

**What's wrong with this picture? A pilot study on Lebanese of African heritage; how they challenge current discourses on identity, "race", racialization and racism in Lebanon**

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**Abstract**

"Stories of racism, like this one, are normal for most half-caste Lebanese," says Ed. "Lebanon is a racist country and we're not even accepted within our own society" (Rousseau, 2009).

The discourse on racism in Lebanon is largely structured on binarism, narrowing any dialogue regarding this subject to just two parties – "Lebanese" and (approximately 400,000) female migrant domestic workers, a dynamic that has permitted racism to pass for classism and to flourish largely unchallenged. This template narrative of an "Us" versus "the Other" story has left no room to explore other positions on racism in the country. This paper introduces new voices into this discourse by looking at the talks of five Lebanese individuals of African heritage, and paints a different picture of racism in Lebanon through their lived experiences. It attempts to show how by their existence these individuals challenge: the concept of "race", modes of exclusion, inclusion and "othering", and the tying of colour to national identity, in Lebanon. It explores: the current context of a "white" identity in the country through self-racialization and selective aestheticization, or identity fetishism; the country's current classism/racism dichotomy; in brief, the history of Lebanese emigration to West Africa, and mixing that occurred; and it highlights patterns and themes in the talk of these five individuals related to "othering", racialization and "race"-based discrimination in Lebanon.

**Keywords:** Mixed-identity; mixed-parentage; identity fetishism; selective aestheticization; othering; racialization; race-thinking; racism.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1. Background**

Within academic and non-academic spaces of dialogue, it can be argued that the discourse on racism in Lebanon has typically been presented along binary lines of opposition. It is often framed as an uncomfortable (and occasionally fatal)<sup>1</sup> relationship between “Lebanese” and female migrant workers (HRW, 2010; Jureidini, 2003; Abu-Habib, 1998), with rare mention of other social groups who also face racism in the country.

At its core is a template narrative that, although presents an important and prominent piece of the situation, distorts the picture in its entirety and confines the discourse within a rigid framework of “us” versus “the low-class outsiders”. It perpetuates the existence of two homogeneous, separate units, with no room to explore any other position on racism in the country, resulting in frequently unchallenged racism presenting itself under the guise of classism.

Within this framework, Lebanese of African heritage are cast aside as a subaltern group. Yet, they are also, in varying degrees and through unique as well as shared experiences, the targets of race-based “othering” and discrimination in Lebanon (Lee, 2009; Rousseau, 2011: 24; Sara, 2012; Fleming-Farrell, 2012; Caldwell, 2012). Often defined by what they are not, they are frequently the subject of “othering” and racism due to erroneous physical identifiers, a situation which has positioned them, on the surface of things, as occupiers of both positions, of “us” and “them”, as well as various other multiplicities.

Indeed, there appears to be a general sense of confusion (almost denial) regarding their possible existence, as illustrated during a discussion with students at the American University of Beirut:

Although the majority of the class denied that the treatment of domestic workers was racist when presented with an incident of an African-Lebanese who was mistreated due to the color of their skin all of them agreed that this was racism. “This is racism because if they are Lebanese then they should not be treated this way”, says Kamal. Even more interesting was the reaction from most of the students who seemed unaware of the existence of mixed-ethnicity Lebanese in the country (Rousseau, 2011: 24).

This is despite Lebanon’s rich history of emigration that saw its citizens moving to different parts of the world, including Africa<sup>2</sup> (Hourani and Shehadi, 1992; Bierwirth, 1999; Akyeampong, 2006). These early waves consisted mostly of men; many who became naturalized in their new country of residence, engaged in relationships in their new homes, created inter-“racial” family units, and had mixed-parentage children (Khuri, 1968; Bierwirth, 1999: 95, 98; Leichtman, 2005: 669).

What the exclusion of Lebanese of African heritage from Lebanon’s discourse on racism highlights is a need to clear the space for multiple voices in order: to understand their experiences with racism and draw from them; to enrich the current dialogue; to leverage their individual tactics at dealing with racism into broader societal contexts and within localized situations (such as within families); and to aid in the deconstruction of racialized identities and racism in Lebanon.

This paper shall explore how this group challenges: the concept of “race”, modes of exclusion, inclusion and “othering”, and the tying of colour to national identity, in Lebanon. In attempting to do so, it will explore the current context of identity and racism in Lebanon, and its classism/racism dichotomy. It will look at the history of Lebanese emigration to West Africa, and attempt to construct a picture of the extent of mixing between Lebanese and Africans. It will then look at five interviews<sup>3</sup> with Lebanese individuals of African heritage, and attempt to highlight patterns and themes related to racialization<sup>4</sup> and “race”-based discrimination in Lebanon.

Given the limited space and material available<sup>5</sup>, this paper will act: as a pilot study that aims to provide new material to, and fill a gap within, the current discourse on racism; and as a stepping stone to further studies within this subject area. It will provide material that should aid in: involving all camps in an interactive exchange in the near future; eliminating the two fixed polarities and start the incorporation of subaltern voices; and creating a multi-layered, richer discourse with regards to racism in Lebanon.

## **1.2. Literature Review**

As its title implies, this paper looks at how Lebanese of African heritage challenge current discourses on identity, “race”, “othering”, racialization and racism in Lebanon. There exists a large amount of research on each individual subject, and a combination of them, but very few specifically on Lebanon.

There is generous literature on mixed identities around the world. Studies range from exploring the attitudes of young people towards their identity (Tizard and Phoenix, 1993), to historical perspectives of mixed-“race” (Alibhai-Brown, 2001). Others focus on gendered and embodied “hybrid” identities (Kamada, 2010), and the construction through lived experiences and negotiation through talk of “black” identity (Tate, 2005).

Other studies explore the significance of: “race” and inter-“racial” relationships (Fernandez, 2010; Sollors, 2000); racial consciousness of white “transracial” mothers (Twine, 2010); racial identity development of mixed-parentage children (Katz, 1996); the influence of family communication on the topic of “race” (Socha and Diggs, 1999); and understandings of “race” (Suki Ali) and the significance of racism (Connolly, 1998) in the lives of young children.

Works reflecting on: identity (Maalouf, 2000; Jenkins, 2008; Rutherford, 1990); on cultural identity specifically (Bhabha, 1994; Werbner and Modood, 1997); racialization (Murji and Solomos, 2005); self-racialization through selective aestheticization (Hage, 2005); and global debates, theories and histories of “race” and racism (Law, 2010) also exist.

In addition, studies on certain practices particular to Lebanese family units such as patriarchal connectivity, patrilineality (Joseph, 1997; Joseph, 1999), and utilitarian familialism<sup>6</sup> (Ong et al, 1996) exist; and generally on elements of ethnic grouping and boundary building (Barth, 1998); class, identity and marks of belonging (Skeggs, 2004); and “othering” (Said, 2003).

Finally, there is a body of work that looks specifically at migrant workers and their experiences in Lebanon, (Abdulrahim, 2010; Hamill, 2011; HRW, 2007; HRW, 2010; Jureidini, 2002; Jureidini, 2003; Jureidini, 2009; Jureidini and Moukarbel, 2004).

While these studies provide well-structured arguments and insights into the complexities of each of the subject areas relevant to this paper, no literature exists on a combination of them, specifically on the multi-“racial” experiences of individuals from and living in Lebanon. Hence, this study aims to fill this gap and provide new material and insights to our understanding of mixed identities in Lebanon, how they challenge current discourses on “race”, racism, and so on.

## **1.3. Research Questions**

The following questions have dominated the preparation and writing of this piece: What does it mean to be “Lebanese”? How is “Other” defined? What is racism in this time- and geography- specific context? Where do Lebanese of mixed African heritage fit in this picture? What can we draw from their lived experiences as a group subject to frequent “othering”?

Chapter two will briefly look at how in a minority nation<sup>7</sup> and a nation “so deeply and intrinsically composed of minorities” (McDowall, 1983: 7), different social groups have carved a collective identity of “whiteness”. It will then attempt to present what it means to be an “Other” in Lebanon.

Chapter three will lay the foundation of Lebanon’s conflicting state of raciality by looking into certain points in its history of mixing; at miscegenation and manumission in the region, and at Lebanese migration waves to West Africa.

Chapter four will then look at five Lebanese individuals of African heritage, and how by their existence they challenge the constructed “white” identity of “Lebanese”. An analysis of data collected during the preparatory phase of *Mixed Feelings: Racism and “Othering” in Lebanon from a Lebanese Perspective*<sup>8</sup> will comprise the bulk of this chapter.

## **Chapter 2** **The Imagined Lebanese**

This chapter looks at the construction of a “white” identity in Lebanon, how it has perhaps shaped people’s experiences and has been implicated in larger structures of racism in the country (Twine, 2010: 89). It explores how tying national identity to a certain colour-code affects the way people “negotiate racialization and racism and establish racialized identities” (Twine, 2010: 6).

### **2.1. Lebanon: An Overview**

To present a history so multifaceted in a space such as this is to do it injustice. However, this section shall present specific snapshots of Lebanon’s history and demographic makeup that should inform the reader’s understanding of how and why boundary building and racializations thrive today.

Lebanon is a nation comprising “20 or so communities – still known as “confessions”<sup>1</sup> – with their individual histories, their age-old fears, their bloody quarrels and amazing reconciliations” (Maalouf, 2000: 119)<sup>2</sup>. Comprising an estimated 4 million people (Chaaban, 2010: 159), it is governed by consociationalism<sup>3</sup>, a religious power-sharing structure based on its last official census in 1932 (Soffer, 1986: 197; Kanaan, 2005: 141, 142). Indeed, religious affiliation has always played a powerful role – socially and politically – in how different groups in the country congregate, include, exclude and interact with one another (Jamali and Keshishian, 2008: 282; Ajrouch and Kusow, 2007: 79; Faour, 2007: 909).

Being highly sectarian, there is a strong tendency to build boundaries along sectarian lines<sup>4</sup>, and group identity determines one’s degree of social inclusion and exclusion. In fact, throughout the country’s history, group identity mobilization has been a powerful source of action<sup>5</sup> (Hanf, 1993: 327 and 331), and people hold on strongly to their group identities, a practice that can suppress individual mobility.

Finally, Lebanon is highly patriarchal, encoded in its constitution and everyday practice<sup>6</sup>. Citizenship is through patrilineality (Joseph, 1999; Obeid et al, 2010: 692), with very few exceptions<sup>7</sup> to this rule (Kimber, 2012). And although there prevails seemingly powerful and inflexible boundaries within its society, these “boundaries have been porous and fluid, in part, because of the centrality of patriarchal kinship structures, modes of operation and idioms in all spheres of social life” (Joseph, 1997: 74)<sup>8</sup>.

So when “inhabitants of a country all feel they belong to different communities” (Maalouf, 2000: 119), what commonalities bring them together? Amongst the possible shared allegiances, the next section

looks at a particular one that seems to have developed amongst all these groups, one common identity theme, although in constant negotiation, that is representative of the country, and holds a superior status to “the Other”.

## 2.2. White, White to the Bones<sup>9</sup>

Although the 18th and 19th centuries saw “the development of an exclusionary association between being white and being European”, “whiteness” was not exclusively a European attribute, as evidenced with the development of non-European white identities<sup>10</sup> (Bonnett, 1998: 1030).

Historically, “white” has been a valued physical attribute in the region, “routinely used to identify Middle Eastern peoples and distinguish them from darker-skinned ones” (Bonnett, 2000: 11, 14). And, although, “samra” denotes a certain classical beauty in the region<sup>11</sup>, a closer look at this brown-beauty standard reveals that “who we are, or who we are seen to be, can matter enormously” (Jenkins, 2008: 3).

This section presents an overview of a socio-historical process of white self-racialization that has taken place prior to, during and after the formation of the modern state of Lebanon. Through a process of self-racialization and selective aestheticization, we observe how a diverse population have come to racialize themselves as “white”.

In the early 20th century, Lebanese immigrating to countries such as Australia and the US were often shocked to be classified racially as “Asian”. What ensued were battles fought (successfully) in courts to be recognized as “white”<sup>12</sup> (Hage, 2005: 184; Gualtieri, 2001); a process of (re)claiming “whiteness”. And, as we shall see, similar assertions to “whiteness” occurred for different reasons, within different periods, in different geographical spaces, and by different Lebanese groups.

In his piece on “white” self-racialization of Lebanese Maronites<sup>13</sup>, Ghassan Hage (2005) argues that during the socio-historical process of claiming “whiteness”, a process of positive selection and negative suppression culminating in a self-perception of “whiteness” also took place, one he terms “identity fetishism”<sup>14</sup>. As the three main sects<sup>15</sup> in Lebanon are Maronite Christians, Sunni Muslims and Shi'a Muslims, this section shall briefly go over how each engaged in identity fetishism, self-racializing themselves as “white”.

By the 1800s, anti-Arab sentiments grew amongst the Maronites (Kaufman, 2004: 2; Salibi, 1988: 170), with a claim to “whiteness” as a racial identity as opposed to “Arab” (Hage, 2005). One: because of a sudden shift from being an overwhelmingly peasant community to one engaging the French directly through silk trading (Hage, 2005: 187; Salibi, 1988: 104-105). Two: because Christianity, although born in the region, had become Europe's main export, giving it a mark of whiteness for most of its history<sup>16</sup> (Dyer, 1997: 17). And, three: perhaps as an attempt to cast themselves as different and superior in a largely Muslim environment (Hage, 2005: 185).

However, it was during the period of colonial paternalism, the French Mandate (Thompson, 2000: 40), that assertions of “whiteness” intensified<sup>17</sup>. “Having grown to believe they represented the embodiment of Western civilization in the Levant”, the Maronites felt their identity was under threat through being colonized and “civilized” by those they emulated (Hage, 2005: 196).

In addition, in the period prior and during the mandate, when racism in France was most significant and resilient<sup>18</sup>, race-thinking and negative stereotyping of “blacks” were shaped further in Lebanon through interaction with the French, highlighting how “states and citizens are constructed under colonialism and then bequeathed to their postcolonial successors” (Thompson, 2000: 1).

“White” self-racialization for the Shi'as began with their departure from Lebanon. Lebanese immigration to West Africa first occurred in the late 19th century, predominantly of a Shi'a Muslim nature (Hourani and Shehadi, 1992). Whereas in Lebanon, the Shi'as occupied the lowest position in society's hierarchy of identities (Nasr and James, 1985: 10), they attained an elevated position in Africa; that of indispensable

middle men<sup>19</sup> between “blacks” and “whites”<sup>20</sup> (Falola, 1990: 530; Williams, 1985; Bigo, 1992: 509, 512-513).

Although occupying an intermediary role, the Shi’as in West Africa nevertheless engaged in identity fetishism, through which “Africa” was placed in a position even more degraded than theirs in Lebanon (Weiss, 2007: 51). They “internalized elements of colonial discourse and then, in an inversion, re-deployed it vis-à-vis the black Africans they encountered” (Weiss, 2007: 48), negotiating for themselves a white identity through “a desire to forge a sense of self that is positive” (Ajrouch and Kusow, 2007: 89-90).

With regards to the Sunnis, as “whiteness was incorporated into dominant groups’ collective identities” (Bonnett, 2000: 14), it is perhaps fair to say they too embodied “whiteness”, the mark of distinction and superiority (Goldberg, 1993: 69). Being the dominant group in the Middle East meant “white” was perhaps the norm, a centric identity not “racially seen and named” (Dyer, 1997: 1), constructed through a process that suppressed the realities of colour diversity in the region.

Although Islam condemns racial prejudice, based on ideas of a social and religious system of equality (Harik, 1972: 303; Lewis<sup>21</sup>, 1971: 19; Hourani, 1953: 24), evidence of preferring “whiteness” as a racial marker in the Middle East manifests in various instances, such as: during the Arab slave trades reaching as far as West Africa (Talhami, 1977: 447; 450; Mustafa al- Jiddawi 1963 in Talhami, 1977: 450), a time when subjugation became synonymous with “black”, when Africans were seen as an inferior race destined to be slaves (Davis 1984: 33, Lauren, 1988: 8); in the way certain individuals of black or mixed “race” were treated due to their colour (Al-Garrallah, 2011: 101; Bonnett, 1998: 1035); how a “white” complexion was perhaps “associated with membership of the social elite” (Bonnett, 1998: 1035); and through literary works of black writers who addressed prejudices held in the region against blacks (Talhami, 1977: 450).

It is arguable that historically no white “racial” identities were formed in the region<sup>22</sup>. But it is clear that through identity fetishism “white” became a marker, a signifier of “racial” and/or ethnic identities that developed in the region and Lebanon<sup>23</sup>; where different “racial”, ethnic and social groups now employ the category “white” as one way to define their social collectivity (Bonnett, 1998: 1032), and to distinguish the “Other”.

### **A Black Side of White Lebanon<sup>24</sup>**

This section attempts to present a different perspective on the “fact” of “whiteness” of “being” Lebanese, by examining a history of mixing with people of darker complexions. The first part will go over ethnic diversity in the region and the second will focus on Lebanon, reflecting on its more contemporary history vis-à-vis the gendered nature of migration waves to West Africa and the subsequent mixing that occurred.

I acknowledge this section runs the risk of being an oversimplified presentation of a complex history of identity and mixing in the region. Nevertheless, it attempts to show important aspects of regional diversity that should aid in deconstructing and reconstructing “white”, “Lebanese” and “Other”, as well as racism in Lebanon in its contemporary form.

### **Miscegenation, Manumission**

As mentioned earlier, Islam has an integrative character that attempts to moderate “racial” differences amongst people. However, the reality has been different as, through interaction, people applied positive and negative attributions to certain racial signifiers, one being dark skin and its constructed connotations.

There has been “much sexual interaction between human populations that it would be meaningless to talk of absolute divisions between ‘races’” (Popeau in Jenks, 1998: 167). This is true about the region, as its geographical position provided a crossroads to different corners of the world, resulting in varying degrees of interactions between people with different phenotypical features. Unfortunately, little seems to have

been written regarding such interactions in Lebanon, the bulk of these (seemingly scarce) writings on exogamy being on the Middle East (Richards et al, 2003; Hopwood, 1999).

An examination of these resources does not make clear the prevalence of inter-“racial” marriages in the region. But it is evident inter-“racial” relationships were an occurrence; the earliest through miscegenation and manumission, perhaps due to certain social practices such as: the region’s involvement in the slave trade of Africans (Hunwick and Powell, 2002; Davis, 1984; Lauren, 1988); social barriers between Arabs and non-Arabs, such as religion, as well as the patriarchal and patrilineal nature of the region’s predominant cultures<sup>25</sup> (Joseph, 1997; Joseph, 1999); the practice of utilitarian familialism; and so on.

Despite these barriers, mixing did occur, so much so that studies point to Arab populations carrying ~10% lineages of sub-Saharan origin, predominantly female, with some countries having a high frequency of as much as ~30% (Richards et al, 2003)<sup>26</sup>. Other studies show “marked ethnic heterogeneities in several countries” including Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Lebanon (Ibrahim, 1998: 230)<sup>27</sup>.

Other studies show of ties between East Africa<sup>28</sup> and the Middle East spanning over a millennium, and of African presence<sup>29</sup> in the region (Felix et al, 2002), such as the Zanj<sup>30</sup> (Trimingham, 1975 in Felix et al, 2002) and other slaves taken from as far as West Africa (Talhami, 1977). In addition, groups categorized as African, Nubian, Berber, and more, have historically existed (and still do) throughout the region (Ibrahim, 1998: 230, 231).

### **2.3.2. Migration, Matrimony, Mixing**

“And let us remember a fact that we cannot neglect. Only in the last twenty-five years, the mixed marriages between Lebanese and Westerners have produced thousands of children...” (Chiha as quoted in Hage, 2005: 198)<sup>31</sup>.

What follows is a brief story of a Lebanese presence in West Africa, the nature of unions that transpired between “white” Lebanese and “black” Africans, and how perhaps these unions also “produced thousands of children”, who by the Lebanese practice of patrilineality are defined as Lebanese and who by virtue of phenotype disturb the constructed “whiteness” of being Lebanese.

The history of emigration from Lebanon has had an interesting trajectory<sup>32</sup>, happening through many waves, each having its own special character<sup>33</sup> (Hourani, 1992: 6). The third wave saw Lebanese setting sail for Africa in the late 1800s (Hourani, 1992: 5, 6). This movement was a gendered one, comprising mostly, if not only, men, “a large proportion of those who went to West Africa came from the Shi’i villages of southern Lebanon” (Hourani, 1992: 6).

Lebanese presence in West Africa was (and is still) met with public indignation, and they “had to grapple with competition and severe criticisms against them as individuals, as a race, and as traders” (Falola, 1990: 538). Seen as a proxy of colonialism, through unhampered and paradoxical<sup>34</sup> interactions with local women, and other reasons<sup>35</sup> that, unfortunately, shall not be detailed in this paper, themes of racializations developed around the Lebanese communities of West Africa, one being “the ravishers of women” (Kaniki, 1973; Falola, 1990; Van der Laan, 1965; Khuri, 1968; Misra, 1992; Beuving, 2006; Bierwirth, 1999: 95).

Whereas, in Lebanon, cultural norms restricted interactions between men and women before marriage, Lebanese men exploited their sexual desires in West Africa, unrestrained by any community pressure, with very few of them intermarrying (Khuri, 1968: 93; Beuving, 2006). And, although Lebanese men of the interior frequently married local women<sup>36</sup>, some were quick to pension them off as soon as they made enough money to marry a Lebanese woman (Leighton, 1992: 582), creating animosity between Lebanese and their African hosts<sup>37</sup>.

There is obviously evidence of Lebanese intermarrying, successfully creating family units with African partners and having children from these unions (Lee, 2009; Caldwell, 2012; Sara, 2012; Fleming-Farrell,

2012). However, the frequency is unclear, and this author found only one academic piece (Khuri, 1968) examining the historical development of Lebanese children of African heritage in West Africa as “a racially and socially distinct group and the cultural factors responsible for this development” (Ibid: 90).

However, as virtually all of the country’s religious laws encode patriarchy and citizenship laws revolve around patrilineality, “children belong to their father and their father’s family” (Joseph, 1997: 82). Therefore, even in situations of non-marriage, children from these unions with West African women could legally be classified as Lebanese citizens as long as they were recognized by their fathers as theirs, a practice that apparently happened often (Khuri, 1968: 96-97).

Unfortunately, records on the number of Lebanese of African heritage in Lebanon and in West Africa were not found during research for this paper. Part of this stems from there being “no official census in West Africa separates the mulattoes from other racial or ethnic groups” (Khuri, 1968: 91), amongst other factors<sup>38</sup>. However, one cannot deny the existence of Lebanese of African heritage, their presence manifesting itself in different ways and spaces.

## 2.4. Conclusion

We have seen how becoming and being “white” “operates simultaneously as an aspect of identity”, and acts “as an organising principle in forging social structure” (White, 2002: 408). And through a history of miscegenation, manumission, migration, marriage and mixing, we see how this “white” mark of identity in the region and in Lebanon is essentially a myth. Yet, there still seems to be a fear, or perhaps a rejection, of a “blackening” of any of the country’s identities, (Arab, Lebanese, Phoenician, and so on). Indeed, one source found during research for this paper draws attention to a fear in contemporary Lebanese society with regards to (un)intentional “racial” mixing<sup>39</sup> (Inhorn, 2004: 174). The next chapter shall examine how this constructed “white” identity provides a framework for “othering”, social exclusion and racism.

## Chapter 3 Repudiated “–isms”

I want the world to know that we the {.....} are treated in Lebanon as if we were Sri Lankans! This statement may have gone unnoticed had it not been for a listener who was equally seen as progressive, who was quick to retort `...may God forbid, never have we treated you as Sri Lankans!’ (Abu-Habib, 1998: 52).

In 2012, the Anti-Racism Movement<sup>1</sup> released a video against non-admittance of migrant domestic workers (MDWs) into private swim resorts in Lebanon<sup>2</sup>. The video features a “white” Lebanese woman tanning by the pool who, after time passes, is shown in full blackface makeup<sup>3</sup>, presumably a result of being in the sun too long. The video ends with her ejection from the resort as she is mistaken<sup>4</sup> for domestic help by the lifeguard.

What this video’s intended and perceived messages highlight is an attitudinal approach to tackling racism in Lebanon, based on the perhaps one-dimensional belief that racism is solely about skin. It is an attitude that fails to go beyond the surface, resulting in countermeasures in the form of colour-blind quick fixes<sup>5</sup>. Ultimately, it shows that even well-intentioned activists dedicated to tackling racism can fail to look at the historic context and sociolinguistic processes taking place in contemporary Lebanese society<sup>6</sup>.

Lebanon is home to 400,000 MDWs<sup>7</sup>, primarily from Ethiopia, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal and Madagascar (Hamill, 2011: 24; Nallu and Andersen, 2011). Comprising ~10% of the country’s population, these women form a significant part of Lebanon’s ethnoscapes. Yet, despite the size, and as a consequence of the nature, of their demography, they are one of the most ostracized social groups in the country, subject to different modes of discrimination and abuse (HRW, 2010).

This is partly due to the non-provision in Lebanese labour law for MDWs. As a result, these women must operate under the *kafala* system<sup>8</sup>, a sponsorship system that ties the worker to one *kafeel* (sponsor) and provides the sponsor/employer with legal protection (Abdulrahim, 2010: 21-22). Their situation is further exacerbated by being foreign, “darker” women in a “white”, patriarchal society, involved in what is perceived as lower-class, stigmatized work<sup>9</sup>. These various intersecting and deeply intertwined oppressions have facilitated the creation of a wide power discrepancy that is easily exploited, where cases of race-based discrimination are often shrugged off as classism.

As a consequence of this duo dynamic<sup>10</sup>, the current discourse on racism is structured along binary lines of opposition, confined within a framework where racism is ill-defined, and where race-based discrimination is often eclipsed by classism. This discourse operates “in the same way as splitting and projection: the centre expels its anxieties, contradictions and irrationalities onto the subordinate term, filling it with the antithesis of its own identity” (Rutherford, 1990: 22).

Furthermore, classism in Lebanon is systemic (Samaha, 2012), and arguably and intimately interrelated with racism (as with the case of MDWs). The nature of the country’s classism “suggests that the whole notion of ‘race’ may have begun as a prejudice based upon class before it became one based on phenotype and colour” (Popeau in Jenks, 1998: 169). “Thus ‘race’ is defined in terms of lineage and kin solidarity, but also with the idea of superiority and inferiority between groups or classes within the same... nation” (Popeau in Jenks, 1998: 170).

This paper argues that when the designation of boundaries specifying inclusion and exclusion are created to target systematically disadvantaged groups of people, singled out as a collectivity and identified through the signification of “race” characteristics (Law, 2010: 134), that is when we observe a transition from classism into racism. And as a big part of the nation’s (constructed) lower class comprises easily identifiable migrant groups, this classism reproduces and perpetuates a class/“race” hierarchy, where “racist practices contribute to class distinctions” (Kleven, 2009: 208), and vice versa.

When defining Self, there perhaps is a need to construct a positive self-image, in Lebanon’s case, a “white” image. And, with regards to acknowledging racism in one’s society, there is also a need to maintain this positive self-image while doing so, a phenomenon that results in those who perceive themselves as “white” to dismiss racism as individual acts rather than institutionalized concepts.

Racism changes from space to space and, therefore, needs to be defined within its specific context. All racisms have two common elements: each presupposes that some concept of “race” is being mobilised; and each involves negative attribution of a specified “racial” group (Law, 2010: 3). So, in order to shift the discourse away from its classism tenors and refocus it on deconstructing and reconstructing the processes behind race-thinking and racism, this paper brings into the current discourse a new group, and attempts to examine how these two prerequisites of racism manifests through this group.

It shall attempt in the next chapter to show how classism alone cannot be used to explain the discrimination MDWs face, by answering a number of unanswered questions in a space where race and racism are rarely discussed.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Portraits, Through Talk**

“All societies produce strangers, but each kind of society produces its own strangers, and produces them in its own inimitable way”, strangers who do not fit “the cognitive, moral or aesthetic” maps chartered and neat divisions drawn by society (Bauman, 1997: 46).

The following pages shall explore how Lebanese of African heritage help us to understand racism in a context where racism is not usually used. Each individual is a site of discourse; through their talk, they

each paint pictures of various issues that deal with (mistaken) identity, “othering”, racialization and racism in Lebanon.

Individuals of mixed heritage “by their actions or existence, defy community, ethnic and racial boundaries” (Alibhai-Brown, 2001: 162). They blur racial lines; their existence is a challenge to ideas of national belonging on the basis of “race”, and the fixedness of identity:

[To be of mixed-heritage] is a cognitive and physical process of being in the world – in, and as a result of, a race-conscious society – to be an interruption, to represent a contestation, and to undermine the authority of classification. Identity is formed in the interstice between recognition and being recognized (Gibel Azoulay, 1997: 41).

The identity of one who is “mixed” is “constructed in talk of lived experience” (Tate, 2005: 2), as much as it is through socialization and reciprocity. Therefore, this chapter attempts to conceptualize a different picture of racism in Lebanon by looking at these individuals and how their talks form portraits of lived experiences with “othering”, racialization and racism.

These individuals are Lebanese, living in their fatherland, using Arabic as their language, embracing Lebanese “cultures” as theirs. How are they then identified as “Other”, how are they racialized in their country, and what language is used in “othering”? This section touches on sociolinguistic processes (cognitive and social reproduction) that make clear what we are dealing with is not classism but a multiplicity of factors resulting in race-based discrimination.

Their portraits and narratives<sup>1</sup> highlight some tensions and conflicts encountered by those who are categorized as non-Lebanese. Although understandings of class and gender play a prominent part in one’s “othering” experiences, what unfolds here is a story where perceived “race” trumps all other factors.

#### **4.1. Portrait One**

**AD**

**NK:** Did you go to kindergarten here [in Lebanon]?

**AD:** Yes, I went to school for three years [...] and it was terrible.

AD’s interview<sup>2</sup> was conducted in a café frequented by all of us<sup>3</sup>. The intent was to have a short, ad hoc interview and to experiment with a space where we could socialize as friends, rather than engage in a participant/researcher dynamic. What transpired was expressive involvement on AD’s part, and one interesting aspect of her interview was how she, at times, volunteered answers to questions unasked, as in the above excerpt.

#### **Body as a site for “othering”**

**NK:** OK, explain.

**AD:** It was terrible because of the racism issues. At first, it was about my hair [inaudible].

As the interview commences, one begins to observe the lived experiences of an individual perceived to embody phenotypical differences that do not conform to Lebanese “norms” of physical appearance, thus, alienating her. “It was about my hair” demonstrates how hair becomes a site of “othering”, a site of ethnic (and, consequently, national) non-belonging. It acts as one of many construction sites upon which individuals are expected to “cultivate, display, and perform... identities” (Twine, 2010: 416), and can quickly become a site of experiencing “othering” and racist bullying if it does not meet expectations (Tizard and Phoenix, 1993: 65).

#### **Racism within different systems**

**NK:** You don’t remember the teacher ever coming to intervene on your behalf?

**AD:** No, I don't think they really cared [...]

AD's talk touches at perhaps the chronic inability of educators and educational institutions in dealing with such situations. Indeed, bullying in schools is an under-reported phenomenon in Lebanon, covered by (few) sources (Slemrod, 2012). Children in Lebanon are perhaps learning "to navigate among a variety of contradictory meanings and messages about race" (Fernandez, 2010: 150), and are being brought up to be racists, by intention or not (Sara, 2012). Indeed, young children seem to be picking up social cues on the prevalent discourses in Lebanese society regarding power structures, differentials, and so on.

**NK:** And where do you think [the kids] got these ideas from? You think on their own or [...] from their parents [...]?

**AD:** Actually, if [their] parents hadn't been racist they wouldn't have been like that [...]

**NK:** Is there any story that stuck out in your mind?

**AD:** A lot of stories; you cannot live in a society where even the national security doesn't respect you [...] Officers and people wearing army uniform, they do the same thing, "Come here, come sit with us, how much can I pay you?"

**NK:** You must have had some positive experiences in Lebanon [...]

**AD:** I do have Lebanese friends. When it comes to the friends, it's OK, but in the society itself, on the streets and out there? Trust me; it's never going to change [...]

Here, AD expresses a belief that racism is embedded within different systems in Lebanon, specifying three: parenting; policing (the assumption by police that she is a sex worker because she is a black woman); and society as a whole. By saying "when it comes to the friends, it's OK, but in the society itself" racism exists, AD highlights how "actual relations occur on the individual level while attitudes, myths and prejudices are held at a more general level, shared consciously or unconsciously by much larger groups of people" (Hopwood, 1999: 2).

Her assertion "if parents hadn't been racist" points to a personal opinion but also perhaps an actuality that racism in Lebanon is being reproduced within the family unit<sup>4</sup>. It should be noted, however, that parents "are not the only sources for modeling and imparting racial attitudes to young children", as they may be absorbing pervasive racial attitudes and prejudices reflected in and embedded within the larger society (Quintana, 1998).

### **Gendered theme of racialization**

**AD:** The first thing [random people on the street] say is, "Where do you work?" Or they'll go like, "We need a maid to clean this house", that's the first thing they say.

**MRT:** Really? When you're walking!

**AD:** Just walking! Or just in the cab, "Sorry I want to ask you: We need a maid to clean the house can you... are you free?"

**NK:** They don't try to ask what you do, they automatically assume...

**AD:** Yes, they always assume.

Where today intentional racial discrimination can be considered morally reprehensible, it is not always the case with unconscious racial stigmatization<sup>5</sup> (Lawrence III, 1987: 384). This excerpt draws attention to the gendered nature of racializations taking place in Lebanese society. The simple presumption that as a black woman AD must be a maid and nothing else perhaps shows how commonly shared assumptions embodied in a saying or, in this case, a recurring enquiry, need not be articulated as it is understood by all parties (Fernandez, 2010: 111).

### **Reciprocity in identity formation**

**NK:** Do you feel Lebanese?

**AD:** No.

**NK:** But you do acknowledge the Lebanese... like it's one of your nationalities?

**AD:** Yes [...] I don't like being Lebanese, and if I ever go to another country where I have to let go one of my nationalities, trust me, I'll give up the Lebanese.

Here, we see an explicit rejection of her Lebanese identity, stemming from lived experiences of one who is constantly "othered". Declaring she would give up her Lebanese nationality with ease highlights the importance of socialization and reciprocity in identity formation. It shows that what determines a person's affiliation to a given group is "the influence of those about him [...] who try to make him one of them; together with the influence of those on the other side, who do their best to exclude him" (Maalouf, 2000: 21). Indeed, rejections of her "black" identity by Lebanese society "determine not only men's attitudes towards their affiliations but also the hierarchy that decides the relative importance of these ties" (Maalouf, 2000: 22), a hierarchy where Lebanon becomes less important to AD than any potentially new nationality.

### **Support/coping mechanisms**

**AD:** [...] my grandmother said, "Be strong [...] fight back and stop crying". So I took that advice and [fought] back and they all got scared [...]. They used to call my grandfather to report me [...] [laughs].

**MRT:** And when you went back [to country in West Africa], you felt the difference, more at home?  
**AD:** Of course! They even love you more when you're mixed [...] they respect you.

**MRT:** How did you learn to... what was your approach? Because when you were a kid you were fighting back and then what did you do?

**AD:** Actually, it made me stronger. Trust me, I can live here [in Lebanon] if I want to but it's going to do nothing for my future [...] you cannot stay somewhere where you're never going to be elevated by the society; you'll only be damaging your future.

Through her assigned difference, AD manages to find alternative empowering discourses and devices that aid in coping with racism: from direct action<sup>6</sup> (fighting back); to utilizing her cultural and ethnic capital and drawing from her experiences in a different space (country of her mother) ("they love you more when you're mixed, they respect you"); to "identity repositioning enabled by counter discourses" (Tate, 2005: 105) (being treated as an "Other" "made me stronger"). Through a process of negotiating and positioning, AD creates ways to cope with race-based "othering" and discrimination, leading "to an identity of privilege and heightened self-esteem" (Kamada, 2010: 4).

## **4.2. Portrait Two**

**BO**

**BO:** [...] living in a Lebanese African community in Ghana, you are exposed to Lebanon and you're ready to move to Lebanon, so it's not something strange to you. But, of course, when you come here [...] there is a little culture shock and the expectations are different [...]

Unlike AD whose father is mixed (West African and Lebanese), and mother black West African, BO's mother is mixed Ghanaian Lebanese and his father Lebanese. His background<sup>7</sup> suggests that perhaps gender and class have played important roles in his "othering" experiences in Lebanon.

### **Body as a site for "othering"**

**BO:** [...] of course, you got looked at as a different person [...]

**MRT:** [...] they don't even get close to your real place of origin [...]

**BO:** That's because I don't look Ghanaian. I don't look Ghanaian because I don't have the African features.

**BO:** [...] anywhere I go nobody think[s] of me as Lebanese; no one.

**MRT:** No one?

**BO:** No one, nobody, 'cause I don't look like the typical Lebanese. Even though people know there are so many Lebanese mixed but still every place I go to if I don't talk they think I'm non-Lebanese, I'm Latin, I'm Indian, I'm uhh Cuban, I'm somehow Asian, Polynesian,. Until I talk and I identify myself [as] Lebanese mixed and then they'll make the assumption.

**BO:** [Lebanese] look at you from the positive approach in the beginning [...] like "Woooah, dark, so he must be for example Sri Lanki, he's dark so how come?"

In each excerpt above, "look" is a recurring feature, highlighting the significance of the body as a site of "othering". It is the way "he is looked at", the way others, by their looks, make him feel those innumerable differences that determine BO's identity as "Other" (Maalouf, 2000: 22). And it is how he "looks" that make the "difference of the object of discrimination [...] at once visible and natural – colour as the cultural/political sign of inferiority" (Bhabha, 1994: 114).

BO's talk suggests that to be looked at as Lebanese (or Ghanaian), one must embody a certain "look", certain "racial" and/or colour codes. His complexion and features become indisputable racial signifiers, yet his talk demonstrates how erroneous physical identifiers can be in determining someone's nationality (e.g., where "dark" equals "Sri Lankan"). It also touches on how essentialism<sup>8</sup> is being used in contemporary Lebanon, making significant the tying of one's "racial" attributes to one's country (Anderson, 2000: 147).

### **Multiple themes of racialization**

**BO:** [...] they call you names but again...

**MRT:** Like what kind of names?

**BO:** Like Sri Lanki...

**MRT:** So they use other nationalities they consider lower?

**BO:** Yeah, lower, of course.

Colour is not the sole reason of exclusion and differentiation (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992: 100), but is often erroneously utilized to select those to exclude and "other". This talk points to processes of racialization in Lebanon, where certain nationalities have been altered and inferiorized in the collective partisan mind of society, and re-presented and sealed through language; in this case, where "Sri Lankan" as a nationality is re-presented as "lower" and a slur<sup>9</sup> (Lutz, 2010; Anderson, 2000: 156).

**BO:** [...] all of a sudden Lebanon was having this big boom of mixed Lebanese [families] coming back [...] this imposed on Lebanese the fact that [...] not all Lebanese look alike, and they found out that they are so many Lebanese African, people who are like 50/50 métis, who really look black African but they are Lebanese [...]

**BO:** [In school] So, yeah, the guy from Africa is helping with English, for example. I'm strong, you're not, and at the end I'm exotic [...] in the end I'm different and you're not, I'm interesting and you're not.

In these two extracts, BO touches on one of his internal coping strategies: the reinforcement of a positive self-image (Shorter-Gooden, 2004: 417). However, we also observe the reproduction of a racialized "other", i.e., the "exotic" other, the "half" other. In his talk, BO seems to have internalized a discourse on exoticness and embodying a half identity, and has racialized himself as "different", "exotic", "interesting", "strong", "50/50"<sup>10</sup>, "métis"<sup>11</sup>, demonstrating that identity is a state of "becoming" (the exotic other, for instance) as well as "being" (the exotic other) (Hall, 1990: 225).

**BO:** Yeah, of course, true Lebanese are dark especially the people that live on the coast but your darkness is different than their darkness so they look at you and "ah yeah you're African".

Here, BO highlights two aspects of racializing blackness: how he himself racializes “true Lebanese” as being dark, applying a homogenizing colour identity to a nation; and he touches on a process of racialization in Lebanon that engages in negative suppression (Hage, 2005: 202), where dark Lebanese may exist “but your darkness is different than theirs”<sup>12</sup>.

### Support/coping mechanisms

**MRT:** [...] did you have a strong need [...] to identify as a Lebanese?

**BO:** No, not really, I took advantage of this because I always ridiculed them as being Lebanese and how I am better than them.

**MRT:** But this is also discriminatory.

**BO:** It is discriminatory but it is a defence mechanism, OK? So they used to call me names but it didn't bother me because I thought I have something that you don't have, I've been outside, I'm mixed, I know many things, I speak languages, in class whenever you want to cheat on [...] English you have to come and sit next to me.

To cope with “othering”, BO leveraged his ascribed identity as an “Other” to attain one that privileged his differences (“I have something that you don't have”). Furthermore, he creates different positive “selves” that comprise this privileged identity<sup>13</sup>, such as: the smarter self (“whenever you want to cheat, you come to me”); the exposed self (“I've been outside”); and the multilingual self (“I speak languages”). Faced with a power structure privileging “whiteness” and rejecting “blackness”, BO’s crafting of multiple “selves” becomes an empowering device in resisting negative perceptions and bolstering a positive self-image (Shorter-Gooden, 2004: 417).

### Reciprocity in identity formation

**BO:** [...] when you come to Lebanon you are an outsider [...] in Ghana, you have your own Lebanon but when you're in Lebanon, OK, you're the non-Lebanese coming from Ghana to Lebanon so you lose your sense of Lebanese-ship because people look at you in a different way...

**MRT:** [...] how was the assimilation [in Ghana]? Did you feel like you had to give up something of your Lebanese side?

**BO:** No, not at all. From the Ghanaian experience Lebanese were accepted because they are lots of Lebanese men who are married to Ghanaians so there is this [inaudible] of Lebanese Ghanaians and they all stick with each other<sup>14</sup> but at the same time they are connected with everybody as equals, there's no discrimination over there.

These excerpts highlight how identity formation is a dialogue, involving mutuality. BO’s description of how his Lebanese identity was formed and negotiated in two different geographical spaces and time periods unpacks the process of identification to an extent. In Ghana, the dialogue is one of mutual agreement on BO being Lebanese (“Lebanese were accepted”, “you have your own Lebanon”). In Lebanon, however, it becomes one of disagreement on his Lebanese-ness, leading to a loss of a “sense of Lebanese-ship”. This demonstrates that, in the process of identity formation, reciprocity is essential, as “identification is often most consequential as the categorisation of others, rather than as self-identification” (Jenkins, 2008: 15).

**BO:** [...] it's an adaption also [...] this defence mechanism becomes part of you, so you know how to adapt to situations and questions, looks and so on [...]

**BO:** [...] if I tell a person I'm Lebanese and he tells me “No, no, you're not Lebanese” then yeah I'll be “Hey, I am Lebanese. I'm more Lebanese than you are.”

These extracts narrate how defensiveness can act as a coping mechanism, allowing one “to adapt to situations”, but how it can also become a “part of you”, showing the “impact of white racism in creating a defensive lifestyle and life perspective” (Feagin and Sikes, 1995: 97). In the process of being socialized

into Lebanese society, one who is perceived as “Other” faces rejection and this can lead to embodying defensiveness<sup>15</sup> in one’s identity.

### **Performativity and fallacy of “race”**

**BO:** [Last year] I had my hair like it was afro [...] I enter this shop [...] and the guy started talking to me in English and welcoming me in English and he automatically said, “You’re from Cuba” [...] I just nodded with my hair and [...] played along [...] I wanted to buy something and I asked him about the price and he doubled the price [...] And then I spoke in Arabic, “Come on, are you trying to rip off a Lebanese?” He says “You’re Lebanese!” I say, “Of course, I’m Lebanese, I’m Lebanese mixed!” [...] And then he changed the story and then he was more welcoming [...] this is how people always look at you, from the way they want to look at you based on criteria, your tan, your colour [...]

**BO:** I can be anything I want and I always use this. People, when they ask me, if they look at my eyes, they think I have Asian blood and I always tell them “Yes” and they believe it.

In this talk on mistaken identity, we observe how when one attempts to read the body in order to place an individual as “one of us” or an “Other”, “racially ambiguous” features and “a light skin shade destabilizes this neat binarism because it allows Blackness to move” (Tate, 2005: 110). BO’s identity “has a chameleon-like multiplicity”, which undermines the essentialist idea of national identity tied to colour/racial codes, where “white” skin does not then equal Lebanese authenticity, nor does “black” skin equal non-Lebanese (Tate, 2005: 111, 113).

### **4.3. Portrait Three**

**RC**

**RC:** [...] I don’t see my children growing up here and [having] the same experience I had [...]

**NK:** Do you feel any attachment to [country in West Africa]? Or any curiosity about it?

**RC:** Yes [...] I went with my dad, but I didn’t feel it [...] I have nice memories of Australia, from my childhood.

RC’s talk<sup>16</sup> presents some of the same themes as the two previous portraits. However, one unique theme is observed in his talk; RC introduces subtle cues of racializing the “Other” in Lebanon, such as through “racially”-based jokes, and it is with this we start his portrait.

### **Jokes as a tool to “other”**

**RC:** [My younger brother] has his own problems also, I remember he came to me during recreation, and then two guys came, friends actually, and they came and they told him *Wasakh wiju bi chocolat*<sup>17</sup>. Here we observe an interesting detail; RC shares an incident regarding his younger brother who also “has his own problems” with racism in Lebanon. Not only does RC use the present perfect (has), perhaps indicating on-going problems, he also gives an example of a joke made by fellow schoolmates (“he dirtied his face with chocolate”), rather than share a story involving explicit race-based discrimination. This illustrates how racial biases can be perceived to surface through jokes<sup>18</sup> by one who is constantly “othered”; how perhaps “jokes, stories, and popular fiction about blacks act as a “sounding board for and as a magnifier of popular prejudices” about black inferiority” (Feagin and Sikes, 1995: 92).

### **Racism within different systems**

**RC:** I didn’t have a good experience there during my childhood.

**NK:** Why?

**RC:** Because of the school, the way they treat you...

**NK:** The students, the teachers or both?

**RC:** Both; the whole environment. I had a hard time.

**RC:** When it first started, I was in kindergarten, first day, we start class, teacher was getting to know each one of us, where we are from and everything, we started singing, and then after 2 hours it was recreation time, we went out, and all of a sudden I see all this kids jumping on me, a bunch of kids, and saying things like, "You black, I want to kill you and I want to beat you up!"

**RC:** [About dating white Lebanese girls] Like some people are OK with it. Some people are not. Let's say in the beginning of a relationship, you just pretend it's nothing. It's just friendship and we're just friends and nothing. You know? But later it's like... when the parents see [...] it's going to get more serious, then they start having this... how to say it... the people, family, talking, interfering and "Oh, you're going to let your daughter marry a black guy or someone from another race?" You know? So, it plays with their mind. It kind of plays with her mind also, so she can forget...

These extracts highlight the presence of "race"-based discrimination within different systems in Lebanon; extract one points to discrimination within the school system ("the whole environment"); two, on the theme of racist bullying by students as young as pre-schoolers; and three, racism within families and by society.

The second extract highlights how the emerging social identities of Lebanese children cannot be understood without recognising the importance given to racializing discourses in their day-to-day lives, the complex ways in which racism intervenes and shapes their identities (Connolly, 1998: 2).

All three excerpts also touch on a dominant theme within the current discourse on racism in Lebanon: the old "it's class, not race" adage, the reason commonly given for the unchallenged discrimination faced by MDWs in Lebanon (Lee, 2012; Slemrod, 2012). And as classism and racism are inextricably intertwined, it becomes instrumental to examine similar discriminatory experiences of an individual such as FK; his class background/social status<sup>19</sup> dismantles the use of negative stereotyping tied to class as the sole reason for discrimination in Lebanon.

In addition, his Lebanese nationality makes clear that even though he is "of the nation"<sup>20</sup>, he is still not considered "the same" on the grounds of (but not only) his identifiable, constructed difference – skin. Protest against a Lebanese dating a Lebanese on the grounds of colour, and the connotations assigned to this colour, is perhaps used as a tool to maintain the (constructed) homogenous white identity of the nation. Therefore, to integrate, to be accepted and treated as an equal in Lebanese society, one must be seen as "white"<sup>21</sup>.

### Late development of race/racism awareness

**RC:** [...] I wasn't aware you know? What I'm telling you now because I realize. The issue is...

**NK:** But [the kids in kindergarten] said you were black so you must have realized.

**RC:** Yes, but for me it is like: OK, fine. But then after my sister she starting having the same problem [...] she was in grade 6, so she was facing some issues *kamein*<sup>22</sup>. Back then when there was this Lebanese product, *leef el abed*<sup>23</sup>, they used to call us this. And when they said it to my sister, she came home and told me "Guess what they called me at school?" And I said, "Really?!"

**RC:** [...] during my teenage years I was more aware of this problem [...] it was more obvious.

RC expresses what seems like late awareness of the race-based "othering" he was subjected to as a child. It is not until he observed his sister going through the same thing did he begin to better understand his experiences, being at its most obvious during his teenage years. This perhaps points to a number of things – related to a combination of how "cognitive sophistication and experience increase with age" (McKown, 2004: 599), and group membership (shared experiences with sister and brother) – such as: the ability to infer intentions and articulate one's experiences as one gets older; and having a better understanding of racism through exposure, observation, learning, shared experiences, and so on. Indeed,

it is during adolescence many children begin to recognize racism and how it involves exertion of power over an individual (Ibid: 600).

### **Theme of isolation**

**RC:** [...] to be honest, I don't really have friends in Lebanon, like true friends. It's just, OK, friendship, that's... you know?

**MRT:** Do you know people who are like black or other race who are friends or?

**RC:** Yeah, I have other... black friends also, but...

**NK:** Are they Lebanese?

**RC:** Yeah, half Lebanese, half African, but you know we're just distant...

As RC began to understand his experiences with “othering”, he seemed to distance himself from forming relationships with Lebanese. This is perhaps due to RC’s eventual awareness of his perceived “race” and the racism he was being subjected, a realization that “represents a potentially critical development in children’s lives. When children come to understand that others may harbor racial stereotypes, prejudices, or discriminatory tendencies, their orientation to intergroup contexts may be altered” (McKown, 2004: 598).

### **Support and coping mechanisms**

**NK:** You [and your younger brother] were together?

**RC:** We were together sometimes... you mean together as facing the same issue?

**NK:** Supporting each other...

**RC:** Supporting each other, yeah. Always. And I had to look after him because he was the youngest. I'm just here; I have to cover his back<sup>24</sup>.

**MRT:** How did you deal with it?

**RC:** [...] motivations from my parents, like my mom used to tell me to be strong, they are ignorant, and stay quiet.

**NK:** What did your dad say?

**RC:** My dad? To be honest he repeats what my mom tells me [...] He has his own way. He would be like, “it is like that [...] I know my own people, but it's just that way. You have to deal with it [...]”

**RC:** There [were] still a lot of people I had to deal with [in university] [...] But, *kallas*<sup>25</sup>, at that point I just knew how to interact with people, I know who is racist and who is not. Some people act like they are really friendly [...] then I would discover after a while they had these views [...]

**RC:** I just don't care anymore. It doesn't bother me, you know. I just feel proud.

These four snapshots from RC’s talk showcase the presence of different coping mechanisms used to cushion his experiences with race-based “othering” and discrimination: Shared agency with siblings; mother as a main source of support (along with supporting role played by father); adaptation through experience (“at that point I just knew how to interact with people”); rejection and disconnect (“I just don’t care anymore”); and the reconstitution of oneself within an empowering discourse of dignity (“It doesn’t bother me, I just feel proud”).

### **4.4. Portrait Four**

**HK**

**NK:** So what is your name?

**HK:** HK?

**NK:** If you want.

**HK:** HL?

**NK:** Yes, he's confused.

**HK:** [Laughs] Yeah, I use both [surnames].

Although HK's<sup>26</sup> father is [West African], we included him in the project for two main reasons: Firstly, as his parents never married, HK is entitled to Lebanese citizenship based on a loophole in Lebanese citizenship laws<sup>27</sup>. And, secondly, HK's mother moved as a single Lebanese woman to [West Africa] where she met his father, presenting an unconventional migration pattern.

### **Jokes as a tool to “other”**

**HK:** [Some students] used to call me stuff like Kunta Kinte, for example [laughs].

**NK:** [...] it's so funny, because when we interviewed other people they told us like *leef el abd*... what do you call it?

**HK:** *Leef el abed*? Ahhh I also had [laughs].

**NK:** Yeah, you seem to have very educated children...

**HK:** [Laughs]

**NK:** ...in your school [laughs].

**HK:** [Laughs] and Ali Bhutto.

**NK:** Who's Ali Bhutto?

**HK:** The father of Bhutto, the Pakistani who died? What's her name? Benazir?

**NK:** Really?!

**HK:** [Laughs].

As other participants, HK found himself the target of “othering” as a child. However, part of his “othering” experiences included the use of jokes that likened him to recognizable personalities perhaps considered “darker than” in Lebanon. In the preceding narrative, we observe how jokes can be used “as socially sanctioned outlets for expressing taboo ideas or subjects. Ethnic and racial humor conveys a message about power relations”, perhaps reflecting the broader social hierarchy existing in Lebanon, as well as reinforcing difference and reproducing unequal relations<sup>28</sup> (Fernandez, 2010: 115, 116).

### **Police discrimination**

**HK:** At some point it was depressing [...] I was faced [...] with the paper issue, this whole Lebanese mother, that I'm not Lebanese, I cannot get Lebanese passport [...] so, that was really tough for me. And I couldn't leave [...] afterwards I had trouble with police and army [...]

**MRT:** What kind of trouble? Because of the papers?

**HK:** Both. They would call me and “give us your paper”. I would give them my old Lebanese papers and they would say *kissikht yali jannassak*, for example.

**NK:** What does that mean?

**HK:** Like euh “fuck whoever gave you this nationality”.

In this talk, we observe the use of berating language by police, demonstrating their anger towards HK's (temporary) “privilege” to identify as Lebanese without having the “right” of patrilineality. This extract not only suggests the existence of racist thinking within the police force, but the predominance of such thinking in Lebanese society. HK's skin makes singling him out easy. And even having in his possession Lebanese identity papers does nothing to lessen his lived experiences with discrimination. This brings us back to the paradoxical nature of the quote cited in chapter 1: “[...] if they are Lebanese then they should not be treated this way,” highlighting that in Lebanon, nationality/citizenship (and patriarchal kinship as observed with earlier portraits) is not enough to exempt one from discrimination and racism, that skin indeed “says it all; it speaks volumes” (Tate, 2005: 118).

### **Late development of race/racism awareness**

**HK:** I didn't notice until probably after 12, 13, that age...

**HK:** At the time, I didn't know who the hell was Kunta Kinta or Bhutto [laughs] but, yeah, I used to come to my mom and tell her that they are calling me this and then you know...

**NK:** She said? What did she say?

**HK:** She'd say "it's fine".

**HK:** At some point it got really negative. I don't know if it was me or... it was... I was starting to notice the racism around like euh...

**MRT:** When was that?

**HK:** From... in my teenage years mainly.

HK's talk highlights an unawareness of what he experienced as a child. It is not until early adolescence that he goes through a transitional phase, where his perceived "race" becomes clear to him; he begins to understand his lived experience with being "othered" as related to "race" and racism. This suggests development of "racial" awareness did not occur at home, arguably unexpected as "family life is the first and foremost location for forming understandings of self and society" (Socha in Socha and Diggs, 1999: xi). It shows how one's "racial" identity is not necessarily negotiated within just families, but also "negotiated between individuals and the outside world" (Katz, 1996: 181).

### **Gendered theme of racialization**

**HK:** I was asked once to... I was caught by the police and asked to strip down because they hear that black guys had euuhhh [big penises] [laughs].

**NK:** Are you [...] kidding me?!

**HK:** I swear [laughs].

**NK:** And what did you do?

**HK:** I did! [Laughs].

**NK:** Did you have... how old were you?

**HK:** Euh [says age] [laughs]

This talk not only supports the earlier claim of discrimination by Lebanese police, but also points to a process of racialization taking place regarding the black male body. The body provides a site of ascribing "racial" thinking and stereotypes as HK is forced to strip and verify a fetishized feature of his perceived "race"<sup>29</sup>. And as "to be black is to be available for racial humiliation", HK's body is used as an object of humiliation (Farley, 1997: 474).

### **Challenging the fixedness of identity**

**HK:** [...] at some point my mom claimed that she never knew who my father was [...]

**NK:** Why?

**HK:** To get me on her name. So, it worked and I became HK.

**HK:** But then [...] I wanted to travel, so I went to get a passport [...] I had to show them my [country in West Africa] passport so they knew we were lying [...] they blocked my, euh...

**NK:** Application.

**HK:** Not just the application, everything [...] I cannot get any new Lebanese documents.

**NK:** [...] do you feel Lebanese? I mean you grew up since you were two here [...] you speak the language [...]

**HK:** Yes, but I never felt Lebanese. I recently started feeling that "No, I'm actually Lebanese" [laughs]. But before I was always an African living in Lebanon.

**NK:** Is it because you felt this way or because people make you feel this way?

**HK:** Both.

**MRT:** So what does it mean for you: Lebanese?

**HK:** But that's the thing; I don't really know what is Lebanese [...] *Bas* I can, I speak the language fluently, I know plenty of stuff, like the culture, but still I'm not obvious, you know [laughs].

"I became HK" is a powerful statement as it presents in its simplicity the conflicts and complexities of identity labels. It illustrates how identity is organized across time and space (Tate, 2005: 92), a production

never complete, a dynamic process, always constituted within, not outside, representation (Hall, 1990: 222).

In these excerpts, HK demonstrates how identity is not only “being”, but also “becoming” (Hall, 1990: 225). Just as the legal codification of patrilineality deprived HK from “being” Lebanese, a simple provision/loophole<sup>30</sup> in the law permitted him to “become” Lebanese and, subsequently, “be” Lebanese. And by another simple act, he was stripped of his “Lebanese-ness” again.

In the third excerpt, HK’s talk shows the challenge to essentialist discourses on national identity. It highlights that sharing a common language and culture is not enough, that by the (non)practice of reciprocity and through the practice of kinship lines, he will never be “obvious”.

### **Support/coping mechanisms**

**MRT:** And you feel like there’s a chance [to acquire the Lebanese nationality]?

**HK:** They’ve been talking about it for the past two, three years, and it’s been intensifying more, campaigns and stuff but I kind of lost hope. I don’t care anymore, I don’t want it.

Here, we observe an indirect coping mechanism: through disconnecting, by the counter rejection of Lebanon (“I don’t care, I don’t want it”), and by language, using “they” when addressing Lebanese and “we” when talking about Africans (see below).

**NK:** [...] at 12 how did you start realizing?

**HK:** Yeah, like I started noticing that I’m euh... different from...

**NK:** How did you notice? Was it because people started saying things [...]?

**HK:** Probably getting exposed to the whole... the African history and...

**NK:** In Lebanon?

**HK:** No, in general. That we’ve been enslaved and all that stuff. And then getting some remarks here and there like *abed*, and all that stuff [...].

This excerpt suggests an interesting coping mechanism adopted by HK. By stating “we’ve been enslaved”, he demonstrates a degree of shared agency with “Africa”<sup>31</sup>. In order to cope with racism, he perhaps draws strength and creates commonality. Adolescents struggle with difference while, at the same time, searching for basic alikeness, at times finding it and sometimes creating it (Flum and Lavi-Yudelevitch, 2002: 536). As HK found it difficult to find mutuality amongst peers who rejected him, he perhaps looked to “drawing strength from one’s culture and ancestors” (Shorter-Gooden, 2004: 421).

### **4.5. Portrait Five**

**GF**

**GF:** [...] I faced racism and discrimination [...].

**NK:** From the people in the town or family?

**GF:** The people and the family. Mainly from my family.

**NK:** Oh, really?

**GF:** Yeah.

**NK:** Did you find it a bit shocking? Because they knew your father got married to a [country in West Africa] woman, they knew for 20 years...

**GF:** And that was the point really, that my dad got married to a black lady...

GF<sup>32</sup> is the only person in this paper who came to Lebanon for the very first time as an adult. As we shall see, this factor plays a large part in the level of belongingness he developed for Lebanon.

### **Racializing “black”**

**NK:** Like do you have any specific incident [...] with the family that stuck with you?

**GF:** Actually, they stay away from us 'cause we're black.

**NK:** [...] did they say anything to your face or is it just the way they act?

**GF:** Yeah, they... actually they used to call my mom a monkey and stuff like that.

**NK:** Family?!

**MRT:** [Inaudible].

**GF:** Yeah. I'm not kidding. I don't want to go into details.

Racism is reproduced within private spaces, such as family (Fernandez, 2010: 150). And it is in this intimate sphere we observe how one wounding form of racism is against his mother. Within family, GF's "black", "African" mother becomes synonymous with "monkey". Lebanese culture is one "that embeds persons in familial relationships" (Joseph, 1999: 54) but here we see a complete rejection of this where this family member is re-presented by the words of her in-laws as non-human, stripped of (human) familial relationship. Through linking GF's mom to the racially derogatory label of "monkey"<sup>33</sup>, we observe, not a subtle pressure to conform to "norms" of family, but a lived experience with blatant discrimination by family<sup>34</sup>.

### **(Non)Significance of language**

**NK:** And how was it [coming to Lebanon]?

**GF:** It was pretty... weird the first time. Different type of people, you know? From the south.

**NK:** Did they speak English?

**GF:** No, no, only Arabic.

**NK:** So, you had to...

**GF:** Yes, I had to learn. And after that, things became ugly [...]

Here we observe how "language has the marvellous characteristic of being both a component of identity and a means of communication" (Maalouf, 2000: 109). Language is a significant factor in identity formation, a "powerful and reassuring line" people identify with and build a sense of belonging on (Maalouf, 2000: 108, 109). But it is also a tool used to vocalize and seal difference. After GF learnt to speak the country's language of commonality, this should have brought him closer to identifying as Lebanese. However, "language becomes a site of struggle" (Rutherford, 1990: 22); it was then he felt his difference ("after that, things became ugly").

### **"Belonging" in identity formation**

**NK:** [...] did you feel like, "This is my country" when you first came?

**GF:** This is not my country. This is not where I should belong.

**NK:** OK.

**GF:** Nah, nah, nah, I need to be out of here. Actually, that is the plan.

**NK:** But you do have Lebanese name, and a Lebanese passport...

**GF:** Yeah, that's just [...] I mean that's it... it's not really me.

Discriminatory experiences "act as formative influences, but they can also cause permanent injuries" (Maalouf, 2000: 22), resulting in rejection, in this case the rejection of Lebanon from GF's identity. Relationships without any mutuality component tend to be less close, indicating that reciprocity (or lack thereof) determines the degree of one's sense of belonging (Flum and Lavi-Yudelevitch, 2002: 536). Indeed, the declaration "this is not my country, this is not where I belong" points to a deficient sense of collective identification, of belonging, of commonality, be it real or imagined, between Lebanon and GF (Jenkins, 2008: 132, 147). Finally, his assertion "I need to be out of here" hints at a coping mechanism of avoidance (Shorter-Gooden, 2004: 419).

### **Support/coping mechanisms**

**MRT:** You have good friends.

**GF:** Yeah, yeah, good friends. I have good friends here.

**NK:** You have lots of Lebanese friends or mostly mixed?

**GF:** Nah, mixed. I go for mixed more because they understand.

Here we see a situation where an environment of “othering” pushes GF to congregate in groups of mixed Lebanese. GF seeks social support through an informal network of friends who are Lebanese of African heritage, a group he feels there exists commonalities, i.e., a shared “colour” and experiences<sup>35</sup>.

#### 4.6. The Big Picture

##### Summary

By providing snapshots of lived experiences, these individuals reveal how one “of the things that people have in common in any group is precisely the recognition of other groups or categories from whom they differ” (Jenkins, 2008: 23), a recognition of the “Other” based on constructed differences.

They show us “who we are seen to be” (Jenkins, 2008: 3) is indeed powerful as it touches on processes of racializations and “othering” based on erroneous physical signifiers and partisan forms of socialization, resulting in very context-specific racism. They provide insights into: the power structure and differentials existing within contemporary Lebanese society; sociolinguistic processes that go beyond, yet triggered by, “colour”; and the negative attributions tied to constructed, homogenised “racial” categories perceived as different from and inferior to “Lebanese”.

Through their talks, they highlight the significance of discourse and communication. They tell us of language used in “othering”, and how the body<sup>36</sup> is utilized as a site of “othering”, used in identifying, constructing, inferiorizing and isolating the “Other”. And we see how through their existence they disrupt this process and clearly show how such a process fails in its aims<sup>37</sup>.

Their portraits reveal the prevalence of certain themes of racializations around “black”, such as: the monkey; slave; one with dirty skin; maid; with a body embodying the bestial; the “Sri Lanki”; the sexually promiscuous; chocolate face; the nigger sponge; and so on. They highlight how race-based discrimination and racism take new and different forms, some implicit, others overt.

Finally, we observe through racism permeating different strata of Lebanese society; gendered racializations; colour-based jokes; “othering” based on “racial” signifiers; and so on, how labels, while not always referring to “race” explicitly, reinforce racialized discourses, and create an essentialist context within which a whole range of other discourses reproduce a racialized identity of one categorized as “black” and “Other” (Connolly, 1998: 94).

##### Difficulty with recall

Although frequently faced with racism, when called upon to share specific incidents, some interviewees had difficulty with recall, which perhaps presents itself as an interesting, additional coping mechanism. AD, RC and HK showed varying degrees of difficulty with recall<sup>38</sup>, perhaps hinting at the repression of (race-based) discrimination. For instance, when asked how he responded to his “othering” experiences in school, HK replied “I really don’t remember”<sup>39</sup>. As AD exhibited a strong degree of frustration at her experiences, she was asked more than once to share a specific incident of racism, but was not able to. At the time of his interview, RC had not long graduated from university. However, when asked to share a clearly racist incident that occurred while at university, his response was delayed<sup>40</sup>.

##### Perceived racism

One theme that frequently manifested itself in some of the interviews is what I term perceived<sup>41</sup> racism. When asked for examples of race-based discrimination, some given could at most be described as subtle, and difficult to categorize clearly as conscious and racist (or race-based). One suitable example is this excerpt from HK’s interview:

**HK:** Now I have this [country in West Africa] passport, which is euh the same one that I came with... from [country in West Africa] in [specifies year] [laughs]. Here at the embassy they renewed it by putting a stamp on it. But all the pages are full; I have just probably one page left. And it is really old. It is ridiculous [...]

**NK:** Why don't you get it renewed? You have to go back to [country in West Africa], right?

**HK:** Yeah, that's what the damn [...] this is what he tells me but it's a Lebanese guy, just...

"This is what he tells me but it's a Lebanese guy" reveals his distrust in Lebanese, born out of years dealing with racism. Indeed, instances of perceived racism highlight a number of points, such as: a feeling of oppression and perhaps oversensitivity to situations, both stemming from prolonged experiences with racism; and a "structure of feeling [...] caught between experience and language" (Rutherford, 1990: 22).

Although these cases cannot be clearly categorized as racist, one must not undervalue perceived racism. There should be an understanding of the racist implications of the way feelings are being conceptualized (Lawrence III, 1987: 318) through subtle cues, actions, attitudes, and so on<sup>42</sup>. And where discrimination is perceived, it does not matter whether it is conscious or not; a defensive reaction towards it may occur. In segments of AD's talk<sup>43</sup>, for example, she highlights an oppressed voice ("you should hear my opinion", "they don't really care", "they always have this drawback from you"). And "if her sense of persecution is more acute or dramatically stated", it still perhaps "communicates well the embattled character of" being/being looked at as "Other" in Lebanon (Feagin and Melvin, 1995: 95).

## Chapter 5 Conclusion

### 5.1. Summary

Through a combination of talk and the collation of existing research, this paper has attempted to paint another picture on identity, "othering", racialization and racism. It has endeavoured to give space to different voices in the current discourse on racism; to reveal through the narratives of Lebanese of African heritage the complexities of their lives in a nation with a constructed, romanticized identity of whiteness; to examine the racializations taking place; define racism in contemporary Lebanon; and help in deconstructing and examining the "classism, not racism" paradigm.

It has shown how "white" has become a significant marker of being Lebanese, regardless of "racial", ethnic or religious allegiances/identities. By examining sections of its history, we observe how Lebanon went through a self-racialization and selective aestheticization process of attaining whiteness, presently encoded in certain social modes of identification in the country<sup>1</sup>.

We have seen how (re)claiming whiteness is perhaps an effort to forge a positive sense of self and identity, as to "have white privilege is to not identify or be identified as racially specific" (Gopal, 2012). And we observe how the "Other" is frequently seen as one disturbing this whiteness; specifically, we see in the case of Lebanese of African heritage how based on this "white" signifier the "Other" is constructed<sup>2</sup>.

This paper has also highlighted how boundary "making is about difference making for purposes of empowering or disempowering" (Joseph, 1997: 75), reinforcing power relations between constructed "races" signified by colour codes, perceived physical attributes, and so on. We have looked at specific ways "different groups within a particular country are racialized and how that racialization may give rise to" (England, 2010: 197) practices of exclusion and inclusion.

This paper has provided a glimpse at "complex and contradictory ways in which racism" (Connolly, 1998: 10) manifests in Lebanon, by looking at the lived experiences of people identified as Lebanese by legal and patrilineal codes, yet who are misidentified as non-Lebanese by visual cues. We have seen how, in a

time when identity discourses and formations are constantly shifting and altering, the Lebanese identity manages to maintain a fixed colour code.

We observe how the experiences of African Lebanese highlight a range of themes and issues, from institutionalized racism to individual coping mechanisms, and how they provide unique insights into the process of racializing “Lebanese” and “Other”.

Finally, this paper has shown that racism in Lebanon is frequently overshadowed by classism, and how the five individuals in this paper, through their profiles as young Lebanese with different “class” backgrounds”, allow us to temporarily set aside classism from the dialogue, and see racism at work. We see through their experiences how racism “provides the conceptual framework which not only guides the way people think about themselves and others, but also, in turn, comes to influence and shape their actions and behaviour” (Connollly, 1998: 11).

## **5.2. Further research**

This paper acknowledges that a range of interrogations are absent from it<sup>3</sup>. However, it has touched on significant themes, and opens up the floor to a number of central research questions and avenues for future research with regards to racism in Lebanon. By attempting to rid the discourse on racism in Lebanon of its binarism, it has also contributed to a nuanced understanding of the various processes and complexities in identifying and understanding racism<sup>4</sup>.

It raises questions regarding “racial” socialization within family, how sameness and difference are negotiated and communicated to and by children, and so on. Therefore, further research can inform us on how children in Lebanon are developing understandings of the “Other”, “race” and racism.

In addition, as almost all individuals interviewed for this paper highlighted forms of institutional racism, research examining how different groups are socialized within different institutions<sup>5</sup>, as well as the related prevalent discourses in each, can prove instrumental in understanding the extent of institutional and structural racism in the country.

Indeed, an understanding is needed on how “discourses on ‘race’ [...] influence and shape the way in which” Lebanese society is “organised and divided”, how such divisions “inevitably come to be normalised and internalised in the way we then think about and interact with others” (Connolly, 1998: 19).

This paper provides an initial lens into the importance of language in self-identification, “othering”, racialization, and so on. Therefore, future research can lean towards discourse analyses (van Dijk, 1987; 1993) of the language used in various mediums in Lebanon, such as the media, school textbooks, etc.

In addition, research is needed on how “race” mixing is perceived by Lebanese (including how prevalent it is in Lebanon and by Lebanese living outside the country, and how aware of it Lebanese are), and how this plays into the formation of “Lebanese” identity.

Finally, future research can endeavour to look at how other intersecting factors influence one’s “othering” experiences in the country; and to look at how the resulting coping mechanisms from this can be leveraged on a macro scale and within localized situations; which mechanisms are effective; which perpetuate problems with “othering”; and so on.

## **Endnotes**

### **Chapter 1**

1. It is reported that an average of one migrant domestic worker dies per week in Lebanon, “most often by committing suicide or trying to, quote on quote, ‘escape from their employer’” (Houry as quote in Damon, 2011). One recent suicide that was covered by various news sources is that of an Ethiopian woman, who days before was caught on camera being beaten by men from a recruitment agency.

Footage of the video can be found on the Al Jazeera’s website, at:  
[www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/03/2012314142844277446.html](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/03/2012314142844277446.html)

And on LBC’s website, at: [www.lbcgroup.tv/news/23327/R](http://www.lbcgroup.tv/news/23327/R)

2. One of the earliest records of Lebanese presence in West Africa dates back to 1914, Sierra Leone, with other sources placing the earliest wave to be as early as the 1880s; oral sources speculate 1888 in Conkary (Khuri, 1968: 91) and between 1860 and 1876 in Dakar (Boumedouha, 1992: 549; Akyeampong, 2006: 305; Khuri, 1968: 91).

3. These interviews were conducted as part of a project entitled *Mixed Feelings: Racism and “Othering” in Lebanon from a Lebanese Perspective*. The project is a collaborative effort by me and Polish photographer Marta Bogdanska, and was sponsored by the Heinrich Böll Foundation, Middle East Office.

The interviews were conducted with a few selected participants of *Mixed Feelings*, using an old Nokia phone, ad hoc, no script and conversational. The length of the interviews varied, and was dependent on the time the interviewee could spare, the space on the phone, and the direction of questioning the interview took.

I would like to acknowledge my being “mixed” facilitated access to participants and framed the conversations around race-related experiences, occurrences that might have not been possible otherwise.

For more information on the project, please refer to Appendix II.

4. I have chosen to utilize racialization in examining the existence of racism in Lebanon because it involves “the elaboration of the dynamic and complex processes” through which racial identities and meanings are constructed (Rattansi 2005, as cited in Law, 2010: 60); and, because racism “involves negative attribution of a specified racial group” (Law, 2010: 3), a process similar to racialization and which presupposes race-thinking.

5. With specific regards to Lebanon, and the region as well, little seems to have been written on this topic. The literature review in Chapter 1.2 will detail further what literature was found during research for this paper, and what is lacking.

6. Utilitarian familialism is defined as “the normative and practical tendencies whereby” families “place family interest above all other individual and social concerns” (Ong et al, 748), and one way Lebanese do so is through marrying within the same family, clan, sect, from the same village, etc.

7. Lebanon is described here as being a minority nation as it is not part of any politically dominant elite in the region.

8. See Appendix II for a description of this project.

### **Chapter 2**

1. Other sources place the number of recognized confessions in Lebanon at 18 (Knio, 2005: 227).
2. In addition, each sect has established its own religious courts regulating family laws (Obeid et al, 2010: 63; Joseph, 1997: 74).
3. The country is governed by a quasi-democratic system, in which “there are six Christian members of the government for each five Muslims”, and where the president is always a Maronite Christian, its vice president a Sunni Muslim and its speaker of parliament a Shi’ite Muslim (Soffer, 1986: 197).
4. One example of sectarian boundary building is the division of Beirut during the civil war, along what was infamously known as The Green Line, which “separated the mainly Muslim factions in West Beirut from the Christian Lebanese Front in East Beirut” (Wikipedia), where the two sections were (and are sometimes still) referred to as *Gharbiyyeh* (West) and *Shariyeh* (East).
5. For example, during the Lebanese civil war, religious sect identity played a powerful and fatal role. “Lebanese identity papers record confession – and the holder’s name usually betrays it anyway. Hundreds of Muslims were killed simply because they were Muslims and hundreds of Christians simply because they were Christians” (Hanf, 1993: 327).
6. “Patriarchal kin modes of operation, in Lebanon, were produced and reproduced not only in domestic but also in government and non-government spheres. The privileging of males and elders justified in kin moralities and sanctified by religion, the hallmark of patriarchal kinship in Lebanon, was widespread in public arenas. Elites distributed resources on the basis of highly personalistic, face-to-face relationships often grounded in real or idiomatic kinship, subsidizing the control of males and elders over familial females and juniors” (Joseph, 1997: 79).
7. An “exception to the law that is rarely utilized is that if a child is born out of wedlock and the father is not known, the child can take the Mother’s Lebanese nationality” (Kimber, 2012). For the complete Lebanese Nationality Law, see Appendix IV.
8. Boundaries that are “valorized in social, cultural, religious, economic and political practices” in Lebanon (Joseph, 1997: 74).
9. This title is inspired by a quotation on “whiteness” made by a prominent Christian leader in Lebanon during the time of the French Mandate in the country:

The Lebanese, he asserts, are ‘white, white to the bones, of an unalterable white, authentic, that leads to no ambiguity; a fanatical white in opposition to the Moroccan, the Algerian or the Senegalese’ (Hayek as quoted in Hage, 2005: 197).
10. Such as China and the Middle East (Bonnett, 1998).
11. *Samra* roughly translated to “tanned” or more popularly “brunette”, a word that conjures up images of a brunette woman, with sun-kissed, tanned skin, used in many Arabic love songs, such as “Samra ya Samra” by the late Egyptian singer Karem Mahmoud.
12. With regards to the first Lebanese immigrants in the US, it has been debated that their (re)claiming a “white” racial identity had principally to do with pursuing “the privileges of citizenship by defining themselves as distinct from nonwhites, notably blacks and Asians” (Gualtieri, 2001: 52).
13. The Maronites are a uniate Catholic church found in Lebanon, and the Levant (Salibi, 1971: 76).
14. “[Identity fetishism] stresses that the feeling of horizontal comradeship among so much inequality is not a simple mental emotional illusion. It has its material base in what is perhaps the only thing that a ‘community’ distributes equally [...] the ‘potential’ to be what the idealized best of the community are”; in this case, white (Hage, 2005: 203).

15. Based on the 1932 census, the last formal census in Lebanon.
16. One related example being the establishment of French missionaries, who lived and taught, in the Maronite regions of Lebanon (Hage, 2005: 195; Salibi, 1971: 85; Kaufman, 2004: 2, 3).
17. It was during this time assertions of “whiteness” by prominent Christian Lebanese figures were made, such as:

The Lebanese, he asserts, are ‘white, white to the bones, of an unalterable white, authentic, that leads to no ambiguity; a fanatical white in opposition to the Moroccan, the Algerian or the Senegalese’ (Hayek as quoted in Hage, 2005: 197)

We owe a lot to our brothers of the black and yellow race. We regret being superior to them. Nature must be unjust but what can we do about it (Hayek as quoted in Hage, 2005: 197).

[T]he Phoenician alphabet is today used by ‘the quasi-totality of the white race’. ‘To which we belong’ (Chiha as quoted in Hage, 2005: 197).
18. For example, around the late 18th century, France had passed laws related to slave trading called *Le Code Noir*, which deemed African slaves as property, stressed discipline, punishment and racial segregation (Lauren, 1988: 19).
19. This role took on various characters, depending on the country. For example, in the French colonies, it was observed that they found themselves acting as a kind of safeguard that enabled the French to avoid becoming too “africanized/wild” (Bigo, 1992). In British administered colonies, their middleman role was partially due to marketing boards that were “established to handle the main cash crops. The Boards had the power to purchase and export cocoa, palm produce, cotton, and groundnuts. [...] The opportunity in cocoa trade for the Lebanese was diminished, for only a few were given licences to purchase. Again, they survived by working as agents to the big firms which had been granted quotas” (Falola, 1990: 538).
20. This sort of thinking also manifested itself through other avenues such as with racial mixing and miscegenation, when during the Victorian era (1837-1901), it was believed that the British “race” had to be kept pure, and “Arabs might breed with Africans to improve the latter, but it was felt that the gulf between the British and the African was too great” (Hopwood, 199:54), again emphasizing that the Arabs were seen as better than Africans but less than Europeans.
21. I acknowledge the controversy surrounding the works of Bernard Lewis, however, I feel his position with regards to this particular point is of importance and validates the argument I wish to present.
22. With the clear exception of the Maronites (Hage, 2005).
23. It should be noted that there exists an on-going discourse around the identity of the Lebanese as originally Phoenician (Antelava, 2008; Hage, 2005: 197; Salibi, 1988: 171), another identity that is seen as “white”, as demonstrated by the quote in point 17 above.
24. This section title is inspired by the book *A White Side of Black Britain: Interracial Intimacy and Racial Literacy* (Twine, 2010).
25. A structure that may have limited the interactions to gendered forms, i.e., between Arab males and non-Arab females, but not the other way round.
26. This was perhaps “a result of the Arab slave trade, and mainly female assimilation into the Arabian population as a result of miscegenation and manumission”, women “imported specifically for the sexual gratification of elite males and for their reproductive potential” (Richards et al, 2003: 1058, 1062).

27. In these nations, “as many as 35 per cent or more of the population” differ from the “Arab” majority (Ibrahim, 1998: 230).
28. Specifically the coast of East Africa (Felix et al, 2002).
29. One example would be Al Jahiz, a 9th century African scholar based in the Middle East (Felix et al, 2002: 30).
30. They were reportedly taken as slaves (Talhami, 1977).
31. To authenticate the “whiteness” of Lebanese, Chiha drew on the “fact” that Lebanese mixed for years with “Westerners”, a statement not seemingly based on real records, but on his personal opinion.
32. The largest communities of Lebanese “emigrants and their descendants are to be found in the United States of America, Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean islands; in Brazil, Argentina and some other South American countries; in Australia; in Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal and some other West African countries; and in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and other countries of the Gulf” (Hourani, 1992: 3).
33. Those who went to Egypt or Europe during the first phase were mainly Christian or Jewish merchants. Those who went to America in the second period were, to a great extent, young men from Christian villages of the Lebanese mountains. In the third period, a large proportion of those who went to West Africa came from the Shi'a villages of southern Lebanon; this was a result both of the growth of population and of the integration of Southern Lebanon into the administrative and economic system of Lebanon, which created new possibilities of movement and an awareness of new horizons. And in the most recent period, a large proportion (although by no means all) of the emigrants have been those with education or a useful technical training from all communities (Hourani, 1992).
34. “[...] the worst of it is the attitude of young Lebanese men towards native women whom they pursue while tending to despise them” (Bigo, 1992, 523).
35. Some of the reasons include: being racialized as a foreign, homogeneous, exploitative group, their presence perceived as encouraged by the colonial administration (Falola, 1990: 525); which in turn placed them as ideal scapegoats in times of economic and political crisis in the region (Bigo, 1992: 510).
36. They often did so to apparently secure their position in the chiefdom (Leighton, 1992: 582).
37. For instance, in Senegal the Lebanese were charged with being racist “in not marrying their women to Senegalese men. The Lebanese respond by adamantly stating [...] ‘integration is not done below your belt’” (Leichtman, 2005: 669).
38. These factors include the lack of official census records in Lebanon, and difficulties to access government records in any of the participants’ respective West African countries for this paper.
39. “[...] a range of moral anxieties among Middle Eastern men, who may fear (un)intentional sperm ‘mixing’—including with racialized “black *bizri*” (literally, black seeds)—in Middle Eastern IVF laboratories (Inhorn 2003b). For example, in one of the IVF clinics in my study, a recurrent fear among the infertile Lebanese men was that their semen would somehow become tainted with the semen of the black West African janitor, whose job was to accompany men to the semen collection room and then to carry their fresh semen samples back to the IVF laboratory” (Inhorn, 2004: 174).

### Chapter 3

1. The Anti-Racism Movement (ARM) was created by young activists in Lebanon in collaboration with migrant community leaders to challenge and fight racism in all its forms. [www.antiracismmovement.com](http://www.antiracismmovement.com)

2. ARM has worked on exposing this discriminatory practice, and to highlight how it has become a racism issue as much as it is a classism issue. They have released since 2010 a few videos demonstrating this policy in practice.

The 2010 video can be viewed here:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=fylZa\\_xPOGA&list=UUaBBARrvSIU9MDzB2\\_Hj7MQ&index=21&feature=plcp](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fylZa_xPOGA&list=UUaBBARrvSIU9MDzB2_Hj7MQ&index=21&feature=plcp)

The 2012 videos can be viewed here:

- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=R\\_Y6WU\\_zh9g](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R_Y6WU_zh9g)  
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=l0ZXvVpNxbl&list=UUaBBARrvSIU9MDzB2\\_Hj7MQ&index=1&feature=plcp](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l0ZXvVpNxbl&list=UUaBBARrvSIU9MDzB2_Hj7MQ&index=1&feature=plcp)

3. Due to mixed reactions to the video, some full of praise and some negative, the video was taken down within 24 hours.

For screen shots of the video, see Appendix III.

For more details on the video, see the below links.

- [beirutspring.com/blog/2012/05/17/the-worlds-worst-anti-racism-ad/](http://beirutspring.com/blog/2012/05/17/the-worlds-worst-anti-racism-ad/)  
- [www.antiracismmovement.com/2012/05/important-message-to-everyone-who\\_26.html](http://www.antiracismmovement.com/2012/05/important-message-to-everyone-who_26.html)

4. Due to her “tan”.

5. Such as the video mentioned in point 2 above.

6. This can result in the provision of countermeasures in the form of colour-blind quick fixes, rather than initiatives based on in-depth analyses of the dynamic processes of racializations taking place in Lebanon.

7. This figure is an estimate, as Lebanon has not had an official census in almost a century. Other sources place this number at around 200,000 (HRW, 2010: 1).

8. The *kafala* system allows employers a powerful position of control, creating a modern-day slavery situation; it renders the *kafeel* as legally responsible for the MDW during her stay in Lebanon, the *kafeel* controls the renewal of the MDW's visa and whether she can leave her employment, and this system provides a sense of ownership (HRW, 2007: 116; Abdulrahim, 2010: 9).

9. Domestic work in Lebanon is stigmatized as “dirty work, so much so that even “if Lebanese workers were able to receive higher wages for the same occupations performed by foreign labour, the culture of shame surrounding cleaning [...] would cause Lebanese job seekers to avoid these occupations” (Chaaban, 2010: 185).

10. That is, Lebanese versus MDWs doing underpaid “dirty” work.

## Chapter 4

1. The narrative of each individual was examined for possible themes around “othering”, racialization, racism, and related themes. Those that were central have each been given a space for discussion; some may have common headings but are specific in context to each individual. These themes present discourses specific to the individual’s experience, but also provide a glimpse of what might be happening on a macro scale in Lebanon.

2. It should be noted that AD was very instrumental in accessing other participants for the project. She was the first person we took pictures of and the first person we interviewed. Shortly after the interview, AD left Lebanon for Liberia.

For a short profile on AD, see Appendix I.

For the complete transcript of her interview, go to Appendix V.

3. Mostly for its convenience (close to shoot site), and as we felt it provided us with a casual and somewhat neutral setting.
  4. Begging the question: "What unconscious messages about themselves will the children pick up from their" parents (Katz, 1996: 27).
  5. I choose to utilize the word stigmatization here as housework is seen as dirty and undesirable work by general Lebanese society, as noted in point 9 in Chapter 3.
  6. She also mentions the role played by her grandparents in providing her support, in telling her to "be strong".
  7. For his brief profile, see Appendix I.  
For the complete transcript of his interview, go to Appendix V.
  8. A practice where "race" intersects with notions of citizenship and nationality (Anderson, 2000: 147), and provides a basis of "othering" people who do not meet a nationality's "race" expectations.
  9. Specific nationalities such as *Habashiyeh* (Ethiopian) and *Sudani* (Sudanese), are racialized in Lebanon and used as insults or descriptions of certain jobs; in this case where *Sri Lankieh* (Sri Lankan) can be used to imply an insult, or to mean "maid" regardless of the maid's country of origin (Lutz, 2010; Anderson, 2000: 156).
  10. BO's mention of a 50/50 identity is interesting. The use of fractions is obviously not a peculiar phenomenon when describing a person of mixed parentage. But it is intriguing when used in a patrilineal society such as Lebanon, where one assumes from birth the identity (nationality, last name, religion) of one's father (Joseph, 1999: 175). It perhaps presents a paradoxical state where one can never fully embody the doctrines of patrilineality when regarded as visibly an "Other" and treated as such.
- BO:** [...] so to the Lebanese society it was something different to see now the interbreeding of Lebanese who are outside married to whoever they are married [inaudible].
- Also interesting is BO's use of the word "interbreeding" in the third extract. It almost seems he is using the English equivalent of the Arabic word for mixed—"race"; although almost never used in Lebanon, one word for mixed—"race" is *hajeen*, which is from a verb, *hajjana*, meaning to hybridize, to cross-breed.
11. As Lebanon is a Francophone nation, there are many French words used in place of Arabic equivalents, such as the French word "métis" to indicate one who is mixed.
  12. "The person represses precisely those images that undermine the aestheticized image invoked by thinking 'My people are a superior people.' [...] [A]long with the positive aestheticization of the self comes the process of negatively aestheticizing the other, the one who is being racialized as inferior" (Hage, 2005: 202).
  13. As the self is always "in relationship to" (Joseph, 1999: 54), we can say that these selves are indeed "part of, related, connected" (*ibid*: 54) to BO's experiences with "othering".
  14. This also points to a possible practice by Lebanese in Ghana of segmented assimilation (separate but equal).
  15. We also observe here BO's (possibly defensive) assertion of being "more Lebanese than you are", in spite of his earlier reference to a half ("50/50") identity.
  16. For his brief profile, see Appendix I.

For the complete transcript of his interview, go to Appendix V.

17. This roughly translates to “he dirtied his face with chocolate”.

18. Although the extent of how racially loaded these jokes are will need further examination beyond this paper.

19. That is, one who is Lebanese, “black”, male, perceived as middle class, speaks Arabic fluently, multilingual, and so on.

20. A fact that will be made apparent to whomever he engages continuously with (e.g., Lebanese girlfriend and her family).

21. A reaffirmation of Hage’s (2005) identity fetishism theory.

22. *Kamein* roughly translates to “as well” or “also”.

23. This roughly translates to “the slave/nigger loofah”.

24. RC uses the present perfect here as well, perhaps implying that he still looks after his younger brother with regards to “race”-based discrimination.

25. In this context, *khallas* roughly translates to “that’s it.”

26. For his brief profile, see Appendix I.

For the complete transcript of his interview, go to Appendix V.

27. Indeed, he was granted citizenship at one point, which was then revoked.

28. However, it is unclear the extent of racial awareness and the intent of racial connotations these (older) students had by making these jokes, a point wanting further examination beyond the scope of this paper.

29. It should be noted that one source of such thinking of the black male body as overly sexualized, bestial, animalistic and dirty partly stems from the use of Senegalese soldiers during French rule in Lebanon to quell any resistance (Thompson, 2000: 48); resulting in an obsession with the perceived sexual threat posed by the racialized black male body.

30. ”A child derives citizenship in Lebanon through her/his father. A woman cannot pass citizenship on to her children or foreign husband, except under limited circumstances. If the children have no known father (or known mother), they can obtain citizenship through their mother or independently if neither parent is known. Until recently, such children had ‘ghairs har’i’ (illegitimate) written on their Lebanese identity cards” (Joseph, 1997: 81).

31. Africa is a side of his identity that he was never had direct relation with until the start of adolescence, when he seems to have sought knowledge of why he was being “othered” and then identifying with this identity of “we”. In addition, in the same sentence, he also points to being called abed (slave/nigger).

32. For his brief profile, see Appendix I.

For the complete transcript of his interview, go to Appendix V.

33. This perhaps highlights an awareness in Lebanon of past and prevailing racial discourses and biological racism with regards to “African”.

34. One also wonders then what sense of inferiority might GF develop when a part of his identity is classified as a monkey.

35. However, such a reaction may be problematic as it can be seen perhaps as a threat or, at the least, negatively by a society that sees itself as predominantly and homogeneously “white”, and may lead to an undesirable reaction (Maalouf, 2000: 27).

36. That is, colour, skin, hair, facial features, and any other physical phenotypes used as “racial” signifiers.

37. These individuals may experience a cross-over of “racial” lines through spatial contexts (such as the “performance” of race in different spaces) and through the different constructions of different identities in relation to public discursive arenas (Ali, 2003: 11-12, 13).

38. GF did not demonstrate difficulty with recall but he chose not to elaborate on incidents regarding his mother and the family, so he also shows signs of choosing to repress certain incidents.

39. It was only after I shared with him three examples of racism I personally experienced in Lebanon did he then volunteer the story of being arrested by police and forced to strip.

40. He replied with “Wait; let me remember because there is a lot. Not just in uni I mean...”

41. By perceived racism, I mean one’s personal interpretation of an incident or experience as negative or degrading, and based on one’s perceived “race”.

42. For instance, with regards to “feeling” discrimination, RC states in his talk that “when it comes from older people you can feel this old mentality”.

43. This is based on the following excerpts from AD’s interview:

**NK:** And in grade school, high school and university did you face the same issues?

**AD:** Yeah... but it was not like the picking on and the beating, of course, but there is always racism, always.

**MRT:** Can you give us an example? How it manifests itself?

**AD:** Like euh... for example, let me [inaudible] for now and think of university. I had a class, marketing and there was this teacher, he would ask a question, and be like “who knows the answer?” and I would always raise my hand, and he would never pick me. Never. He’d just ignore me like he was not seeing. Sometimes there’ll be like only two people yeah [...]

**NK:** You think it’s racism or because he wanted the other students to answer because he knew you knew the answer?

**AD:** The whole year for four [?] months? I don’t think so like you should hear my opinion too you know?

**NK:** But then people knew you were Lebanese though...

**AD:** They don’t really care, even when they ask you and you say your dad’s Lebanese and they say, “Ah, OK! But then you still feel the difference, the always have this drawback from you.

## Chapter 5

1. Where “white” has become, not necessarily a “racial” identity but certainly, a colour-code of “Lebanese”.

2. Thus, even if the group or individual in question is Lebanese (where “Lebanese-ship” can only be attained through patrilineality), of the same sect, same village, has a Lebanese passport, and so on, if they disturb this “whiteness”, they can only be seen as “Other”.

3. Such as the possible juxtapositions of gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity and disability in the lived experiences of an “Other” in Lebanon.

4. For example, it highlights how tackling racism requires a shift from quick fixes that further reinforce stereotypes, to initiatives based on an in-depth understanding of class racism, “othering” and racialization in the country.

5. Such as police in the police force, students in high school and people in the work place.

## **Appendix I**

### **Portrait Profiles**

Portrait one: AD

- Female
- Lebanese father
- West African mother
- Born in West Africa
- Moved to Lebanon:
  - At the age of three
  - Went back to West Africa at age six
  - Moved back to Lebanon at age nine
  - Left Lebanon for West Africa following this interview
  - Stayed with grandparents in Lebanon; parents stayed behind in West Africa
  - Lived in Beirut for most of her time in Lebanon
  - Speaks fluent Arabic and English

Portrait two: BO

- Male
- Lebanese father
- West African Lebanese mother
- Born in West Africa
- Moved to Lebanon at the age of 7
- Initially stayed with grandparents in Lebanon; parents stayed behind in West Africa
- Lived in Tripoli as a child, in the north of Lebanon
- Speaks fluent Arabic, English, French and Spanish
- University schooling (bachelors and masters) abroad
- Worked (at the time of this interview) as a consultant

Portrait three: RC

- Male
- Lebanese father
- West African mother
- Born in West Africa
- Moved to Lebanon at age 4
- Moved to Lebanon with entire family; one brother, one sister, both parents
- Lived in Tripoli as a child, in the north of Lebanon
- Speaks fluent Arabic, French and English

Portrait four: HK

- Male
- West African father
- Lebanese mother
- Born in West Africa
- Moved to Lebanon at a young age
- Brought up by grandparents in Lebanon

- Lived in Lebanon during the civil war, in a neighbourhood located in what is infamously known as “the Green Line”
- Went to predominantly Christian school
- Only mixed child in school
- Speaks fluent Arabic and English

Portrait five: GF

- Male
- Lebanese father
- West African mother
- Born in West Africa, then moved to Lebanon at the age of 20
- Moved first to the south of Lebanon
- Currently lives in Beirut, the capital
- Speaks fluent Arabic and English

## **Appendix II**

### **About *Mixed Feelings: Racism and “Othering” in Lebanon from a Lebanese Perspective***

#### **The project**

*Mixed Feelings: Racism and “Othering” in Lebanon from a Lebanese Perspective* is a photography exhibition initially conceptualized by me in 2010, and then finally developed and realized between the mid of 2011 and beginning of 2012. Using a combination of images and words to highlight the issue of racism in contemporary Lebanon through Lebanese participants, it aims at questioning ideas of “race”, racialization and “othering”, and how these factors play into the perceptions of who belongs in the country and who does not. Inspired by ideas of (mistaken) identity and the multiplicity of factors that come into play when looking at racism and “othering”, it showcases 30 portraits of Lebanese from African and Asian heritage, as well as 17 quotes taken from interviews conducted with some of the participants.

#### **The title**

The title of this project is inspired by *Mixed Feelings: The Complex Lives of Mixed-Race Britons* by Yasmin Alibhai-Brown.

#### **Team and sponsor**

*Mixed Feelings* is a collaborative project by photographer Marta Bogdanska and by me (in my capacity as a copywriter and activist), and is in cooperation with the Heinrich Böll Foundation, Middle East Office. For additional details, visit: [www.lb.boell.org/web/52-845.html](http://www.lb.boell.org/web/52-845.html)

#### **The panellists**

The project opening was held in Beirut, on the 27th of June, 2012. As part of the opening, a panel discussion was held, moderated by Bogdanksa, comprising: Nadim Houry, Deputy Director of Human Rights Watch (MENA); Rana Boukarim, a representative of Anti-Racism Movement; Lala Arabian, Executive Director and Protection Coordinator of Insan Association; and myself.

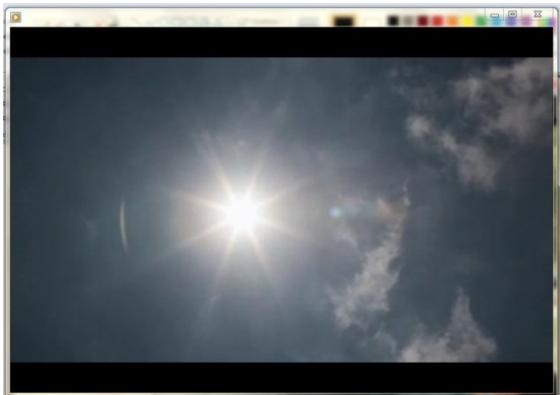
#### **Press coverage**

The project was well received and covered by a number of news media: Television (LBC, CNN); print newspaper (Daily Star Lebanon); and online news media (Al-Akhbar English; Al-Akhbar Arabic; BBC Arabic; As-Safir; Now Lebanon).

#### **Interviews and interviewees**

The five interviews used for this dissertation are taken from a collection of interviews conducted for *Mixed Feelings*. Interviewees were selected at random, and all interviews were conducted without the use of a script, and in either a nearby coffee shop or at my flat, both located next to the photoshoot site (with the exception of GF's interview which was done during the shoot). The interviews utilized a conversational style of interaction, rather than a researcher-participant dynamic. I conducted the majority of interviews (with the exception of BO's), with Marta contributing when the line of questioning seemed to reach a dead end. Interviews were recorded on an old Nokia phone or, when possible, using Marta's laptop. In the transcripts, MRT refers to Marta and NK refers to myself, and all participants have been assigned false initials to retain a degree of privacy.

### Appendix III Screenshots of ARM Video



## **Appendix IV**

### **Lebanese Nationality Laws: Page 1**

#### **Decree No15 on Lebanese Nationality**

**19 January 1925**

##### **Amended by**

**Regulation N°160 dated 16 / 07 / 1934**  
**Regulation N°122 L . R . dated 19 / 06 / 1939**  
**Law of 11 / 1 / 1960**

General Saray , High Commissioner of the Republic of France to the countries of Syria , Greater Lebanon , the Alaoite and the Druzes'Djebel ;

Acting upon :

Decree dated 23 November 1920 ;

Regulation N°2825 dated 20 August 1924 ;

The proposal of the Secretary General ;

Decrees as follows :

#### **Article 1**

Is considered Lebanese :

Every person born of a Lebanese father .

Every person born in the Greater Lebanon territory and did not acquire a foreign nationality , upon birth , by affiliation .

Every person born in the Greater Lebanon territory of unknown parents or parents of unknown nationality .

#### **Article 2**

The illegitimate child whose nationality has not been established during his minority shall have the Lebanese nationality if one of his parents in respect of whom affiliation is first established and if the proof of affiliation regarding both the father and the mother results from a single contract or judgment , the child shall acquire the nationality of the father should the latter be Lebanese .

#### **Article 3**

(The text of this article has been abrogated by article one of regulation 122 L . R . dated 19 / 06 / 1939 ).

#### **Article 4**

The spouse of a foreigner , who has become a Lebanese citizen , as well as the children of full age of such a foreigner , may , if they so request , obtain the Lebanese nationality , without satisfying the residence condition , whether by virtue of the regulation giving this

## **Appendix IV**

### **Lebanese Nationality Laws: Page 2**

nationality to the husband , the father or the mother or in a special regulation . Likewise , the minor children of a father acquiring the Lebanese nationality , or a mother acquiring the said nationality and who remained alive after the death of the father , shall become Lebanese unless they reject this nationality within the year following their majority .

#### **Article 5**

( As amended by the law dated 11 / 01 / 1960 )

The foreign woman married to a Lebanese shall, upon her request , become Lebanese after one year from the date of registration of the marriage in the Civil Status Office .

#### **Article 6**

( As amended by the law dated 11 / 01 / 1960 )

The Lebanese woman who gets married with a foreigner remains Lebanese until she requests the striking off of her registration in the census records on account of acquiring the nationality of her husband .

#### **Article 7**

( As amended by the law dated 11 / 01 / 1960 )

The woman who has lost her Lebanese nationality as a result of her marriage with a foreigner may , upon her request , recover this nationality after the dissolution of her marriage .

Lebanese female citizens who were married prior to the 1932 census and who have lost their nationality by marriage and did not have any record in the census registers of that date , may , subsequent to the dissolution of their marriage , obtain a court judgment ordering their registration should it be established that , on 30 August 1924 , they were on the Lebanese territory . As concerns those who were residing abroad at that date , they may recover their Lebanese nationality under article 2 of Law dated 31 January 1946 .

#### **Article 8**

Shall cease to be Lebanese :

The Lebanese subject having acquired a foreign nationality should this acquisition take place pursuant to an authorization granted by a regulation issued by the Head of the State .

The Lebanese who accepts a public office from a foreign government and maintains such office despite that he has been instructed by the Lebanese government to abandon it within a specified period ,

#### **Article 9**

Examination of lawsuits relating to nationality falls within the exclusive jurisdiction of courts of law .

Temporary Provisions

#### **Article 10**

## **Appendix IV**

### **Lebanese Nationality Laws: Page 3**

1<sup>st</sup> While preserving the option rights provided for in the Peace Treaty signed at Lausanne in 1923 , is considered Lebanese every person born on the Greater Lebanon territory of a Lebanese father also born in the said territory and was on November 1914 an Ottoman subject

#### **Article 11**

Children and married women having acquired a foreign nationality, in accordance with article 36 of the Lausanne Treaty, may obtain, after investigation, the Lebanese nationality by decision of the Head of State provided they reside in the Lebanese territory and submit a declaration to this effect within the year following maturity or dissolution of marriage.

#### **Article 12**

All provisions contrary to the provisions of the present regulation are hereby repealed.

#### **Article 13**

The Secretary General and the Governor of Greater Lebanon , each within his jurisdiction , shall implement the present regulation which shall come into force as of the date of its publication in the official bulletin where the affairs of the Higher Commissariat are published.

## **Appendix V**

### **Interview Transcripts**

**AD**

**NK:** So basically let's do a quick background. So were you born in Lebanon or?

**AD:** No, I was born in [country in West Africa].

**NK:** In [mentions capital city]?

**AD:** Yes.

**NK:** And when did you come to Lebanon?

**AD:** First time I came I was 3 years old.

**NK:** OK.

**AD:** I went back when I was 6, then came back when I was 9, I came back for school.

**NK:** And then you've been here since then?

**AD:** Yes.

**NK:** Why did you come the first time?

**AD:** Because the war broke out in [country in West Africa].

**NK:** You came with your father?

**AD:** No, with my grandparents.

**MRT:** Did you go to kindergarten here?

**AD:** Yes, I went to school for three years till I was 6 and it was terrible.

**NK:** OK, explain.

**AD:** It was terrible because of the racism issues. At first, it was about my hair [inaudible] and then my grandmother said, "Be strong, when they do that you should fight back and stop crying."

So I took that advice and started fighting them and beating them and they all got scared.

**NK:** [Laughs].

**AD:** They used to call my grandfather to report me in the school [laughs].

**NK:** [Laughs] Can I ask you a question? When you were getting picked on the first time before you were reporting to your grandma, did you tell the teacher?

**AD:** Euh... actually I don't remember.

**NK:** You don't remember the teacher ever coming to intervene on your behalf?

**AD:** No.

**NK:** Do you think they ever noticed or?

**AD:** No, I don't think they really cared or else the kids wouldn't really do that... a three year old, the teacher should be monitoring them and following them?

**NK:** And where do you think they got these ideas from? You think on their own or they must have heard it from their parents or... do you have any idea? You've been here long enough to see...

**AD:** Actually, if your parents hadn't been racist they wouldn't have been like that. When you have kids, first of all, the point of raising your children is to teach them there is diversity or other countries... and if you look at [inaudible] in Lebanon, they teach nothing but Lebanese history, you should teach them about the world, world history you know?

**NK:** I think they teach French history no? You've been to school here, you never had French history or anything like that?

**AD:** No, I never did French history [inaudible]

**NK:** How come your parents didn't come with you? Because they had businesses and work there?

**AD:** Yes, exactly

**NK:** [Off-record discussion].

**NK:** So you came here at 6 and then stayed.

**AD:** From 3, 3 to 6 and then I went back.

**MRT:** And when you went back, you felt like a difference, more at home?

**AD:** Of course! They even love you more when you're mixed in Africa, they love you more, they respect you. There is nothing called racism in Africa.

**NK:** There is though, my father faces a lot of racism in Nigeria

**NK:** [NK talks about Lebanese and Indians in Africa and the racism they face in West Africa].

**NK:** So when you came back you stayed from 9 till now.

**AD:** Yes.

**NK:** And in grade school, high school and university did you face the same issues?

**AD:** Yeah... but it was not like the picking on and the beating, of course, but there is always racism, always.

**MRT:** Can you give us an example? How it manifests itself?

**AD:** Like euh... for example, let me [inaudible] for now and think of university. I had a class, marketing and there was this teacher, he would ask a question, and be like "who knows the answer?" and I would always raise my hand, and he would never pick me. Never. He'd just ignore me like he was not seeing. Sometimes there'll be like only two people yeah [...].

**NK:** You think it's racism or because he wanted the other students to answer because he knew you knew the answer?

**AD:** The whole year for four months? I don't think so like you should hear my opinion too you know?

**NK:** OK, do you have anything like from students? For instance... I will give you an example of mine [NK gives example here regarding being called *habashiyeh* in university].

**AD:** Yes, they say that a lot.

**NK:** So did you have this in grade school?

**AD:** Yes, a lot.

**NK:** But then people knew you were Lebanese though...

**AD:** They don't really care, even when they ask you and you say your dad's Lebanese and they say "Ah, OK! But then you still feel the difference, the always have this drawback from you."

**NK:** You must have had some positive experiences in Lebanon, it's not all negative.

**AD:** I do have Lebanese friends. When it comes to the friends, it's OK, but in the society itself, on the streets and out there? Trust me; it's never going to change, that's my opinion.

**NK:** OK, so when someone confronts you on the street what's...?

**AD:** The first thing they say...

**NK:** ... you reaction?

**AD:** The first thing they say, they go like, "Where do you work?" or they'll go like "We need a maid to clean this house", that's the first thing they say.

**MRT:** Really? When you're walking!

**AD:** Just walking! Or just in the cab, "Sorry I want to ask you: We need a maid to clean the house can you like... are you free?"

**NK:** They don't try to ask what you do, they automatically assume.

**AD:** Yes, they always assume.

**MRT:** Basically, you're planning to leave?

**AD:** Yes.

**MRT:** And this is very much connected to your experiences here?

**AD:** Of course.

**NK:** Is there any story that stuck out in your mind?

**AD:** A lot of stories, you cannot live in a society where even the national security doesn't respect you. Like when you're passing the street, anytime I'm passing like officers and people wearing army uniform, they do the same thing, "Come here, come sit with us, how much can I pay you?" you're wearing a national uniform, respect yourself and [...] you know? You're supposed to be protecting the people of the country, not acting [...] like your fellow brothers.

**NK:** Yeah, that's true. So you don't have one particular story in mind maybe?

**AD:** Euh... when I remember I'll tell you. I have a lot; I'll write you an email.

**NK:** It can be something really funny, doesn't have to be... it can be something that you laughed that was really ridiculous [explaining with a personal example and one of a friend].

**MRT:** How did you learn to ... what was your approach? Because when you were a kid you we fighting back and then what did you do? Like what was your personal approach?

**AD:** Actually, it made me stronger. Trust me, I can live here if I want to but it's going to do nothing for my future. I can live here and stay here but it won't do anything for me because I really don't care. If you really know who you are and what you want in life, you really don't care. But you cannot stay somewhere where you're never going to be elevated by the society; you'll only be damaging your future.

**NK:** Do you have a Lebanese passport?

**AD:** Yes.

**NK:** Do you feel Lebanese?

**AD:** No.

**NK:** But you do acknowledge the Lebanese... like it's one of your nationalities?

**AD:** Yes, I acknowledge.

**NK:** But you have like... not like a self-hating relationship with Lebanon?

**AD:** Yes, I have that, I don't like being Lebanese, and if I ever go to another country where I have to let go one of my nationalities, trust me, I'll give up the Lebanese one.

**NK:** So you feel more [inaudible] but more African, more [country in West Africa].

**AD:** Yes.

**BO**

**MRT:** You're half Ghanaian, half Lebanese?

**BO:** Yes, Lebanese Ghanaian.

**MRT:** OK, and your father?

**BO:** My father's Lebanese, my mother she's also mixed Ghanaian Lebanese.

**MRT:** Ah but why are you Ghanaian?

**BO:** Because my mother she's half half as well.

**MRT:** And you were born in Ghana.

**BO:** I was born in Ghana and I grew up in Ghana then I moved to Lebanon.

**MRT:** OK and what was your first impression when you moved here.

**BO:** Well, being living in a Lebanese African community in Ghana you are exposed to Lebanon and you're ready to move to Lebanon so it's not something strange to you but of course when you come here and you see how life in Lebanon is yeah of course you're going to see the difference because the type of life over there the lifestyle in Ghana is completely different from the lifestyle of living in Lebanon. So there is a little culture shock and the expectations are different in terms of how you do things on a daily basis...

**MRT:** Expectations towards you?

**BO:** Yeah from my perspective of course but since I came here at the age of 7 I was still a kid so it was still interesting because I was exploring.

**MRT:** And there was much for you to adjust to certain things probably no?

**BO:** Yeah because as a kid everything you do is a trial, it's an experience and yeah, of course, you got looked at as a different person coz at that time we're talking 30 years back the Lebanese diaspora were not yet coming back to Lebanon so to the Lebanese society it was something different to see now the interbreeding of Lebanese who are outside married to whoever they are married to so obviously [inaudible]

**MRT:** So you would say that the Lebanese diaspora that you grew up in was kind of [inaudible] or tradition or how was it manifesting?

**BO:** Living out of Lebanon with the Lebanese community, they all [inaudible] each other but when you come to Lebanon you are an outsider in Lebanon. So in Ghana you have your own Lebanon amongst Lebanese but when you're in Lebanon OK you are the non-Lebanese coming from Ghana to Lebanon so you lose your sense of Lebanese-ship because people look at you in a different way.

**MRT:** And how were Ghana [inaudible].

**BO:** No, they are used to people mixing up with Ghanaians, with Africans, or whatever, yeah.

**MRT:** [Inaudible] From the Polish community for example in the US that they stick together and there is a big problem with assimilation. So how would you describe it in Ghana for you?

**BO:** There was no discrimination in Ghana.

**MRT:** Yeah but how was the assimilation? Did you feel like you have to give up something of your Lebanese side?

**BO:** No, not at all.

**MRT:** No?

**BO:** No, I mean... From the Ghanaian experience Lebanese were accepted because they are lots of Lebanese men who are married to Ghanaians so there is this [inaudible] of Lebanese Ghanaians and they all stick with each other but at the same time they are connected with everybody as equals, there's no discrimination over there.

**MRT:** OK, you came back here with the family right?

**BO:** With my grandparents.

**MRT:** So you had like a base, you weren't coming...

**BO:** No, yeah but alone because I had no... I wasn't living with my parents, I lived with my grandparents. So I came here for schooling... and new experiences come, you're coming from a completely different

country, different culture, different background, you live in a disciplinary society and a discriminated society because no matter how [inaudible] Lebanese they are they look at things that are not like them from a discriminatory point of view.

**MRT:** Yeah, but it's interesting because Lebanon is such a mix also, its considered to be a big mix so why do you think they have this...?

**BO:** They, the Lebanese they like to wonder always and ask so many things, how, why, where, why not?

**MRT:** But this is good, it should lead to a critical approach but it is not actually.

**BO:** Yeah, it leads to a discriminatory approach unfortunately. They look at you from the positive approach in the beginning at that time, at my time, like "Woooah, dark, so he must be for example Sri Lanki, he's dark so how come?" Until they know you, who you are or who your family is, it's like ah you're the son of so and so in Africa ah ok and then yeah it gets easier to integrate and eventually you get accepted of course.

**MRT:** Do you remember like any examples of this kind of behaviour when you were in school when you came here and started going to a Lebanese school and meet children and children can be cruel...

**BO:** Yeah, of course, true Lebanese are dark especially the people that live on the coast but your darkness is different than their darkness so they look at you and "ah yeah you're African" and they call you names but again...

**MRT:** Like what kind of names?

**BO:** Like Sri Lanki...

**MRT:** So they use other nationalities they consider lower?

**BO:** Yeah, lower of course yeah, it's all how you present yourself... as kids growing through the civil war we managed to impose ourselves on the people and [inaudible] if they call us names we go beat them up and then we're good friends

**MRT:** [Laughs] Just wait I have a question... but did you have a strong need that you had to identify as a Lebanese?

**BO:** No, not really, I took advantage of this because I always ridiculed them as being Lebanese and how I am better than them.

**MRT:** But this is also discriminatory.

**BO:** It is discriminatory but it is a defence mechanism OK? So they used to call me names but it didn't bother me because I thought I have something that you don't have I've been outside I'm mixed I know many things, I speak languages, in class whenever you want to cheat on the English you have to come and sit next to me so yeah the guy from Africa is helping with English for example. I'm strong, you're not, and at the end I'm exotic, people talk about me even if sometimes in a [inaudible] way, like "Oo [inaudible]" in the end I'm different and you're not, I'm interesting and you're not.

**MRT:** And this [inaudible] somehow naturally?

**BO:** It was natural.

**MRT:** But then you respond because people would not be able to do it.

**BO:** Yeah it's an adaption also because once you get... when people see you a lot and when you are much younger, a kid, and growing up through this, this defence mechanism becomes part of you so you know how to adapt to situations and questions, looks and so on, and growing up as a kid you grow up with this and eventually people will accept you because you're a kid. It's different when you come as an adult and you're "hey, here I am, I'm Lebanese". They always look at you with wonder but that was long time ago. Now things have changed because in the past 15 years and after all these changes in the world, especially in Africa, many, many Lebanese mixed people, they sent their kids back to Lebanon for education and for security so all of a sudden Lebanon was having this big boom of mixed Lebanese family coming back to Lebanon. So this imposed on Lebanese the fact that there are so many Lebanese Mexican, Lebanese Latin American, Lebanese African, Lebanese American, so not all Lebanese look alike... and they found out that they are so many Lebanese African, people who are like 50/50 metis, who really look black African but they are Lebanese, their father's Lebanese or their mother's Lebanese and it became accepted but the Lebanese society in itself they discriminate. They discriminate with everything. They look at people who are not like them as lower, and yeah, it's natural. Look how they treat Sri Lankis, look how they treat maids

**MRT:** No, no, it's not natural, it's cultural actually, it's the other way round.

**BO:** Yeah... yeah it's cultural.

**MRT:** I don't think it's natural, it's a culture here.

**BO:** Yeah, it's cultural.

**MRT:** Can you give me like an example of something that happened to you recently that comes back to your being mixed? It can be a positive example.

**BO:** Well, recently... because I'm a mature man now, I'm grown up, anywhere I go nobody think of me as Lebanese, no one.

**MRT:** No one?

**BO:** No one, nobody, coz I don't look like the typical Lebanese. Even though people know there are so many Lebanese mixed but still every place I go to if I don't talk they think I'm none Lebanese, I'm Latin, I'm Indian, I'm uhh Cuban, I'm somehow Asian, Polynesian, until I talk and I identify myself I'm Lebanese mixed and then they'll make the assumption.

**MRT:** Wait, I'm thinking... so you don't have like specific example that you can tell me, I dunno like a juicy story [laughs] It can be a positive one.

**BO:** It can be a positive one... I'll give you an example that happened with me a year ago in Hamra that was a year or two years ago when the high season, tourism high season was really good and I was walking in Hamra and I had my hair like it was afro and it was the beginning of Ramadan. So I enter this shop and I was looking around and the guys started talking to me in English and welcoming me in English and he automatically said "You're from Cuba". And I did not speak I just nodded with my hair, and he said "Wow, great, welcome to Lebanon." So I played along and I told him "Hmm Lebanon is beautiful! I like this country, sea, mountains, and everything" and I pretended that I am from Cuba. And I wanted to buy something and I asked him about the price and he doubled the price for me. And I tell him "No, no" and he says, "This is a very good price for you!" And then I spoke in Arabic "Come on, are you trying to rip off a Lebanese?" He says "You're Lebanese!" I say "Of course, I'm Lebanese, I'm Lebanese mix!" He says "So your mother's Cuban?" I tell him "Yes, but my father's Lebanese." And then he changed the story and then he was more welcoming in Lebanese and in Arabic. I didn't buy at the end. But this is how people always look at you from the way they want to look at you based on criteria, your tan, your colour, your [inaudible], your body shape...

**MRT:** But you know what's really funny for me?

**BO:** What?

**MRT:** Is that they don't even get close to your real place of origin. Like Cuba, Ghana, where the...

**BO:** That's because I don't look Ghanaian. I don't look Ghanaian because I don't have the African features.

**MRT:** But it's really interesting, because this whole story undermines our assumption about nationality, you know? They think they know something and they're so certain about it but they make it up in their head, you know, and they don't even think about it. But then nationality is so important. You're not Lebanese but the end they give you like a [inaudible] you can be anything else...

**BO:** I can be anything I want and I always use this. People when they ask me, if they look at my eyes, they think I have Asian blood and I always tell them yes and they believe it.

**MRT:** But it doesn't hurt you...

**BO:** No, not at all.

**MRT:** No?

**BO:** I make fun of it because I know how to switch situations around. But there's nothing to be hurt about because...

**MRT:** Why not? You're in your country you know. You feel this is my place, this is my country, I've been living here, I know this place like inside out, you know... I buy my veggies here, I know the prices, and this guy wants to rip me off, don't you get angry?

**BO:** Well, yes, for this incident, yes, because I feel what if I'm really Cuban and in Lebanon I'm being ripped off? But the fact that when I told him I'm Lebanese he changed everything, he was shocked. So yeah but this happens everywhere. If I go to any European country, they're going to think I'm not European, they're gonna raise the price, this is natural, this is tourism. But if I tell a person I'm Lebanese and he tells me "No, no, you're not Lebanese" then yeah I'll be "Hey, I am Lebanese. I'm more Lebanese than you are."

**MRT:** Yeah, it's interesting how you're able to like... I dunno, I'm thinking how I would feel if I was in Poland... because I enjoy when I'm outside, people think I'm French [inaudible].

**RC**

**NK:** So what is your name?

**RC:** My name's RC, I'm half Lebanese, the other half is African from [country in West Africa]. I was born in [capital of country]. Then I came to Lebanon in 1990.

**NK:** Wait; so how old were you when you came?

**RC:** I was 4 years old when I came.

**NK:** So, your parents met in [country in West Africa]?

**RC:** Yes.

**NK:** What was he doing?

**RC:** my dad left during the civil war actually, he went to [country in West Africa] and started his business with his sister.

**NK:** What was he doing?

**RC:** He was working in mechanics and transportation, with his sister, and then he met my mom, after a while...

**NK:** And then they got married and had kids, ok. And what brought your father back here? What brought all of you back here?

**RC:** When the war ended, towards the 1989, ... to convince him he has to come back, that he has heritage, I don't know what...

**NK:** Inheritance

**RC:** Yeah, so he came here and things happened in a certain way, he was disappointed, and was forced to stay here,

**NK:** Did he give up everything to come here?

**RC:** Yes, my mom came with us, we all came. WC, my brother was born in 1990, so after WC was born he [dad] just took a decision to move back and settle. I have an older sister XC. When we came we moved to Tripoli, we had our old house in ... Street, we lived there until 1999.

**NK:** Is it where the famous ... Street is? Where everybody goes in Tripoli?

**RC:** Hallab, yeah, it is close.

**NK:** So, you came here and you went to school?

**RC:** Yes, I went to the same school my dad went, called [says name of school], a French school.

**NK:** How was that?

**RC:** It wasn't really... I didn't have a good experience there during my childhood.

**NK:** Why?

**RC:** Because of the school, the way they treat you...

**NK:** The students, the teachers or the both?

**RC:** Both. The whole environment. I had a hard time. When I first came I didn't speak Arabic, it was only French, and English because first we were in Australia, we went to Africa – [country in West Africa], and then there was a civil war so we moved to Australia, went back to [capital of city] and then came here.

**NK:** So you moved here not knowing Arabic but at school here they speak French so you didn't need Arabic..

**RC:** Yeah but I did... I mean the system wasn't that good you know. Nobody spoke real French. So I had to learn Arabic. It was difficult with the students, even the used to talk in Arabic with me... Yeah, I was kind of... I don't know, I was reserved, distant.

**NK:** Is it your personality or just the environment made you like this?

**RC:** I don't know if it is my personality..., Ok, it is my personality... or my personality came from this.

**NK:** What made you feel [says something audible here]

**RC:** When it first started, I was in kindergarten, first day, we start class, teacher was getting to know each one of us, where we are from and everything, we started singing, and then after 2 hours it was recreation time, we went out, and all of a sudden I see all this kids jumping on me, a bunch of kids, and saying things like: you black, I want to kill you and I want to beat you up!

**NK:** In kindergarten?!

**RC:** Yeah [Laughs]!

**NK:** They already knew how to be racist in kindergarten?

**RC:** Oh, yeah.

**NK:** Because of you colour?

**RC:** Yeah

**NK:** What about teachers, where they there during the recreation?

**RC:** Well, teachers are there, they just stand and look at kids, for them kids are playing.

**NK:** So, they were not aware of what was happening? You think they were aware?

**RC:** Maybe, I don't know. I know that teachers are there, I didn't tell the teachers.. No.

**NK:** How come?

**RC:** I don't know, I have this nature which is like I like revenge but it doesn't need to happen right away, I wait for the right moment to take it.

**NK:** So did you ever take revenge?

**RC:** No, not really. Because also I was, first, I wasn't aware you know? What I'm telling you know because I realize. The issue is...

**NK:** But they said you were black so you must have realized...

**RC:** Yes, but for me it is like: ok fine. But then after my sister she starting having the same problem because she went to school, she was 12, we came here she was 12. And she was in grade 6 so she was facing some issues *kamein*. Back then when there was this Lebanese product *leef el abd*, they used to call us this. And when they said it to my sister, she came home and told me: guess what they called me at school? And I said really?! My parents got angry and, I don't know, they talk to her, just go tell the sisters, the nuns, they told it to the nuns. She was at a school run by nuns.

**NK:** And girls were doing it to her?

**RC:** Yes, there were only girls.

**NK:** And what about WC? Did you go to the same school with WC? Did it help to have your brother at the same school so you had some sort of, like someone to talk to or... ?

**RC:** Yeah, no he had those same things you know?

**NK:** You were together?

**RC:** We were together sometimes... you mean together as facing the same issue?

**NK:** Supporting each other...

**RC:** Supporting each other, yeah. Always. And I had to look after him because he was the youngest. I'm just here, I have to cover his back. He has his own problems also, I remember he came to me during recreation, and then two guys came, friends actually, and they came and they told him *Wasakh wiju bi chocolat*

**MRT:** How did you deal with it?

**RC:** How did I deal with all that? It was motivations from my parents, like my mom used to tell me to be strong, they are ignorant, and stay quiet.

**NK:** What did your dad say?

**RC:** My dad? To be honest he repeats what my mom tells me, and the, that's it, he continues straight (?) He has his own way. He would be like: it is like that, I know my people, I know my own people, but it's just that way. You have to deal with it, by defeating... to overcome this issue...

**NK:** You just ignore it

**RC:** Yeah, you just ignore it and you have to, yeah, just ignore people.

**MRT:** But you eventually made friends?

**RC:** Yes.

**MRT:** Lebanese friends?

**RC:** Friends? Euh... After the experience I had I don't believe in friendship anymore. You know?

**NK:** But you do, of course, meet Lebanese who are...

**RC:** I mean, yeah, here? I met some really cool people, but over time, during my teenage years I was more aware of this problem. I had a lot of backstabbing issues, and you know? Due to my colour. And it was more obvious.

**NK:** Did you date in high school?

**RC:** Yep.

**NK:** So you dated Lebanese girls?

**RC:** Yeah.

**NK:** So it must have not been a very big issue being black? Because you were able to date ...

**RC:** Depends, it depends.

**NK:** Like what?

**RC:** It depends. Like some people are OK with it. Some people are not. Let's say in the beginning of a relationship, you just pretend it's nothing. It's just friendship and we're just friends and nothing. You know? But later it's like... when the parents see... when they see it's serious, it's going to get more serious, then they start having this... how to say it... the people, family, talking, interfering and "Oh, you're

going to let your daughter marry a black guy or someone from another race?" You know? So, it plays with their mind? It kind of plays with her mind also, so she can forget...

**NK:** Do you feel that you ever dated anybody whose parents were OK but then people started talking and made the parents nervous?

**RC:** Not only the parents, even the girl. And it comes to your personality; if you are strong enough you can handle it.

**NK:** So, you do feel that sometimes the girls you were with and their parents were fine with it but society influences them..? It is not like everybody is racist.

**RC:** Yes, the society influences them.

**NK:** You went to [name of university]?

**RC:** Yes, [name of university].

**NK:** So how was it? More mature students?

**RC:** There was still a lot of people I had to deal with, a lot of shit. But khallas, at that point I just knew how to interact with people, I know who is racist and who is not. Some people act like they are really friendly and cool but it is just for something, to take advantage, then I would discover after a while they had these views, point of view.

**NK:** Did you have any incident that happened to you in university that was clearly racist?

**RC:** Wait; let me remember because there is a lot. Not just in uni I mean. This friend in [name of university] actually, we used to hang out a lot, not me and him only, we had a group, he was cool you know, acting cool at the beginning and ok with me, we used to talk, and then after a while, I don't know, he flipped, he just started talking about race, that black people are only minority, shit like that..

**NK:** He was talking about Lebanon?

**RC:** in general, in the world they are a minority. The black race is minority. He was more just giving hints. Then all the friends who were with me were against him, made him shut up and told him he can't say this kind of stuff, that he was being ignorant. Me, I don't argue with such people. Truly it is ignorance, this is my point of view.

**NK:** Have you met anyone in Lebanon who has been exposed to black people and is still racist?

**RC:** Actually, yes, we came here to Lebanon and my mom kind of made this circle, so cohesive that nobody can enter and harm us, we made our own world, and to be honest I don't really have friends in Lebanon, like true friends. It's just, OK, friendship that's... you know?

**MRT:** [Inaudible].

**RC:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**MRT:** Do you people who are like black or other race who are friends or?

**RC:** Yeah, I have other... black friends also, but...

**NK:** Are they Lebanese?

**RC:** Yeah, half Lebanese, half African, but you know we're just distant or...

**NK:** Did you ever talk about your experiences to anybody else who is half Lebanese, half black? Did you feel like...?

**RC:** Oh yeah, yeah.

**NK:** And you feel the similarities?

**RC:** Yeah, yeah.

**NK:** Do you guys ever think there is anything we can do to tackle this? Or you're very resolved with the situation, *khallas*, that's how it is, like your father said.

**RC:** Hmm, no. No, like I have never thought about doing anything.

**NK:** With anybody also, it never came up: let's do something about it?

**RC:** No.

**NK:** OK.

**RC:** No, no.

**NK:** So the general feeling with...

**RC:** Because my views are like, *enno khallas*, you know it's just Lebanon, this is the way it is, and it is not going to, yeah, why bother?

**NK:** So do you think this project, for instance, is like [inaudible] why bother or? You can be honest about it.

**RC:** Well... To be honest, no.

**NK:** Elaborate.

**RC:** Yeah, yeah, no... like, there should be something, you know? Like we have to shake them. Lebanese, between them, are racist. So to overcome such an issue it is going to take time. It is a matter of time.

**NK:** OK.

**RC:** You know? They are even racist between them, you know? In families.

**MRT:** Yeah, but it will never change if [inaudible]

**NK:** If you have this attitude of why bother, then nothing changes. Did you ever feel like maybe your attitude should change? Or you just don't want to waste energy or?

**RC:** How? You want my attitude to change?

**NK:** No, I mean did you ever feel maybe you should have a change of attitude? If someone talks to you, you should talk back or? Because if you don't begin a change, then change doesn't begin. Did you ever feel this or?

**RC:** No.

**MRT:** Maybe some positive [inaudible].

**RC:** Positive stuff? You mean euh... Lebanese people that are OK with the diversity and people? Yeah.

**MRT:** And it didn't make you trust them more?

**RC:** Not really.

**MRT:** Why?

**RC:** I don't know. It has to do with my personality. Who I am, you know? I dunno, I have a problem with trust.

**NK:** We have one more minute. Do you have any questions?

**MRT:** Do you feel like staying here? Or are you thinking of going [inaudible].

**NK:** Do you see yourself living in Lebanon with this situation or?

**MRT:** Is Lebanon your country [inaudible] your life here?

**RC:** No, not really. I'm telling you honestly, it's just euh... honestly, it's... I don't know... like... speaking of... settle here, and making a family and everything, I don't see my children growing up here and have the same experience I had and... you know?

**NK:** Do you feel any attachment to [country in West Africa]? Or any curiosity about it?

**RC:** Yeah, yeah. I've been to [country in West Africa] in 2006 and to be honest I went with my dad, but I didn't feel it... I didn't feel something special, you know? It's just... ok it is my mom's country, where I was born.

**MRT:** [Inaudible].

**RC:** You know [laughs]... maybe. Maybe one day.

**MRT:** [Inaudible] before you were [inaudible] Australia right?

**RC:** Yeah, we were in Australia. I have nice memories of Australia, from my childhood, when I was [inaudible].

[SPACE RUNS OUT ON PHONE. 2ND HALF OF INTERVIEW IS DONE ON MRT'S LAPTOP]

**NK:** So you were telling us about your experiences... euh, your mother. Her experiences here.

**RC:** Yeah, when she drives, she walks... like she's in the car, she'll be driving and the some people would be like, *Woah, shu abeed?* That's the famous word for black in Lebanon, even till now.

**NK:** So this was [inaudible] when she first came?

**RC:** No, no, I want to say 10 years ago.

**NK:** So what would they say to her?

**RC:** They would say black [inaudible].

**NK:** *Bas* in Arabic, how would that be... the sentence?

**RC:** *Shu abeed, am bi sour siyartak?* You know. And stuff like that.

**NK:** Do you drive?

**RC:** Yes.

**NK:** Do you get any reactions when you're driving?

**RC:** No, not really but staring, you know? A lot of staring.

**NK:** But do you feel sometimes that maybe the staring is just curiosity or maybe girls think you are cute or have a nice car?

**RC:** Yeah, yeah, a bit of everything. But when it comes from older people, you know, older people who you can feel this old mentality, this curiosity and where is he from. I know it is curiosity now. I just don't care anymore. It doesn't bother me, you know. I just feel proud.

**NK:** Do you feel that how your mom probably is treated here affected your family unit? Your father hearing complaints from his children, and complaints from his wife, you feel like he was tired of it or it made it a tighter family?

**RC:** Tighter?

**NK:** Did it make it more close as a family or more tense as a family?

**RC:** Close. This is what I was saying in the beginning, we made this circle, she made that circle and that is why I admire her. I admire my mom. She is really strong. Because I know a lot of friends, a lot of African women who couldn't stand it [inaudible] most of them came here, stayed like four years and they left, you know? Most of them... Their marriages didn't succeed.

**NK:** Yeah. It is very difficult if you hate your husband's whole country and family.

**RC:** Yeah.

**NK:** Did you have problems with your extended family? When you first came and they saw your mom?

**RC:** Yes.

**NK:** Do you have any examples or?

**RC:** Yeah, a lot of, you know attitude. It is about attitude.

**NK:** Not about saying out? Just the way they acted?

**RC:** You know, making hints, or just attitude. And excluding her. You know?

**NK:** Does she speak Arabic?

**RC:** Who?

**NK:** Your mom.

**RC:** My mom? Yeah. Good. Good. [Inaudible] but she understands it pretty good.

**NK:** OK, so they were not excluding her because of language. It wasn't because they couldn't talk to her; they can.

**RC:** No.

**NK:** Do you have any example that got stuck in your mind of how they treated her or even you guys?

**RC:** Yeah, a lot of things. I remember once my mother was invited to my second aunt here in Beirut, we went there for a weekend. We were having this dinner on Saturday night, we were all eating, you know? And then my aunt she has three daughters. And one of them had a fiancé... We were at the table, my mom was right in front of her, so we could feel that she was... you know? She was calling her just to stare and look at my mom, like the way she eats, you know? And then the laughter...

**NK:** Who was poking who?

**RC:** My aunt was poking her daughter just to look at my mom. A lot of things like that, you know.

**NK:** Did you have any incidents with your cousins, uncles etc.?

**RC:** They were kind of mean. They are all jealous of me, I don't know why.

**NK:** No one said anything to you?

**RC:** Colour wise? No. Because they were afraid of my dad. Like I told you; he came and he told them that nobody interferes with my family.

**MRT:** So he's really strong?

**RC:** Yes.

**MRT:** I was wondering how is your father... I was wondering if I can ask you this question. How is your father? Because it's also very dif... it could be a very difficult situation for him being kind of... because it's his family and...

**RC:** Yeah, he is strong.

**MRT:** So he made it clear.

**RC:** Yes. He made it clear that this is his family, nobody interferes or else... I'll be tough.

**NK:** OK. That's good. I think that's pretty much... all...

**MRT:** I mean unless you want to say something. Unless you have something that you need to say.

**RC:** I'd have to brainstorm a lot.

**NK:** Yeah, if you remember anything you can write to me, you have my email.

**MRT:** We can meet some other time [inaudible].

**RC:** No, but seriously, no, no, like... my mom was telling me that when she was in Australia, can you believe it? She was in Australia in the mall, she had her hair cut, close cut, not shaved but close. So she was walking down in a mall and suddenly two Lebanese women pass by...

**NK:** In Australia?

**RC:** Yeah. Imagine.

**MRT:** [Laughs] Jesus, they're everywhere.

**RC:** And at that time my mom understood Arabic. And they were like *tal3a fiya, mafi sha'ar bil rasa*

**NK:** "Look at her; there's no hair on her head."

**RC:** They just [inaudible]

**MRT:** Yeah, but they could have done it to anyone, to any short, shaved woman, you know, when I had short hair [inaudible] [MRT goes on to give example]

**RC:** I don't know...

**NK:** You never know, this is the thing. You always have to make sure. We interviewed a girl once and a lot of her experiences when I think about them might just be not race-related. Maybe sometimes you are so fed up with your situation that now you see everything in one way.

**RC:** I know, yeah, you have to be careful.

**NK:** Clearly saying: "Look at that black woman driving" obviously is racist. It's very clear. But saying: "Look at that woman, she has no hair on her head" it doesn't have to be. But I can understand how funny it is that it's two Lebanese [laughs].

**RC:** [Laughs].

**NK:** In Australia.

**HK**

**NK:** Come closer. Because we have to speak together. Eum [clears throat] Marta if you want to help, because I'm getting like bored of like [laughs]... I don't know what more questions to ask [laughs]

**NK:** So what is your name?

**HK:** HK?

**NK:** If you want

**HK:** HL?

**NK:** Yes, he's confused.

**HK:** [Laughs].

**MRT:** [Inaudible].

**HK:** Yeah, I use both.

**NK:** OK, so H, can you give us a quick background of... You're Lebanese obviously and you're [from country in West Africa]. Where do you come from in Lebanon and where do you come from in [country in West Africa]?

**HK:** I was born in [name of city], the capital, and came from there when I was two. Euh, I was raised in [an area in Beirut].

**NK:** Where I live now?

**HK:** Yes.

**NK:** Where is your mother from?

**HK:** Euh, [an area in Beirut], which is now Downtown Beirut

**NK:** Your mom's from Downtown?

**HK:** Like the places that Solidere took and made...

**NK:** So you're from Downtown, she's fancy.

**HK:** [No, no she's not [laughs]].

**NK:** [Laughs] I'm kidding. So you are really a Beirut. That's cool. So what else can I ask you?

So, you came here at two so you obviously must have not felt the cultural difference because you were very young.

**HK:** When I first?

**NK:** Coz we interviewed people who came here and they came like later at like 8, 9 years old or as teenagers so they felt like a cultural shock...

**HK:** I had a war shock [laughs].

**NK:** Ah there was war! How was that?

**HK:** And the area where I used to live was the euh...

**MRT:** The Green Line.

**HK:** Yeah.

**NK:** Why did your father decide to go here instead...?

**HK:** My mom took me from there because there was war over there, she came and there was war over here.

**NK:** So she just chose the better war?

**HK:** Yeah, the better war [laughs]

**NK:** This war was better?

**HK:** I don't know if better or not but she just decided to be...

**NK:** Closer to family?

**HK:** Yeah, yeah.

**NK:** Did your father come with her?

**HK:** No.

**NK:** So he decided his war was just

**HK:** Yeah [laughs].

**NK:** [Laughs] "I'll stay here thank you". So how long did your mom live in [country in West Africa]? Was she born there or...?

**HK:** No, no, she went there for work. She stayed for four or five years.

**NK:** Oh really? So, she wasn't one of those Lebanese who lived in Nigeria... in Nigeria! In [country in West Africa] since they were young..?

**HK:** No, no.

**NK:** OK and then she met your father there?

**HK:** Yeah.

**NK:** OK and then they got married...

**HK:** Yes. They didn't get married actually.

**NK:** And then she came here, she brought you during the war... how was that experience for you?

Growing up during the war?

**HK:** Interesting. Not scary or anything.

**NK:** Oh really?

**HK:** Yeah. And euh it taught me a lot about ... I could see the horrors of war...

**NK:** OK.

**HK:** So it was interesting... rich in a way.

**NK:** So how was it for you as in schooling? Did you go to school during the war?

**HK:** Yes.

**NK:** There was regular like school?

**HK:** Not all the time... yeah.

**MRT:** When did you move out from the Downtown area?

**NK:** He wasn't in Downtown

**HK:** No, no, I wasn't in the Downtown.

**MRT:** [Inaudible].

**HK:** [Laughs] I stayed there the whole... you mean the area where I grew up? For like 20 years... then I left it, then I went back.

**NK:** I need to ask you some more personal questions. So growing up you went to a Lebanese school?

**HK:** Yes.

**NK:** Were there other mixed children at your school?

**HK:** None.

**NK:** You were the only one?

**HK:** Yes.

**NK:** OK. And you were H.

Was your school predominantly Christian, Muslim or?

**HK:** Christian.

**NK:** Ok. Did you feel out of place at that time or did you not realize that you were different?

**HK:** I didn't notice until probably after 12, 13, that age...

**NK:** When you were younger people didn't...

**HK:** Yeah, some of them used to call me stuff like Kunta Kinte, for example, [laughs].

**NK:** Kunta Kinte?

**HK:** Kunta Kinte [laughs].

**NK:** Really?! You had smarter children in your school.

**MRT:** Who?

**NK:** Kunta Kinte is like euh...

**HK:** The guy from "The Roots", the novel?

**NK:** Yeah, there is this famous African... I don't know I watched the series... I don't know, was it a book?

**HK:** Yeah, it was a series, actually it was because of the series they...

**NK:** In Nigeria there was this show, it was a series and it showed... It was Nigerian though...

**HK:** Was it?

**NK:** I think so. Anyway, *mohim*, it's so funny, because when we interviewed other people they told us like *seif el abed*... what do you call it?

**HK:** *Seif el abed*? Ahhh I also had [laughs]

**NK:** Yeah, you seem to have very educated children...

**HK:** [Laughs].

**NK:** ... in your school [laughs].

**HK:** [Laughs] and Ali Bhutto.

**NK:** Who's Ali Bhutto?

**HK:** The father of euh Bhutto, the Pakistani who died? What's her name? Benazir?

**NK:** Really?

**HK:** [Laughs].

**NK:** I didn't know these [inaudible] when I was a child, are you sure? Were these kids or like grownups?

**HK:** The, the older kids.

**NK:** OK, that's still interesting.

**MRT:** You felt it was negative or?

**HK:** At the time, I didn't know who the hell was Kunta Kinta or Bhutto [laughs] but yeah I used to come to my mom and tell her that they are calling me this and then you know...

**NK:** She said? What did she say?

**HK:** She'd say, "it's fine", and she would go probably and complain to the ...

**NK:** Did you ever complain directly to anybody at school or... did you ever go to teachers?

**HK:** No, no.

**NK:** Did you ever get confrontational with any student ever or did you just leave it to pass?

**HK:** On a race euh...?

**NK:** No, if someone called you Kunta Kinta, would you smack them?

**HK:** [Laughs].

**NK:** Or would you were like whatever?

**HK:** I really don't remember.

**MRT:** You said that you didn't realize... like anything?

**HK:** Yeah, what it was

**NK:** Yeah, at 12 how did you start realizing?

**HK:** Yeah, like I started noticing that I'm euh... different from...

**NK:** How did you notice? Was it because people started saying things? Or people would say hey... I don't know, or was it you?

**HK:** Probably getting exposed to the whole... the African history and...

**NK:** In Lebanon?

**HK:** No, in general. That we've been enslaved and all that stuff. And then getting some remarks here and there like abed, and all that stuff, so that... yeah

**NK:** When you came here, you came with your mom who is Lebanese, so you met the family?

**HK:** I grew up with my grandparents, they raised me.

**NK:** Did you feel a difference in your family towards you? Were they accepting of you, did you have people in your family that would say things that would make you feel uncomfortable?

**HK:** I have a really small family and euh... No, it was mainly, it was more... They were more loving of me.

**NK:** So you had a very loving [inaudible] home.

**MRT:** OK in general do you think your experiences here as a mixed person is like positive or?

**HK:** At some point it got really negative. I don't know if it was me or... it was... I was starting to notice the racism around like euh...

**MRT:** When was that?

**HK:** From... in my teenage years mainly.

**MRT:** You remember like some incident or something that stayed in your mind [inaudible] story or?

**HK:** Euh... I really... It is a general thing. I probably had a fight or two about this but I... I...

**MRT:** Was it... euh? The question is, how you took it? Was it annoying or [inaudible]?

**HK:** At some point it was depressing. And then I was faced at some point with the paper issue, this whole Lebanese mother... that I'm not Lebanese, I cannot get Lebanese passport, and all that stuff. So, that was really tough for me. And I couldn't leave. And mainly the... afterwards I had trouble with police and army. They would... yeah, yeah.

**MRT:** What kind of trouble? Because of the papers?

**HK:** Both. They would call me and "give us your paper". I would give them my old Lebanese papers and they would say *kissikht yali jannassak*, for example.

**NK:** What does that mean?

**HK:** Like euh "fuck whoever gave you this nationality".

**NK:** Lebanese nationality?

**HK:** Yeah, yeah, because at some point my mom claimed that she never knew who my father was, that she just slept with someone.

**NK:** Why?

**HK:** To get me on her name. So, it worked and I became HK. But then at some point euh I wanted to travel, so I went to get a passport, so they sent this *3am El 3am* to investigate, yeah, so they asked "how did you come into the country", so I had to show them my [country in West Africa] passport so they knew we were lying, that I do have a father, so they blocked my euh...

**NK:** Application.

**HK:** Not just the application, everything, they blocked my euh... yeah. And since then I cannot get any new Lebanese documents.

**NK:** So, hold on, you can't leave the country?

**MRT:** No, he can, on the [country in West Africa passport].

**HK:** I have another issue with the [country in West Africa passport] ... which is euh...

**MRT:** So basically it's not solved till now? The Lebanese citizenship.

**HK:** No, no, no.

**MRT:** And you feel like there's a chance or?

**HK:** They've been talking about it for the past two, there, years, and it's been intensifying more, campaigns and stuff but I kind of lost hope. I don't care anymore, I don't want it.

**MRT:** But basically you can travel now or?

**HK:** Now I have this [country in West Africa] passport, which is euh the same one that I came with... from [country in West Africa] in [specifies year] [laughs].

**NK:** So it has expired looong time ago.

**HK:** Yeah. Here at the embassy they renewed it by putting a stamp on it. But all the pages are full, I have just probably one page left. And it is really old. It is ridiculous. I cannot... I went with it to [country 1] and I got stuck in [country 2] for a month because when the guy at the embassy saw it, he's like, he threw it at me. He was like: "A [...] year old passport?! I don't take this! Go away!" and stuff you know [laughs]

**NK:** Why don't you get it renewed? You have to go back to [country in West Africa], right?

**HK:** Yeah, that's what the damn...

**NK:** Actually, with my Nigerian passport they changed the passport so many times, that recently I have to go back physically, to Nigeria to get a new passport. 'Cause it has to do something with... I don't know... electronic ID...

**HK:** Yes, this is what he tells me but it's a Lebanese guy, just...

**NK:** No, I think, I called [inaudible] you have a Nigerian passport, you have to come back and do it, there's a new passport again...

**MRT:** When you were coming back from India, and coming back to Lebanon, was there like a problem for you to come back?

**HK:** Euh I had to go to speak to someone, and he was like "Where is your visa?" and stuff, I took out the old Lebanese document that I had and I said I'm Lebanese but I was just using this. So he was like "It's OK".

**NK:** It was OK?

**MRT:** Do you have to leave the country, you can stay here? [Inaudible].

**HK:** Stay here? Yeah.

**NK:** Do you have like an *ikameh* or anything?

**HK:** A what?

**NK:** *Ikameh?* A resident permit?

**HK:** I stopped paying it because at some point it got really heavy...

**NK:** So, you are an illegal alien.

**HK:** [Laughs] Yeah.

**NK:** OK, I need to go back [inaudible] in terms of your treatment in Lebanon, do you feel Lebanese? I mean you grew up since you were two here.

**HK:** Euhh...

**NK:** You speak the language, obviously...

**HK:** Yes, but I never felt Lebanese. I recently started feeling that “No, I’m actually Lebanese” [laughs] But before I was always an African living in Lebanon.

**NK:** Is it because you felt this way or because people make you feel this way?

**HK:** Both.

**MRT:** So what does it mean for you: Lebanese?

**HK:** But that’s the thing; I don’t really know what is Lebanese. Bas I... I don’t know. Bas I can, I speak the language fluently, I know plenty of stuff, like the culture, but still I’m not obvious, you know... [laughs]

**NK:** Do you have any incident that happened to you that stuck out in your mind? So I’m going to give you an example for instance: One of the people I interviewed told me that when he moved here he was about eight, and then he started going to school here, and kids you used to tease him. And one incident that stuck in his mind, was that children told him once, why are you in this school? Shouldn’t you be at home cleaning toilets with your mother.

**HK:** [Laughs].

**NK:** And this story stuck with him like 20 something years later. Did you have any strong?

**MRT:** It could be positive or not.

**HK:** It could be positive or negative, anything. That stayed in your mind this whole time,

**NK:** Like you’d hear... like living here you’d hear plenty of remarks of that kind, yeah, like *seif el abd* and stuff about your my hair... [pause].

**NK:** [I give a personal another example].

**HK:** [Laughs] Plenty of such incidents but I don’t...

**NK:** But you don’t keep them with you.

**HK:** Yeah.

**NK:** I tend to keep a lot of things with me [I give yet another personal example].

**HK:** Woah [Laughs]!

**NK:** [I continue the example] So you’ve never had like any stories that are like “Woah, come on, how can you be that like unexposed?”

**HK:** I was asked once to... I was caught by the police and asked to strip down because they hear that black guys had euhhh [big penises] [laughs]

**NK:** Are you fucking kidding me?!

**HK:** I swear [laughs].

**NK:** And what did you do?

**HK:** I did [laughs]

**NK:** Did you have... how old were you?

**HK:** Euh [says age] [laughs]

**MRT:** [inaudible].

**NK:** And why did they arrest you?

**HK:** There was a fight in that area and I was around and they came...

**NK:** So you were not involved in the fight?

**HK:** Friends but euh...

**NK:** You directly?

**HK:** No, no, no.

**NK:** So did you tell them “I was not involved in the fight?”

**HK:** Euh... at some point they came and was like “Go away!” And I was like why, and I stayed, so he came and took me. They cuffed me and took me [...]

**NK:** [...]

**HK:** Yeah [laughs] And I was like “No!” struggling and stuff. And then they came up and “OK, if you show us [...]”.

**NK:** And your mom, did you report this to family? Did they go follow up?

**NK:** No.

**NK:** No? Scary shit, that's scary.

**NK:** [Laughs].

**NK:** I'd be like "Can I make my one phone call please?"

**NK:** [Laughs].

**NK:** Wow, OK, eumm... funny and scary [laughs].

**NK:** [Laughs].

**MRT:** I have one more question. [Inaudible] At some point you said you were getting depressed with this whole feeling of racism and... and euh how did you deal with it you know?

**NK:** By joining a hardcore rock band [laughs] and writing songs against the system. Stuff like that.

**MRT:** So you do that... play in a band.

**NK:** Not any more. Before.

**MRT:** [Inaudible] And that was something that made you feel stronger?

**NK:** Yes.

**MRT:** [Inaudible].

**NK:** No.

**MRT:** But you have Lebanese friends?

**NK:** Yeah, yeah.

**MRT:** And you feel like there are good people?

**NK:** Yeah, yeah.

**NK:** So when you are facing racism, what do you think? You think like it's a Lebanese thing, is it just stupid people, is it not exposure? What is your personal view on it?

**NK:** I used to think it's a Lebanese thing, but it's euh... then again it's a...

**NK:** Everywhere?

**NK:** ... it's a stupidity thing, you know, yeah.

**NK:** OK

**NK:** But Lebanese have it in a special way [laughs].

**NK:** They do have it for themselves [inaudible] from one neighbourhood to another they can hate each other [inaudible] It might just be the war, I don't know. Is there something that you specifically when you think of Lebanon really like? Like when you say Lebanon is there something that comes to your head that you like, that you don't like? Like it could be anything, something physical, not physical, abstract, anything...

**NK:** I like its nature. I like euh [pause] I like that it is the most open place in the region. Emm... Lebanon...

**NK:** But what do you think of the country? You personally, think, anything you like. It could be... I don't know... I like the fact that there are posters every fucking where in Beirut and they are like 1,000 posters and not probably not seen in any other city, I'm saying anything. Is there something, when you think of Lebanon, it's like hmm.

**NK:** Lebanon. [Long pause]. I don't know. There is not one specific thing.

**NK:** Is there something you hate?

**NK:** The arrogance and stupidity of....

**NK:** Is there anything specifically that is 'Lebanese' that you hate? Because arrogance could be any country. Is there anything that is typically Lebanese that you're like "Pfff, no"

**NK:** The typical Lebanese itself [laughs]

**NK:** [Laughs] What is a typical Lebanese?

**NK:** You know... the...

**NK:** I know. But I want to know your point on the typical Lebanese? Like what is your impression of the typical Lebanese? Is it physically, is it the way they think, talk, is it certain things they say?

**NK:** All of it. It's the whole...

**NK:** Package?

**NK:** Package, yeah. No soul.

**NK:** No soul?

[Off-record discussion]

**NK:** What is your name?  
**GF:** My name is S.  
**NK:** What is your full name?  
**GF:** Come on.  
**NK:** You have to.  
**GF:** OK. My full name is GF.  
**NK:** G? OK  
**GF:** Yeah and I'm half Lebanese.  
**NK:** And half?  
**GF:** African.  
**NK:** Which country from Africa?  
**GF:** Where I'm from? I'm from [country in West Africa].  
**NK:** [country in West Africa]. [capital city]?  
**GF:** Right  
**NK:** OK. I think my whiteboard is [inaudible] one second [inaudible].  
**GF:** Yeah, and I work here. I work here.  
**NK:** OK. Where do you come from in Lebanon by the way?  
**GF:** My dad's from the south actually.  
**NK:** Where?  
**GF:** South Lebanon... [mentions city].  
**NK:** You are the people I've been looking for!  
**GF:** Ah for real?  
**NK:** I was talking to this cab driver. I was like: dude I need to meet some people from the south because I knew there's a lot of metis in the south...  
**GF:** Yes. It's true.  
**NK:** So you are my gate. We have to talk later. She'll just be testing light and the background [inaudible].  
**GF:** OK. And umm...  
**NK:** What else do I want to ask? So, HH, were you born here?  
**GF:** No, I was born in [country in West Africa].  
**NK:** OK.  
**GF:** I was there, and [inaudible] years ago I came here...  
**NK:** Wow, you are new here!  
**GF:** Yeah, I've been here... probably about 10 years now.  
**NK:** Wow, that's funny. Because we interviewed another guy called D?  
**GF:** Yeah.  
**NK:** And D came when he was 16, and then he came when he was 17. Which is very different from like M or F, they've been here for a really long time.  
**GF:** Yeah, they've been here for a long time.  
**NK:** So your experiences must have been more positive?  
**GF:** Yeah.  
**NK:** D had really positive experiences, while M was like "I hate this country, I want to leave". It's so different [inaudible].  
**GF:** [Laughs] Yeah, this is different, you know? And for me the job is OK, but you know like you [inaudible] used to the life here. But it's ok.  
**NK:** So, you came here when you were 20?  
**GF:** Yeah.  
**NK:** You spoke Arabic in [country in West Africa] with your parents?  
**GF:** No.  
**NK:** But you speak Arabic now?  
**GF:** Yes.  
**NK:** You learnt it in ten years?  
**GF:** Yes.  
**NK:** So you picked it up in the 10 years?  
**GF:** Yeah.  
**NK:** *Walao*, I'm really bad, I have been here nine years and I can't speak Arabic.  
**GF:** No, because for my work I have to like...

**NK:** OK, how long have you been working in [company]?

**GF:** Like eight years.

**NK:** Ah ok so you've been in contact with Lebanese a lot.

**GF:** Yeah, yeah.

**NK:** So when you came at 20 did you come to do any studying or you came directly...?

**GF:** Actually, when I came I was living in the South.

**NK:** Ah you were living in [city]

**GF:** Yes, so it was like a little bit difficult because my... my family from the south [inaudible] like village kind of [inaudible] so they won't like really show us [inaudible] university and stuff like that so we had to like get a job and kind of financially [inaudible] to my dad so we had to get a job... and that's it so since I got the job at [company] I've been working here.

**NK:** I am going to ask a lot of race related questions now. So when you were in the south, was it your first time coming to Lebanon or you used to come?

**GF:** Yes, it was first time.

**NK:** Ah, you never came before this?

**GF:** No, no.

**NK:** As a child, nothing?

**GF:** Nothing.

**NK:** Never met your grandmother, grandparents

**GF:** No, I lived in [country in West Africa].

**NK:** So you met everybody new?

**GF:** Everyone new.

**NK:** And how was it?

**GF:** It was pretty... weird the first time. Different type of people, you know? From the South.

**NK:** Did they speak English?

**GF:** No, no, only Arabic.

**NK:** So, you had to...

**GF:** Yes, I had to learn. And after that, things became ugly and I faced racism and discrimination, and this kind of stuff, you know.

**NK:** From the people in the town or family?

70

**GF:** The people and the family. Mainly from my family.

**NK:** Oh, really?

**GF:** Yeah.

**NK:** Did you find a bit shocking? Because they knew your father got married to a [country in West Africa] woman, they knew for 20 years...

**GF:** And that was the point really, that my dad got married to a black lady...

**NK:** But 20 years [inaudible] accept it?

**GF:** No, no.

**NK:** Really? That's a long time... they could have gotten over it

**GF:** No, no, they didn't.

**NK:** And so, your mom came with you?

**GF:** Yeah, my mom, she came with us.

**NK:** First time in Lebanon also? No.

**GF:** The first time, every one of us.

**NK:** Wow. And she must have found it very difficult.

**GF:** It's very difficult for her, even up till now.

**NK:** OK. Where do you live now?

**GF:** I live in [area in Beirut].

**NK:** Does your mom live there also?

**GF:** No, she stays in the south [inaudible].

**NK:** Oh. And how is that?

**GF:** Hmm. For me, it's like, you know... I don't like it but I have to

**NK:** Not you, but for like your mother?

**GF:** Oh mom? Oh yeah, it's not good for her. She... she's euh...

**NK:** She wants to go back anytime or?

**GF:** Not really she wants to go back; she just wants to move from the south, you know?

**NK:** And probably come to Beirut.

**GF:** Yeah... I'm working on that actually.

**NK:** OK. And so apart from family... OK do you want to ask anything related to family because I can't think of any questions...

**MRT:** Mmm, no, I think you covered everything.

**NK:** Like do you have any specific incident that happened with the family that stuck with you?

**GF:** Actually, they stay away from us 'cause we're black.

**NK:** Yeah, but did they say anything to your face or is it just the way they act?

**GF:** Yeah, they... actually they used to call my mom a monkey and stuff like that.

**NK:** Family?! The family.

**MRT:** [Inaudible].

**GF:** Yeah. I'm not kidding. I don't want to go into details. We used to fight with them.

**NK:** No, come on! It is pretty funny because this woman in Tripoli, we took pictures of her kids, when she first came and I saw this with my own eyes, she didn't tell me, that when they used to get pissed they would be like: I don't believe our brother would marry an *aswad*, in front of her

**GF:** Yeah, yeah.

**NK:** And I'd be like dude she's there!

**MRT:** Aswad?

**GF:** A black.

**NK:** A black person.

**GF:** They called like *Sudani* and stuff like that [inaudible] they used to call my mom a monkey so we got angry and we had a fight with them.

**NK:** And your father what did he do? I'm sure it was difficult for him because it was family.

**GF:** It was difficult for him, he was always on our side, really he's a nice guy, he didn't...

**NK:** OK.

**GF:** [Inaudible] He was always with us.

**NK:** OK.

**GF:** And we had a fight with them and up till this day.

**NK:** So your impression of Lebanon was like... did you feel like "This is my country" when you first came? Because you faced all this [inaudible].

**GF:** This is not my country, this is not where I should belong.

**NK:** OK.

**GF:** Nah, nah, nah, I need to be out of here. Actually, that is the plan.

**NK:** But you do have Lebanese name, and a Lebanese passport.

**GF:** Yeah, that's just a Lebanese stuff... I mean that's it... it's not really me.

**NK:** And in Beirut it must have been different.

**GF:** Yeah, Beirut... OK [inaudible] good people. Even the Lebanese here they're kind of different.

**NK:** Mmm hmm.

**GF:** You know, from the south. There are good people from the south too you know but here is much better you know... much better.

**NK:** It's funny though because... all the Lebanese, most of the Lebanese in Nigeria are from the south so it's funny... I felt that they must have seen a lot of mixes in their life. A lot of people go, they get married, they come back. So I find it very shocking that they are not used to this yet.

**GF:** When I came, it was very bad. Maybe this time, I think it's OK.

**NK:** OK.

**GF:** You know this time maybe it's OK... more people that come from Africa.

**NK:** Do you know anything about your sister? How is she... like as a girl here, is it difficult?

**GF:** Yeah, my sister, it's kind of difficult because you know they'll call [inaudible] they'll call her names and stuff like.

**NK:** Yeah, I know.

**GF:** [Inaudible] and stuff you know.

**NK:** But she speaks perfect Arabic. I've heard this girl talk and I was like wow

**GF:** Yeah.

**NK:** So she must insult them back [laughs].

**GF:** Of course [inaudible] [laughs] she gets angry and [inaudible].

**NK:** OK, what other questions I want to ask you... is there something you specifically love about Lebanon or really hate about Lebanon? Anything that comes to mind when you think of Lebanon.

**GF:** Lebanon.

**NK:** Because you've been here 9 years, you must like something.

**GF:** Of course, I do like the country, it's a very beautiful place.

**NK:** Yeah.

**GF:** Life is OK.

**NK:** Life is good.

**GF:** Yeah and meanwhile what I hate about it, they... some of them are very stupid [laughs] discrimination is a problem. And they always want to be happy... you know. [Inaudible] they discriminate, that's what I don't like about it.

**NK:** OK

**GF:** But some of them, they are very good people

**NK:** OK

**MRT:** You have good friends

**GF:** Yeah, yeah, good friends. I have good friends here.

**NK:** You have lots of Lebanese friends or mostly mixed?

**GF:** Nah, mixed. I go for mixed more because they understand.

**NK:** They're from the same background and they understand. But do you have anything specific? Because if you ask me what I hate about Beirut I'll say like the traffic. You know like something like very... I don't know...

**GF:** OK,

**NK:** Apart from the people, apart from the treatment, is there something about the country you like? Or like hate?

**GF:** Actually, I like the night life. It's cool.

**NK:** The nightlife is cool. Yeah, the nightlife is not bad.

**GF:** [Laughs]

**NK:** Beirutis know how to [...] party.

**GF:** Yeahhh... it's nice, it's nice.

**NK:** And something you hate about Lebanon? I don't know, lack of pepper? [Laughs].

**GF:** Definitely [laughs].

**NK:** Lack of spice?

**GF:** [Laughs] but actually I hate... I don't anything I hate apart from the treatment and that's it. But now it's getting much better actually

**NK:** I guess you get used to the environment [inaudible].

**GF:** Yeah

**NK:** I mean I was talking to this woman today, she's Filipina, and she has a Lebanese husband. She took her kids to the Philippines and they wanted to come back to Lebanon. So it depends where you grow up also, maybe affects the way you feel in a country. Because where you spend your childhood is home...

**GF:** Yeah, yeah, exactly, when people born here, they're more comfortable being here. But when you're from outside, and you're coming here, it's going to be hard, to get [inaudible] system, speak the Arabic, and you know

**NK:** Yeah

**GF:** You're used to friends and the way they behave you know. If you're born here, it's much easier and you want to come back here. So there's a lot of a difference between [inaudible].

**NK:** OK, and I guess this interview is over [laughs].

**GF:** Thank you! Bye, bye [laughs].

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