her own despite this; Jacinta's ethnic sameness with the 3-year-old girl did not necessitate a choice.

While it is not my intention to reinforce notions of ethnicity, the language of ethnic identification was ever-present and used daily in order to identify the children and explain the behaviors of particular workers. For Jacinta, in particular, this was always an issue and a site of contention. Her demeanor was constantly being read through her Karimojong ethnicity, and despite making her home at Furaha, she felt she could never fully trust the other mamas. Tragically, this suspicion was proven to be well-founded when her roommate reported her to the orphanage's director for stealing a tin of formula. Her granddaughter, 11 months old, was ill with malaria and unable to breastfeed for a week. The mother of the child, Jacinta's 16-year-old daughter, was having a difficult time keeping her milk supply up, so Jacinta wanted to bring home formula to ensure the health of her granddaughter. The proprietor fired Jacinta immediately for stealing donated goods from the orphanage.

The ethics of Jacinta's decision were defended and attacked by various mamas in the days that followed her termination. Those who were friends with Jacinta found her firing unjust, and explained to me that women take supplies from the orphanage all the time. "The ones talking the most, are the ones who steal the most," Mama Lucy reported to me the very day Jacinta was forced to leave Furaha. Teacher Phoebe, on the other hand, told me that she had been roommates with Jacinta a few years back, and she kept telling Jacinta to stop stealing so much from the donated

goods. Phoebe claimed that this type of behavior was an aberration amongst the mamas, and there was only one plausible explanation: the Karimojong steal everything.

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4.6 Conclusion: A Meaningful Life

Witnessing the conditions under which the women work every day, and knowing their monthly salaries, it is difficult to approach the topic of labor with anything other than a material lens. In addition to bearing witness to their work, the women also openly talked about their desire to find better employment despite some of the women having been employed there for over two decades. For many of the mamas, it was made plain that they would happily leave their positions at the orphanage for a better paying job when they discussed employment and salaries in everyday conversations with one another. When opportunities presented themselves, women did leave. Mama Grace, the cook who made the superior version of *posho* and beans for staff lunch, left the orphanage while I was there to go into business with her sister as produce vendor at one of the large markets in the city.

Yet, as I hope to have illustrated throughout this chapter, the care that the women employed by Furaha provide to the children housed there cannot be accounted for by material circumstances alone. Despite their meager salaries, they were not disconnected from their work or the children for whom they were caring. Likewise, I do not think that a Weberian analysis of the women's vocational pull is the most convincing argument for the labor the women are performing daily. They did not speak in a language that suggests they were called to care for the children at the

orphanage even when they invoked Christianity, but the relationships that they forge with their particular children offer a glimpse into the motivations for their work.[65]

Literature focusing on care work has thoroughly explored transnational inequities and ethnographically rendered the lives of international migrants. As I argued in the previous chapter, the migrant workers who move to Kampala are all on a shared quest for meaning, attempting to earn money to take care of their families. The women who work at the orphanage and other interlocutors in this dissertation are not transnational migrants, but the children's home nonetheless is a contentiously cosmopolitan site in which many women are not allowed to be fully 'home'. Furaha's location in Kampala is vital in understanding the ways in which other parts of Uganda are imagined, and how such imaginings affect the treatment of people from such places. Women's migration to the city has been a concern since colonization forced people to procure cash for taxes (Kyomuhendo and McIntosh 2006, 50), and the (in)ability for women to partake in 'virtuous' work continues to be an issue in everyday conversation in Kampala. But, the added layer of difference that women from the Northern and Eastern regions of the country face make the threat of betrayal from their coworkers real in ways that they argue are absent from their Baganda and Banyankole coworkers.[66] *Musawo* Priscilla's defiant defense of her daughter, whom she perceived as a Northerner, and her decision to take the baby on as her own, shows how such differences could be overcome. Yet, Jacinta's bond with her Karimojong sister also show how ethnic identification was

[65] As mentioned above, Furaha is an explicitly Christian organization. The language of providing "Christ-like love" for the children worked its way in to conversations that the mamas would have with me when I asked them about their work. However, the mamas never expressed the feeling that God had sent them to Furhaha; while their work was Christian in nature, it was not something that they discussed as being theirs alone to burden. Caring for orphaned children was talked about as something *everyone* should do.

[66] This is not to imply that the relationships between all Baganda and Banyankole women were collegial, nor to imply that stereotypes about these two respective groups do not cause friction between them. The tensions between these two respective ethnic groups is further elaborated in Chapter 2, which explores the strike of 2009. I would also like to again stress that 'Banyankole' often stood in for all people from Western Uganda, which was not appreciated from the women who came from Kasese and did not identify as such.

also a source of bonding, even when women were hesitant to provide care for fear of being hurt. In the orphanage setting, kinship bonds simply could not be formed without betrayal: all bonds were those of contentious kinship. Children were destined to leave them, but women still forged kin bonds with them, knowing that these bonds would ultimately be severed. The inability to live and work at the orphanage without creating kin bonds with the children is not an option, but a necessity, because life without kin is a life without meaning, contentious or not.

Chapter 5
The Shoe

Simon[67] had managed to bring Judith to our house one morning during rainy season when it was coming down so hard that the streets were nearly flooding. On such mornings, I always encouraged both Simon and Judith to wait until the rain subsided before making the journey to our place, but they often arrived on time despite my assurances, insisting that the rain's unpredictability made waiting a pointless endeavor. I, however, did not want to begin the journey to the orphanage during such a downpour. Despite my trust in Simon's driving abilities, traveling the roads of Kampala by *boda* was dangerous enough in even the best conditions, and the rain was an added hazard that I remained unwilling to risk. Our rainy-day tea ritual first mentioned in Chapter 3 was thus born out of my fear.

On this particular day, Judith entered the house before Simon and was so drenched that offering her a towel seemed insufficient, but I handed her one anyways, and she pressed it against her clothes in a doomed attempt to dry off. As I put the kettle on to boil water for tea, I saw Simon talking to the man who worked as the guard at our house, Joseph. Because the steady pace of the rain indicated that it was not going to subside for a long time, I called out to both of them and insisted Joseph join us for tea. I felt unsatisfied with the usual tea and biscuits on this dreary morning, so I decided to cook a proper breakfast with the ingredients I had on hand. Simon came into the house while I was chopping onions and tomatoes and worrying that I did not have enough

[67] This, along with every interlocutor's name in this chapter, is a pseudonym. Identifying characteristics have been anonymized.

eggs to feed everyone, but Joseph did not accompany him even though he had agreed to join us. Without proper rain gear, Simon's clothes had soaked up enough water to fill a small fish tank, and I was trying to convince him to wear some of my husband Quincy's clothes when Joseph finally entered.

In front of Judith, Quincy, and me, Joseph smiled broadly as he handed Simon a raincoat and galoshes. "Here, my brother," Joseph said gleefully. "Now, you have clothes for the rain."

Simon looked bemused while Judith laughed nervously.

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5.1 Suspicions of a Witch

Eventually, the rain did subside enough for Simon to drive me to the orphanage about two hours later. It was on the ride to Furaha that morning that Simon first revealed to me his suspicions about Joseph: he must be a witch. Simon explained that Judith entered our house before him that morning because Joseph pulled Simon aside and asked him if he would like to borrow some rain gear, which Simon accepted gratefully. Thinking he would give it to Simon while they were outside alone together, Joseph instead waited until there was an audience to witness his generosity. What other reason could there be for him to do such a thing, which Simon insisted was intentional and done to make Simon appear small, other than him being a witch?

There were a number of things about Joseph that were indeed unusual. As Chapter 6 will show in greater detail, different professions in Kampala are associated with particular ethnic groups, and the job of security guard was most often entrusted to people from Northern Uganda.

Joseph was not a Northerner, but a Muganda,[68] and he had worked for a number of years as a guard for the private residence where we stayed. The house we rented in Ntinda, Kampala, was on a property with four adjoining bungalows. With rent prices that were far too high for even middle-class Ugandans, the property's owners advertised the homes to wealthy Ugandans who traveled home for extended holidays and to expatriates who worked as NGO employees or missionaries. From the outside, it appeared as though the proprietor of the property employed Joseph because of his exceptional work ethic, despite not being a Northerner. While many security guards seem understandably bored throughout the mundane hours of their shifts, Joseph was always alert and diligent. If Quincy or I ventured off the property after dark to buy dinner or run an errand, Joseph would open the gate when we returned before we even knocked, as he watched out the small rectangular spy hole throughout the duration of our absences. He warned us which parts of the city were unsafe for foreigners, and when he had to work overnight, he stood upright and at attention, almost as if he were a soldier. Always with a cap on his head, I never saw him with his back hunched over, nor did I ever witness him leaning against the walls of the property. Though I rarely felt unsafe in the city before the COVID19 pandemic, his attentiveness made me wonder if I was naïve, if he knew something about the soul of the city that remained a secret to me. When he discovered that Quincy spoke Kiswahili, Joseph began communicating with him exclusively in the language, revealing himself to be fluent in the tongue that many Ugandans remain suspicious of because of its association with Idi Amin's military forces. Always jovial and eager to start a conversation with a flash of his smile, I nevertheless wondered about his background and assumed there were some demons haunting him. Where those demons came from, though, I hadn't the slightest clue nor did I have enough information to speculate.

[68] Muganda is a person from Buganda; Baganda is its plural form

In addition to guarding the property, Joseph often performed extra jobs for the tenants without complaint. When an American woman decided to keep hens in the yard for their eggs, Joseph was the one who taught her how to properly handle them. A skilled gardener, he also attended to people's flowers and vegetables when they took trips, and he kept the common grounds area immaculate. He did not stay in the guard's quarters alone, however. He had a preteen daughter, Fiona, who stayed with him in a cramped room, big enough for only a single mattress. Fiona attended a government school less than a kilometer away from the property and walked to her classes every morning. Though space was tight, boarding fees prevented her from staying on the school grounds during the academic year. Whenever school fees were due, which were perpetually a source of stress for working-class people in Kampala, Joseph would talk openly about the amount he needed to the tenants. Without asking directly, he was often successful in collecting money for these fees, especially after revealing just how little he was paid by his employers to sympathetic renters.[69] Explaining his concern that Fiona could not possibly succeed academically in a modern world without a computer to one tenant, he was gifted a laptop for his daughter and money for a course that would teach her how to use it. The Chromebook that an American woman gave to her instantly became her most prized possession, despite not having access to the internet.

Fiona was a constant presence on the property, but her mother's identity remained a mystery. Joseph never spoke of the woman who gave birth to his daughter, and Fiona herself claimed to have no memories of her. Fiona was long and slim and approaching puberty, and Judith questioned her learning abilities. While Fiona was perfectly personable, Judith claimed that she was not very curious, and she did not possess a lot of social grace. When the American woman who lived in the house next to ours tried to engage Fiona in conversation, it never lasted more than

[69] In multiple conversations, Joseph told me that he made 250,000 UGX per month (about 65 USD)

a few minutes, as Fiona gave one-word answers to the questions that were asked of her. She was also several years behind in schooling, but I had assumed that she was in a lower level due to years lapsing without Joseph being able to afford school fees. Judith, however, insisted something was off about her, joking that her mother must be a Musoga.[70] Without adult women in her life, Judith also complained that there were things that she should be learning as she entered womanhood, especially concerning hygiene and menstruation. Because Fiona was always in Kampala with her father, Judith began to question Joseph's parenting decisions, believing him to be an irresponsible father for not having his extended kin network be a regular part of Fiona's life. In any case, despite her seeming lack of magnetic personality, Fiona was not a small child anymore and lacked the innocence that inspires charity or salvation (Ticktin 2017; Abu-Lughod 2002). When tenants donated money or goods towards Fiona's schooling, they did so as much out of loyalty to Joseph as sympathy for his daughter.

Though the people who provided financial support to Joseph and Fiona may have been trying to help, this made him a target of jealousy and suspicion from the other staff members who worked on the property. After Fiona began her computer classes, the other employed guard, Nicholas, and the women who cleaned the housing units began gossiping about how Joseph could possibly afford such luxuries. Nicholas reported this to their employer, a wealthy woman named Angela from Western Uganda, who reprimanded Joseph immediately and told him that effective that very day, his daughter could no longer sleep on the premises. Joseph later told me that Angela accused him of begging from tenants, and also scolded him for monopolizing the guard's quarters that were supposed to be shared amongst him and Nicholas even though the latter never slept on the property. Fiona was not an employee, and therefore Angela demanded that she board at the

[70] A common, and unfounded, stereotype circulated in the city was that Basoga (singular: Musoga) were the least academically inclined ethnic group in the country. Ugandan comedians often make jokes at their expense.

school she attended. Adding insult to injury, the school required all of its students who boarded to stay on the premises at all times, unless granted permission to run an errand for the teachers. This meant that Fiona could no longer attend computer classes, nor could she keep her beloved possession with her at school.

It was clear that Joseph tried to utilize the network of expatriates and wealthy Ugandans who stayed at the property for his and his daughter's advantage, but because of his meager salary and the way his employers and coworkers treated him, I wondered why Simon was suspicious of Joseph. If he were a witch, it did not make sense to me why he would be a danger to Simon and not the people who were mistreating him. I was confused: was it not Joseph's coworker Nicholas who was the real witch, the one who kicked an innocent child off the property out of spite?

5.2 Witchcraft in the Air

"Witchcraft is ubiquitous. It plays its part in every activity of Zande life; in agricultural, fishing, and hunting pursuits; in domestic life of homesteads as well as in communal life of district and court; it is an important theme of mental life in which informs the background of a vast panorama of oracles and magic; its influence is plainly stamped on law and morals, etiquette and religion; it is prominent in technology and language; there is no niche or corner of Zande culture into which it does not twist itself." – E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande*

"For people here know well that when it comes to misfortune, anything is possible." – Adam Ashforth, "Reflections on Spiritual Insecurity in a Modern African City"

Geschiere's (2013) work on witchcraft reveals both its potency in everyday life and the problems that it poses for anthropological inquiry. The quote by Evans-Pritchard from his classic work among the Azande shows the very real danger of witches and witchcraft becoming a floating signifier, as Geschiere (ibid., xviii) warns us. In a far-removed setting from the English giant's field site, the rhetoric surrounding witchcraft in Kampala is not all that unlike the Azande. In

everyday conversation, it is deployed whenever people talk about something unpleasant, from mundane things such as being sold a bitter eggplant or rotten tomato at the market to momentous events with profound consequences, such as the presidential elections. I once asked a Muganda woman why someone would be motivated to bewitch another person, assuming there was some sort of logic to the accusations that were flying amongst the people I worked with during fieldwork. Instead of providing any clarity, she said that sometimes a person will bewitch another for no reason at all. If witchcraft is everywhere, if it is used to explain any illness, malady, or inconvenience that one must confront and some people go to witches for no good reason at all, then does it actually contain no power at all?

As I began to take seriously witchcraft as a phenomenon that deserved ethnographic attention, if nothing else due to the frequency with which it was referred, my first instinct was to conflate witchcraft with jealousy. However, my experiences at the orphanage where I spent many days during fieldwork quickly made me realize that such a straightforward connection was untenable. The caretakers at the orphanage often suspected others of stealing and openly disdained particular workers who seemed to have more money than them, but accusations of witchcraft did not come at expected times. For instance, when Mama Jacinta was fired, she placed blame on one caretaker whom she knew disliked her, but she never accused that coworker of being a witch.[71] Likewise, though many mamas did not find Jacinta trustworthy because of her ethnicity and were openly jealous of the property she owned because of the money inherited from her father, they did not call Jacinta a witch.

Jealousy was also not the primary factor in Simon's calculations of who was a witch on the grounds of the property where we stayed. Simon admitted that Nicholas was jealous of Joseph

[71] See Chapter 4 for a full description of the circumstances surrounding her termination and a greater examination of her life

because the latter had better relationships with the tenants and was able to profit from those relationships, but this jealousy was not enough to make Nicholas a witch. Fiona's eviction from the guard's quarters may have been done out of spite, but witchcraft? Nothing bad had actually happened to the girl, Simon said. It was bad luck for Joseph that he had to pay extra fees for boarding, of course, but both Fiona and Joseph remained safe, even if the girl had to temporarily forego her dreams of becoming a computer wizard. If jealousy was not always a motivating factor for calling someone a witch, the threat of a witch's powers was nevertheless always on the forefront of people's minds. The greatest effect of witchcraft, I would argue, is not the actual occurrence of an evil, but the inability to move about calmly in the world. It is not the force of the witchcraft that is most potent; it is the threat of deception, and deception can come from anyone, with or without jealousy. My decision to use the term 'deception' in describing witchcraft is meant to emphasize the *intentional* concealment of a witch's true intentions.

I must admit: Simon's revelation about Joseph made me uneasy. Adam Ashforth's (2000) account of his friend Madumo's experience of bewitchment is a remarkable feat in a number of ways, but I particularly appreciate his candor: "'What do you mean 'cursed'?' I spat, losing patience. 'What kind of bullshit is that? You've had bad luck? Everyone has bad luck sometimes,'" Ashforth snapped at his friend (ibid., 21). The direct confrontation with a friend who believes in curses leaves the reader without the slightest doubt of what the ethnographer thinks of such curses and witchcraft. Despite needing to take both phenomena seriously because of the profound effects they were having on Madumo, Ashforth juggles his own doubt with the total social fact of witchcraft in his field site. After taking us on a journey that is extraordinary in its ordinariness in so many parts of the world, I would agree with Ashforth's assertion that "the question of witchcraft involves something akin to a religious mystery, a matter for contemplation and spiritual action but

which defeats all efforts to comprehend in clear and distinct ideas" (ibid., 254). Despite my best efforts to keep some sort of researcher's objectivity, my feelings surrounding witchcraft diverged significantly from those of Ashforth. Like a devout Catholic who remains a person of faith regardless of historical or scientific evidence that contradicts the foundations of the religion, my time in Kampala had made me a witchcraft believer. Despite its mystery and incomprehensibility, I became convinced of its potency.

Writing about religious faith, Harding's classic work (2000) on Jerry Falwell and Christian fundamentalism also delves into the ways in which the ethnographer becomes intertwined with the cosmological systems she is studying. Harding's field site surrounded her with belief in God, similar to the ways in which Kampala surrounds one with belief in witchcraft. In the very first chapter, her experience of barely evading a car accident is illuminating: though Harding herself was not a practicing Christian, she found herself asking what God was trying to tell her through the almost accident (ibid., 33-34). Converting to Christianity offers those who believe the means to achieve everlasting life in God's kingdom, and the process forces people to consider how the Holy Spirit is speaking to them. A key difference between the religious conversions of Harding's interlocutors and the conversion to a belief in witchcraft is the roadmap offered by the former. For the Christians in Harding's ethnography, the road to salvation is predetermined and can be found in the Bible. For those who must contend with witchcraft, they are not trying to live life following Jesus for which they will be rewarded after death. Instead, they are constantly trying to evade evil in order to live in the present. Quotidian events like Harding's road incident are not interpreted as lessons to be learned from God; instead, an accident on the streets of Kampala could be the result of someone wishing evil upon you. What binds the two cosmological systems together, however, is the foundational and necessary role of belief. Put candidly, accepting witchcraft as not only

affecting society, but as an actual real threat in and of itself, changes the way one moves through the world. While it is true in any setting across the globe that people cannot know the true thoughts or intentions of others, the added burden of believing that another person's intentions can be mobilized by supernatural forces creates added layers of stress and suspicion.

In Kampala, the contentious cosmopolitanism of the city makes it so that "witch", or *omulogo* in the city's lingua franca Luganda, evades a satisfactory definition. This chapter makes an argument for the importance of deception, or intentional concealment, as foundational when thinking about witchcraft, but a more specific account is impossible as people have different ideas about what constitutes a witch and how witchcraft operates. Even when there is consensus that a person is a witch, there are often disagreements as to what that statement even means. Of course, the accounts of witchcraft even amongst people from the same ethnic group are diverse, but the different belief systems of ethnic groups from across the country coalescing in Kampala make it that much more difficult to grasp. For example, a Muganda woman insisted that there is no difference between a person who wants to bewitch someone and a trained witch. The former will seek help from the latter, and then the non-trained person will pay a witch for their services and will become a witch herself. Simon, a Munyankole, said that only trained witches possess power, and the people who seek their services will not be able to gain the witch's powers. For those from the North of the country like Judith, witchcraft is not something that is widely believed in their home regions, but many come to believe it when they move to Kampala.

The opaqueness surrounding the powers and possibilities of witchcraft add to the experience of uncertainty as people move throughout the city. When Ashforth (1998) and his two interlocutors attempted to make sense of *Inkosi ya Manzi*, the author emphasizes that the end of apartheid rule in South Africa added to the "spiritual insecurity" that was plaguing Soweto. After

its fall, people suddenly could not blame their misfortune on apartheid, forcing them to search for new reasons for their suffering. The end of apartheid did not mean the end of hardship, and thus the continuation of such hardship was taken as evidence of the efficacy of witchcraft (ibid., 61). For migrant workers in Kampala, the similar realization that moving to the capital city would not lead to the end of their financial precarity likewise led to many turning to the idea of mystery to explain their predicaments.

Because of certain idiosyncrasies in Joseph's demeanor and his refusal to talk about his past or Fiona's mother, I became unreasonably concerned about Joseph's intentions. As more information about his life was slowly revealed, certain characteristics made more sense while others became even more mysterious. Joseph disclosed that he was old enough to remember the Bush War that brought Museveni to power and had lived in the Luweero triangle during the fighting, which the very heart of violence and brutality between the NRA and Obote's military (Reid 2017). He recalled hiding with his mother and siblings in the bush during the fighting, and how they often went hungry. Yet even this revelation was opaque: did he maintain the mannerisms of a soldier in his current role as a security guard because he himself had eventually taken part in the fighting? More confusing was if and how this all connected to the present moment. Was he actively trying to harm Simon? Because it was clear that my relationship with Simon was much stronger than my relationship with Joseph, could that in turn make me a target of Joseph's witchcraft? As Ashforth did with Madumo, I asked Simon all of these questions directly, trusting him to tell me his version of the truth, which I hoped would also offer me some suggestions for how to protect myself. Of course, the often-called reflexive turn in anthropology rightly challenges us to always question the power dynamics between fieldworkers and their interlocutors, and though I trusted Simon and was very fond of him, I was not so naïve to believe we had an entirely

equal relationship. Yet, his insistence that a witch's power could affect anyone made me confident that he believed my concerns to be valid enough to be taken seriously. First, though, I needed to know: how do you know who is a witch?

5.3 What Makes a Witch: The Subjunctive Mood and Desire

Definition of *subjunctive*: of, relating to, or constituting a verb or set of verb forms that represents a denoted act or state not as fact but as contingent or possible or viewed emotionally (as with doubt or desire) – Merriam-Webster Dictionary

Long before Simon's accusations, I had been hearing about witchcraft whenever there was talk of Uganda's presidency. Uganda has had its share of authoritarian rulers who were unafraid to use violence in the name of state building. Perhaps most notorious is Idi Amin, whose reign remained on people's minds despite the passing of time,[72] but "the era from 1971 to 1986 can be seen to represent a veritable explosion of violent entrepreneurialism – both at the level of the state and beyond it", with the entire nation "the product of militarised claustrophobia" (Reid 2017, 79). The coups d'état and moments of violence that characterized this era, and Museveni's decades-long rule with no end in sight, made the people with whom I spoke skeptical of the electoral process in the country, to put mildly. Most of my interlocutors had never voted in an election, insisting their vote simply would not have an effect on the outcome of any presidential election. It was not only because Museveni would rig the election, though this allegation is widely accepted as fact. Beyond the integrity of the elections, the reason why voting did not matter was simple: Museveni is a witch. While the brutality of rulers like Idi Amin and Milton Obote was openly discussed, I never heard the term 'witch' or 'witchcraft' associated with them or their rule. Everyone agrees

[72] See especially Chapter 6

that the regimes were violent, but that violence is out in the open and never denied; they never tried to conceal their brutality. According to one man, a Muganda who worked as a private driver, what makes Museveni much more sinister than previous rulers is that he is just as violent, but you do not hear of the violence. Instead of ruling by brute force alone, the root of Museveni's witchcraft was in his *deception* as a peace maker.

I began to understand why Museveni was accused of witchcraft, but with him being the ruler of the nation, it still seemed too abstract to really grasp. Unfortunately for Simon, witchcraft would strike his family right around the time he began to distance himself from Joseph, providing me with a very close example of the workings of witchcraft and what qualified as such. The son of Simon's sister, a man named Edward whom Simon also considered and treated as his son, lived in Kampala with his wife. Edward met his wife, Janet, when he moved to the city. Edward was from the same village as Simon, in Ntugamo in Ankole, while Janet was a Mugisu[73] from Mbale district in Eastern Uganda. Simon was very fond of Janet, and it seemed from the outside as though Edward and she had a strong relationship, with each being respectful of the other while also comfortable enough to joke and show affection in public. Theirs was perhaps the most openly affectionate romantic relationship that I witnessed throughout fieldwork. Edward was apprenticing as a mechanic in town, while Janet sold produce outside of their apartment on a busy Kampala street. Though they did not have enough money to buy many luxury items, they always had enough for their bills and rent and did not yet have to worry about school fees for children. Their home provided shelter and stability for both of them.

Janet's pregnancy was thus met with a great deal of excitement and anticipation from the entire family and community. However, despite being universally liked because of her good-nature

[73] Mugisu (plural: Bagisu) is a person of Gisu ethnicity. Gisu people are concentrated on the slopes of Mount Elgon in Mbale district.

and kind demeanor, there was one particular neighbor who was not fond of Janet. They would often bicker because the neighbor also sold fruits and vegetables outside of her home, and she complained that Janet moved in and took many of her customers. Though both sold produce, Janet could not understand why her neighbor thought she was competition. The small space each women had and the limited availability of high-quality produce made it such that there were often days when people would come to Janet's shelves and not find the items they were looking for, and if the neighbor had been kinder, Janet would have happily recommended to customers to buy from her. Simon suspected that the neighbor did not actually care about business competition, but may have been envious of Janet's marriage, since the former lived alone.

As Janet approached her due date, she left Kampala to give birth in Mbale where she could be surrounded by her mother and extended family during the final days of pregnancy and first days of motherhood. A few weeks after leaving the city, she felt the pains of labor and delivered a healthy baby boy around 7 o'clock in the evening at a government hospital. Simon said this was an especially joyous birth, as everyone in their family had been having girls over the years. In fact, none of his sisters or nieces delivered a boy until this baby's birth. When Janet put the baby to her breast, he fed for several minutes before falling asleep. The new mother then fell asleep next to her son.

Just hours later, around 11pm, Janet woke up and realized it was time to try feeding her baby again. But the boy could not be awakened. He was not breathing, and despite being in a well-equipped hospital, there was nothing the doctors or nurses could do. The baby died.

It is perhaps predictable that the neighbor should reemerge in this story following such a tragedy. When Janet recalled the last weeks in her Kampala home before traveling to Mbale, she was searching for possible explanations for the death of her son. She remembered certain items

going missing from her home: a sock here, a pair of underwear there, a glove. But, more importantly, she recalled a verbal fight with the neighbor when the neighbor said, "You will never have children." A terrible wish upon anyone, the revelation was even more wicked because when the neighbor said this, Janet was already heavily pregnant. If witchcraft is, as has been stressed by ethnographers and others (Ashforth 1996; Kiguru et al. 2019; Whitehead and Wright 2004), tied to secrecy, what should one make of this direct statement? Is the neighbor herself a witch who spoke Janet's fate into existence before somehow intervening and doing harm to the baby? Or, did the neighbor take the clothing items that had gone missing in the house and give them to an unknown third person who actually possessed the powers of witchcraft?

The statement, "You will never have children," was not only uttered as a matter of fact; I would argue that it was also a wish. Grammatically, the sentence is not technically in the subjunctive mood in English. For it to be a true subjunctive mood, the sentence would have two clauses and would read something like, "I wish that you were to never have children." Though the neighbor's sentence reads in the indicative mood, which is the mood for expressing factual statements, Janet's visible pregnancy makes the neighbor's pernicious remark instead an expression of desire that ran counter to the facts, and therefore in the subjunctive mood. It is the desire that makes it evil.[74] Janet never bearing a child was already something that was foregone, which made a childless fate seem like an impossibility. If the neighbor were merely stating what she believed to be a fact before Janet's pregnancy, it would obviously still be cause for alarm should she later had trouble conceiving. But the intentionality behind those words forced her to question if there was an external force acting upon her at the very moment of their utterance. Even worse, the external force could act upon her child.

[74] See Kirsch 2022 for an example of how the choice of verb tenses, like grammatical moods, can have profound effects for those who speak/write them and those who hear/read them

Simon and his family did not believe that the neighbor was herself a witch, but that she must have taken the missing clothing items to someone who possessed the powers of witchcraft. The items behave like a "magnet", to use Simon's word, and powers can be harnessed to get to the owner through the items themselves. Yet, the witchcraft still needed the spoken words of desire to have an effect. It was not enough for the neighbor to simply visit a witch; she needed to follow the commands of the witch so that the witchcraft could be successful. According to Simon, it was critical for the utterance, "You will never have children" to be uttered by the person seeking to harm Janet's baby. Without the neighbor saying aloud her intention and wishing it upon Janet directly, the witch would not have been able to kill the baby.

Bridging the spoken wish of Janet's neighbor and the accusations of President Museveni being a witch, we can see that the potency of witchcraft comes from what is revealed and what remains hidden. In this way, witchcraft is of course connected to broader anthropological literature surrounding secrecy and risk:[75] though Museveni's powers as a witch come from his deception, that very deception is public knowledge and openly discussed. People do not view Idi Amin as a witch precisely because his killings were indiscriminate and done in the open. There were never any doubts as to what Amin's wishes were nor the violent force he would exert in order to make those wishes a reality. Museveni refuses to be open about his intentions and the violence he is willing to inflict, concealing his actions through silence or lies. Conversely, Janet's neighbor crossed the line from normal communication to conjuring witchcraft even though she openly expressed a desire because that very desire could not be realized without unknown malevolent forces intervening. The subjunctive does not cross the threshold to witchcraft when you know exactly how a person will pursue their stated desire, whether it is the leader of the country or an

[75] See especially Jones 2014 for an excellent literature review of these subjects

unfriendly neighbor. It becomes otherworldly when someone's intentions are clear, but the path to fulfilment requires spiritual intervention.

5.4 Witchcraft is Warfare

Throughout this dissertation, migrant workers moving to Kampala for economic purposes, and their eventual frustration when the city fails to provide financial security, is a recurrent theme. The details of the conflicts that plague many regions that migrants call home have been less present, perhaps in an unconscious attempt by me as I write this to push back against cliched narratives about "war-torn Africa". But truthfully, many of the migrants who come to Kampala in search of wage labor are leaving places that have experienced conflict and violence. Though the Northern region has received the bulk of attention and groups from that region are stigmatized in the nation's capital, people from other parts of the country have also seen repression and disproportionate government repression and killings. As previously discussed, Western Uganda is often equated with the Ankole kingdom and the Ankole ethnic group, of which President Museveni identifies as a member. Ongoing violence by the national government against the Rwenzururu kingdom is lesser known even to other Ugandans. The Rwenzururu movement, comprised of Bakonzo and Baamba dissatisfied with the consolidation of their ethnic groups and territories under Batoro rule, may have been formally disbanded as an armed resistance movements (Doornbos 2018). But, the significance of Rwenzururu cannot be underestimated, and there continue to be massacres of hundreds of people in the Rwenzori foothills to this day (Human Rights Watch 2018; Daily Monitor 2021; Nyeko 2019).

People coming from places with distinct histories of violence arriving in Kampala have a shared experience of the city, even if their previous experiences of violence are particular.

Following Thiranagama's (2012) account of civil war in Sri Lanka, though far removed from contemporary Uganda, I want to stress the ways in which the experiences of war have shaped migrants' lives *not* to flatten the complexities of the social lives and subjectivities of people. The differences in histories and experiences of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) for Acholi and the Ugandan military for Bakonzo, for example, make it impossible to make blanket statements about "war in Uganda", or the violence therein. However, the lives of migrants who had to navigate violent conflict are affected by it in profound ways, and these conflicts shape decisions that people are forced to make, including the very decision to move to Kampala.[76] In deciding to relocate, the relationships between them and the family they leave behind change, and new forms of kinship and sociality emerge. This is another example of larger politics entering the private domain of kin and family. Judith, for instance, moved to the city to provide for her daughter and insisted that the lack of opportunities at home in Lira could be traced to the government's conflict with the LRA, which she felt left the region "underdeveloped", to use a word of her own. But, the nostalgia for Lira and her decision to leave her daughter behind with her mother and sisters illustrate the ways in which war is never able to destroy the idea of a person's home.

Kampala is not a place of active armed conflict, but I would argue that the threat of witchcraft can also be studied "as a transformative social condition" the way Lubkemann writes of war (Lubkemann 2008, 1 as quoted in Thiranagama 2011). The threat of deception permeates every facet of life and is present in the decisions people make throughout their daily lives, and when things are mundane, the very ordinariness becomes oppressive. When there are actively harmful things in a person's life, it is possible to point to concrete reasons for one's precarity.

[76] As was shown in Chapter 2, moving to Kampala does not always guarantee an escape from violence. The dormant tensions between various groups in the city are always threatening to reemerge, such was the case in 2009 when the seemingly mundane decision President Museveni made to block the *kabaka* from visiting nearby Bugerere County led to city-wide, violent protests

However, in the absence of obvious, visible harm, it is necessary to search for other reasons for life's shortcomings. When witchcraft is everywhere, it transforms the ways in which people can interact: might this person be disloyal? The risks of disloyalty in this context transcend what we may think of as "normal". Being the target of gossip or being forced to work alongside an unreliable person is not the same as having to consider the possibility of bewitchment.

Both Geschiere (2003) and Sahlins (2013) write of witchcraft as being kinship's opposite. While kinship is the "mutuality of being" for the latter, witchcraft is antisocial. Yet, in Kampala, people forge kin bonds with one another despite its constant threat. In this way, witchcraft forces even more intense bonds, tested and maintained despite the lurking dangers that could be present in any person that you meet. Along with ethnicity, witchcraft works its way into people's intimate relations and forces contentious kinship bonds. In a world of witchcraft, the cost of refusing kinship is greater than the cost of cultivating it; if witchcraft itself is antisocial as Sahlins insists, its potency makes it so that people must rely on others to alleviate its threat and effects.

Geschiere's work challenges readers to understand witchcraft only as part of a triangulation with intimacy and trust: "the conceptual triangle of witchcraft, intimacy, and trust can only work if all three notions are seen as strictly relational; the poles of the triangle are themselves constantly shifting, and so to their mutual articulations" (33). I would argue that witchcraft is warfare precisely because of this conceptual triangle. When faced with conflict, Kelly and Thiranagama (2010) have shown the ways mistrust can have lethal consequences for those searching for enemies who are traitors to a national or ethnic cause. The search for an enemy who might betray you is also present in Kampala, where "spiritual insecurity" (Ashforth 1998) abounds as people grapple with a life that is often even more precarious than the one migrant workers left behind. In the following section, one will see that living and believing in witchcraft does not easily lead to

consensus as to who is to be trusted, and that for every intimate bond broken, equally important to consider are the bonds that are strong enough to remain.

5.5 Interlude: Fear and Suspicion Come Home

When we arrived in Kampala, my son, Gyata, was just 15 months old. He was quite large and agile for his age, so he was often mistaken for a toddler much older than his one year. As the months progressed, people sometimes questioned why he was not speaking or attempting to form words or sentences, but I never thought much about it, given that my husband and I were also late talkers. When he was around 16 or 17 months old, he began giving commands in Twi, the language of his father: "Dada, bra!" meaning, "Dad, come!" Gyata also began attempting to name some of his favorite things, such as "flower", "butterfly", "moon", and "giraffe". But, a few months later (which happened to coincide with the very time Simon suggested Joseph might be a witch), Gyata stopped talking, and I began to suspect something might be wrong.

Beyond the delay in speech, Gyata was a bit strange, though that perhaps is to be expected given that both his parents are anthropologists. He was terrified of masks or anything that appeared uncanny to him, and he did not like to look people in the eye. When there was a breeze and tree branches moved with the wind, he would watch them and shiver, as if viscerally feeling the shaking of the leaves. A big fan of puzzles and any toys involving bright colors and shapes, he never was attached to stuffed animals or dolls, and he never played pretend. All of these observations, I would later learn when we eventually returned home, are indicators that a child might be autistic. If we were in the United States at the time, a pediatrician would have likely noted these things and referred us to a specialist and Gyata would have begun seeing speech and occupational therapists before even his second birthday. In Kampala, however, people remarked upon Gyata's strangeness

with a great deal of affection and rather than try to make him behave in ways that were "normal", adults instead accommodated his quirks and found creative solutions to his demands. Whenever I expressed concern about his speech or behavior, people assured me that his differences need not be viewed as faults or limitations.

Despite these assurances, I couldn't help but think that moving Gyata to Kampala may have contributed to whatever it was that seemed to be bothering him. He experienced such profound changes at such a young age, and because I was in the midst of fieldwork, I was not able to be at home with him very much. The only full day that I had with him was Sunday, and I felt pangs of guilt to which any working parent can relate. Looking back, being in Kampala during this formative period in Gyata's life was a gift for which I am most grateful: he was surrounded by people who were not attempting to diagnose or normalize him, and he had a degree of freedom that is unimaginable for children in most places in the United States. He did not need to conform to his surroundings; people instead worked to make sure he was comfortable and safe. He had intense bonds with every one of the adults in his life, with each person having their own unique relationship with him. But still, every day that I woke up in the city, I wondered if the difficulties that I was experiencing were somehow being transferred on to him.

This was the context in which Gyata's shoe went missing from our home. He had a pair of rubber crocs, perfect shoes for the environment, and his favorite pair to wear. They were navy blue with a white stripe separating the body from the sole, perhaps more meaningful to me because they were a gift from my father's wife. I would think of home every time I put them on his feet, and he wore them so often that his feet looked speckled, as he had tan lines on the top of his feet that aligned with the classic holes on the tops of the shoes. The other footwear we had for him were not as sturdy, and because the crocs were entirely made of rubber, they could withstand water

without making him uncomfortable. This was particularly important because one of his favorite activities was puddle jumping, and even in the driest months of the year, he could be counted on to find small pools of water. One morning when I was getting him dressed for the day, one of his crocs was by the door where we always kept them, but the second shoe was nowhere to be found. A missing croc is not a cause for panic, so when Judith arrived for the day, I told her that I couldn't seem to find one of Gyata's shoes and asked her to please keep an eye out for it. Judith always kept all of Gyata's items immaculate and often arranged his clothing items, so I was confident that he would be back in his crocs by the time I got home that evening.

However, that day and for the next several to follow, nobody could find this shoe. In a setting void of witchcraft and the fears that it instills, perhaps this would be a mundane event. Truthfully, it was not a big a deal in practical terms. We had the means to purchase other pairs of rubber shoes, and it was not as if the boy had to be barefoot or was somehow being deprived; in fact, he was giddy to be able to go without shoes around the yard, as the direct contact of his feet on the ground provided a positive sensory experience for him. But because I had always been wary of Joseph, and because Simon put in my head that the man had the workings of a witch, I became obsessed. The stories people told involving witchcraft very often involved a missing item belonging to the person who was eventually bewitched, and I could not rid my mind of the possibility that Joseph had stolen Gyata's shoe for nefarious purposes. I then began to get irrationally angry: why would Joseph take Gyata's shoe and bewitch a boy who was still a baby, not even two years old? If he wanted to bewitch someone in the family, shouldn't it be the boy's parents? Of greatest concern at the time, was Joseph the actual reason why Gyata would no longer speak?

Judith's agitation over the situation was doing nothing to calm my nerves. During the days of the missing shoe, she could not rid her face of a concerned look, and her eyebrows and forehead never fully relaxed as she went about her day. She became extra vigilant about Gyata and never let him out of her sight, but she had a different suspect in mind: Nicholas. After observing Nicholas and (wrongly) assuming him to be a Munyankole, she said, "He is a witch. No human being can act like that. Those Banyankole, the majority are like that." Nicholas, who we would later learn was actually Mufumbira,[77] was openly rude to the other people who worked on the property, always with a textbook in his hand and apparently attending university. Judith and Simon could not understand why he was working as a guard if he could afford to attend university, as both described manual labor and higher education as mutually exclusive. Before the shoe incident, it was not rumored that Nicholas was a witch, but it was rumored that he was a spy for the Western woman who owned the property. After reminding me, as she did daily, that Museveni was a Munyankole, Judith reported to me that Joseph had told her all of the evil things Nicholas had done to him over the years. After being tipped 200 USD by a generous tenant a few years prior, Joseph invested in a weed trimmer and began to ask households and businesses in the neighborhood if they needed their lawns cut. He began collecting a modest additional income from this work and insisted to Judith that Nicholas had become very jealous of the money he was making. After a few weeks of building a customer base, he went to mow the grass for one of his clients and the motor would start, but the base would not rotate. He tried shutting the motor and turning it back on, but no matter what he did, he could not get the machine to work properly. Unable to cut the grass and therefore losing a day's pay, he came back home and opened the base of the machine to find a bolt jammed into a crevice, preventing it from turning. That very evening,

[77] Mufunbira is a person from the Bafumbira ethnic group (language: Rufumbira), concentrated in southwestern Uganda; they are a Bantu group related to Banynakole

he claims to have heard Nicholas laughing with the vendors outside the gate as he bragged to them about breaking Joseph's trimmer.

For Judith, this story was believable because she had already witnessed the evil ways of Nicholas: he had, after all, forced Fiona off the property and was "lazy", Judith's favorite adjective for him. With all the vigor of a Weberian capitalist, her idea of a moral person was a person who worked, so she had a soft spot for Joseph because of his tremendous work ethic. In terms of the shoe predicament, she was sure that Nicholas might use it to do harm to Gyata for his own gain, as he was too lazy to work to earn anything on his own. Her reasoning began to make sense to me, and yet another doubt was cast in my mind. Did I have the wrong witch? Were my initial instincts right, and was Simon the one who had the wrong witch in mind? How could I make sense of who is a witch and who is simply a bad person? If Joseph's story about Nicholas purposefully sabotaging his ambitions was true, and I had no reason to believe otherwise given the behavior exhibited by the latter, then perhaps I had been suspicious of the wrong person the entire time.

After an excruciating period of time, the shoe eventually emerged, but it only served to make my suspicions about the threat of witchcraft grow. Joseph was sweeping the compound in the late afternoon one day, right as Simon brought me home from work. Judith was gathering her things and preparing to leave for the evening when Joseph emerged from the backyard. Smiling the same smile as he did when he brought Simon the raincoat and galoshes, Joseph was holding his broom in one hand and Gyata's shoe in the other. "Look what I have found!" he said with a hearty laugh. The shoe was not in good shape, and Judith demanded that Joseph take her to the site where he had discovered it. He said that it had been against the wall in our backyard, which separated our yard from the adjoining property.

Joseph explained that the shoe, which was badly tattered, looked as it did because a rat must have dragged it away and eaten some of it. We had been having a problem with large rats in the compound, presumably because of the construction taking place on the road that was disturbing their habitat. However, I could not understand why a rat would drag off a rubber shoe, which was clearly not a food source; worse, Judith instantly switched her target of suspicion from Nicholas to Joseph. She pulled me aside and said that she searched thoroughly in the area where Joseph claimed to have found the shoe, and made me carefully inspect the markings on the shoe with her. She told me to look for any small pieces that look as if they have been cut off, as even the tiniest pieces could be used for witchcraft if it had touched Gyata's skin. "I just don't know who to trust in this Bagandaland," she sighed, clearly upset with herself for having been so sympathetic to Joseph, a Muganda. The poles of the triangle of witchcraft, intimacy, and trust had shifted. The trust she had for Joseph had been shattered, and the intimacy and admiration she had for him were also destroyed. For me, the inability to find a motive and the randomness of it all did nothing to ease my mind. Despite my husband's insistence that I snap out of whatever state that was forcing me to act in seemingly irrational ways, I was in a total state of "epistemic anxiety" (Ashorth 1998, 64) and relaxation was out of the question.

I was unable to sleep that evening, and on the ride to Furaha the following morning, I confided in Simon. I asked him if he talked to Judith about what might have happened to Gyata's shoe, but he would not give me a direct answer. Simon was never short on words, especially regarding his feelings towards Joseph, so his lack of candor was unusual and concerning. All he said was, "I have lived with many different tribes, and trust me, some people are liars." I continued to press him, but he just repeated the sentence and I became even more frenzied. In the same vein as Judith referring to "Bagandaland", Joseph's behavior was tied not only to witchcraft, but to an

entire ethnic group. With Baganda being the socially dominant group in Kampala, it would not be a difficult jump to conclude that their suspicions were due to feelings of resentment against the larger group that they believed wielded more power. Micro interactions and domestic politics are informed by larger sociopolitical concerns, and this was no exception. But the question remained: *why* would Joseph seek to deceive, and what could he possibly gain from trying to use Gyata's shoe for witchcraft?

5.6 Witches and Flags

Edward, the man whose baby died just hours after birth in Mbale, could not stand to be in Kampala after the death of his son. Since he was now a competent mechanic after apprenticing for over two years at a shop, he decided to move back home to his village in Ntugamo to open a small garage. Janet agreed that to remain in the city was impossible and was happy to move out West, returning after she physically recovered from childbirth to help Edward pack their belongings before permanently leaving the home they had built together. When Simon was helping them one day, the couple could not stop thinking about their neighbors and confiding in Simon about their suspicions. Immediately following the birth of the boy, Janet had fixated on the woman who competed with her for customers, but as more time passed, she was thinking more clearly and realized that there always had been witches near her.

When they first moved to the neighborhood, Edward and Janet insist that they were on good terms with everyone. A Ganda woman named Florence lived directly next door to them and ran a small hotel, making money by selling plates of posho and matooke to the workers in the neighborhood. Edward and Janet had both eaten there on several occasions, enjoying Florence's food and believing her to be their friend. But one day, after Janet was visibly pregnant, she had a

strange interaction when she went to buy lunch from Florence. Florence took her aside and said that she had witnessed Edward courting another woman who was much older than Janet, but assured Janet that she had the solution to her husband's lust for other women. Taking her into her home and opening a locked drawer, Florence pulled out a small plastic bag of herbs and told Janet to put them in Edward's tea that very night before he went to bed. If he drank the herbs, Florence promised that he would only have eyes for Janet for the rest of their marriage.

Because Janet and Edward had a strong, trusting relationship, she immediately reported the strange incident to him. She had taken the herbs so as not to offend Florence and even thanked her for them, but when Edward came come, they both agreed that they had to rid their home of the herbs at once. They threw them away and then made the conscious decision to never buy anything from her hotel ever again, not even crisps in sealed bags or unopened bottles of soda. It seemed as though she was trying to put a curse on their marriage, and so it was simply too risky for either of them to ingest anything that Florence ever touched.

Despite not buying lunch or other items from her hotel, the couple went out of their way to continue to greet and converse with Florence. Any time they passed by, they would try to engage her to keep the relationship free of tension, which was important given that they could not avoid her due to their proximity. As weeks passed, the neighbor continued to chat with them and acted as if nothing was wrong, and was especially friendly to Edward. Unprovoked, Florence stopped Janet one day as she was walking by her hotel. Calmly, she said, "You think you are carrying a prince, but it will never be." In the same vein as the woman who told Janet that she would never have children, Florence's utterance was a statement of desire. If witchcraft requires secrecy, the openness of the speaker's wish once again keeps concealed the method for making it a reality. This was the second case Janet remembered where a woman spoke to her desiring something that was

contrary to the facts, given that she was visibly pregnant when both wished childlessness upon her. Florence's wish was perhaps a greater offence, as Janet had tried to maintain a relationship with her and had considered her a friend before. Correctly identifying the gender of the baby also made the statement even more biting, and she wondered which woman was the one who stole the clothing items from her house for the purposes of bewitching her and killing her baby. Twice a victim of stated desires that would require malevolent intervention to become true, Janet was confused about which neighbor was guilty of witchcraft.

In reporting this to me, Simon was working hard to maintain his composure, telling me that he was not quick to believe such stories of witchcraft. He did, however, ponder out loud to himself in between sentences asking rhetorically why Baganda like witchcraft so much. "In the village, we all know that Baganda are *mayay*," he interjected as he was telling me the story of Florence. "The Baganda will come to our village to buy *matooke*, and pay us to cut down 20, but they will cut 30 and then bury the stems so you don't know how many they take." Referring to the initial decision to use the term 'deception' to describe what makes a witch to emphasize the intentional concealment of one's aims, we can see why burying stems in the ground to mislead a person who agreed to sell you a particular amount of *matooke* transcends a bad deal. It is not that the buyer exploited the person selling them the produce, or withheld money promised during the transaction. Bad business happens all the time, and people are always prepared to bargain in order to get the best possible deal. But you simply cannot bargain with people who will not even tell you what it is they want to buy. By burying the stems in the ground, the buyer deliberately conceals the truth of the situation, creating an entirely different reality.

After riding in a few minutes of silence, we passed the elementary school where Simon's daughter, Purity, attended. Sending her to the most affordable place in the area, the school was

basic, to put it nicely, but I understood his decision to send her there, as other schools with double or even triple the tuition costs did not seem to be a substantial upgrade. In any case, Simon pointed out that there were two flagpoles on the school grounds. “You see? They put the Uganda flag and the Buganda flag.” I hadn’t before taken much notice, but there were indeed two separate flag poles, one with the Ugandan national flag and one with the blue flag of the Buganda Kingdom. I asked Simon if Purity’s school was perhaps financed by the Buganda Kingdom, or what other possible reason there might be for the flag. He did not provide an answer to my question, but instead pointed to all the schools we passed for the remainder of the ride. Indeed, on every school ground, two flagpoles could be found, one representing the country and one representing the Buganda Kingdom. Though I found it strange given that the schools served children from many different regions, I wondered if it was much of an overreach, given that Kampala is technically within the kingdom’s physical territory. Simon insisted that it was not only about the physical land, but about controlling every aspect of life in the city. “They even teach my daughter the Baganda anthem at school,” he said. “They just want everyone to know that they own everything here.”



Figure 11: Ugandan national flag



Figure 12: Flag of the Kingdom of Buganda

I was, and remain, confused as to why Baganda are simultaneously accused of witchcraft and of owning everything. My journey with Simon that day illustrates the ways these two are intertwined, and also perhaps counterintuitively points to my skepticism of conflating witchcraft to jealousy. If we are to take people's assertions as fact and agree that Baganda own all of the land in Kampala, it does not follow that people should also conflate witchcraft with being Baganda. Why would people who already own everything need to resort to witchcraft? Jealousy was also an important concept in Ashforth's ethnography, evidenced by a healer's words: "'There's too much jealousy.' But he was puzzled about the recent increase in jealousy. 'The way things are now,' he said, 'when a person buys furniture, the other one gets jealous and wants to destroy him. You've got cows? They'll kill you…'" (2000, 128). If it is believed that a person bewitches someone out of jealousy, then perhaps in the context of Kampala the phenomenon might better be understood inversely. Is it instead the case that people accuse those who they are jealous of witchcraft?

That seems equally untenable, given the accusations that were circulating throughout fieldwork. It certainly seemed that Joseph was jealous of Simon, as he assumed that I was paying Simon too high of a salary for driving Judith and me, but Joseph never leveled allegations of witchcraft against Simon. Geschiere rightly warns against searching for any sort of formula for

witchcraft, and so perhaps it is no wonder that searching for commonality of accuser versus accused amongst the cases of witchcraft in Kampala is implausible. In highlighting the connection that Simon and Judith were quick to make about "Bagandaland" and witchcraft, however, I hope to shed light on the specificities of witchcraft in Kampala. The suspicion in the air is imbued with larger resentments about belonging and the state. Witchcraft and ethnic suspicion are ever-present dangers but do *not* suspend everyday life. Instead, as I hope to have shown, witchcraft shapes the ways in which people move through the city, influencing how they navigate everything from the mundane to the extraordinary.

5.7 Living With a Witch

Despite feeling in my bones that Joseph was the witch among us, there was little I could do about it. Attempting to counteract the witchcraft was too risky, and Judith warned against this strongly given the proliferation of charlatans in recent years. In trying to protect oneself, going to the wrong person may only worsen the effects of witchcraft. There was simply no way of knowing who was a healer, who was a witch, and who was a fake.

In the end, I was forced to live with a witch, as is the case for most people in Kampala. People do not have the means to move whenever they are suspicious of a neighbor, and the threat of someone close to you betraying you makes it so that eliminating the threat of witchcraft altogether would mean ceasing to participate in social life altogether. I saw Joseph several times a day throughout the duration of fieldwork, and he was the last person to say goodbye to me as I left the house and the first person to greet me when I returned. He maintained his vigilance at work, and despite the supernatural forces that I believed he might have accessed, I somehow still trusted him to keep us physically safe. He continued to look out for Quincy and me whenever we ventured

off the property after dark, and when the violent incident to be discussed in Chapter 7 occurred, I knew that Joseph would protect us if we were ever in danger.

Still, throughout the months that we stayed on the property with Joseph, conversations revealed as much as they obscured. As Joseph continued to speak exclusively in Kiswahili with Quincy, I asked if he had ever been to Tanzania because his accent was uncanny, not like that of Luganda speakers who learn Kiswahili later in life. He never provided an answer to the question, just smiling the way he had when giving Simon the rain gear and me the tattered shoe. I also realized he was speaking Runyankole with Simon, and when I asked how he was fluent in the language, he claimed that his mother was a Munyankole from Ankole. How she came to live in Buganda and any information about Joseph's father was never revealed. Leaving such gaps in his personal history, Joseph left us room to weave together the parts of his story that we did know. Was he not simply a witness to the Ugandan Bush War, but a recruit as a child? The Luweero Triangle was known as a particularly violent area, but the headquarters of Museveni's armed group remained in Ankole. Could this be the explanation for his multilingualism? Is Joseph both a victim and perpetrator in Uganda's violent past?

If there is one thing that witchcraft in the city does flip on its head, it is the cliché, "Seeing is believing." Witchcraft is potent because of its invisibility and concealment, and if you are not looking for it, it will be difficult to find. Like Ashforth's frustration with Madumo or my husband's frustration with me, non-believers will likely scoff at a person's insistence to be careful around certain individuals, to guard your clothing and other items that touch your skin, or to not eat at particular restaurants. Suspicions about the intent of others threaten to force one into a recluse to avoid supernatural powers. Yet for any happening that witchcraft explains, there are alternative explanations that are perhaps more logical and believable to those who doubt the powers of the

occult. For the two examples above, a missing shoe that reemerges tattered may have simply been chewed at by a rat or a stray dog, and a baby boy dying hours after birth is not uncommon in a country with a high infant mortality rate such as Uganda. Any of the events described in this chapter could just be dismissed as part of the contentious, often precarious conditions of Kampala itself. If you don't see witchcraft, then there is no way for you to believe in it.

But, in Kampala, believing in witchcraft is seeing it everywhere.

Chapter 6
Interruptions

Adam Apolot[78] worked as a security guard for a gated apartment complex near the Kamwokya neighborhood in Kampala, Uganda. Originally from a rural area in Teso, a region in Eastern Uganda, he worked 12-hour shifts every day from 7am to 7pm before being relieved by his only coworker, Muhammed Aate. Muhammed, a Lugbara man from West Nile, worked the night shift, and he shared Adam's sentiments towards Kampala. Both migrated to the capital for employment, like so many of the precarious workers scattered throughout the city who send money back home to their nuclear families and extended kin networks, and both expressed frustration at their economic and social positions in Kampala. The small apartment complex they took turns guarding was three stories high, with 12 apartment units in total. Of the 12 apartments, 10 of them were occupied by South Asian families, most of them Gujarati traders. The ground units had porches, and each of the units on the second and third floors had balconies where pots of holy basil, or tulsi, grew, which were tended to with great care by the women of the homes.

Though Teso is in Eastern Uganda, Iteso[79] are described by people in Uganda in similar ways as groups in Northern Uganda: fierce and warlike, with characteristics that are said to have kept the region "underdeveloped". Adam and Muhammed, each in their early 20s, embodied the stereotypical outward appearance of Northerners. Both were tall and thin but visibly fit, quiet without being shy, with self-described "black skin" and discerning eyes that were kind when they

[78] This, along with every name in the chapter, is a pseudonym; identifying characteristics have been anonymized
[79] Iteso refers to the ethnic group in the Teso region

looked at people who gained their fondness. When they were changing shifts, they would often chat with each other for an extended period and share WhatsApp videos they found funny or compelling, despite having been working for the entire day or night. If either needed a shift covered, the other would take over their coverage without hesitation, and it was not uncommon for them to work 36 hours in a row.

Despite their many similarities, they looked nothing like one another and carried themselves in distinct ways. Adam would spend much of his time walking along the premises of the apartment with his hands folded behind his back, and could often be seen peering out of the gate when he was bored with a mixture of despondency and desire. He wore button-down shirts in various pastel shades, which he sometimes washed and hung to dry in the guards' quarters while he was working. Muhammed had broader shoulders and a more relaxed style, preferring T-shirts to button-downs, and he spent much of his shift sitting defiantly on the parked motorbikes that belonged to the tenants while scrolling through his phone. He did not seem to care much about what was happening beyond the walls of the complex during the hours he was stuck inside of them, except to occasionally check on the Lugbara woman who worked as a maid[80] in the apartment complex next door and her fiery toddler daughter. But, those residing in the complex could not be bothered to learn their nuances, and it was not clear if some of the tenants even knew their names. Whenever any of the women who were home during the days while their husbands worked wanted Adam or Muhammed to run an errand for them, they would step onto their balconies and simply yell, "Guard! Guard!"

One of the second-floor units was home to a particularly demanding woman, Janaki, who stayed inside all day with her 3-year-old son. She did not venture outside of the property often, if

[80] I use the term 'maid', as that was the preferred term to describe women who were domestic workers

at all, and her son tried to amuse himself by playing on their balcony. He had many toys, and could be heard making sounds mimicking trucks, various animals, and babies, which indicated the toys he had chosen to play with at any given time. My son, Gyata, took a liking to Adam, and he would spend hours following him around, with Adam putting Gyata on his shoulders whenever a car came to the gate and its horn beeped for Adam to open it. The boy upstairs often looked down from his second-floor confinement when Gyata played with Adam, his eyes peering between the rails, perhaps envious of Gyata's freedom and friendship.

On an uneventful morning when Gyata was pestering Adam, the boy upstairs could be heard bouncing a ball on the balcony. It is unclear whether the boy was trying to make a friend and engage in a game, or it was simply an accident, but the ball eventually fell from the second floor and landed at the feet of Adam. It was a soccer ball, and Adam immediately began engaging Gyata in a game of soccer as the little boy peered down. Gyata, still only one year old, was delighted at Adam's dribbling skills, laughing and trying to mimic his moves. Janaki observed this from the second story and was not amused by Adam touching her son's toy, and began screaming, "My ball! Give it! It is mine!" Her voice was higher than usual, and she was nearly shrieking. The boy began to whimper; Janaki's anger only grew when Adam refused to give her the ball and instead replied, "This is my ball. Yours is upstairs."

After screaming at him a few minutes longer, we heard her door slam and realized she was coming downstairs to retrieve the ball herself. As she was descending in the stairwell, Adam quickly threw the ball back onto the balcony, much to the delight of the boy. When she emerged from the stairwell door, she looked around and asked, "Where is my ball?"

Alex furrowed his brow. "What ball? I never had a ball."

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This chapter explores moments such as the one above, when hierarchies are creatively subverted by workers. Anthropological literature often dichotomizes people working precarious jobs as either actively resisting or merely accepting their positions. For people of the underclass in Kampala, such a dichotomous view does not capture quotidian moments when jobs must be fulfilled, but workers find ways to challenge absolute authority. Instead, I call these instances *moments of interruption*, which allows us to see workers' agency without minimizing the ways in which workers are not able to actively resist their positions all the time. Undoubtedly, this brings to mind the classic *Weapons of the Weak* (Scott 1985), and the analyses of Scott's work have provided inspiration for much of this chapter. His insight that large-scale revolts and revolutionary activities are not the best means of capturing daily forms of resistance has been especially useful for the work that follows. Yet, the stories of "everyday resistance" (ibid.) in the cosmopolitanism of Kampala, where ethnicity and historical racial purging are constantly foregrounded in quotidian interactions, differ significantly from a rural peasantry perspective. As the chapter's opening illustrates, members of the underclass do not always act deferential towards those wielding significant power over them, and these subversions are not relegated to taking place behind the backs of the powerful. This chapter argues that these moments of interruption speak to larger political and socioeconomic divides in the city. My focus, then, is not only on the dynamic of laborer versus boss or powerless versus powerful, but on how such interactions make visible political, ethnic, and economic tensions in the everyday.

As argued in previous chapters, Kampala is largely viewed as a temporary place of residence for migrants from other parts of the country, especially those who are not Baganda. Even workers who moved to the city as children with their parents hesitated in calling Kampala "home",

as the circulation of stereotypes prevented them from feeling welcome even after decades of residence. For young men like Adam and Muhammed, the decision to move from their respective homes in Teso and West Nile can be thought of as a "choiceless decision" (Aretxaga 1997), one that they made not because of their desire to locate to the capital city, but because there were simply no opportunities for employment back home. With children in need of school fees and elderly parents to care for, the lure of Kampala was first and foremost economic in nature. When the move does not provide the imagined employment or ability to send money home to fulfill monetary obligations to their kin, many place blame on specific groups for their prolonged financial and physical precarity. Ideas about ethnicity, and the effects and affects that these ideas have on people's quotidian lives, are inseparable from ideas about work. This chapter, then, also necessarily interrogates perceptions of the types of work specific groups perform, and these perceptions are as critical to understanding the dynamics amongst workers and those who wield power over them as the direct interactions themselves. Assumed racial and ethnic hierarchies reveal the ways in which seemingly mundane interactions, such as the one that opened this chapter, are imbued with tensions informed by history, both real and reimagined. Importantly, the assumed differences and hierarchies do not only exist amongst Ugandans, nor Ugandans against non-Ugandans, but are present amongst members of the South Asian community as well. The diversity of Kampala, and the ways in which different ethnic and racial groups are forced to interact, do not lessen the stereotypes that circulate about such groups. As this chapter will show, these interactions often reinforce prejudicial thoughts.

6.1 "Those people love to segregate themselves so much": South Asians in Kampala

The story of precarious workers rebelling in small ways against people who wield power over them is not unique to Kampala, but the history of South Asians in the country is indeed particular. Edgar Taylor's (2016) excellent dissertation historicizes the infamous expulsion of Asians by Idi Amin in 1972. Rather than view the event as a rupture, Taylor's work challenges us to see the expulsion not as a one-time blip in an otherwise romantic history of cosmopolitan exchange between the sub-continent and East Africa that many of the previous scholars of the Indian Ocean have painted. [81] If Idi Amin's depiction of Ugandan Asians being mere pawns of the British colonial regime is inaccurate and simplistic, so too is the idea of Ugandan Asians being entirely free from racist beliefs. The disconnect between elite Asian traders in the political sphere proclaiming to speak on behalf of the entire community, and the small Asian shopkeepers in the periphery making minimal profits, enables us to see Asians in Uganda not as a unified group, but instead as a diverse array of people who viewed their own citizenship in disparate ways. There is no denying that there were ambitious entrepreneurs who prioritized profits over people, a generalization not unique to South Asian businesspeople. Their status as outsiders, however, made South Asians easy targets of resentment when their economic success grew. Taylor's work shows there were many South Asians who formed deep connections with Ugandans despite this. My fieldwork revealed that being embedded in their local communities did not actually lead to a lessening of prejudice, and the history that follows was felt in the present.

Despite having a presence in Uganda predating British colonialism, Taylor's rendering of the boycott of Asian shops in 1959 shows how anti-Asian sentiments were able to be weaponized

[81] See Aiyar 2015 for an especially illuminating account of the diversity of Indians in Kenya, and Brennan 2012 for an excellent overview of how Indian immigrants affected racialization in Dar es Salaam

even in peripheral towns outside of Kampala. Asians who saw themselves as members of the community, who spoke local languages, and in their own accounts were generous to the local population by offering goods on credit to people unable to afford to pay for goods up front still reported that they were not safe from the resentments of Ugandans who believed their economy should not be controlled by outsiders. The example of Taj, an Asian businessman who set up several shops throughout Buganda, is illuminating:

> "According to his own telling, the relationships that he cultivated in Gomba, whether at his shop or through his charity or political work, were mutually warm and sincere. When the boycott of Asian shops began in 1959, some of his closest colleagues and beneficiaries of his charitable work were among its harshest enforcers. From the other side of the counter, the attributes of thrift and aid could be seen as upholding an unethical hierarchy and the abuses that it enabled, particularly when mediated through credit and unequal access to capital" (ibid., 3).

Taylor's choice of naming "unethical hierarchy" suggests hierarchical systems are inherently abusive and morally questionable, but the boycott in 1959 transcends Western notions of egalitarianism. The gifts Taj imagined he was giving to the local community could never be purely philanthropic; as Mauss (2000) continually reminds us, the recipient of a gift is necessarily embedded in an uneven structure of exchange. Such structures are not always unethical, and the accusations of Asians controlling the entire economy were attacking far more than the business models of store clerks. Rather than being purely economic in nature, ruptures of violence against Asians are imbued with resentments that transcend capitalistic ideas of trade.

Ethnographic accounts and personal histories such as Taj's enable us to see Amin's expulsion of Asians as part of a longer history that is complex, but that also has certain threads that connect the past and present. The boycott that is the subject of much of Taylor's work predates Amin's Asian expulsion by over a decade, making it easier to understand how Amin was able to

even attempt such a move. Like its memory morphing into myth, the expulsion's announcement was also dreamlike:

> "On the morning of August 5, 1972, Amin stood before a group of army recruits in the eastern town of Tororo and told them about a strange dream he had had the night before. In this dream, Amin discovered that the Asians who had been living in Uganda for many years had 'milked the cow' but 'did not feed it.' He explained to his audience that the dream made him realize that the only way to prevent further economic sabotage was to expel the entire population. Those who did not leave the country within ninety days would be forcibly resettled onto rural labor plantations…On August 9, Amin signed a decree revoking the residence permits of all Asian citizens from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and the United Kingdom. Less than one week later, the first group of refugees fled the country on a chartered flight to Britain. Over the next three months, more than 50,000 Asians escaped into exile, including at least 15,000 Ugandan citizens of Asian descent. By the November 9 deadline, fewer than 2,500 Ugandan Asians remained." (Decker 2014, 77)

For the purposes of this contemporary ethnography, perhaps most striking is Ugandans from across the country migrating to Kampala holding very strong opinions about the presence of Asians prior to their move. Throughout fieldwork, the idea of Asians belonging in Uganda was not a popular one, and people boldly asserted their beliefs that Asians were outsiders. Idi Amin's expulsion of Asians is not a forgotten event, present in the popular imaginary of migrant workers in Kampala, especially because Asians are not confined to the city of Kampala. Asian traders and shopkeepers have a presence throughout the country, from remote parts of the North to blossoming industrial centers in the West. Migrant workers are not encountering Asians for the first time when they move to the capital, and many move there with preconceived notions about the entire racial group. As migrants take positions as precarious laborers and become members of Kampala's underclass, anxieties intensify, with workers unable to fulfill the familial obligations that inspired their move. Rather than having ample opportunities to make money to send home to their families, the more common story told by migrants is the inability to make ends meet in the city. Migrant workers are frustrated by a constant lack that a move to the capital cannot fill, and successful

Asians continue to be an easy target 50 years after their expulsion. Personal and professional exchanges that take place between Ugandan migrant workers and Asians in the capital only intensify the ill feelings workers initially had before their move. In other words, the cosmopolitanism and diversity of the city can work in ways that amplify stereotypes and prejudices, rather than reduce them.

If there are lessons to be learned against xenophobia that enabled the boycotts and the eventual expulsion of Asians, the ways in which it was remembered by people like Adam and Muhammed might appear shocking and disturbing. During their daily exchanges of WhatsApp content, which has become a critical medium through which people socialize and politicize, there often contained clips of Amin's speeches emphasizing the importance of keeping Uganda's economy for Ugandans that made explicit references to the Asian expulsion. They watched these clips as they wandered the grounds and ran errands for Asians in the housing complex who they were responsible for guarding. A popular clip of an interview between Idi Amin and a British journalist showed the dictator calmly discussing a former conservative Member of Parliament for the United Kingdom, Enoch Powell. Powell gave a rather controversial speech as an MP that has been branded the "Rivers of Blood" speech (1968), in which he argued that immigration policies in the United Kingdom were a threat to the "indigenous" English population. The MP argued that immigration to his country must be controlled, explicitly speaking about Black immigrants being a threat to white Englishmen. At the time of the speech, he was immediately met with resistance from other MPs amidst debate surrounding the Race Relations Act 1968, which made discrimination based on national origin or race illegal in the United Kingdom. The journalist, clearly in disbelief that an African leader could support a British man in favor of expelling African

migrants from his country, presses Amin: "I know that you're interested in, and indeed actually go along with, much of what Mr. Enoch Powell has been saying recently." Amin responds:

> "Mr. Powell Enoch is a full supported (sic) by me of what he has said. He's not discriminating against any races, but he wanted indigenous Londoners, their children, to have a bright future. He does not want England to be colonized by Africa, by Asia. London for Londoners, Scotland for Scottish, Wales for Welsh, Uganda for Ugandans, Rhodesia for Zimbabwean people – not for the white minority regime, and South Africa and Southwest Africa for the black majority. But, London can have any technical assistant, anybody they wanted to employ in London. But, they are not to dominate the people of England."

The striking part of this interview, and indeed of all of the clips that circulate on Ugandan social media, is how rational Amin's propositions appear; those who watch them often feel as though he was fully justified in his analyses. The dangers of his brand of nativism are lost, as he simply appears to be pushing against "minority rule", such as that of apartheid South Africa. Just as then-Rhodesia's minority population should not control the whole of the country, what makes the case of the United Kingdom being controlled by African and Asian immigrants any different? These kernels of truth in his calmly bombastic assertions make them all the more dangerous in the current sociopolitical climate. One evening, as Muhammed watched an Amin speech, he revealed his true thoughts on the former dictator's policies: "Yes, all you foreigners should go! You should go, and then qualified people can come back."

In present-day Uganda, the category of Asian is complicated by China's growing influence in East Africa. Muhammed divulged his opinion about the place of foreigners in his country during a conversation about presidential politics. It was August 2019, and then-challenger to President Museveni, Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, more popularly known by his stage name of Bobi Wine, was gaining traction throughout the city. As in previous chapters, the campaigning for this election serves as a background actor that sheds light on interactions between individuals and groups. The popstar turned politician was appealing to members of the youth, voicing their collective

dissatisfaction about high unemployment, low wages, and rampant corruption in the current regime. Mirroring people's sentiments about the two respective superpowers fighting for influence in the region, rumors circulated that China was supporting President Museveni's campaign and the United States was supporting Bobi Wine. These rumors can perhaps be traced to Bobi Wine receiving treatment in the United States for wounds he sustained from alleged torture in 2018 following the assassination of his driver.[82] The disdain with which people viewed both the president and China shows their discontent in temporal terms: Museveni's decades-long reign has not benefited the underclass (many of whom were born after he seized power in 1986 and have never known another national leader), and China's development projects are also not having positive effects for most people trying to make a living, thereby making future prospects equally grim. Stories of the mistreatment of Ugandan workers at the hands of Chinese bosses proliferate across every region of the country, and can indeed be witnessed firsthand on any number of construction sites. Indiscriminate firings, linguistic barriers, and a lack of cultural competence have made the Chinese a target of as much resentment as the South Asian population. If Museveni represents the past and China represents the future, neither is offering a way forward for working Ugandans who feel neglected by the state.

Muhammed and Adam saw no way forward so long as Museveni was steering Uganda's ship. Like many of the country's young, working population, Wine's campaign excited them, and people's expectations for change were quite literally visible on the streets in the form of street art and rallies. Yet, both also hesitated in giving Wine unconditional support because they did not view him as a leader who could control the entire country, especially because of his lack of military

[82] See "Bobi Wine arrives in US for medical treatment," *Al Jazeera*, September 1, 2018. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/9/1/bobi-wine-arrives-in-us-for-medical-treatment which gives an account of the allegations

experience. Could Bobi Wine act with as strong of a hand as Amin had? A hopeful future was one in which both President Museveni and the South Asians and Chinese were gone: Muhammed's insistence that we foreigners should go was tinged with both nostalgia for the past and hope for the future because of the historical precedent Amin presented. An expulsion *was* possible, and had happened before; they just needed another leader who was unafraid to put Ugandans first, and for reasons that are discussed below, they questioned if a Muganda like Wine could ever be a president for all of Uganda's people. Rather than concern himself with the violence of the regime, the power of allowing Ugandans to control their own economy and destiny was instead the memory of Amin's regime that Muhammed clung to.



Figure 13: Sticker of Amin on license plate



Figure 14: Sticker of Amin on driver's helmet

6.2 Inseparability of Labor and Ethnicity

The importance of ethnicity and race is ever-present in Kampala and extends far beyond the divide between Ugandans and Asians. One of the clearest indications of the divisions amongst Ugandans is the way in which labor is viewed. While Asians are seen as shopkeepers and merchants and the Chinese as the new monopolizers of infrastructure projects, there were particular ethnic groups associated with specific forms of work throughout the city: in another nod to the cosmopolitanism of the city, *askaris,* or security guards, were assumed to be from the North, police were thought to be from the East, white collar workers were thought to be from Central, and bar owners and "big" business men were presumed to be from the West. These stereotypes show how "categories of work become in practice as well as in scholarly analysis closely constituted

with *kinds* of people. Different kinds of work become understood as initiating social formations and grounding sociality" (Thiranagama 2020). Though many of the women in the compound where Adam worked did not often venture beyond the gates of the compound, on the rare occasions when they did leave their homes, they did so on the backs of *bodas*. I argue that the interactions between *boda* drivers and their customers, and the ways in which drivers assert their politics through bold displays of strong men on their bikes and helmets, offer a glimpse into the different forms of defiance that take place in settings such as the private residence where this chapter began.

Because many *boda* drivers who were born and raised in Kampala saw an ally with the candidate hailing from the Kamwokya neighborhood of their city, they came to be associated with Bobi Wine's campaign. Aside from the stickers decorating bikes and helmets, groups of drivers could be seen and heard throughout the city streets while I was conducting fieldwork, beeping their horns and chanting with raised fists, imagining new forms of liberation after Wine's inevitable win. These factions of drivers embodied Wine's People Power Party, donning the red berets that became the symbol of his campaign as they drove by. Though many people assumed Museveni would ultimately declare himself the victor in the election, they also spoke about the groups of drivers supporting Wine with a mixture of hope and fear. Perhaps, I was told again and again, this time would be different if the *boda* drivers organized and forcefully ensured a fair election. In one unforgettable video, Bobi Wine is running on foot as he eludes police wielding batons hoping to arrest him, hops on the back of a *boda* and stands up, holding his right fist in the air for scores of cheering supporters lining the sides of the street. His red beret was securely on his head as the driver maneuvers his way through the dense traffic. From the outside, the social formations of motorbike drivers were inseparable from the People Power campaign.



Figure 15: Sticker of Wine on driver's helmet, "Webereremu" (Stay awake/Stay focused)

After the video of Wine escaping the police was circulated widely on Ugandan social media platforms, even people sympathetic to President Museveni and the NRM laughed at the incompetence of the police and were impressed with Wine's theatrics. The police and ruling regime were unamused, and the weight of being a *boda* driver in a political climate where that occupation was associated with political resistance was felt throughout the city. In the days following that incident, the open beds of police trucks filled with motorbikes, drivers, or some combination of both were commonplace on Kampala roads. Academic literature exploring *bodas* in Kampala, specifically, interrogates issues of mobility and morality through *boda* drivers and their informal economies (Doherty 2020; Evans et al. 2018). Yet, because of the theatrics of Wine and his *boda* driver, other drivers were punished and found guilty by association, simply by their shared occupation. The informality of their economy did nothing to free them from that burden. Police set up roadblocks at major intersections, people's motorbikes were confiscated, and drivers

were arrested for minor infractions. Without stringent regulations, many drivers are lacking the formal credentials necessary to take passengers.[83] Two common visible transgressions were drivers who refused to wear helmets, and those who refused to abide by the law forcing drivers to only take one passenger per ride; but at the checkpoints in those tense days, every driver would be stopped and asked to show their license and insurance information. Unless a person had enough cash on them to negotiate a deal with the officer interrogating them, lacking either was enough for police to detain drivers. The mass roundup of drivers took place under the guise of public safety, but drivers and their passengers alike knew they were the ones paying the literal price for the regime's disdain and fear of Wine's popularity. But, even on the very day of the *boda* roundups, drivers and their passengers quickly learned which intersections the police were targeting, using longer, more discreet routes that week to avoid arrest and evade fines. Interrupting absolute authority, drivers found creative ways to pick up passengers, get them to their desired destinations, and avert the police.

Exemplifying the importance of aesthetics and campaigning, President Museveni continued to exert his power to quell Wine's influence by banning citizens from wearing red berets. The government created its first-ever gazette of military clothing that included the red beret, and the punishment for citizens donning the clothing in the gazette was life imprisonment.[84] Despite arguing that military-style garments such as camouflaged baseball hats and President Museveni's signature bush hat could deceive the public by mistaking ordinary citizens for soldiers, no one was deceived by the ban or the disproportionate punishment for its infraction. Like the roundup of *boda*

[83] SafeBoda, discussed below, was founded in part because of the lack of training and formal regulations of the *boda* business.
[84] See "Uganda bans red beret, Bobi Wine's signature headgear," *Al Jazeera*, September 30, 2019. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/09/uganda-bans-red-beret-bobi-wine-signature-headgear-190930150137387.html;

drivers, the gazette was another way that the ruling regime was using legal means to suppress the visibility of People Power, but the sheer numbers of the movement provided some degree of protection for its members. Rather than bow to the arbitrary law, leaders of Wine's campaign instead took to social media and the streets proudly wearing their red berets, openly mocking what was interpreted as desperation by Museveni.

As discussed in Chapter 2, however, Wine's ethnicity was a point of contention for people who did not identify as Ganda. The fear of a Muganda gaining presidential power was also felt by some drivers, especially those from Western Uganda who were convinced of their own extermination should Wine win. As Baganda drivers chanted "We need ours!", Banyankole were subject to constant suspicion that they were benefiting economically from Museveni's regime. Despite fears of retaliation, there were some drivers from West who unabashedly countered with visible symbols of their own. Instead of decorating their bikes with photos of Wine or red People Power stickers, groups of mainly (but not exclusively) Banyankole drivers donned "Silent Majority" T-shirts, confident that Museveni would remain in power despite the hyper-visible, charismatic opposition. Without violent confrontation, they were nonetheless interrupting assumptions about the youth and underclass of Kampala uniformly supporting Wine's campaign. A T-shirt may seem like a passive defiance, but Banyankole insisted that showing any support for Museveni was dangerous. Some of the rumors circulating at the time included people being publicly beaten on election days if they admitted to voting for the current president, and groups of People Power supporters patrolling the streets and smashing the knuckles of anyone who was wearing yellow NRM gear.

For drivers from the North who did not fully support Museveni nor believe Wine was a strong enough candidate to fix Uganda's corrupt political system, other strongmen were the

stickers of choice for their bikes. They did not express fear of retaliation if Bobi Wine won the presidency, but feared the entire country would dissolve into chaos. In a visit up North to the Karamoja district, the shift in political atmosphere was obvious, with casual everyday conversations inevitably leading to discussions about the election. From my two short visits there during fieldwork in late 2019 and early 2020, I heard and saw virtually no support for Bobi Wine, which was not altogether unexpected given Museveni's pacification campaign in the region.[85] Mirroring Lugbara's romantic memories of Amin, many Karimojong think of President Museveni as bringing peace and stability to their region, despite the violent, often lethal, force that was used during the "peace process". Youth and elders alike were unanimous in their assumption that Bobi Wine was too young and inexperienced to ever govern the country, with elders especially concerned that he had never fought in a war. Workers from places such as Arua and Lira likewise reported their respective regions' reluctance to embrace Wine. Unsurprisingly, drivers from Northern Uganda did not speak in laudatory terms about the current regime after migrating to Kampala, but still hesitated in giving enthusiastic support to Wine because they similarly questioned his ability to govern with a strong hand. *Bodas* of such men were decorated with leaders such as Gaddafi, Amin, and after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Putin. Even pictures of Osama bin Laden were not uncommon, as he and the other strong men were united in their defiance of the West.

[85] Karamoja has been a notorious region in present-day Uganda since independence, and the dominant ethnic group, Karimojong, also eluded British control. See Fredrick Golooba Mutebi, "Uganda: Pacifying Karamoja – Lessons from Kuria," *All Africa*, December 16, 2006 https://allafrica.com/stories/200612180610.html for a detailed account of Museveni's heavy-handed pacification campaign against Karimojong warriors in 2006.



Figure 16: Sticker of bin Laden on license plate



Figure 17: Sticker of Gadaffi on motorbike



Figure 18: Sticker of Putin on motorbike



Figure 19: Sticker of Putin and Escobar on helmet

Lacking a strong hand was not the only point of contention for non-Ganda *boda* drivers who hesitated in supporting Bobi Wine. Being a Muganda was viewed as a hindrance for Wine, as people who did not identify as such worried he would act on behalf of the *kabaka* and ignore the needs of the non-Central regions. As discussed in Chapter 2, Kampala itself seems to be under constant threat of ethnic eruptions in large part because of fierce Baganda loyalty to their king. Would Wine actually be able to govern the country himself, or would he forever be taking orders from the *kabaka*, whose palace is located right in the Mengo district of Kampala?

But, one common concern about the country's leadership that was unanimously shared was who would govern after the death of Museveni if Wine's campaign proved unsuccessful. President Museveni's real age remains a mystery, but he has clearly reached his elderly years, and every person throughout the country with whom I spoke worried that Museveni was trying to whip support for his son, Muhoozi, to ascend the presidency upon his death. I will never forget a conversation with a Karimojong man, Godwin Lochoru, that encapsulates so many people's feelings about that potential. Godwin is incredibly tall and solid, but does not appear intimidating because his kind, soft manner exudes from his very being. A driver for one of the many nongovernmental organizations in Karamoja, he is a man of few words, preferring to listen to the conversations around him and chuckling softly when finding something funny or amusing. He was most talkative when he was on the phone with his young son as he drove the organization's pickup truck, who called Godwin often from his mother's phone to beg him to return home, preferring his father's soft touch to his mother's stern parenting style. Godwin was always pleading with the boy in Ngakarimojong to please give him a break and let him drive without distraction on those long trips when I would accompany the organization to conduct surveys and fieldwork in the surrounding districts. But on one such trip when conversation turned to politics and the possibility

of Muhoozi taking control of the country, he looked me in the eye and said, "I will get a gun and go to Kampala before letting that man take power."

Despite the North providing a large swath of support for the current president, the thought of his son governing was enough to make even the most mild-mannered people threaten grave action. After my abrupt exit from Kampala, I continued to communicate with my interlocutors through WhatsApp. By the spring of 2022, Muhoozi's camp began to realize the power of *boda* drivers that Wine's campaign harnessed, and coupled that potential with drivers' admiration for strongmen. In what appears to be the potential of a ground army of civilians, by May 2022 *bodas* all over Kampala could be seen with Muhoozi's face on the windshield and "TEAM MUHOOZI: BODA BODA INITIATIVE UGANDA" written underneath. For other *boda* drivers in Kampala, Team Muhoozi's drivers are said to not really be motorbike drivers, but are men who are paid to fight with actual drivers who "do not agree with him". Rather than publicly talking about his plans to run for president following his father and elucidating policy plans, Muhoozi is beginning to assert himself as a strongman. As you can see in the figures below, Muhoozi is dressed in military apparel, donning the red beret that was associated with Wine on many of the bikes. Separating himself in dress from his father, Muhoozi seems to be embracing militaristic aesthetics as visual proof of his might. The bush hat that is inseparable from Museveni's image may have reminded his early supporters of the Bush War that ended with him taking power, but for generations removed from that conflict, a more modern military-chic look inspires more fear than broad-rimmed hats.



Figure 20: Image of Muhoozi's fleet



Figure 21: Image of Muhoozi's fleet



Figure 22: Image of flag flown from Muhoozi's motorbikes

The political leaders that *boda* drivers chose to display acted as symbols, marking people's different visions for Uganda. But beyond that, these images also served as a different form of interruption: Amin's images horrified tourists and expatriates; Muhoozi's band of *bodas* made people reevaluate his potential for authoritative rule; Bobi Wine's pictures were a visual protest to the current regime. Boldly displaying men who had, or have the potential to have, such profound effects on Uganda allows us to see how the future of the country is at the forefront of people's concerns.

6.3 Driving for Pay, Driving to Pay

Regardless of their place of origin or their political leanings, the young men who drove *bodas* were under pressure to make enough money every day to turn a profit. Mirroring Mutongi's

(2017) account of matatus in Nairobi, *bodas* are everywhere, and it is easy to see why they are able to elude any government regulation. Without the army of young men earning money from driving, it is difficult to imagine what industry could absorb their sheer numbers. Still, for most men, there was significant added stress because their bikes were not actually their own, but were instead rented; in exchange for use of a wealthy person's bike, drivers entered into agreements where they would pay the owners between 7,000 and 10,000 UGX every day. They made no exceptions for weather, police bribes, or traffic violations, so drivers had to take advantage of busy days with many customers to ensure they had enough cash to give the bike owners at the end of every week. With the stress of such circumstances, it can often feel as though drivers are quite literally racing to get passengers to their destinations. The government often expresses the need for drivers to be registered and makes promises to ensure people's safety, but without any organized regulatory measures in place and a high unemployment rate, the drivers seem to operate without rules or restraint. Unsurprisingly, *boda* accidents have come to be a common sight on Kampala's streets, and there are rumors of entire hospital wards solely dedicated to treating *boda* drivers who have been injured on the job.

The private arrangements between young men and wealthy individuals renting out a fleet of bikes are often exploitive, and if you have ever traveled to Kampala, you are sure to have seen the bright orange vests and helmets of SafeBoda. Co-founded by a British man and a Ugandan man in 2015, the company's stated goal was to train drivers to make the roads safer while also providing them with financial literacy.[86] Drivers were required to wear uniforms, strictly abide by

[86] According to the Global Innovation Fund, from which SafeBoda received grants: "They [SafeBoda] have two key safety interventions. First, they give boda drivers safety equipment, including a reflector jacket to make them easier to see and two helmets – one for the driver, one for a passenger. Second, they give boda drivers road-safety training in partnership with the Ministry of Health, the Ugandan Red Cross, among others." "Safe Boda – Impact Brief," *Global Innovation Fund*, https://www.globalinnovation.fund/safeboda-impact-brief/

traffic laws, wear helmets, and only ride with one passenger at a time as the law dictates. When I first stayed in Kampala for an extended period in 2017, expatriates and wealthy Ugandans were particularly fond of SafeBoda drivers and liked their policy of providing helmets for passengers. As the name suggests, many passengers who preferred these drivers did in fact feel safer, and their drivers would arrive after being requested on the SafeBoda app, allowing app users to avoid the hassle of calling for a bike on the street. The fares were also set in advance based on kilometers traveled, so there was no bargaining. The expatriates believed the business was improving the lives of local people while providing a better experience for passengers on the road.

What surprised me most about the SafeBoda app when I first arrived in Kampala was the fare calculation. Even taking into consideration an increased fee for being a "Chinese" foreigner, it seemed the app's fares were always significantly lower than they should be. For example, when I accompanied two British volunteers from the orphanage that served as one of my field sites to a shopping center on the other side of the city, they took SafeBoda drivers, while I hailed a regular driver on the road. Their fare was 4,200 UGX, while the lowest fare I could bargain from my driver was 7,000 UGX.[87] On the ride to the shopping center, I asked him about SafeBoda, and why the two other women were paying significantly less than me for their rides. The driver replied that if the SafeBoda drivers did not find a ride on that side of town, they would lose money driving back to Mengo, where our journey started. The fare calculation only takes into account the distance to the destination and ignores the threat of a long one-way journey with no return passengers.

SafeBoda drivers were enticed to become drivers for the business because they had the opportunity to buy a motorbike from the company. Rather than rent a bike indefinitely from a

[87] The exchange rate while I was conducting fieldwork was about 1 USD to 3600 UGX; a ride of several kilometers was thus still under 2 USD for a non-SafeBoda driver. Foreigners' obsession with not being "cheated" continues to confound me

wealthy individual, SafeBoda allowed its drivers to make a weekly payment for two years, and at the end of those two years, the bike would be theirs. Every fare collected would then benefit the driver rather than having to allot daily payments to SafeBoda or a private individual. But, because the drivers were forced to abide by the app's fare calculations, they reported that they often had difficulty making their weekly payments towards bike ownership. Despite its popularity amongst foreigners, the company is precisely that: a company and not a nonprofit or charitable organization. Its business model requires a profit, and drivers must make their weekly payments to be in good standing.

Some men reported that they liked SafeBoda, referencing the bonuses they received if they transported a certain number of passengers a day. Despite the low fares, the company would reward drivers if they made enough trips, and this would compensate them enough for the day to be profitable. A few men told me that if they transported twenty passengers in a day, they would receive a generous boost from the app of 20,000 Ugandan schillings. Perhaps more important than the monetary gains that could be made was the lack of police interference. After having a presence in the city for a few years, police seemed to leave uniformed drivers alone, assuming they had the necessary qualifications through the company. But, many of the drivers riding with SafeBoda helmets or vests had completed the training and only worked for them for a short time. Frustrated by not making weekly targets and forced to return the bike they had hoped to buy, drivers did not relinquish their uniforms. For *boda* drivers, political aesthetics are not the only form of assertion. After leaving the company, men would continue to wear their orange helmets and vests to avoid paying fees and bribes.[88] Unable to directly challenge police presence in the city, they nonetheless found ways to interrupt their demands.

[88] The high concentration of expatriates and missionaries in Kampala (and Uganda more broadly) is not the subject of this chapter, nor of the dissertation as a whole. SafeBoda, however, is a clear illustration of the power these

6.4 Worlds Collide: Guarding the Enemy

It is in this larger political context that we can more fully understand the dynamics between the guards at the private residence where this chapter began and the South Asians who lived there. What happened within the walls of the apartment complex mirrored the challenges to authority that could be seen in the larger city. Like the *boda* drivers, these interruptions to authority ranged from subtle to bold, taking many different forms throughout the long working days. As a reminder, Muhammed and Adam worked a job that many associated with men who are Northerners: they were *askaris*, or security guards. This is a stereotype that comes from a longer history, as British colonial officers regarded "tribes" from the North as ideal soldiers and warriors, proclaiming certain groups to be "martial races" (cf. Streets-Salter 2004). Yet, as discussed in the Introduction, these stereotypes are also informed by the regimes endured by Ugandans after the country's independence: Milton Obote; Tito Okello; Idi Amin, with groups from the Central and Western regions of Uganda remembering their reigns as violent and unforgiving. The histories of strife in the North mirror people's memories and assumptions about the authoritarian rulers from the North, and even Ugandan academics from Central and West do not shy away from describing the region with disdain. But these negative stereotypes also cast groups from the North as the most desired employees for those looking for security. For *askaris*, we can then "think about work as a form of inheritance" (Thiranagama 2020), as both a burden and an opportunity to use their inherited status as "fierce" and "warlike" in Kampala to act as the city's protectors of property.

Yet, in the complex that Muhammed and Adam guarded, the residents expected them to perform other sorts of labor for them as well. For reasons that I truthfully cannot reveal because I

communities have in the country. The app advertises specifically to foreigners, afraid of the objective dangers Kampala's roads present. Foreigners insisted to me that SafeBoda was a more ethical and safer option than non-SafeBoda drivers, which was not supported by any driver I spoke with throughout fieldwork. The gear, therefore, also attracted non-Ugandan passengers.

simply do not know, the women in the apartments did not often venture outside of the gate during the days when they were without their husbands. There were a number of food sellers who recognized that South Asian women did not frequent the local markets, but they knew the types of produce members of the community liked to cook. When food vendors had goods that they thought the women in the complex would like, they would knock on the gate to enter with their wheelbarrows full of greens and fruits, yelling for the women to take a look at their produce. Carefully inspecting pineapples, lemons, mangos, cabbages, leafy greens, and heaps of garlic and ginger, the women were spared from having to leave the compound as they bartered and eventually purchased their desired items.

On days when the South Asian women needed specific produce or ran out of an item and there were no vendors entering the property, they often would ask Adam or Muhammed to retrieve it for them. Handing them just enough money for the product needed and never even a schilling more, whichever man was on duty would exit the gate and run the errand that was assigned to them that day. The two guards would also be called in the evenings for random tasks, more often than not simply beckoned by, "Guard! Guard!" as in the chapter's opening anecdote. They were not hired to perform household tasks or handyman duties, but they were nevertheless summoned to fix things in the apartments or help to move heavy items. Only on rare occasions, the man or woman calling for Adam or Muhammed would use their name. One evening after the sun set, a woman stepped out onto her balcony on the second floor and called Muhammed's name. After about a minute of receiving no response, she called his name again. More time passed, and his name was said again and again, each time with more vigor and annoyance than the last. This went on for several minutes, and it surprised me because Muhammed was generally more responsive to the

requests of the tenants than Adam. Eventually, the woman could be heard retreating back into her house, slamming the door in frustration behind her.

The following day, I greeted a weary-looking Adam and was informed that Muhammed had left town for a few days to attend his grandfather's funeral in Arua, all the way up in West Nile. The previous evening then made perfect sense: the woman calling for Muhammed was not calling the name of the guard on duty that evening. In one of the few instances of using the guard's name to grab his attention, the tenant had used the wrong one, and Adam was spared from having to attend to the woman's call. This bought him some time and allowed him to ignore the tenant's request for the duration of the night, but he was eventually forced to perform the errand that the woman originally called Muhammed for. 'Resistance' is not the correct term for Adam's refusal to answer the woman's call, but it was an interruption, a temporary break from ordinary events that would inevitably resume. Knowing such acts are not revolutionary, these moments of transgression do not necessarily enable an imaginary of a radically different, egalitarian, or just society, but they do provide a temporary respite from subordination.

Such respites are not limited to ignoring a person's call, but can also come from active dialogue. On a hot day during the dry season, a vendor with a wheelbarrow of melons came onto the property looking to sell them to the tenants. My son, Gyata, ran to the bright fruits, and not possessing the social skills or self-control at 1 year old to wait, simply grabbed the piece of melon that looked most delicious to him and began to eat it. Laughing, the vendor told me I could pay just 2,000 UGX for the large slice that Gyata was already devouring. I thought this price was quite good, and I was uncomfortable with Gyata insisting Adam pick him up while he was still eating, so I asked Adam if he would like some. He responded, "You just give me 2,000 schillings instead of the fruit." Strictly forbidden from asking tenants for money, the negotiation he made with me

that day also protected him from reprimand. He did not directly ask me for money, but simply accepted what I offered him in different form.

6.5 The Limits of the Whole: Diasporic Asymmetries

Witnessing the treatment of Muhammed and Adam, and somewhat disturbed by the extra labor they were expected to perform for the tenants, my initial view of the South Asian occupants was probably not dissimilar to that held by the guards themselves. I was critical of the women who so easily called them to run errands and forced them to leave the property unattended, while simultaneously reporting the guards to the property manager for negligence when clothing items went missing from their drying lines. Yet, I could not help but be extra judgmental of the woman introduced in the opening of the chapter, Janaki, who seemed to be obnoxiously demanding of Adam. On the morning that she ran down to fetch the ball from Adam and Gyata, she pulled me aside to let me know she meant no offence to my son, insisting her frustration was solely aimed at "very stupid" Adam who was always making her son cry.

Despite Janaki's repeated attempts to assert her dominance over Adam, she was nevertheless quite dependent on him. I first realized the extent of this dependence one day when she was upset that her "very stubborn house girl" missed three days of work in a row, and called on Adam for help. The woman who cleaned her apartment was introduced to her by Adam and Janaki was now demanding that he find her an immediate replacement to come that very day. Outwardly, it appeared that Adam's most troubled interactions amongst the tenants always occurred with Janaki, but his ability to confront her made their relationship more egalitarian than it first seemed. He denied her request to have a new housekeeper come that day, but promised he would find her a new woman to come to her home if her current employee did not come the next

day. Though he was constantly finding ways to interrupt the power dynamics that inevitably accompanied his position, he never spoke so directly against any of the other women who lived in the apartments.

After realizing the relationship between these two was more layered than I imagined, I began to witness the ways in which Janaki was marginalized within her own community. The other women in the complex would visit each other's homes, and their children played together in the yard. After the men carpooled the school-aged children to their campus every morning and then left for work, the wives would gather in the courtyard with the youngest kids who were not yet old enough for school, drinking tea and gossiping before retreating back to their apartments. But, Janaki and her son were never invited to such gatherings. When Rakesh and Priya, a married couple with two teenage daughters, returned from a weeks-long trip abroad, the other women in the compound welcomed Priya home with great excitement, visiting her and her daughters in their home and asking about the wedding they had attended. All the while, Janaki was confined to her second-floor unit, alone with her son, and often without her husband when he traveled back to India for business.

The differential treatment of Janaki was a subject that even the children in the complex discussed. Two of the first-floor units in the apartment complex were owned by women who invested in properties throughout the city, renting them to tourists and expatriates through Airbnb. A white American family was staying in one of these units for 8 weeks. The husband, Matthew, was a former Marine officer, and he stayed home during the day with his two daughters while his wife, Jennifer, volunteered at a local hospital. Jennifer was a doctor of obstetrics and gynecology, and as she helped deliver new life into the world, Matthew got to know the compound quite well. He put his former military officer skills to use not only scouting the physical property, but also

noticed the comings and goings of his neighbors. Before they left Kampala, he informed me that throughout the entirety of their stay, he had never once witnessed Janaki venture past the gates of the property.

Unlike Janaki's son, the two daughters of Matthew and Jennifer were allowed to be among the playmates of the South Asian children at the apartment. Whatever difference that was preventing the women from allowing their kids to play with Janaki's son was seen as more immutable and dangerous than the racial difference of the Americans' daughters. The older daughter of Matthew and Jennifer, a precocious preschool-aged girl, became particularly close with a primary school girl on the second floor. Matthew was well-traveled and had spent some time in India in his twenties, and he wondered if the hierarchy he witnessed in India was also present in the diaspora. He was especially curious about the caste of the people in the building, imagining the tenants must be high caste. Allowing himself to be earnestly curious to his child's friend in ways he could not be with the adults, he directly asked her the caste of her family. She replied that they were Brahmins, but not just any Brahmins: she reported that they were the highest Brahmins, without specifying what that meant. She did specify, however, that her family only spent time with other Brahmins.

The complicated politics of South Asian caste is far beyond the scope of this chapter or dissertation more broadly, but as Katyayani Dalmia (2018) has explored in an urban setting in India, it is something that is simply unavoidable, much like this dissertation argues ethnicity is unavoidable amongst Ugandans in Kampala. Surnames are not a perfect indicator of caste, and the associations between name and caste can sometimes change depending on regional contexts. But, given that the families in the building were from Gujarat, the surname of the girl's family, Baniya, indicates that she was not actually a Brahmin, but a member of a merchant caste. The young girl's

assertion of her high caste to a foreigner who she could safely assume did not understand its nuances is an interruption itself: she was able to temporarily claim a different identity, despite her caste prohibiting her from spending time with certain people.

A rich literature exploring diaspora has shown the ways in which a desire to keep close to one's homeland when physically separated from it can lead to romanticization that spirals into conservativism.[89] For the South Asian families in the complex, this conservativism was evidenced in overtly political ways in their vocal support of Modi and the BJP; but it is also evidenced by their treatment of Janaki. In Dalmia's rich ethnography of a beauty school in Lucknow, she shows how caste boundaries are subverted and friendships are formed through shared professional spaces where people eat together and physically touch one another as they learn hairdressing and general cosmetology. People were constantly making exceptions for one another in the school, but even outside of that educational space described by Dalmia, the stark separation that was witnessed in the domestic sphere of Kampala was not absolute. People in Lucknow outside of the beauty school dated and even married across caste and religious lines to mixed reactions of their families (ibid.). Within the private sphere of the Kampala apartment complex, the sharing of space and food was not ever done despite the families' proximity to Janaki.

In a conversation with the mother of the girl who claimed to be Brahmin, I asked if she missed India. She was frequently on WhatsApp video calls with her mother and father, and they were always eager to speak to their granddaughter. The mother surprised me by replying that she did feel nostalgic for India, but that she was glad to be in Kampala and away from her parents. She explained that while she missed her family and the help that they would provide as she raised her children, in Kampala she was free to be the head of the household and took care of her family as

[89] See especially Lavie and Swedenburg 1996

she saw fit. While the diaspora community may indeed be longing for their homeland, they could be the perfect versions of what they imagined that community to be without restraint from the messiness of the actual country or its people. Modi blaming Muslims for the problems of India was easy to accept when they did not have to interact with Indian Muslims in their adopted city; adhering to strict laws of caste purity was less of a problem when there were fewer people to keep out. India's domestic politics, and the impacts of BJP's rhetoric on everyday people, were felt only at a distance by the families across the ocean. The women could long to be with their loved ones while simultaneously feeling more in control of the domestic sphere, which is why they protected it with such vigor.

Accounts from house cleaners and caretakers who were employed by South Asian families in Kampala support the idea that racial and caste separation are stringently observed amongst the diaspora community, especially regarding purity. Certain people and foods were simply not welcome in the house, and the workers who were allowed to enter South Asians' domestic space were nonetheless made to be separate in other ways. One woman who worked 12-hour days for a South Asian family was not permitted to eat from the same plate or use the same utensils as her employers and had to keep her dishes and flatware in a separate cabinet.

Revisiting Janaki's interactions with Adam, both were interrupting hierarchy and power in their relationship. Janaki, never willing or able to venture from the apartment and not a desired friend for the other women in the building, was able to release some of her frustration when she communicated with Adam. Likewise, Adam knew Janaki was dependent upon him in a different way than the other women in the building, and that reliance made it possible for him to challenge her absolute authority.

6.6 Making Friends, Punishing Children

Muhammed's friendship with the Lugbara woman who worked as a maid in the complex next door, Sara, and her daughter, Jessica, often took the form of them chatting over the brick barrier between the two properties. The tenants in the complex where Sara worked were also mostly Gujarati traders, and her work seemed to be unending and intense. On any given day, she was washing clothes, fetching water, sweeping the compound, mopping the balconies, and running errands. She did not have a day off to herself, and she had no escape from the property or its people, sleeping in the small, sparse workers' quarters with Jessica. It was only after the sun set, when her friend came to work on the property beside her, that she could ever be seen relaxing. Because Sara dutifully fulfilled her work obligations, Jessica was often left to play on her own, as she was only 3 years old and not yet able to attend primary school. Throughout the long hours of the day, she could be seen chasing the chickens kept in the compound, climbing the few trees on the property, running up and down the exposed stairs of the apartment building, or climbing the barrier wall to peer into the complex guarded by Muhammed and Adam. Her ability to climb fascinated and disturbed me, as she would somehow hang off the balconies of the second and third floors of the building. She spoke no English, and when I warned her, "*Mpola mpola!*" in Luganda to be careful and she stared at me blankly, Muhammed informed me that she only spoke Lugbara. I then switched to English, telling her to "Be careful!" every time I saw her doing something dangerous, which was multiple times a day. Attempting to offer her some respite from her boredom, I would often blow bubbles for her or offer her a few of Gyata's toys, but what she really wanted was proximity to people. When she wanted me to bring Gyata close to the barrier so she could play with him, she would yell out, "Be careful! Come! Be careful!"

In the evenings when her mother was bathing or washing clothes, Jessica would often call to Muhammed and beg him to allow her onto the property. She was affectionate with him, and the two had a bond, visible in the ways they held hands and spoke to one another, fast Lugbara conversation interspersed with giggles. But it was evident that she also desired to play with the other children in the compound and have friends who were her age mates. Whenever any of the kids were outside, Jessica would run up to them and attempt to join in their play. The youngest children would sometimes engage her, but the South Asian parents would become extra vigilant whenever Jessica was around and put a stop to their children's play if Jessica came too close to them. She was clearly not a desired playmate of the parents; despite her young age, they granted her no exception to the rules that they had made for who could be included in their social circles. Knowing it was Muhammed who allowed her on the property, the parents would disdainfully glance at him as she ran around. If such glances upset him, there were no visible indications from his face or body language.

After weeks of seeing Jessica, both in Muhammed's compound and at the barrier, she suddenly was no longer a presence. I would see her in the distance, still dangerously climbing trees and trying to tackle the compound rooster, but she was no longer coming onto the property or spending time at the barrier. Truthfully, I missed hearing her parrot my most frequent phrase to grab my attention. Sensing something was off, I inquired her whereabouts to Muhammed. He informed me that the tenants on both properties were beating Jessica, and though the little girl was used to it, Sara had enough and decided it was best for Jessica to be less visible to avoid the beatings. I worried that I was guilty of the cardinal sin of neglecting any sort of "researcher's objectivity" in becoming attached to Jessica, but worse, I further worried that I may have contributed to her punishment by making her too comfortable in the compound. Muhammed

insisted that the beatings had always taken place, but I quickly realized that there were hierarchies that I could not interrupt, regardless of how badly I desired. Though the bond I forged with Jessica may not have crossed the threshold to the moral obligation of kinship, it proved itself to be a contentious bond regardless. From cosmopolitanism to kinship to friendship, Kampala found a way to assert contention into every relationship.

Jessica so clearly encapsulated interrupting hierarchies simply by being herself, refusing to be anything other than a playful and daring 3-year-old. But, she also embodied the limitations of such interruptions in a contentious setting such as Kampala. Muhammed and Adam could find creative ways to subvert the authority of the tenants, and while they were at risk of verbal accusations or stern warnings from the property manager, their intimidating stature prevented them from being physically assailed. Jessica was not safe from such assaults. While Sara's friendship with Muhammed could continue, Jessica's was severely limited, the constraints of the intimate setting imbued with a long history of social segregation and inequity. There are no limits to who can interrupt the rigid social orders of a particular place, but the repercussions for these interruptions are not equal.

Chapter 7

A Journey Away from Home, and Back

"The brave die every day because they do not back down."
– Meena Kandasamy, *When I Hit You*

When I began to 'map out' this dissertation, a few key themes jumped out as the most important: kinship, migrant work, ethnicity, cosmopolitanism, and violence. The preceding chapters have fleshed out one or two of these themes at a time, using ethnographic accounts and engaging with theoretical arguments in an effort to show the ways in which Kampala is a place that (dis)allows particular relationships and ways of being. However, this chapter breaks with the form of the others in focusing specifically on the life of one woman, whose story brings together all of the major themes that have been explored. As a migrant worker from the North[90] of the country who came to Kampala in search of wage labor to pay for her daughter's school fees, and as an escapee from an abusive relationship, I felt her life deserved to stand on its own as exemplary of many people's experiences in the city. While there are aspects of her life that seem to be remarkable, I want to emphasize that her story is both exceptional *and* mundane. In other words, many of the women and men with whom I forged relationships and who so generously shared their stories with me lived through circumstances that one might assume to be rare, but were in fact the norm.[91] Much of this dissertation has shown how ethnicity and difference are ever-present in

[90] As described in previous chapters, I use the government's broad administrative regions to do describe the homes of migrant workers. The regions are Western, Central, Eastern, and Northern; 'North' is thus capitalized here to reflect this.

[91] Literature on conflict in South Asia, such as Veena Das's (2007) work and Sharika Thiranagama's (2011) monograph, both of which wrestle with the normalcy of violence and how it is woven into quotidian life, was often brought to mind in a context far removed.

Kampala, used to forge instant bonds, sever their possibility, or be sources of tension in relationships; yet I want to also emphasize that aspects of people's experiences are shared, even if unevenly. Despite aspects of her upbringing that signal the difficulties that she encountered, this chapter explores the protagonist's experience with physical pain and witchcraft in the city and the ways in which it was a more severe place than the home where she grew up. Upon her ultimate return home, I had initially hoped to end the chapter and dissertation with the physical relief she felt after leaving the city. I theorized that Kampala was the source of Judith's pain, and that all she needed to do was to return to her daughter, mother, and sisters for healing. Unfortunately, the truth remains more complicated than such a clean ending allows for. Though she remains home with her kin, the chapter ends by illustrating how contentious kinship is a reality even far removed from Kampala.

7.1 Lethal Kinship

Judith Owuor[92] showed up for work one Wednesday morning looking as though she had not slept the night prior. Her eyes were red and swollen, and she was not standing with her typical impeccable posture. Her husband, John Okiror, had learned his uncle had passed away, and she was asking my husband and me for permission to accompany him to the burial. Judith was not merely an interlocutor, but worked as my son's nanny throughout fieldwork. She explained that this paternal uncle was particularly important to John, as he helped raise him after the death of his own father. Because John's family was in Soroti, over 6 hours away by bus in Eastern Uganda, she would need more than just one day off. She would return to work the following Monday.

[92] This, along with every name in this chapter, is a pseudonym; identifying characteristics have been anonymized

Having lived with John for nearly four years, there was added stress and anticipation because this would be the very first time Judith would meet his family. Though she had pleaded with him over the years to take her to his village, to introduce her to the people she considered her in-laws, something was holding him back from taking this step. They referred to each other as 'husband' and 'wife', and she dutifully fulfilled her role in every aspect of their domestic life. As a nanny for my rambunctious toddler, she worked an eight-hour day, 9am-5pm, and then hurried home every evening to prepare dinner for John, while also keeping their rented room immaculate, all of his clothes pressed, and all of their bills sorted. He was a *boda* driver, and Judith admired his stringent work ethic. He would leave the house every morning by 6am, come home for a one-hour lunch at 3pm, and then drive again late into the night until 10pm. With this strict schedule, he reliably earned around 700,000 Ugandan shillings[93] a month, which was considerably more than most members of the Kampala underclass earned. With John a Teso man from Soroti, and Judith a Langi woman from Lira, their ethnic identities were distinct, but their shared experience of having "black skin" and Northern features, as Judith described it, transcended their differences in a city did not value these physical aesthetics.

We were introduced to Judith through the cousin-brother[94] of her husband, Adam Apolot. Adam worked as a security guard at an apartment complex where we had temporarily stayed, which had 12 units, with most of those units being occupied by Gujarati businessmen and their families.[95] Adam was especially close with our toddler while we lived on the property and never seemed to mind playing football or catch with him, and when we decided to ask Adam if he

[93] At the time, this was equal to about 191 USD. To put this into perspective, most drivers with whom I spoke said they earned anywhere between 200,000 to 350,000 Ugandan shillings a month, no more than half of what John took home.
[94] This kinship term will be elaborated below
[95] See Chapter 6 for the significance of this and an ethnographic account of Adam's labor

happened to know any trustworthy people looking for a job as a nanny, he recommended Judith. As Judith worked, the two of them chatted while the toddler explored the ins and outs of the apartment complex's grounds throughout the day. Always grateful for Adam's care and attention to our son, we would often share meals with him, and made sure we showed our appreciation by tipping him from time to time. Until that point, we felt equally close to both of them. When circumstances forced us to move out of that apartment complex only two weeks before the death of John's uncle, all of us missed Adam, but Judith especially missed his company during her workday and would mention him often.

Five days after asking permission to take a trip to Soroti, on the Monday that Judith returned to work, she began to open up about her domestic situation. Before that day, she did not disclose the intimacies of the life she shared with her husband, but the weekend forced her to do so in order to secure assistance in escaping her predicament.

John had left for Soroti without Judith the previous Wednesday, leaving while she was out of the house running an errand just hours after she had come to our home informing us of the trip. Confused and hurt by his departure, she called him continuously that day, only to find his phone off. Throughout the entire weekend, she called several times a day to no avail. He was still not back from his trip, and she had no way of knowing when he would return. Upon reflection, Judith came to the realization that the lack of obligation he felt towards her own kin showed his lack of commitment to her. Recalling the various times he refused to visit her family in Lira and refused to take her to Soroti, she said, "And worse, he does not like my daughter." John told her that he could not care for another person's child while the father was still alive, and therefore did not think it was necessary to travel to Judith's home to meet her. Ironically, her daughter was the reason Judith chose to come to Kampala, the place the two of them would eventually meet. Like many

domestic workers, she was drawn to employment opportunities in the capital of the country that were absent from her hometown. Finding work in order to pay her daughter's school fees and send her mother and sister money occasionally was her way of fulfilling her obligation as a mother, daughter, and sibling, even though this work kept her physically separated from her family.

Recognizing that her commitment was unreciprocated, Judith decided that John's unwillingness to introduce her as his wife meant she could no longer continue their false affinal relationship. She would await his return, and tell him that she was leaving, saying, "If I stay with him, I might just die." My husband and I immediately questioned her, not because we disbelieved her need to leave her relationship, but because we thought her strategy of confronting him before leaving might be dangerous. Would it not be safer to remove all of your belongings while he was still away? I asked. But Judith insisted that it was necessary for John to be present for her to separate from him; if she left without his knowing, he could go to the police and accuse her of stealing from their shared home, and things could become very complicated. Convinced of her logic, and knowing that she lived the intricacies of daily life that were beyond the realm of our experience in the city, we advised her to begin looking for a new place that she could rent independently while she awaited his return.

Judith somberly worked her normal hours on Monday and Tuesday, but on Wednesday, she never showed up for work. Knowing that an encounter with her husband was likely, we asked a few middle-class Ugandans who also employed domestic workers for advice. All of them were unanimous in their advice: go to the police. Uncomfortable with this, I decided to rush to the orphanage where I was conducting fieldwork so that I could gather other opinions and ask the director and precariously employed caregivers what should be done. All the women caregivers also made it clear that it was critical the police register her as missing, so that the husband could

not make false accusations against other people, including us. The director, a Muganda woman named Barbara Lwanga, further elaborated. She warned that women were being killed at alarming rates at the hands of their partners in Kampala. If John had reacted violently when Judith asserted her right to leave, he could go to the police before us and say that her last known whereabouts was our residence. Barbara also asked me a series of questions that reinforced notions of ethnicity and class in Uganda: "Is she educated? What 'tribe' is she from? What 'tribe' is the husband from? Does she have family here in town?" Hearing that Judith was from Lira and the husband was from Teso, she sighed, explaining that "some 'tribes' are more 'primitive'" in their treatment of women. As a Muganda, she was openly and especially suspicious of groups outside of Central Uganda; without knowing the specificities of their relationship, hearing his place of origin was enough to make her very concerned. His ethnicity indexed violence for Barbara, and since Judith had to leave school after completing only 2 years of secondary schooling, her lack of education was another mark against her, since Lango people were also seen as 'primitive'. In true neoliberal fashion, the director insisted that uneducated women would not advocate for themselves or know their rights because they lacked educational capital.

Alarmed at the information I received from the director about women being killed by their partners, which was confirmed by the caretakers who belonged to the working- and underclass of the city, I was also reminded me of Judith's own words warning us that she "might just die." We heeded the unanimous advice and went to the local police station. The reality of women being killed was again confirmed by the police, who repeated what others before had told us: Judith's life was in danger. The officers took our report seriously, and realizing the severity of the situation, it was agreed that we had no choice but to return to our former apartment complex to ask Adam for help.

Adam was straightforward when confronted with the situation, while also being careful to not say anything negative or revealing about his cousin-brother. Judith had long wanted to run from John, he claimed without elaborating, and she had thought about asking us for help even several weeks prior. Knowing that he was close with the couple, we asked him to go to their place in Kamwokya to make sure Judith was unharmed while we stayed and manned the gate, taking over as security guard in his absence. He hopped on a *boda* and we watched him ride off into Kamwokya. While we did not know many details about the relationship between Adam and John, we did know empirically that Adam and Judith had a friendship, and assumed this friendship would translate into concern about her safety.

When Adam returned from Kamwokya, he said that he had not been able to find the room where Judith and John were staying. This was a bizarre response, so we pressed more: What did he mean he could not find the room? Had he not been there before? Adam was insistent that he had never before been to their place, and said that he described her appearance to numerous people in the area, and none of them knew who or where she was. Bizarrely, he also said that he did not even bother to ask about John, because he did not know his surname. He was making it seem as though he knew Judith more than John, and in the process of doing so, was deliberately protecting the latter. Without any knowledge of the exact location of where Judith stayed, and Kamwokya being a sprawling neighborhood where the self-proclaimed "ghetto president" Bobi Wine hails from, we simply did not know how to proceed; Adam knew as much and told us to go home. The experience of not knowing whether Judith was alive or dead, while being impotent in my ability to act in any meaningful way to find or assist her, severed any hope of a researcher's objectivity in that moment. The hours of the day were spent trying and failing to find ways to locate her.

Later that evening, there was a knock on the gate of our place. Judith was there, and she entered our house, saying flatly, “That crazy man came back.” Upon his return, Judith told him that she was leaving, and the multiple betrayals that John had committed came flooding out into the open. He had a wife and children in Soroti, which is why he chose to hide the rest of his family from Judith, and while having more than one wife is not uncommon throughout the country regardless of ethnicity or religion, Judith was furious that she was stripped of the right to choose for herself if she was comfortable with being a second wife. Rather than acknowledge his egregious omissions, John locked her in their room, saying that he would kill both Judith and himself before he would allow her to leave, and threatened to set their place on fire while they were both inside. Multiple times that day, he called his mother on the phone and asked her to convince Judith to stay, and the mother pleaded with her, saying her son needed someone to take care of him in Kampala. It was clear that she was his ‘town wife’, who made the city livable for the son and husband of a mother and wife so far away.

Throughout the duration of her punishment for a crime she did not commit, John beat Judith repeatedly in the ribs while skillfully avoiding making any marks on her face or visible body. In the long hours of the day, she wrestled with him whenever he would enter the room and demanded to be set free, and he would squeeze her stomach area until she was forced to give up in pain. It was difficult for her to bend or twist by the time she arrived at our house. She finally managed to escape by convincing him that she needed to make a charcoal fire to cook for the two of them, as they had eaten nothing all day. He followed her outside the door of their room, and looked on as she gathered her cooking materials, made a stack of charcoal, and began to fan the fire. When John was satisfied that he had broken her spirit and assumed she had given up and returned to domestic mode, he stopped watching her momentarily to get something from their room. As he entered the

room, she continued to make noise as if she was cooking, and then quickly fled with nothing but a 5,000 UGX note when he was out of sight. All her belongings, including her national identification card, cash, and bankcards, were left behind. As she told us the story of what transpired, it looked as if the gravitational pull of the entire earth was exerting itself on her body; there was a heaviness, an unhappiness in her being, without any sort of dramatic rhetoric or body language.

After she took some time to compose herself, we let her know that we had been trying to find her all day, and that we had to take her to the police because we had filed a report that she was missing as others had advised us to do. When we told her that we had sent Adam to find her only to have him say that he had no way of locating her home, she raised her eyebrows and wrinkled her forehead in disbelief. She revealed that Adam had shared meals that she cooked for him and John multiple times per week in the very room where she had been trapped all day. She was unwilling to go as far as the orphanage's proprietor in dismissing an entire ethnic group as 'backwards', but she was quick to make one generalization: "There must be something wrong with that family," she concluded.

7.2 Moral Choices

Approaching kinship as philosophy as McKinley (2001) compellingly argues we should do, the web of relations in this particular situation shows that being loyal to his kin made it impossible for Adam to simply tell us the truth about where Judith and Adam were that day. Judith considered Adam kin, both through his relationship with her husband and because of the independent bond the two of them had forged. From his admission that Judith had told him that she was contemplating leaving her relationship, Adam gave us just enough information to let us

know we were right to be worried about his in-law, motivating us to continue searching and illustrating the obligation that he felt towards her. But, as McKinley states, the power of kinship "leaves little or nothing out of the moral notion of social relatedness" (ibid., 133). Thus, while every relationship, kin or non-kin, comes with a set of obligations and expectations, kinship is "an overarching philosophy of *moral* obligation" (ibid., 138, emphasis mine). With his continual reference to kinship as moral philosophy, McKinley allows us to see how Adam's behavior reflects the ways in which he felt categorically obligated to John, which overrode any conflict of personal interest. But what is one to do when you feel morally obliged to two people at such odds that one's life may be in danger? Adam could not lead us directly to John's home and risk his arrest, nor could he tell us that we had nothing to worry about and risk injury to Judith. In a city far from their homes, the contentious kinship created did not allow for easy solutions.

In his classic work studying amongst the Iteso, Ivan Karp (1978) details kinship terminologies and the expected relationships that accompany them. When discussing sibling terminology, Karp notes, "it is capable of vast extension through the expansion of sibling terms to cover all consanguines of ego's generation. This allows wide scope for the element of choice. Simply because the terminology is capable of wide extension does not mean, however, that the extension of a term will always be practised" (ibid., 99). When sibling relations are established and practiced, he says, "social relations are supposed to be highly egalitarian and are epitomized by the full sibling relationship, which is one of co-operation and mutual confidence" (100). The expansion of the sibling term to include people who would be cousins in a Western framework (i.e. the children of your father's siblings) made it difficult to uncover a clear family tree for Adam and John. For the two of them, the term 'cousin' on its own did not make sense, but cousin-brother did indicate that they were acknowledging a difference in their relationship than full siblings. This

is where the element of choice, as Karp puts it, becomes important. While far removed from the ethnographic setting in which Karp did his research, being in Kampala away from their homes reinforced the sibling bond between these two Teso men, who had a shared experience of life in the city. In wrestling with his obligation towards his cousin-brother, Adam's choice to offer a glimpse of Judith's unhappiness makes clear that he felt John and Judith to be equally his kin. But he could not protect both equally: in omitting certain facts or lying altogether, his actions could have had profound consequences especially for Judith. One actual consequence that came about was a complete severing of relationship with my family and me, while the most extreme consequence could have potentially been Judith's death. Using McKinley to push this, it was not only "co-operation and mutual confidence" that led Adam to make his decision to protect John: it was moral obligation.

The life John chose to hide from Judith also allows us to see how he viewed his life in Kampala as distinct from his life in Teso. Rather than go through the same lengths to deceive his relatives in Teso about the life he was leading in Kampala, he had told his mother about Judith years ago. The two women would often talk on the phone, and Judith's fondness for his mother is what led John to ask his mother to speak to her on the day he had locked her in their room. Despite never having met her in person, John's mother knew that Judith was necessary for his ability to live and work in the city, as she was the one who managed the household, cooked all of John's meals, and made his life as comfortable as their circumstances allowed. His mother openly encouraged the relationship even after John was forced to reveal his family secrets. She even said that she would demand John bring Judith home to their village for Christmas, and that John would arrange with Judith's father to marry her. John's mother did not care how many daughters-in-law she accumulated, nor did she care about the "realness" or legal status of the relationships. Her

moral obligation was to her son, and that meant making promises to women she never had met, knowing that these promises would never be fulfilled.

7.3 Collateral Damage

There is now a rich literature highlighting the ways in which kin relationships can be particularly harmful *because of* the assumed closeness and responsibilities that come with such relations.[96] This is an important intervention, as kinship studies in the past often highlighted the positive aspects of relationality, implicitly suggesting that close bonds must be inherently good.[97] While the foundational works of kinship have studied structure, more recent work has moved into the realm of how kinship is lived and maintained in practice. However, the story of Judith brings into fore how even those considered kin can become collateral damage when competing kinship bonds demand loyalty in ways that transcend 'normal' tense relations, such as mothers-in-law demanding attention from their sons at the expense of their sons' wives. Judith was not in a tense relationship with Adam, nor was she competing for the affections of her husband. Despite this, Adam limiting his action in coming to the aid of Judith very well could have been tragic had she not escaped their shared room that day all because his torn allegiance prevented him from intervening. Again, though he showed loyalty to Judith through his limited revelations about her relationship with John, his unrelenting moral obligation to his cousin-brother may have led to tragedy.

As previous chapters have shown, loyalties and betrayals present themselves on multiple scales in the city of Kampala, extending beyond the realm of kinship. We had to take Judith to the

[96] See especially Peletz 2001; Thiranagama and Kelly 2010
[97] This, of course, is still how some anthropologists view kinship. See Sahlins 2013 for one such example that has been influential in contemporary kinship studies.

police station to report that she was safe, and the reaction from the police officers, social workers, and all of the employees in the station made us all feel as though we were in an alternate reality. That very morning, everyone was very concerned for Judith's safety, fearing the worst and warning us that domestic issues have led to the deaths of women. When she arrived unharmed, however, that concern shifted almost immediately to blame. Why, they asked her, did you run away to your employers? What are they doing for you that makes you neglect your husband? It must just be that he misses you; apologize for running away and everything will be fine, they coaxed. It was as if women could only be sympathetic actors when they were visibly beaten or dead. Alive, they were nothing.

Even more concerning, the next day, we received a phone call from somebody claiming to be a detective, saying that Judith had to come back to the station to sign a form to close her case. We all doubted whether this was true, but decided to go so that we could avoid any further issues with the police. When we went, John was there, waiting for Judith to arrive so that he could beg her to come back in person. The man who called Judith to the office was there, knowing that he brought her back under false pretenses but unapologetic for his deceit, and the entire office was once again pleading with Judith to just spend more time with her husband and go back home to him. If only she would stop working as John wished her to do, he would be kinder to her and would never hurt her again. The social workers, both of whom were women, were echoing the pleas from the men in the room.

After leaving the police office, I expressed my shock and anger to Judith. She shared neither my shock nor anger; she knew exactly what had happened. "That officer was speaking to John in their language. He's one of them." Being loyal to one's own, however broadly conceived, is a chosen action that can have the most devastating effects on those who fall outside of the group.

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7.4 Back to the Beginning

The story of Joseph Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) is well documented both in academic and popular works. In the United States and the Western world more broadly, the short documentary *Kony 2012* produced by the charity Invisible Children popularized the LRA to the general public, highlighting the brutality of its leader, and focusing specifically on the crimes committed against children. The dramatic rendering of the situation in Northern Uganda quickly went viral, with 120 million people watching the film on YouTube within five days of its debut.[98] Without taking any time to interrogate the Ugandan government's role in Kony's rise to power, the film was criticized by many people who were familiar with the intricacies of the LRA as being inaccurate at best, and purposefully misleading at worst. Nonetheless, the film had profound effects on public opinion, and eventually on international diplomacy. For instance, President Obama was pressured to provide funding and troops to finally capture Kony.[99]

However, the effects and atrocities of the LRA were being documented far before the viral documentary popularized the narrative, and its mission not founded by Joseph Kony. When current President Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA) toppled the Obote regime in 1985 and overthrew the interim President Okello, an Acholi general, the North braced itself, as the people feared retribution for sharing ethnic identities with the previous regimes. During these tumultuous and uncertain days, Alice Auma, an Acholi woman, led a spiritual battle against Museveni's NRA

[98] See Sam Sanders, "The 'Kony 2012' Effect: Recovering From A Viral Sensation," *NPR*, June 14, 2014. https://www.npr.org/2014/06/14/321853244/the-kony-2012-effect-recovering-from-a-viral-sensation (accessed September 1, 2020).
[99] For a discussion of Kony's importance in US foreign policy, see Kristof Titeca, "Why is the US hunting for Joseph Kony?" *AlJazeera*, May 11, 2014. https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/05/why-us-hunting-joseph-kony-20145716731355345.html (accessed September 1, 2020).

while she was possessed by the spirit Lakwena, promising to save the Acholi people from defeat, calling her cause the Holy Spirit Movement. While her movement was intense but short-lived and she ultimately fled to Kenya after a series of military losses, Joseph Kony came to take over the fight for the Acholi people and re-established Lawkena's mission through the LRA.[100] The Lord's Resistance Army remains active today and continues to promise to bring prosperity back to Uganda, though it no longer operates in the country, but has moved to the bordering nations of South Sudan, Central African Republic, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In 1998, Rosa Ehrenreich wrote about the ways in which the LRA used children in its movement in *Africa Today,* 14 years before most people in the United States even knew Kony's name. She wrote stories that were told to her of child soldiers being forced to kill fellow children, of prepubescent boys being sacrificed on the front lines of battle, of child brides made to marry combatants. Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the United Nations Security Council have all condemned Joseph Kony and the LRA, and narratives of war also dominate academic literature that focuses on Northern Uganda.[101]

The normalcy and displacement that was woven into so many people's stories, particularly from the North of the country that felt the devastating effects of the LRA most strongly, was almost too much to believe, and many stories did in fact echo the disturbing report that Ehrenrich gave back in 1998. Though the LRA was not a topic that I went into fieldwork to pursue, it came up whenever I spoke to anyone from Gulu or the surrounding districts, a stark reminder of how history continues to be lived and felt in the present. In everyday conversations with people who had

[100] See Heike Behrend's (1998) *Alice Lakwena and the Holy Spirits: War in Northern Uganda 1986-87* for a thorough account of the rise and fall of Lakwena, which led to the rise of Kony.
[101] See Dubal 2018 for an ethnographic account of the LRA that challenges Western interventionist models that foreground morality

experienced the violence that accompanied the war, what was most striking about the stories of those who survived was the role that chance played in their lives. Judith was no exception to this.

When she was in Primary 2, the LRA had made their way to Lira, her home district. During this time, people had heard disturbing stories about what the LRA was capable of, and Judith's mother feared for her children's lives. One morning, the soldiers had made their way so close to their village that Judith's mother took her children to hide in the bush. When they heard gunfire from close range, Judith and her siblings panicked and ran in separate directions, away from their mother and each other. An officer from the LRA captured Judith and the kids that they found in the area where she was hiding and marched them for several kilometers. She does not recall where they were headed or for how long they were marching, but she guessed that they were walking for at least two hours.

However, Judith's fate changed when a commander came to look at the children and quickly ordered the officer who had taken them to stop what he was doing and let the children go. The commander released everyone, and she eventually made her way back home with her family. The logic behind the commander's decision that day will never be knowable to us, but Judith explained that it was simply the way the LRA operated. The destruction that it left in its path did not seem a premeditated strategy of any sort, but rather random attacks on ordinary citizens that left people searching for meaning. In the end, most decided that it was up to God to decide who they wanted to let live and who they wanted to kill; finding a logic other than God's will is indeed an impossible task while sorting through the destruction caused by a movement proclaiming to be fighting for Christianity. After moving to Kampala as a young adult, she noted that the abuses she saw in everyday life made her feel as though the lack of war in Central and Western Uganda made people more fearful than those who came from North. Whether it was beatings by the police or

election rigging, she was frustrated that those she labeled as Baganda and Banyankole[102] followed unfair orders instead of choosing to fight back. Rather than worry about repercussions of standing up for themselves, she generalized, "For us from North, we have seen war. We know that when we die, it is our day." The randomness of her own survival, and the belief that she survived because it was God's intention, influenced her willingness to confront anyone who she believed was treating her unfairly.

But, it was not only the LRA and armed men that caused Judith and her family trouble as she was growing up. Her parents separated when she was around 8 years old, and she and her siblings were forced to live with their father. When he remarried, his new wife wanted her husband to prioritize the children she had with him at the expense of his other kids, a stepmother narrative that was repeated to me often regardless of ethnic group. Despite performing well on the national examinations and enjoying school, Judith was forced to drop out after her second year of secondary school because her stepmother refused to pay her school fees. She does not place all of the blame on her stepmother, however. To relinquish one's responsibility to their children for a new woman is terrible in Judith's mind, and to protest this injustice, she ran away from her father to live with her aunt.

Soon after leaving her home, her paternal grandfather passed away. While Judith has many siblings, her father only ever had one son, who was her father's firstborn and favorite child. "You know witchcraft is real, right?" she asked me as she casually told the story of her brother. After I gave a half-hearted shrug, she went on to explain that her brother died at the age of 23 due to

[102] Many interlocutors from the North and East of Uganda whom I spoke with referred to all people from Central Uganda as Baganda andall people from Western Uganda as Banyankole, though both the Central and Western regions comprise a number of diverse ethnic groups. Likewise, interlocutors from Central and Western Uganda often referred to all people from North as Lugbara or Acholi. The stereotypes of the dominant group from each respective region became generalizations about all people, as seen in Chapter 3.

witchcraft. Her paternal grandfather was a farmer in Lira, and when he passed away, people were envious of the amount of land that her father, and eventually her brother, would inherit. One day, as her brother stepped out of his house, he felt a sharp pain in his leg, and he fell to the ground and his leg began to swell. They went to multiple doctors and hospitals throughout Lira, but no one could ever find what was wrong with him, and the swelling and pain never abated. With no diagnosis or physiological explanation, the family concluded that a neighbor must have been envious of the family's land, and witchcraft was blamed for the brother's sickness. Several months after the swelling first began, Judith grew very close with her brother after becoming his primary caretaker. Their other sisters would also visit and help when they could, but it was Judith who stayed with him fulltime. The pain and swelling spread to other parts of his body, and eventually he could not move without Judith's assistance. His physical state deteriorated rapidly, and one day as she was holding him up after he asked her to help him sit, he died on her chest.

Judith's father could not cope with the loss of his first and only son and became an alcoholic.

7.5 Leaving Lira

"Migration can be triggered by the angle of sunlight, indicating a change in season, temperature, plant life, and food supply. Female monarchs lay eggs along the route. Every history has more than one thread, each thread a story of division. The journey takes four thousand eight hundred and thirty miles, more than the length of this country. The monarchs that fly south will not make it back north. Each departure, then, is final. Only their children return; only the future revisits the past." - Ocean Vuong, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*

Judith met Jacob, the father of her child, after she was forced to leave secondary school, and gave birth to a daughter at the age of 17. Both were young and ultimately did not marry or stay together romantically, and their contact became increasingly spare throughout the years. Jacob and

his mother visited Judith frequently when their daughter, Naomi, was an infant, but these visits became more infrequent as she grew. Judith raised her daughter with the help of her mother and sisters in a village outside of Lira town until Naomi turned 4 and began nursery school. Though the narrative of wanting better for one's child may seem cliché, there is a reason why it persists, especially amongst so many of the migrant workers in Kampala. Having been denied the opportunity to finish schooling herself, Judith searched for work throughout Lira that would allow her to pay for her daughter's school fees. She often said that UPE schools[103] could not be trusted to provide adequate education, and so she sent Naomi to a more expensive private school in the hopes of her getting a proper education. But, despite her best efforts, she simply could not find stable work in Lira. After months of searching, she decided to head south to Kampala, where it was rumored that employment was abundant and cash could be earned quickly.

In leaving a home where she had experienced so much at such a young age, Kampala was a place where she could begin anew. Because she came to the city to work fulltime, she left her daughter behind with her mother and sister, where Judith knew Naomi would be safe and have all the care she needed. Judith was set on finding work that allowed her daughter to have a proper education, and that would also allow her mother to be financially secured. Her sole relative in Kampala was her paternal uncle, whom she referred to as her father,[104] and he allowed her to stay with him and his family at the police barracks in Nsambya.

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[103] UPE refers to Universal Primary Education, which is was a policy introduced in 1997 by the ruling regime to increase primary school enrollment. This abolished tuition fees, but did not eliminate costs altogether. School fees still exist, and parents are responsible for providing uniforms, school supplies, and help for any construction projects at their child's school. While I disagree with aspects of this opinion piece, for more on the shortcomings of UPE see "Everything Wrong with Universal Primary Education Program In Uganda," *Teach for Uganda*, https://teachforuganda.org/stories/everything-wrong-with-universal-primary-education-program-in-uganda (accessed January 11, 2023).

[104] After the death of her brother, the uncle in Kampala with whom Judith stayed became her primary father. Though Langi kinship uses the same term for father and paternal uncle, Judith's birth father could not handle the responsibilities of fatherhood after her brother's death.

When she first arrived in the city, she remembers hearing stories about the dominance of Luganda, and non-Luganda speakers warning her that it would be impossible to get employment without knowing the language. She heard that employers would "throw the application in the dustbin" if an applicant for a job received an in-person interview and began speaking English rather than Luganda. Even non-Luganda speaking people who are university educated, she was warned, cannot find work because Baganda control certain aspects of Kampala society. Whether this was true or not, Judith's first experiences in the city did make her acutely aware of the importance of speaking Luganda. Being eager to learn, she said that when she tried to speak the language with Baganda strangers in the market or in her neighborhood, they would hear her accent and laugh at her for even trying. As her worries about finding a stable job without the language skills of the seemingly dominant group increased, she was offered a job at Mukwano Industries factory on the outskirts of town.

Mukwano is a large conglomerate that produces everything from plastic chairs to soybean meal. When Judith first arrived at the factory, she was placed in the cooking oil department, helping to label and package sunflower seed oil and earning 10,000 UGX[105] per day. She describes the work as physically easy, though at the time, the workers were allowed only one 30 minute break in a 7-hour shift. Because of transportation costs, the amount of money she was earning was not substantial enough to send as much home to her family as she would have liked. After being transferred to the soap department, she made the decision to quit. The little money she was earning was not worth working in that particular part of the factory, where the strong and varied scents overwhelmed her and gave her migraines nearly every day. Very early on, she was forced to

[105] About $2.72 at the time

confront the fact that Kampala might not be the source of abundant or easy money that she had imagined.

Around this time is when she first met John, and quickly moved in with him to escape the crowded conditions at the police barracks. At her uncle's place, the conditions were beyond tight, as 8 or more people crammed together into a very small dwelling. As they became more seriously involved, Judith began to inquire about John's family and offered to introduce him to her uncle, but he always refused. One day, Judith's uncle showed up at their home to check on her, and John snuck out of the room in order to avoid meeting him, leaving without even a greeting. From that day, Judith's uncle did not approve of her relationship with John because of the disrespect he showed.

This was, obviously, a site of contention from that point on. Yet, constantly negotiating between unemployment and underemployment, coupled with John's diligence and economic reliability, prevented Judith from up and leaving. For many who come to Kampala with hopes of getting enough money to take care of their children and buy property back home, going home with nothing to show for one's time away is unthinkable. If she were to leave John, she would have to return to the police barracks in Nsambya, where her uncle, his wife, their 4 children, and 2 cousins crammed together in two small rooms. With John, Judith never had to worry about money, as he provided enough for rent, food, and utilities without complaint. At least in her current situation, any time she was able to secure a means of making money, she could save everything that she earned and send it home without worrying about bills. Though she was also able to live rent-free at her uncle's place, the family often struggled on the uncle's meager police salary, and Judith's conscience prevented her from keeping the money she made to herself when she was forced to see the conditions under which they lived. She would always end up buying staples like *posho*, beans,

or cassava to contribute to the household, and thus she needed to physically separate herself from the only kin she had in Kampala.

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7.6 Witchcraft, Everywhere; Pain, Everywhere

Judith opened a bank account when she first arrived in Kampala and saved any extra money she earned to take to Lira on annual trips back home when she visited her family. In 2016, before the bank she used had a branch operating in Lira, she went to the bank to withdraw nearly all of the cash that was in her account the day before she had planned to go back home for Christmas. That year, she found odd jobs as a nanny and a housecleaner for various families in the city and was happy to have had earned enough to distribute a sizable amount of cash to her mother and sisters. As she was leaving the bank, a man approached her and spoke to her in English, though she said that she knew from his accent that he was a Munyankole. He asked her for directions to Kampala International Hospital, claiming he was new to Kampala from Mbarara and did not know how to get there. Judith told him that any *boda* driver would know the location. A second man then approached Judith and the stranger, and asked what was happening; again, Judith deduced by his accent that he was also a Munyankole. The stranger repeated his story to the second man, while the former asked for advice on an alternate means of transportation due to his fear of motorbikes. Judith quickly told them to find a taxi instead and then said that she had to get going, but the men insisted that she stay and partake in the conversation. The second man then walked around her without ever physically touching her, and suddenly, "I just felt dizzy, like I needed to lay down, like not myself," she explained. She sat down on the pavement and has no recollection of what happened in the minutes that followed, but when she finally came to her senses, the two men had

disappeared and all of her money was gone. They stole 600,000 UGX[106], a year's worth of savings that she wanted to give to her family. Though she was warned to be careful in Kampala, to be on guard against the witches that roamed the streets, this was her first experience with witchcraft in the city.

In the immediate days following this experience, Judith began to have severe stomach and pelvic pain. At first, she assumed this was from the stress of the robbery, but after it persisted for weeks, she knew that stress alone was not the source of the pain. She visited many doctors and nurses at both government-run and private clinics. Every medical professional she saw diagnosed her with either a yeast infection or a urinary tract infection (UTI), and she had taken multiple rounds of antibiotics and antifungal medications. Despite these repeated diagnoses and diligently taking any medicine that was prescribed, her pain never subsided, but grew more intense and spread to new parts of her body with every passing year. Eventually, she just decided that this pain was something she would have to live with for the rest of her life, as she became frustrated at the doctors' insistence that she had a yeast infection or UTI without running a single test. Giving up on a physical diagnosis for her ailments, she relinquished and decided there were deeper, spiritual causes for her pain.

From strange spells that robbed her of her savings to an ailment that could not be diagnosed, she described Kampala as a place of witchcraft. Did the men who stole her money also cast a spell on her that doomed her to a life of pain? Or, was it a different source of witchcraft that was causing her physical agony? She became suspicious of even friends and neighbors; after all, how else could the two Banyankole men know that she was withdrawing such a large sum of money at the bank? In Middleton's preface to Behrend's (1999) now classic book about Alice Lakwena, he writes that

[106] About 165 USD

Lakwena's followers were lured by her promise "to rid the country of witchcraft" (ibid., x). He says, "This might not 'exist' in actuality but beliefs about it did" (ibid.), which seems to be his way of rationalizing a belief in witchcraft as a community's response to years of violence and hardship. Similarly, Caplan (2010) has showed how uncomfortable anthropologists are when the media engages in stories about witchcraft in sub-Saharan Africa, and Uganda more specifically, without complicating it as a belief system tied to larger structural concerns, such as modernity and capitalism. My fieldwork was not among Acholi, but the consensus in Kampala was that Northerners (including Acholi, who would be amongst Lakwena's followers) did not believe in witchcraft. Judith described the death of her brother in witchcraft terms while simultaneously remarking on how witchcraft was a Baganda phenomenon. She insisted that the intricacies of witchcraft remained a mystery to her until she moved south to the capital.

However, I am not interested in whether witchcraft exists as a "rational" fact in one place or another, nor do I take her belief in it as a logical or rational way for Judith and others to deal with economic hardship or material circumstances. The only way to understand witchcraft in Kampala is through the experiences of those who have been affected by it. In other words, regardless of whether I believe in witchcraft, witchcraft does affect the ways in which people experience and navigate the city in ways that transcend a rationalization of seemingly bad luck as described in Chapter 5. In this way, witchcraft is a total social fact.

Judith, like many interlocutors that I met during fieldwork, came to know the city intimately through the pain it caused her. Bearing witness to the physical pain that Judith was forced to endure nearly every day, I too gave up attempts for a proper medical diagnosis of her ailment. It is not that I thought there was not a physiological reason for it, but I saw firsthand the ways in which doctors and medical workers misdiagnosed her pain. Eventually, I came to

experience that pain as impossible to categorize medically as well. While the story of her brother's death in Lira showed that she had tangential knowledge of witchcraft and other-worldly ailments, it was not until she moved to the city that she began to be plagued with such ailments and bad luck herself. Perhaps suffering in a way that transcended material circumstances was simply part of the price one paid for being in a world of witches.

After knowing Judith for about 7 months, and after seeing her visit 2 clinics in those months and receive a diagnosis of yeast infections both times without ever being tested for one, I once again broke "researcher's objectivity" and suggested she visit a nearby clinic that was frequented by foreigners, a *muzungu* clinic that was well funded with a knowledgeable staff, to get yet another medical opinion. I could not accept that Judith was living in pain for more than 3 years and was perplexed by clinicians and doctors diagnosing her, wrongly, with the same infections several times a year. She saw a Dutch woman medical doctor, described her symptoms, and the doctor quickly realized that Judith was suffering from Bilharzia, a parasite that enters the bloodstream in freshwater and effects the organs in one's body. Judith was confused by the diagnosis because she never went swimming and fetched her water from a borehole, but assumed she may have picked up the parasite while washing clothes in a spring when she lived in Kamwokya with John during a time when the borehole was being repaired. After being prescribed Praziquantel, she was sent home, and she was relieved that the white foreign doctor was providing a diagnosis other than yeast infection.

When Judith began taking the medication, she said she felt instant relief in her stomach area the very day she took the first dose, and she was confident that the doctor had gotten it right. The difference in her body was visible to everyone: her stomach was no longer bloated, she was

more energetic, eating more, and eager to do more physical activities. Yet, within two weeks, the pain returned. She was still in Kampala. She was still in pain.

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7.7 Brief Respite at Home

After separating from John, Judith was forced to move in with her uncle and his family once more. She was again reunited with her only kin in Kampala, living in a crowded shared space in the police barracks in Nsambya. Despite the conditions, Judith had a newfound commitment to her daughter, repeating daily that she must stay and work hard to provide for her child. Though she contributed to the household often, she was still able to put aside some money every month for the business she hoped to open in Lira. After coming to enjoy cooking and learning how to bake with the gas stove in our home, she decided that she was going to move back home and open a local restaurant when we left Kampala.

I was forced to leave Kampala about 4 months before I had planned in March of 2020, as I was conducting fieldwork when the COVID19 global pandemic began to close borders and halt everyone in their tracks. When my family and I left, Judith hoped to leave too, but President Museveni shut down the country of Uganda entirely just days after our departure, banning all public transportation and making travel impossible for average workers. What was meant to be a temporary shutdown of just 14 days was extended several times, with Ugandans enduring one of the longest and harshest lockdowns in the world. The first lockdown that began in March 2020 lasted for 75 days, while a second lockdown in June 2021 lasted 42 days (Nanfuka and Kyaddondo 2022). For even middle-class families with vehicles, stories proliferated of police stopping people

with more than 2 passengers regardless of whether they were immediate family members during these lockdowns.

Judith found a way back home before the official reopening of the country with a lorry driver who was traveling to Lira and was at long last reunited with her family in May 2020. She was unable to open her business immediately, as even after the strictest measures of the lockdown were eased, new rules emerged that forced most markets and arcades to remain closed. But she was able to visit Lira Hospital and once again explained her pain to a doctor there. This time, the doctor said that she had severe internal hemorrhoids, and after a set of X-rays and scans, he confirmed that this was the main cause of her symptoms. He told her he could perform a quick day surgery, and that she would experience instant relief. That very week, Judith underwent surgery, and in the 'violent' Northern region that she calls home, her symptoms subsided.

7.8 The End and the Beginning

I wanted nothing more than the conclude the chapter and the dissertation with Judith's procedure and physical relief. With all the witchcraft and uncertainty, financial precarity, and physical abuse that she endured in the city, I was certain that Kampala itself was the main source of her pain. I witnessed the myriad ways, from the most subtle to the boldest, that she was discriminated against by people who immediately judged her because she simply "looked" like a Northerner. It was clear that she was forced to move through Kampala carefully, judging others before they judged her and predicting others' reactions to her as an act of self-preservation. By the end of my stay in Kampala, I would have done nearly anything to ensure Judith was able to get back home and away from the chaos of the city, away from people who simply did not value her.

As the months passed, President Museveni used the COVID19 pandemic as a way to suppress political opposition, and the odds were increasingly stacked against Judith's dream of being a restaurant owner. Though officially the first lockdown ended after 75 days, there was intense confusion amongst my interlocutors as to what was allowed and disallowed. Even when Ugandans could leave their homes, public transportation and gatherings of more than a few people remained forbidden. Those who would have been Judith's customers were without work for months on end and therefore without discretionary income to spend on luxuries like outside food. Paying no mind to the glaring difficulties that awaited her, she found a high-traffic rental spot and opened her restaurant despite friends and family warning her of its inevitable failure, determined to find a way to make it work. In August 2020, *Best Choice Restaurant* was opened, a small, rented space with black metal doors and freshly painted white walls. A WhatsApp number boldly displayed underneath the restaurant's name promised fast delivery of food to those who messaged it, a service that Judith stubbornly hoped would separate it from its competitors. With a white curtain separating the back of the restaurant where her gas stove, refrigerator, and deep freezer sat, Judith arranged the front seating area with four wooden tables. Draped over each table was a checkered tablecloth with a bright mix of purple, pink, blue, and yellow squares, with four blue plastic chairs and salt and pepper shakers. The ambiance was cheerful, and there was a smaller corner table in the back of the seating area with thermoses of chai and metal cups that customers could take at their leisure.

Predictably, fantasy gave way to reality and *Best Choice Restaurant* was not long lived. The country continued to be subject to shutdowns, particularly as campaigning for the presidential elections of 2021 intensified, and the political and economic uncertainty did not allow for the flourishing of a new restaurant in Lira. But Judith was not to be easily defeated; ever resourceful

and determined, she saw a different opportunity to buy and sell bulk food crops to vendors throughout Lira. She rented a large space, bought an industrial scale, and began selling soy and maize to retailers, doing a small part to fill a gap emerging in the supply chain from COVID restrictions. Unlike the restaurant, her bulk foods business thrived. Judith began to envision converting her restaurant space to a storefront, selling smaller quantities of goods to the local community so as to not limit herself to retailers.

As ever, her family was the motivating factor as she boldly changed course. This time, however, she was not working for her daughter physically separated from her. Judith's daughter, Naomi, was always on her mind in Kampala, but her new business ventures allowed her to be with her child as she creatively cultivated a life for both of them in Lira. Their bond grew especially strong as Ugandans endured the longest educational lockdown in the world, allowing (and forcing) them to be together every day.[107] Her daughter accompanied her as she visited different places throughout the region planning her next business moves, and helped her mother dig in her garden as she grew and harvested maize and sorghum.

Judith's achievements did not go unnoticed in the community. She was happily able to financially provide for her daughter, sisters, and mother, but this also made her a target of jealousy and resentment from friends and neighbors. People began to question how she acquired the capital to begin her bulk food business after the restaurant's failure, and she had to be more careful about who she trusted to help her. There was a long period where Judith was unable to communicate at all after her phone was stolen, and she was convinced the thief was someone she had employed. Unfortunately, people close to her would go through great lengths to claim her success as their own.

[107] Primary schools in Uganda did not reopen until January 2022. See https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/worlds-longest-education-lockdown-ends-as-ugandas-schools-reopen

7.9 Contentious Kin at Home

Though Judith was not on bad terms with Naomi's father, Jacob, he never made much of an effort to see Naomi. Throughout her years in Kampala, Naomi stayed with her maternal grandmother, but Judith spoke with Jacob on a semi-regular basis and would even take Naomi to visit Jacob's mother, who was fond of her granddaughter. Despite her openness to his family, Judith claims that her daughter never even spent a single night with her father, and Naomi never expressed much interest in visiting him, though she happily greeted him on the rare occasions that he visited them. As Judith was too proud to ask for any sort of financial support, the father had never paid any of Naomi's school fees or healthcare expenses. But in a jarring turn of events, Jacob showed up unannounced at their home one evening and demanded Naomi come and live with him. He threw a bag at Naomi and told her to pack her belongings.

Having never lived with her father, and being old enough at 11 years old to speak for herself, Naomi defied him and told him she would not leave. Judith joined her daughter in protest and there was an intense verbal altercation; because Naomi would not follow his commands, Jacob accused Judith of spoiling the girl, using it as evidence that he needed to raise her. After a long argument and realizing Naomi was not going to leave with him, Jacob lost his temper, raised his hand, and smacked Naomi across the face.

Upon seeing this, Judith took matters into her own hands. She grabbed a wooden chair, lifted it over her head, and smashed it over Jacob's head. He fell, seriously injured, and needed hospitalization. In her own words, said flatly and without regret when she reported the incident to me over the phone, "I nearly killed him."

The long history of Judith caring for Naomi on her own and being solely responsible for her daughter's expenses did nothing to help her legal case. Though she was quite literally preventing the kidnapping of her daughter, the police were called and she was arrested and sent to prison for several weeks. Her thriving business came to a sudden halt, and Jacob became the victim in the story despite his verbal and physical assault. When Judith was in prison, Jacob never even attempted to take custody of Naomi, allowing her to stay with Judith's mother. It was clear the motivation for his visit, and the source of his rage, had nothing to do with his daughter. Mirroring Jacinta's husband claiming her property as his own in Chapter 4, Jacob was trying to force his way into being a beneficiary of Judith's success.

Throughout the dissertation, the importance of Kampala itself was at the foreground of interlocutors' experiences. For ethnic minorities like Judith, moving through the city constantly aware of the stereotypes that circulated about her ethnic group forced discerning relationships and interactions. When she was experiencing physical pain and the doctors were unable to find the source of her ailment, I could not help but wonder if the psychological and emotional burden of having to navigate such a city was in fact the source of her suffering. After failing to find a solution even after the *muzungu* clinic gave her a new diagnosis, I became convinced that Kampala itself was the source of her ailment. My desire to end the dissertation with her initial relief back home in Lira was to argue that the contentiousness in the city, from the cosmopolitanism to the kinship bonds forged, affected even the health of ethnic minorities who were navigating Kampala. It was the city that was the disease.

The experience young Naomi was subject to, however, shows that contentious kinship exists far beyond the borders of Uganda's capital city. It is present even in the Northern region, the one that first lured me and where I made a home. In this way, grappling with the difficulties of

intimacy and kinship are to be found everywhere, including and especially where we are most comfortable. As the unrelenting difficulties of Kampala were shared amongst migrant workers, the difficulties of kinship are shared amongst us all. Kinship remains a perennial concern for anthropology because of its stubborn persistence (cf. McKinnon and Cannell 2013). Whether far away from home or nestled in its comfort, we will find loyalty and betrayal amongst those we consider kin, and pain is a certainty in such relationships. For the people in this dissertation who moved away from their families to financially provide for them, they found new kin in the city to alleviate the precarity of a place that was unknown and often unkind. Being separated from their kin was only eased by the creation of new unwavering bonds of obligation.

We continue to make bonds of kinship beyond those into which we are born because a life without kin is a life without meaning. In an ethnically diverse setting where people moved to financially support their natal kin, ethnic identity often became a romanticized view of one's home, but in times of strife, it quickly morphed into a politically contentious category that detonated mistrust and resentment. It is clear that cosmopolitanism is not an easy solution to enduring issues of ethnicity and racialization, but the preceding pages have shown that an acknowledgment of difference does not lessen our ability to forge such bonds. On the contrary, it is wrestling with difference that will allow new possibilities of relating, no matter where we are.

Conclusion

"…the story didn't need to be clean, and it didn't need to be satisfying; in fact, it would never be clean or satisfying, and once I realized that, I would be able to see what was true."
– Jia Tolentino, *Trick Mirror*

I began writing this dissertation after a traumatic end to fieldwork. I do not use that adjective lightly; while the whole world was indeed in a state of disarray as nation states grappled with the COVID-19 outbreak, the effects of this disarray were not equally distributed. Reports of the virus originating in Wuhan, China, coupled with then-President Trump repeatedly referring to it as the "Chinese virus", culminated in me being forced to flee Kampala after an incident that led me to doubt my physical safety in March 2020. While there is substantial anti-Chinese sentiment in Uganda and other parts of East Africa for legitimate concerns about economic dominance and mistreatment of workers, there was a palpable shift in the atmosphere during the uncertain days as the virus spread from China. A Korean man in Soroti had his house surrounded; a Chinese man in Arua caused panic as he attempted to check in to a hotel; a Chinese man was not feeling well downtown and threats arose; talk of 'eliminating' the Chinese grew.

After I was able to catch the last KLM flight out of Amsterdam before flights from continental Europe to the United States were temporarily barred from entry, President Museveni shut down the country of Uganda entirely. A ban on public transportation soon gave way to a ban on all transportation, and people could not travel even in their own private vehicles with their immediate family members. Giving less than 24 hours' notice before imposing these restrictions, the government claimed that they needed to take such drastic measures to ensure people did not flee to their villages. Everyone was to stay where they were throughout the duration of the

lockdown, which was originally set to last 14 days, but was later extended several times and the strictest measures were kept in place for 72 days.

These measures, of course, were most severely felt in Kampala by the economically precarious populations who do not consider the city home. Members of these populations, with whom I spent most of my time and forged most of my relationships, were not allowed to return home, and many were trapped in their roles as domestic laborers or security guards without the freedom to even walk to the market. Many of these people have children in other parts of the country, and they were not allowed to be with their families during a time of great uncertainty and fear. Instead, they were trapped in a city that was often unkind to them.

The discomfort that I often felt throughout the duration of fieldwork was not something that I wanted to explore in the chapters that have preceded this. However, as an Asian American attempting to uncover sometimes difficult, complicated truths in an East African city, it would be disingenuous to pretend I was just another anthropologist in Kampala. Being "Chinese", for all intents and purposes, in a place deeply mistrustful and often resentful of the category into which I fell, everyday life was not a romantic endeavor. Anthropologists have grappled with issues of power and inequality that are inherent in researcher-subject relationships, but there remain lingering assumptions about fieldwork being an idealistic part of anthropology. The thought of not loving the place one does research continues to be unfathomable for many. I did not dislike Kampala, but I cannot truthfully say that I loved it, either. I found it to be arduous, freeing, harsh, full of potential and life, and suffocating all at once. The devastating effects of colonialism and colonial scholarship have prompted Africanist scholars today to undo narratives that unfairly and inaccurately paint sub-Saharan Africa as a place that is 'less than'. I hope the ethnographic accounts that I have given show Kampala, and Uganda more broadly, to be anything but 'less

than'. Yet, like any place on any continent, beauty is accompanied by ugliness in certain situations; the latter need not take away from the former.

My subjectivity led to many uncomfortable encounters in Kampala. Because most of the Chinese and Chinese-looking population in the city is there for business, it was difficult to situate myself as an anthropologist. Aside from harmless "ching-chong" greetings and questions about the country of China, there were more hostile meetings, which included demands for me to explain why the Chinese were exploiting Ugandans, and at times I was a target of the frustration that accompanied such exploitation. I, too, am obviously deeply disturbed by many of the interventions by the Chinese government and contractors in East Africa, but physically representing their actions was exhausting. The guilt I felt over this exhaustion lingers, as I know the position I was in during fieldwork, with a US passport, financial and institutional support from a prestigious university, and the ability to leave the country; my interlocutors did not have these luxuries. Still, not inhabiting the same whiteness as Euro-Americans greatly influenced the ways in which I navigated the city, and research that I was able to do.

However, the fact that I inhabited such a position in Kampala is not the only thing that led me to undertake the type of research that I did. Before enrolling in a PhD program, I lived and worked in Karamoja, a region in northern Uganda, for 2 years in 2014-2016. As I have said in the previous chapters, the experience that I had there was incomparable to the one I had in Kampala. Karimojong, the ethnic group in Karamoja, are viewed by people in Kampala as 'backward' and 'primitive', and the language used by newspapers and television reporters to describe the region oscillates from exoticizing to demonizing. A Nilotic pastoralist group in a semi-arid climate that the British labeled as warlike, I found rural life in Karamoja to be equalizing in ways that were absent from city life. With full acknowledgment of my many privileges, in Karamoja, being forced

to do things such as fetch water and live without electricity also led to a rich relationship with the place itself, and friendships that persist until today. The people with whom I interacted in Karamoja included self-proclaimed warriors and domestic workers and shopkeepers and NGO workers and *boda* drivers. Members of each respective group felt open enough to ask me blunt questions, without the suspicion that often accompanied such questions in Kampala. It was not a physically easy place to live, but one that was rich and fulfilling, and still deeply misunderstood by many, myself included.

When I first arrived in Kampala, the people with whom I felt most at ease happened to be people from the East and North of the country. Perhaps this was an unconscious bias on my part, but their stories of migration from their home regions compelled me to center them in anything that I wrote. While there was near consensus that people missed their hometowns and their families, it was also clear that school fees and other expenses forced people to search for employment, and opportunities to earn cash are thought to be abundant in Kampala. As everyday life continued for me, conversations that I had with people from places like Karamoja, Lira, Gulu, Kapchorwa, and Soroti made me realize that there was a shared experience of not belonging in the capital of their country. Without the ability to speak Luganda, and having physical features deemed as 'Northern', many of those from the North and East find the dominance of the language and norms of Baganda unwelcoming at best. In this way, I found allies and supporters who immediately understood my own complicated and guilt-ridden feelings of frustration when I had to do things like go to the market or an office to secure paperwork for visas and permits.

Kampala Past

Of course, I would never compare my subjectivity to a woman coming from Karamoja to earn less than 100 USD per month to send her children to school. My intention in this conclusion

is to again situate my own interests and position to highlight the reasons why some may argue that my ethnography highlights fractiousness. It is not meant to be a work showing Kampala as a hostile place, but one that shows it from the perspective of those at its margins. The city would not function without laborers from the North and East, but it has been written about as though Baganda cosmology and cultural norms could be a starting point in understanding it.

The city of Kampala is of course central to this work, and it is the place itself that made this ethnography possible. Yet, as I first argued in the Introduction, I maintain that it is impossible to fully account for the workings of the city without an understanding of the importance of what is happening beyond its borders. Despite the significance of the Buganda Kingdom and its location within its historic territory, Kampala's past is inseparable from all of Uganda's past, and its history has deeply affected how workers from other parts of the country are treated. Workers from the North and East made it clear that they are undervalued, often discriminated against, and met with distrust due to unfair, colonial stereotypes. Southall and Gutkind (1957) provided a sociological account of how people negotiate difference in Kampala's neighborhoods, and their study of urban marriage is particularly revealing. As non-Baganda migrants created new kin networks in the city, people preemptively rejected marriage unions with individuals because of ethnic difference, and the differences in marriage norms that accompanied it.

These histories of suspicion affecting how people relate to one another therefore predate Uganda's independence. Uganda's postcolonial history, with coups d'état, violent political oppression, and policies targeting particular ethnic groups made possible, or at times precluded, the relationships people formed. From Obote's decision to abolish the historic kingdoms of Uganda to Amin's Asian expulsion, postcolonial leaders grappled with what it means to be Ugandan and who is allowed to be considered such. As Kampala's role as the country's economic

and political center was cemented, ethnic minority migrant workers embodied the stereotypes that people had formed about their home regions.

Kampala Future

Presently, migrant workers continue to be burdened by the history of ethnic betrayals various postcolonial leaders commanded in the name of state building. Despite the violence that many workers like Judith experienced in their home regions, leaving their natal kin behind to economically provide for them was not easy. Interrogating how people forge bonds in Kampala is therefore inseparable from the networks of obligation that first led people to the city. The kinship that migrant workers forge in the city is contentious kinship not only because of the stereotypes and prejudices that force discerning relationships with others; it is also contentious because of the impermanence of the place. There were many workers with whom I spoke who had lived in Kampala for decades, but they never grew to consider the capital home. Yet, every migrant worker with whom I spoke insisted that returning home without enough capital to buy property and build a home was a failure.

As was seen in the story of Judith, the romanticized idea of one's home often does not match the reality on the ground. While home is a place of one's natal family, mother tongue, favored food, and familiar landscape, it is not utopic in reality. In this way, I would argue that Kampala's future is one of hope. Kampala is not antithetical to home; the layers of contention that exist in the city do not preclude meaningful lives, and bonds of kin are forged across seemingly insurmountable difference. These bonds, as I hope to have shown, allow migrant workers to find renewed purpose, providing them with answers to the age-old existential question of why people continue to persist even as circumstances prove precarious. Rather than attempt to minimize that difference, pretend it does not exist, or romantically celebrate it, honestly grappling with the

competing cosmologies that circulate in Kampala will allow for entire new imaginaries that are not constrained by its sometimes-sordid past. If this work does anything at all, I hope it shows that the future of Uganda cannot be secured without including *all* of its people. In a postmodern, multiple truths era of anthropology, I am willing to stake this as a truth, period.

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