

# Too Many Blackamoors: Deportation, Discrimination, and Elizabeth I

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In 1596, Queen Elizabeth issued an “open letter” to the Lord Mayor of London, announcing that “there are of late divers blackmoores brought into this realme, of which kinde of people there are allready here to manie,” and ordering that they be deported from the country.<sup>1</sup> One week later, she reiterated her “good pleasure to have those kinde of people sent out of the lande” and commissioned the merchant Casper van Senden to “take up” certain “blackamoores here in this realme and to transport them into Spaine and Portugall.”<sup>2</sup> Finally, in 1601, she complained again about the “great numbers of Negars and Blackamoors which (as she is informed) are crept into this realm,” defamed them as “infidels, having no understanding of Christ or his Gospel,” and, one last time, authorized their deportation.<sup>3</sup>

England was, of course, no stranger to strangers, nor to discrimination against them. As Laura Hunt Yungblut has shown, European immigrants constituted a noticeable part of the English population starting in the twelfth century.<sup>4</sup> Although they could gain some rights of citizenship, the Crown taxed or restricted their residency whenever political or economic expediency warranted. Elizabeth herself repeatedly authorized the expulsion of immigrants.<sup>5</sup> Yet Elizabeth’s orders to deport certain “blackamoors” are,

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in fact, unique, for they articulate and attempt to put into place a race-based cultural barrier of a sort England had not seen since the expulsion of the Jews at the end of the thirteenth century.<sup>6</sup> In justifying the geographical alienation of certain “Negars and Blackamoors,” the queen sets them categorically apart from her “own liege people.”<sup>7</sup> While she figures the English in terms of their national allegiance, she designates the “Negars and Blackamoors” as a “kind” of people, “those kinde,” defined by skin color (the blackness stressed by “*Negars*” and “*Blackamoors*”) and associated, less inclusively, with religion or lack of religion (“most” are “infidels”). That is, against the contrasting national identity of her subjects, she depicts and condemns “Negars and Blackamoors” generically as a race—a “black” race.<sup>8</sup>

These documents have become pivotal to critical assessments of the material and ideological place of “blacks” within England as well as of early constructions of racism and race within English literature of the period.<sup>9</sup> Critics have read Elizabeth’s letters as “the visible signature of the imperial metropolis’s nervous writing out of its marginalized other” and have taken the writing out of “blacks” as the writing in of a derogatory association of blackness and race.<sup>10</sup> Debates continue over when this equation finally stabilized and when blackness supplanted religion as “the most important criterion for defining otherness.”<sup>11</sup> Early modern scholars tend to place the emergence of a color-based racism at the end of the sixteenth century; eighteenth-century scholars, at the end of the eighteenth. What complicates any such designation is the fact that constructions of race and of blackness emerged within a complex of social, economic, political, religious, and natural discourses, not all of them engineered to produce national or racial boundaries. While the result of articulations such as Elizabeth’s may have been the inscription and predication of a racist ideology that defined and derogated “black” subjects categorically, the marking of race and color was not the only issue at stake.

In fact, although Elizabeth presents the presence of “blackamoors” in England as a local and internal problem, prompted by the fact that “of late divers blackmoores” have been “brought into this realme” and added to a population that “all ready” numbers “to manie,” her efforts are framed by a much larger, long-standing conflict: England’s ongoing war with Spain. That conflict, which had been heightened more than mollified by the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, was playing itself out partly in privateering ventures of the sort that were bringing “blackamoors” into England.<sup>12</sup> Whatever the ideological bearings, Elizabeth’s plan to

reverse that immigration emerged as a practical solution to her need to reclaim English prisoners from Spain: from what we can tell in each case, the queen intended to exchange “blackamoors” for the captive English. From the start, then, the “Negars and Blackamoors” selected for deportation were caught not simply in a binary opposition with England’s “own liege people” but also in a triangulation with the Spanish—a triangulation defined by the practicalities of war and, in many ways, inattentive to boundaries of race or color. As Elizabeth’s letters map out these transactions, they do show us a color-based racist discourse in the making. But significantly, it is a discourse shaped, complicated, and compromised by political and economic circumstances.

We need, then, to start with those political and economic circumstances and, in particular, with the identity of the “blackamoors” who are caught in the middle. In his influential study, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain*, Peter Fryer has argued that the queen’s discriminatory project “failed completely” “in so far as [it] was a serious attempt to deport all black people from England.”<sup>13</sup> To be sure, Elizabeth’s efforts extended only across the short period between 1596 and 1601 and did little to diminish the size of that population. Blacks remained in England throughout the Renaissance and by the middle of the eighteenth century comprised somewhere between one and three percent of the London populace.<sup>14</sup> Yet to evaluate the queen’s policies in the ambitious terms of a full-scale deportation is misleading, even with qualification (“in so far as”) of the sort Fryer offers, since, as Fryer also acknowledges, Elizabeth never attempted to deport “all black people from England,” only parts of that population.<sup>15</sup> Although in its abstractness her language suggests that the population crisis was widespread, her proposals seem to have been limited to a relatively small number of subjects (at first ten, then eighty-nine) and, in at least the first case, to a specific group.

To date, critics have only speculated about the identity of these subjects—first called “blackmoores” and in the last letter “Negars and Blackamoors”—and, in efforts to underscore the racial politics significantly at issue here, have named them “blacks,” “black servants,” “Moors,” and “Africans.”<sup>16</sup> As Nabil Matar has cautioned, these terms are not interchangeable. And while their use was indispensable in articulating race as a visible category for early modern as well as modern readers, we are now in a position to historicize these markers more carefully and to recognize their vagueness and indeterminacy.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, in the seventeenth cen-

tury, “blackamoor” gets somewhat codified in poetry (e.g., Henry King’s “The Boyes Answer to the Blackmoor”) that, according to Kim F. Hall, “insists on the absolute difference between black and white.”<sup>18</sup> Earlier, however, “blackamoor” is sometimes substituted for “Moor” (itself a multivalent term), and its resonances seem torn between ethnicity and color, especially on the stage.<sup>19</sup> In Thomas Dekker’s *Lust’s Dominion* (ca. 1599), for example, which traces the integration of a North African Moor within Spain, when (and only when) that Moor, Eleazar, is about to usurp the Spanish throne, his lover, the Queen Mother, triumphantly declares him a “proud Blackamore.”<sup>20</sup> In Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus* (ca. 1594), the mixed-breed offspring of the Gothic Queen and the Moor Aaron is designated as a “blackamoor” in the stage directions when the darkness of his skin, described as “tawny” as well as “black,” threatens to expose the adulterous queen and Moor.<sup>21</sup> “Negars” was clearer: in travel narratives, the equivalent “Negroes” usually indicated West Africans from the coast between Guinea and Benin, and they were routinely distinguished from the Moors of North Africa.<sup>22</sup> Yet while Elizabeth’s conjunction of “Negars” with “Blackamoors” places an emphasis on color, it does so at the expense of any regional or geographical distinction.

What gets notably—and, I would argue, strategically—lost in these inscriptions is the fact that the initial group targeted for deportation were “Negroes” captured from a Spanish colony in the West Indies. Specifically, in 1596, the queen proposes deporting ten “blackamoors” who had been recently brought into the country by Thomas Baskerville. She explains to the Lord Mayor:

Her Majestie understanding that there are of late divers blackmoores brought into this realme, of which kinde of people there are allready here to manie, consideringe howe God hath blessed this land with great increase of people of our owne nation as anie countrie in the world, whereof manie for want of service and meanes to sett them on worck fall to idlenesse and to great extremitye. Her Majesty’s pleasure therefore ys that those kinde of people should be sent forth of the lande, and for that purpose there ys direction given to this bearer Edwarde Banes to take of those *blackmoores that in this last voyage under Sir Thomas Baskerville were brought into this realme the number of tenn*, to be transported by him out of the realme. Wherein wee require you to be aydinge and assyting unto him as he shall have occacion, and thereof not to faile.<sup>23</sup>

The voyage Elizabeth references, the “last [i.e., latest] voyage” of Baskerville (of 1595–96), was commanded by John Hawkins and Francis Drake.<sup>24</sup> Both Hawkins and Drake died during the expedition, and Baskerville, who had been commissioned as colonel-general of the land troops, ended up in charge.<sup>25</sup> The venture was designed to recharge England’s waning efforts against the Spanish. Drake and Hawkins proposed sending ships to the isthmus of Panama to intercept the silver Spain was bringing from Peru and so to cripple the Spanish economically and militarily.<sup>26</sup> Elizabeth, however, was troubled by rumors that the Spanish were advancing on England and insisted on a project closer to home. As a compromise, she agreed to a raid on a Spanish ship grounded in San Juan de Puerto Rico and loaded with “tow myllyons and a hallf of tresure.”<sup>27</sup>

The mission in San Juan failed, however, and Hawkins died. Hence, Drake turned to what early maps depicted as the West Indian mainland and waged an assault on the town of Rio de la Hacha, “a pearl-fishing settlement consisting of about fifty houses,” occupied by the Spanish.<sup>28</sup> According to a key account in Richard Hakluyt’s *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques, and Discoveries of the English Nation*, the Spanish governor, Manso de Contreras, tried to negotiate a ransom for the town, but apparently not to Drake’s liking. As a result, while Baskerville stormed an outpost, “the Generall,” Drake, “with some hundreth and fiftie men . . . tooke the Rancheria a fisher towne, where they drag for pearle. The people all fled except some sixteene or twenty souldiers, which fought a little, but some were taken prisoners, besides many Negros, with some store of pearles and other pillage.”<sup>29</sup> Another negotiation of ransom failed, and after the Spanish cleared out, at Drake’s command “the Rancheria, and the towne of Rio de la Hacha were burnt cleane downe to the ground, the Churches and a Ladies house onely excepted, which by her letters written to the Generall was preserved.”<sup>30</sup> Drake’s company then departed, taking with them captured Spaniards and “Negroes.” In addition, the English later took two more “Negroes,” this time from a “Negro” settlement at Nombre de Dios, according to the Spaniard Miguel Ruiz Delduayen, who fought against Baskerville.<sup>31</sup>

It seems highly likely that these two groups of “Negroes” were indeed the “blackamoors” Elizabeth points to in her first letter as she references Baskerville. The question, then, is not just why the queen targeted *black* subjects for deportation in 1596, but why she chose these particular black subjects. Why scapegoat as “blackamoors” ten subjects, designated as “Negroes” in

contemporary accounts, who had just been brought by Thomas Baskerville from the Spanish West Indies? To invoke that particular expedition—which Kenneth Andrews has declared “one of the worst conceived and worst conducted major enterprises of the entire sea-war”—was not in and of itself politically advantageous.<sup>32</sup> The venture did not hurt England’s standing in the Caribbean, but neither did it slow Spain’s advances there.<sup>33</sup> The head of the Spanish fleet, Don Bernardino Delgadillo de Avellaneda, in fact, used the events as evidence of England’s cowardice, and his “Spanish Lies” were troubling enough to prompt a bombastic rebuttal from Baskerville and one of his captains.<sup>34</sup> The “Negroes” from the Baskerville campaign, however, came into England as prisoners of the ongoing Anglo-Spanish conflict, and it was that political position, I would argue, that made them especially useful and suspect to the queen.

Tellingly, within accounts of the voyage, it is the dividing line of war, more than any other marker, that defines encountered “Negroes”—and defines them as Spanish allies. Admittedly, this alliance may have been uneasy, if not also coerced, at least for some “Negroes” who may have been “runaway slaves.”<sup>35</sup> Spanish accounts reveal that the Spanish were suspicious of “freed Negroes” who had come “to serve [the Spanish] in this war.”<sup>36</sup> The Spanish surveyor Juan Bautista Antoneli cautions that “there is no trust nor confidence in any of these Negroes, and therefore we must take heede and beware of them, for they are our mortall enemies.”<sup>37</sup> In addition, both English and Spanish accounts raise the possibility that “Negroes” willingly left with Baskerville in order to escape Spanish rule. The Spanish governor writes that Drake took “100 Negroes and Negresses from the pearl station, who for the most part joined him voluntarily.”<sup>38</sup> In a narrative not published until the nineteenth century, Thomas Maynarde, who sailed with Drake, lists “some slaves repairinge to us voluntarily” among their “many prisoners Spaniards & negroes.”<sup>39</sup> As well, the English admit relying on the “intelligence of som negros” during the venture and in one instance include a “Negro,” along with “three English men” and “a Greeke,” among their own military casualties.<sup>40</sup>

Yet whether the “Negroes” served the Spanish—or joined the English—voluntarily or by force, what most witnesses emphasize is that both “subjugated” and “freed Negroes” “rallied to [the Spanish] majesty’s service with loyalty, hard work and energy” against the English.<sup>41</sup> The English captain John Troughton reports fighting against “some Spanyardes & negros” at Nombre

de Dios.<sup>42</sup> English narrators otherwise pay little attention to the “negroe towne,” whose labor force Spanish narrators tellingly survey.<sup>43</sup> Another account notes that “Negros,” along with “a few Spaniards” and “Indians,” aimed “some 30 or 40 shot” at the Baskerville contingent at Santa Marta.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, once the Baskerville “Negroes” are taken, they figure in English records as prisoners of war, in one subject group with the Spanish. The account of the events at the Rancheria, for example, asserts that Spanish soldiers “were taken prisoners” “*besides many Negroes*” and that, when the English later docked at Porto Belo, they “set on shore all our prisoners as Spaniards and Negros.”<sup>45</sup> Maynarde conjoins “many prisoners Spaniards & negroes” in one phrase, and Troughton reports that Spaniards at the Rancheria intended “to Ransom their houses, negroes, and som spanyardes prisoners.”<sup>46</sup> In these representations, the tensions and power divide between “Negroes” and Spaniards are leveled (or muted) out, and these subjects are pressed together into a single category of captives.

In 1596, then, when Elizabeth proposes deporting “blackamoors” from the Baskerville expedition, she is choosing subjects who have come into England as prisoners of war. That status helps explain the timing and the focus of her ambitions, which seem to have involved, if not to have been directly prompted by, a crisis developing over Spain’s alleged mistreatment of English prisoners. During the voyage, Drake wrote to the governor of Puerto Rico, Pedro Suarez, insisting that “whenever I have had occasion to deal with those of the Spanish nation, I have always treated them with much honour and clemency, freeing not a few, but many of them,” following “the honourable usage of war.”<sup>47</sup> He further warns the Spanish governor that if the English captured by the Spanish “receive good and fair treatment, I shall be my usual self, but otherwise I shall be obliged to act against my nature.”<sup>48</sup> Less than a month before Elizabeth ordered the deportation, she too apparently expressed concern that “Englishmen that have been taken prisoners and carried into Spain are used there with great rigour and cruelty, some in Seville and other places condemned to death, others put into the galleys or afflicted with great extremities which is far otherwise than any of the Spanish prisoners are used here in England.”<sup>49</sup> In retaliation, she threatened that “Spanish prisoners as yet remain in England shall be restrained from their gentle usage,” “search[ed] out,” and sent to “Bridewell or some such prison of severe punishment,” under the supervision of “Mr. Nicholas Owsley.”<sup>50</sup> There are subtle signs here that the queen may have intended to exchange these Spanish prisoners for

English captives. She justifies Owsley's appointment on the basis that he "hath heretofore brought prisoners from Spain and carried Spanish prisoners back."<sup>51</sup> Moreover, she assures "any man that holdeth any prisoners for ransom" "that no prisoner shall be *sent out of the realm* without the knowledge and satisfaction of the party whose lawful prisoner he is."<sup>52</sup>

Whether or not such an exchange was planned or effected, when the queen authorized the deportation of "blackamoors" less than a month later, she probably did have this kind of exchange in mind. For only a few days after issuing the first orders, she proposed a second deportation of "blackamoors" and explicitly justified her intent as a payback for the return of English prisoners held in Spain and Portugal.<sup>53</sup> Her "open warrant to the Lord Maiour of London and to all Vyce-Admyralles, Maiours and other publicke officers" explains:

Whereas Casper van Senden, a merchant of Lubeck, did by his labor and travell procure 89 of her Majesty's subjectes that were detayned prisoners in Spaine and Portugall to be released, and brought them hither into this realme at his owne cost and charges, for the which his expences and declaration of his honest minde towardses those prizoners he only desireth to have lycense to take up so much blackamoores here in this realme and to transport them into Spaine and Portugall. Her Majesty in regard of the charitable affection the suppliant hathe shewed, being a stranger, to worke the delivery of our contrymen that were there in great misery and thraldom and to bring them home to their native contry, and that the same could not be don without great expence, and also considering the reasonableness of his requestes to transport so many blackamoores from hence, doth thincke yt a very good exchange and that those kinde of people may be well spared in this realme, being so populous and numbers of hable persons the subjectes of the land and Christian people that perishe for want of service, wherby through their labor they might be mayntained. They are therfore in their Lordships' name required to aide and assist him to take up suche blackamores as he shall finde within this realme with the consent of their masters, who we doubt not, considering her Majesty's good pleasure to have those kind of people sent out of the lande and the good deserving of the stranger towardses her Majesty's subjectes, and that

they shall doe charitably and like Christians rather to be served by their owne contrymen then with those kinde of people, will yelde those in their possession to him.<sup>54</sup>

This document makes clear that Elizabeth planned to send eighty-nine “blackamoors” to Iberian domains in “very good exchange” for the eighty-nine English prisoners already recovered. These new orders may not necessarily explain her initial proposals either to deport the Baskerville “Negroes” or to detain the Spanish prisoners. Yet given the timing and the context of Anglo-Spanish tensions, it seems highly likely that these initiatives were related and that the proposed expulsion of “blackamoors” was, in the first case as in the second, part of a prisoner exchange with Spain.

This reading of the historical circumstances does not entirely answer the question of why “blackamoors” became the targeted group in lieu of, say, imprisoned Spaniards, who may have been likely candidates as well, if my suppositions are correct. But it does begin to suggest how complicated that answer is, and was, for an England engaged in a conflict with Spain. On both a practical and an ideological level, the expulsion of “blackamoors” appears to further a nationalist cause and solve an internal economic crisis. To deport them is to open up positions of service or labor that, Elizabeth makes clear, they currently hold. (Despite her reference to their “possession” under “masters,” what she describes is not slavery, which had been abolished from England and most of Europe by the sixteenth century.)<sup>55</sup> It is to encourage English “masters” to prefer over “those kind of people” their own “contrymen,” who are “the subjectes of the land and Christian people” and who otherwise might “perishe for want of service.”

Yet the internal, nationalist focus of this proposition is compounded by external, practical pressures that appear more urgent and compelling. In both sets of orders, the number of “blackamoors” to be expelled is obviously incommensurate with the magnitude of the problem the queen displays. The creation of ten, even eighty-nine new jobs would do little to ease the situation, which has resulted from a “great increase of people of our owne nation” and has affected “manie” in “want of service.” In fact, in the second letter, the size of the population to be deported is determined not by the needs of the unemployed English but, rather, by the needs of a “stranger,” the “merchant of Lubeck,” Casper van Senden. Van Senden brought eighty-nine “of her Majesty’s subjectes” “home to their native contry” “at his owne cost and charges”—something, Elizabeth stresses, that “could not be

don without great expence.” His “requestes to transport so many blackamoors from hence” in recompense come first. The desire to repay him determines and trumps the justification that follows: that “those kinde of people may be well spared,” “being so populous,” and that the English need their jobs. Van Senden’s “labor and travell” thus take precedence over the lack of “labor” faced by England’s idle poor, and the “great misery and thraldom” of English captives whom he has rescued over the “perishing” of the unemployed English at home. The deportation of “blackamoors” appears as a “reasonable[]” solution, and “blackamoors” as a dispensable subject group, *because* (and within the document *after*) they figure as a “very good exchange” for *him*.

Ideologically, the exchange actually challenges the national and racial boundaries Elizabeth invokes in its defense. While the queen promotes the strength of her “own nation” over “anie countrie in the world,” her ability to negotiate with Spain over the treatment and release of English prisoners depends on the mediation of a Dutch stranger. Moreover, the substitution of “blackamoors” for those English, and the consequential substitution of unemployed English for “blackamoors” in service, undermines the absolute difference she asserts. “Those kinde of people” may be unwelcome and unwanted within England, but they also occupy positions Elizabeth’s “own liege people” do or might hold. And if they are suspect as subjects once in service to the Spanish, their presence in England, like Van Senden’s, actually gives the queen leverage in working out relations with Spain. Thus, although Elizabeth’s rhetoric suggests and supports a provincial nationalism, what she proposes relies on the complex connection between England and the various “strangers” who serve England’s international interests.

In fact, those international interests take precedence over the national. For despite Elizabeth’s insistence that the deportation would improve the demographic and economic situation within England, she anticipates internal loss and internal resistance to that loss. Her second letter is written with an eye to English “masters” who would rather hold “Negroes” as servants than employ the English (presumably at a cost or greater cost) in their stead. Although she states that she “doubt[s] not” the willingness of these masters to comply, she nonetheless offers a sustained rationale that will convince them to “consent” and will persuade public officials (to whom the document is addressed) to “aide and assist” in the rounding up of the targeted population. To that end, she valorizes Van Senden’s economic sacrifices as a model for her own

subjects. A “suppliant” as well as a “stranger,” Van Senden has worked for the “delivery” of English prisoners with a “*charitable* affection,” she emphasizes, at his own sizeable expense.<sup>56</sup> Just as he relieved Englishmen suffering abroad so should the English “doe *charitably*” “like Christians” and relieve the English suffering at home; just as he did so “at his owne cost and charges,” so, implicitly, should they.<sup>57</sup> The queen underlines the “reasonableness” of this request by insisting that she asks no more from her people than Van Senden has already given voluntarily. He is to “have lycense to take up so much blackamoors” and only so many “blackamoors” as he is due in a one-for-one exchange. In assuring her subjects that the exchange will prove “very good” since “those kinde of people may be well spared in this realme, being so populous,” she may also be hinting that there will still be plenty of “blackamoors” to go around after the deportation. Indeed, her first pronouncement (in 1596) that “there are allready here to manie” may itself imply that there will always be enough.

Despite itself, Elizabeth’s second letter makes clear that while unemployed English citizens stand to gain from the deportation, then, English “masters” stand to lose. In the face of this economic double edge, what begins to emerge in the second letter, and what will get a bolder iteration in the third, is an important shift from a practical argument based on economic expediency to an ideological argument grounded on natural difference. Elizabeth draws here a unifying boundary around England, one that can accommodate the service of the Dutch mediator and rationalize the expulsion of the serving blacks. In promoting the Protestant Van Senden as a model for English Christians, she defines her people as part of a Protestant community that selectively exceeds national boundaries and implicitly excludes “blackamoors,” some who, after all, have served the Spanish/Catholic foe. Within a Protestant framework, their deportation answers a moral imperative that ultimately outweighs the vexed economic variables. Insisting that “God hath blessed” the increase of the English people, she implicates the burdensome increase of “blackamoors” as a recent development that works against this providential design. Although this letter is more explicit than the first about where those “blackamoors” are being sent (Iberia) and why, it is even less explicit about their identity. Elizabeth notes that the blacks have been brought “of late” into the country, but she does not say by whom. What defines the group—and marks them as expendable—is their increased size. In contrast with Christians, they begin to emerge as a problem in their own right, an abstract

“kinde” of people without a country, homeland, or history, and an unblessed race.

For the moment, that incrimination comes by implication only, in part because the document subordinates the “blackamoor” problem to economic concerns. Elizabeth imagines that there is enough antipathy toward “blackmoores” that she can market them as a “kinde of people” who “may be well spared.” But she does not count on that base of ideological prejudice, whatever its strength, to overcome the practical utility and profitability of harboring “Negroes” within the realm, not at least within the class of masters who stand to lose from the deportation.

We do not know how well her argument worked or whether the exchange ever took place. Yet five years later, when the queen authorizes one last deportation, her worries about her own subjects’ resistance have increased and so—consequently, I would argue—have her efforts to code blacks as a separate race. In 1601 she writes:

After our hearty commendations; whereas the Queen’s Majesty, tendering the good and welfare of her own natural subjects greatly distressed in these hard times of dearth, is highly discontented to understand the great numbers of Negars and Blackamoors which (as she is informed) are crept into this realm since the troubles between Her Highness and the King of Spain, who are fostered and relieved here to the great annoyance of her own liege people that want the relief which those people consume; as also for that the most of them are infidels, having no understanding of Christ or his Gospel, hath given especial commandment that the said kind of people should be with all speed avoided and discharged out of this Her Majesty’s dominions. And to that end and purpose hath appointed Caspar van Zenden, merchant of Lübeck for their speedy transportation, a man that hath very well deserved of this realm in respect that by his own labor and charge he hath relieved and brought from Spain divers of our English nation who otherwise would have perished there. This shall therefore be to will and require you and every of you to aid and assist the said Caspar van Zenden or his assigns to take up such Negars and Blackamoors to be transported as aforesaid, as he shall find within the realm of England. And if there shall be any person or persons which are possessed of any such Blackamoors that refuse to deliver

them in sort as aforesaid, then we require you to call them before you and to advise and persuade them by all good means to satisfy Her Majesty's pleasure therein, which if they shall eftsoons willfully and obstinately refuse, we pray you then to certify their names unto us, to the end Her Majesty may take such further course therein as it shall seem best in her princely wisdom.<sup>58</sup>

Where before Elizabeth asserts that she "doubts not" that English masters will follow Van Senden's lead and deliver their "blackamoors," now she admits that some of her subjects might "willfully and obstinately refuse" and prescribes aggressive action against them. She directs her public officials to "advise and persuade" citizens "possessed of" "Negars and Blackamoors" "to satisfy Her Majesty's pleasure." If that pressure fails, the officers are to "certify their names unto" the Crown "to the end Her Majesty may take such further course therein."

The queen couples these practical measures to a developing ideological argument, which posits a more limited conception of nationalism and a more absolute conception of race than what had appeared in the earlier letters. Now, instead of scripting the English into a wider Protestant community with a Dutchman at its helm, the queen closes the English borders and gives priority to "her own natural subjects." While she again praises Van Senden as "a man that hath very well deserved of this realm," he appears as her appointee rather than, as before, the one dictating the conditions of the exchange: the queen herself gives the "especial commandment" that blacks be deported because English citizens are suffering (more extensively now) from "hard times of dearth." In the background are "the troubles between Her Highness and the King of Spain," which demand an attention to nation, an assertion of "Her Majesty's dominions," and the protection of her "own liege people." Here, it is the unemployed underclass, and not English masters, who seem most central as representatives of the nation, they who "want the relief which those [black] people consume," they who are greatly annoyed that blacks are "fostered and relieved" by English masters. If those masters are to be, like the poor, apt representatives of the realm, a realm troubled by Spain, they must hand over the blacks in their possession and hire their countrymen. National allegiance takes precedence over Christian duty, economics, and class.

As this more guarded and insular nationalism surfaces in the last set of orders, with it comes a more insistent racism. An ame-

liorating Anglo-Spanish exchange of prisoners still shadows the document as a motivating factor for the deportation: Van Senden has once again been selected for the “transportation” because he “hath relieved and brought from Spain divers of our English nation who otherwise would have perished there.” But this time Elizabeth does not specify whether the prisoner crisis is current, recent, or past. Hence, if the suffering of the English captives appears more serious (the imprisoned English here “would have perished”), it also seems less urgent, less compelling as a motive for action. With the need to bring the English home abstracted thus, the need to get the black population out takes its place as “the thing itself,” as the propelling problem rather than an expedient solution to other crises.

That problem is inscribed, and abstracted, in racial and ultimately racist terms. Where before Elizabeth states that the “blackamoors” had been “brought” into England, implicitly under the auspices of venturing English, here she implies that they have “crept” into the realm, in worrisome numbers, both independently and secretly (she must be “informed”). If they are responsible for their immigration, so are they responsible for their expulsion on racial grounds. Here for the first time the queen names the subjects in question “Negars.” But she simultaneously conflates that historically meaningful designation with the more elusive “Blackamoors,” creating a composite subject group of “blacks.” To this color coding, she adds the accusation that “most of them are infidels, having no understanding of Christ or his Gospel.” Where before “blackamoors” appeared as non-Christian only via a contrast with the constructed Protestant community from which they were excluded, here the incriminated group has its own self-defining feature: a probable lack of faith. Even if only “most” are infidels, all are nonetheless suspect for an infidelity that no one could see literally, and so would see figuratively. Thus, in this document as not before, blacks acquire their own negative attributes as a “kinde of people.” It is no longer expediency and circumstance that make their deportation from England “reasonable[]” at a particular historical moment. They, by virtue of their innate and collective characteristics, their blackness and their probable faithlessness, are a race, a people, that “should be with all speed avoided and discharged out of . . . Her Majesty’s dominions.” If the current “hard times of dearth” within the nation make such an action particularly urgent in 1601, Elizabeth’s rationale extends across time, producing a population—or at least the idea of a population—that could be repeatedly condemned as the infidel “black.”

These official letters issued by Queen Elizabeth between 1596 and 1601 move then from the contingent to the absolute, the practical to the ideological, the economic to the racial, ultimately coming as close as contemporary texts will come to categorically defining a “black” race. The proposal to deport “blackamoors” begins, in its first manifestation, as an expedient solution to crises resulting from the Anglo-Spanish conflict; in its last incarnation, it produces the infiltration of “blacks” as a threat both to England’s economy and to its national unity and “natural” identity. Yet the story these documents tell is not simply of a growing English racism or the stabilizing of an association between color, “blacks,” and race. Rather the letters evidence how pressured that ideological trajectory was by practical circumstances that were as divisive as they were directive to any single way of seeing. Indeed, even in 1601, if the queen’s explicitly “racist” language suggests that England’s subjects had grown more inclined ideologically toward discrimination against “blacks” as a subject group, her anticipated policing of anyone disobeying her orders suggests that some citizens may have been less inclined practically toward the deportation of particular “blacks” in their possession. If we can trace in Elizabeth’s open letters a subtle change in attitudes toward the accommodation as well as the alienation of a “black” population, it is a change that we must understand as always under revision, inevitably contingent on the practical, political, and economic needs of the moment and both framed and fractured by those needs.

## NOTES

I am extremely grateful to Emma Smith, and to Mary Thomas Crane, Ann Baynes Coiro, James R. Siemon, and Maurice Lee for their generosity, wisdom, and input.

<sup>1</sup> Queen Elizabeth to the Lord Mayor et al., 11? July 1596, in *Acts of the Privy Council of England*, n.s., 26 (1596–97), ed. John Roche Dasent (London: Mackie, 1902), 16–7.

<sup>2</sup> Queen Elizabeth to the Lord Mayor et al., 18 July 1596, in *Acts of the Privy Council*, pp. 20–1.

<sup>3</sup> Qtd. in Eldred D. Jones, *The Elizabethan Image of Africa* (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1971), p. 20. See also “Licensing Casper van Senden to Deport Negroes [draft],” in *The Later Tudors (1588–1603)*, vol. 3 of *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, ed. Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, 3 vols. (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 221–2, 221.

<sup>4</sup> Laura Hunt Yungblut, *Strangers Settled Here amongst Us: Policies, Perceptions, and the Presence of Aliens in Elizabethan England* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 89. See also Ania Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002), pp. 7–19.

<sup>5</sup> See Yungblut, p. 91.

<sup>6</sup> In the face of Elizabeth's variant spellings of the term, I will use "blackamoor" unless I am quoting from a particular text.

<sup>7</sup> Qtd. in Jones, p. 20.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Neill's "'Mulattoes,' 'Blacks,' and 'Indian Moors': *Othello* and Early Modern Constructions of Human Difference," *SQ* 49, 4 (Winter 1998): 361–74, has been helpful as a model for articulating the imbalance of national and racial identity.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Jonathan Burton, "A Most Wily Bird': Leo Africanus, *Othello*, and the Trafficking in Difference," in *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*, ed. Loomba and Martin Orkin (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 43–63, 56; Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca and London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1995), pp. 13–4; Karen Newman, *Fashioning Femininity and English Renaissance Drama* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 80–1; Arthur L. Little, *Shakespeare Jungle Fever: National-Imperial Re-visions of Race, Rape, and Sacrifice* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2000), pp. 16, 73–4; Gretchen Gerzina, *Black London: Life before Emancipation* (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1995), pp. 3–4; Virginia Mason Vaughan, "*Othello*": *A Contextual History* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), pp. 56–8; and Jones, p. 20.

<sup>10</sup> Imtiaz Habib, *Shakespeare and Race: Postcolonial Praxis in the Early Modern Period* (Lanham MD and New York: Univ. Press of America, 2000), p. 92. See also Ian Smith, "Barbarian Errors: Performing Race in Early Modern England," *SQ* 49, 2 (Summer 1998): 168–86, 184, and "Those 'Slippery Customers': Rethinking Race in *Titus Andronicus*," *JTD* 3 (November 1997): 45–58, 48; and Francesca T. Royster, "White-Limed Walls: Whiteness and Gothic Extremism in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*," *SQ* 51, 4 (Winter 2000): 432–55, 438–9.

<sup>11</sup> Neill, p. 367. On the preeminence of religious distinction, see Winthrop Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550–1812* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1968), p. 55; Loomba, "Delicious Traffick': Racial and Religious Difference on Early Modern Stages," in *Shakespeare and Race*, ed. Catherine M. S. Alexander and Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000), pp. 203–24; Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), pp. 15–7; and Burton. On the association of race and color, compare Wheeler (pp. 5–11) with Dympna Callaghan's *Shakespeare without Women: Representing Gender and Race on the Renaissance Stage* ([London and New York: Routledge, 2000], p. 78) and Loomba's "'Local-Manufacture Made-in-India Othello Fellows': Issues of Race, Hybridity, and Location in Post-Colonial Shakespeares" (in *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*, pp. 143–63, 149). On the instability of racial inscriptions in the Renaissance, see also Mary Floyd-Wilson, *English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2003); and Jean Feerick, "Spenser, Race, and Ire-land," *ELR* 32, 1 (Winter 2002): 85–117.

<sup>12</sup> See Kenneth R. Andrews, *Elizabethan Privateering: English Privateering during the Spanish War, 1585–1603* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1964).

<sup>13</sup> Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 1984), p. 12; emphasis added.

<sup>14</sup> Gerzina, p. 5.

<sup>15</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>16</sup> See, for instance, Little, p. 73; Callaghan, p. 75; and Hall, p. 14. Hall is very conscious that her choice to use “blacks” in talking about various representations of African peoples indeed glosses over more distinct cultural identities, which, she argues, “have been erased from historical records or do not obtain in the early period” (p. 8).

<sup>17</sup> Nabil Matar, *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1999), p. 7.

<sup>18</sup> Hall, p. 118.

<sup>19</sup> Patricia Parker has explored the resonances of these terms in her paper, “Sound Government: Morals, Murals, and More,” presented at the World Shakespeare Congress, Valencia, Spain, 19 April 2001. See also Neill, pp. 364–5.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Dekker, *Lust’s Dominion; or, The Lascivious Queen*, ed. J. Le Gay Brereton (Louvain: Librairie Universitaire, Uystpruyst, 1931), III.iv.1836.

<sup>21</sup> William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans and J. J. M. Tobin, 2d edn. (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), pp. 1065–1100, IV.ii.51 [stage directions], V.i.27, IV.ii.66.

<sup>22</sup> On the distinctions between “Negro” and “Moor,” see my essay, “Imperialist Beginnings: Richard Hakluyt and the Construction of Africa,” *Criticism* 34, 4 (Fall 1992): 517–38, which also traces the ways these categories collapse into each other and into other European and non-European groups.

<sup>23</sup> Queen Elizabeth to the Lord Mayor et al., 11? July 1596, in *Acts of the Privy Council*, pp. 16–7.

<sup>24</sup> On this voyage and its place in the war, see Wallace T. MacCaffrey, *Elizabeth I: War and Politics, 1588–1603* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1992), chap. 6, pp. 107–34; Julian S. Corbett, *Drake and the Tudor Navy*, 2 vols. (London, 1899), 2:375–409; and Andrews, *Drake’s Voyages: A Re-Assessment of Their Place in Elizabethan Maritime Expansion* (New York: Charles Scribners’, 1967), chap. 11, pp. 158–79, and *Elizabethan Privateering*, pp. 174–5.

<sup>25</sup> See Andrews, ed., *The Last Voyage of Drake and Hawkins* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 16, 45. This text is made up of a number of relevant documents interspersed with commentary by Andrews. Future references to commentary by Andrews will treat Andrews as the author of *The Last Voyage*, while references to the documents also contained in the book will be cited by the authors of those documents.

<sup>26</sup> On the assumptions lying behind these strategies, see Andrews, *The Last Voyage*, p. 5.

<sup>27</sup> Sir Francis Drake and Sir John Hawkins to Queen Elizabeth I, 16 August 1595, in *The Last Voyage*, pp. 31–2, 32. On the changing plans, see MacCaffrey, pp. 108–14.

<sup>28</sup> Andrews, *Drake’s Voyages*, p. 172.

<sup>29</sup> Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques, and Discoveries of the English Nation*, 12 vols. (Glasgow: James MacLehose, 1904), 10:226–45, 234; emphasis added.

<sup>30</sup> Hakluyt, 10:235.

<sup>31</sup> See Miguel Ruiz Delduayen, "Report by Miguel Ruiz Delduayen" (1596), in *The Last Voyage*, pp. 199–218, 218.

<sup>32</sup> Andrews, *Drake's Voyages*, p. 158; see also Andrews, *Elizabethan Privateering*, p. 175. For a survey of historians' evaluations of the voyage, see Andrews, *The Last Voyage*, pp. 7–9.

<sup>33</sup> See Andrews, *Drake's Voyages*, pp. 158, 178.

<sup>34</sup> See Hakluyt, 10:26–45.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, Corbett, p. 396.

<sup>36</sup> Delduayen, p. 212. For other references to "Negroes" fighting for the Spanish, see "Inquiry on Behalf of Juan Enríquez Conabut," in *The Last Voyage*, pp. 223–6, 224; and a letter from Juan Enríquez Conabut to Fray Bartolomé de la Barrera y Castroverde, 11 January 1596, in *The Last Voyage*, pp. 226–7, 227.

<sup>37</sup> Bautista Antoneli, "Antoneli's Report on the Defences of Certain Places in the West Indies, 1587," in *The Last Voyage*, pp. 193–9, 196; see also Hakluyt, 10:135–56.

<sup>38</sup> Manso de Contreras to the king, 15 January 1596, in *The Last Voyage*, pp. 187–193, 192; see also Delduayen, p. 212.

<sup>39</sup> Thomas Maynarde, "Thomas Maynarde's Narrative," in *The Last Voyage*, pp. 85–107, 94; on the publication history of this document, see also Maynarde, p. 85.

<sup>40</sup> John Troughton, "John Troughton's Journal," in *The Last Voyage*, pp. 107–13, 111. Andrews notes that at Rio de la Hache, "some of the Spaniards and about a hundred Negroes helped the raiders to locate hidden valuables" (*Drake's Voyages*, p. 172); Hakluyt, 10:243.

<sup>41</sup> Delduayen, p. 212.

<sup>42</sup> Troughton, p. 112.

<sup>43</sup> Maynarde references one settlement thus in passing (p. 99).

<sup>44</sup> Hakluyt, 10:236.

<sup>45</sup> Hakluyt, 10:241.

<sup>46</sup> Troughton, p. 111.

<sup>47</sup> Drake to Pedro Suarez Coronel, governor of Puerto Rico, n.d., in *The Last Voyage*, pp. 174–5, 174.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> G. K. Harrison, *A Second Elizabethan Journal* (London: Constable, 1931), pp. 107–8.

<sup>50</sup> Harrison, p. 108.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* Nicholas Owsley also had been commissioned to negotiate with the Emperor of Morocco in 1589; see Hakluyt, 6:511.

<sup>52</sup> Harrison, p. 108; emphasis added.

<sup>53</sup> On this exchange, see also Fryer, pp. 10–2.

<sup>54</sup> Queen Elizabeth to the Lord Mayor et al., 18 July 1596, in *Acts of the Privy Council*, pp. 20–1.

<sup>55</sup> On the history of European slavery, see Robin Blackburn, "The Old World Background to European Colonial Slavery," *WMQ* 54, 1 (January 1997): 65–102. On the place of blacks in England, see Gerzina, pp. 3–4.

<sup>56</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>57</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>58</sup> Qtd. in Jones, pp. 20–1.