

Diversity of Raciolinguistic Experiences in the Writing Classroom: An Argument for a Transnational Black Language Pedagogy

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A couple of years ago, I worked in the writing center with a student on a paper about her identity development. She received high marks for content but lost points for writing. As I read her paper, two things struck me: First, she had grown up in Boston, but her parents were from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. At home, she spoke Lingala, which she hid from her friends after she was mocked. Second, many of her sentences were indecipherable. She wrote, for example, “I didn’t have an indistinguishable surface hair from different females in my class and they wouldn’t converse with me or simply give me disposition since I didn’t seem as though them.” (Savini)

In the January 2021 *Inside Higher Ed* article “10 Ways to Tackle Linguistic Bias in Our Classrooms,” Catherine Savini shares the above anecdote about tutoring an African student from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), whose essay was on writing development. Savini briefly shares the student’s language struggles, which included not only being constantly mocked by her peers for speaking in Lingala but also being instructed by her teachers “not to write like she speaks but to translate her Black Vernacular English (BVE) into standard academic English (SAE)” (Savini). While Savini uses this student’s language background and experience to demonstrate why literacy and writing teachers need to adopt antiracist pedagogies that promote fairness and social justice for linguistically marginalized students, here I focus on the African student example because it highlights a larger issue in the field that remains unaddressed: How do the language backgrounds of transnational and immigrant African students challenge language pedagogies that seek to support the learning needs of Black students? Savini draws from Black language scholarship to show how it can

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help writing instructors better address the needs of Black students who write in BVE. Certainly, Savini's intent is positive; the only problem is that the student used to frame the argument is African—specifically, Congolese American—and her home language is Lingala, not BVE. Thus, the sentence quoted from the student's writing for illustration, "I didn't have an indistinguishable surface hair from different females in my class and they wouldn't converse with me or simply give me disposition since I didn't seem as though them," does not have the grammatical or syntactical features of BVE. Savini, however, reveals that the student admitted to using "the thesaurus for every single sentence," which may have inadvertently contributed to the "indecipherable" sentences.

This example highlights the assumption that writing and language arts teachers make about African students studying in the US: that they speak and write in BVE or its varieties. Such an assumption can make students suppress their other language backgrounds, as seen in the case of Savini's student. It can also exacerbate raciolinguistic ideologies in writing classrooms—ideologies that construct the language practices of racialized groups (for example, Black and Brown people) as deficient and inferior and those of whites as superior and standard. As Jonathan Rosa and Nelson Flores emphasize, such ideologies "conflate certain racialized persons with linguistic deficiency irrespective of their empirical linguistic practices" ("Do You Hear" 177). For example, the student mentioned in the article, as a racialized subject, had her language practices framed as deviant by teachers who forced her to use a thesaurus. Also, because the student is Black, her teachers assumed she spoke and wrote in BVE, embracing raciolinguistic ideologies characterized by the "co-naturalization" of race and language, leading to the static association of particular language practices to distinct ethno-racial categories (Rosa and Flores, "Unsettling"). Because US raciolinguistic ideologies are based on US-centric racial and linguistic formations, writing and literacy instructors tend to subsume all linguistic practices of Black students in one racial category—Black. This leads to the erasure of transnational and immigrant Black students' language backgrounds and practices, particularly when theorizing language pedagogies for Black students. Yet, one of Savini's tips for combating linguistic bias is for teachers to "ask students about their language backgrounds." As I read this article, I wondered if Savini considered if or how Lingala might have impacted this student's writing development. I also wondered if the student spoke any other languages besides Lingala. If the student's parents are from the DRC, it is possible Lingala is not the only language the student spoke at home. And if it is, going by the student's self-affirmation, perhaps it is a Lingala influenced by other languages, like French, the official language in the DRC, or Swahili, the country's main lingua franca. For, as I show later, transnational and African immigrant students bring diverse language repertoires and backgrounds to US

classrooms that challenge a range of US-based presumptions about language, race, and history.

Put another way: Because these theories are largely based on the US's "sociolinguistic order of things" (Alim, "Critical Language" 28), language pedagogies in the field of writing and beyond might not be as effective as they should be in addressing the language and literacy needs of transnational and immigrant Black students. H. Samy Alim explains the "sociolinguistic order of things" in the US to be shaped by the ideology of the dominating group, that is, the white middle class. This group, according to Alim, seeks to maintain the language status quo in the US, where white, middle-class English is treated as the dominant and standard variety and placed at the top of the language hierarchy. This "sociolinguistic order" marginalizes all other languages, including English varieties like BVE. US writing and literacy scholars and teachers base their theories and pedagogies on this "sociolinguistic order." The focus on English fails to account for how other imperial languages of Europe, like Spanish, Portuguese, and French, have historically contributed to a racist and oppressive "sociolinguistic order" globally, particularly in formerly colonized Afro-Diasporic contexts. For example, in the US, Spanish, Portuguese, and French are viewed as marginalized given the focus of English dominance. Yet, for some transnational and immigrant Black students, these are, in fact, languages of the colonizer. The focus on the US local context and English linguistic hegemony might not raise transnational and immigrant African students' critical consciousness about how their African Indigenous languages have historically been marginalized by European languages. For example, a classroom that does not engage in explicit conversations about the implications of Eurocentric linguistic hegemony in global contexts might not raise African students' critical language awareness about how their Indigenous languages, like Lingala, were suppressed by French and Belgian colonization in the DRC.

I make this argument based on my personal experience as a former transnational African student and also through analyzing the writing of three transnational African students who were enrolled in my first-year writing (FYW) class. In reading the writing they produced in my class, I learned that African students bring not only diverse language histories to US classrooms but also diverse raciolinguistic experiences and ideologies that arise from their different experiences with European colonization. Their writing also revealed how European linguistic hegemony introduced a new sociolinguistic order and raciolinguistic ideologies in their respective countries. Analyzing these three students' writing as a transnational and immigrant language scholar from Kenya with a closely similar raciolinguistic experience arising from British colonization afforded me a specific connection with them and an opportunity to interrogate the various histories of colonization and raciolinguistic ideologies in the continent and their

implications on contemporary writing classrooms in the US. Besides analyzing the writing of these three transnational African students, I analyzed the writing of two other students, second-generation Nigerians, also enrolled in the same class. Unlike the three transnational African students, these two students were born and raised in the US. From their writing, I learned that African immigrant students go through another layer of racialization in the US because of their identity as Africans. Through their writing, I learned that being both African and Black in America poses an additional challenge in navigating US raciolinguistic ideologies, particularly as a student. In fact, their writing revealed that US raciolinguistic ideologies adversely impacted their learning experiences. Collectively, the five students' writing revealed a diversity of raciolinguistic experiences that African students bring and encounter in literacy and writing classrooms. In analyzing their experiences, I show why the field of rhetoric and writing must continue to theorize linguistically and socially just pedagogies that account for and attend to the language differences of all Black students. This is especially the case given the increasing diversity of Blacks in the US, where one in every ten is foreign born (Anderson and López).

This essay, therefore, argues for a transnational Black language pedagogy informed by a raciolinguistics framework. The pedagogy I imagine recognizes and differentiates the complexity of raciolinguistic experiences and ideologies across multiple Black communities (transnational, immigrant, African American) and seeks to historicize their diverse language practices. The proposed pedagogy is in solidarity with Black language pedagogy and scholarship, because linguistic practices of all Black students, descendants of enslaved people or not, are racially positioned as deficient by Eurocentric and US-based raciolinguistic ideologies. Typically, transnational and immigrant Black students fall under the categories "long-term English learners," "heritage language learners," or "Standard English learners" (Flores and Rosa, "Undoing Appropriateness" 155). According to Flores and Rosa, students who "belong" to any of these "sometimes overlapping" groups have their language practices constructed as deficient, not because of "their lack of proficiency in objective linguistic practices but [because of] their racial positioning in society and how this position affects how their linguistic practices are heard" ("Undoing Appropriateness" 166–67). Similarly, as Black language scholarship has taught us for the last sixty-plus years, the language practices of Black students, descendants of enslaved Black people, have historically been positioned as deficient, despite proof of the systematicity of Black language as a rule-governed linguistic system. It is therefore important for all Black communities to work in solidarity in theorizing, researching, and teaching Black language in order to effectively counter Eurocentric linguistic hegemony and raciolinguistic ideologies in both local and global contexts. In light of this

proposal, using my students' writing, I theorize a transnational Black language pedagogy guided by the following questions:

- How do transnational and immigrant African students' diverse and complex raciolinguistic experiences and ideologies complicate current language pedagogies, particularly those that seek to support the language needs of Black students?
- What language-related knowledge and theories do US writing instructors need to acquire to effectively work with Black students with diverse language backgrounds, racialization histories, and raciolinguistic experiences?

To these ends, I first present a scholarly and historical precedent for a transnational Black language pedagogy by offering Geneva Smitherman's work as a model. Next, by analyzing writing produced by transnational and immigrant African students in my FYW class, I build out complex African language histories and raciolinguistic experiences that support an argument for a transnational Black language pedagogy.

SCHOLARLY AND HISTORICAL PRECEDENT FOR A TRANSNATIONAL BLACK LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY

In proposing a transnational Black language pedagogy, I suggest writing scholars and instructors look deeper into Geneva Smitherman's approach to researching, theorizing, and teaching Black language as a transnational and Afro-Diasporic project. My suggestion is based on my reading of Smitherman's extensive body of work and also in having experienced her pedagogy first-hand as a transnational African graduate student. Although Smitherman researches and theorizes Black language focusing on its implications for African Americans in the US, her orientation is transnational and considers what language means for Blacks in the Afro Diaspora or the global Black community. She models her scholarship after other scholars who also have engaged in transnational Black language work. In her essay, "From Ghetto Lady to Critical Linguist," she identifies several Black transnational scholars who were instrumental in shaping her critical language awareness, including linguist Beryl Bailey (Jamaican), linguist Lorenzo Turner (African American), and psychiatrist and philosopher Frantz Fanon (French West Indian).

Linguist Beryl Bailey's research in "Toward a New Perspective in Negro English Dialectology," which Smitherman identifies as critical in shaping her language journey, is transnational in nature. Bailey examines the syntax of Jamaican Creole by comparing it to Black speech spoken in New York. Smitherman admits that it was "Bailey who reintroduced [me to] the concept of a linguistic continuum from Africa to the Caribbean and North America in the Diaspora"

and also, “Bailey’s work gave me the idea of tapping into the Black literary tradition to recover the authentic linguistic nuances reproduced by our writers crafting works of art in the Black Tradition” (*Talkin That Talk* 6). In the same essay, Smitherman identifies Lorenzo Turner’s transnational ethnographic research on *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* as instrumental to her work. This work compares the linguistic similarities among the Gullah dialect, African American language, and West Central African languages. Of psychiatrist Frantz Fanon, Smitherman writes that he “introduced me to the psychological aspects of race and racism” (4). Fanon’s work was also transnational. Although he was from Martinique (French West Indies), his subjects were Africans. For example, he worked with Algerians colonized by the French, during which time he observed the psychological damage of colonialism on Black Africans. Smitherman writes that as “a healer, he sought ways to bring a wholeness to the divided Black self that imitated things European and attributed inferiority to Black Culture” (4). From Fanon’s work, Smitherman writes, she was able to make connections with the work of W. E. B. Du Bois, who describes a similar psychological damage of double consciousness experienced by US Blacks as result of slavery and US racial experiences. In connecting Fanon and Du Bois, Smitherman shows the potential of transnational theorizing and researching of Black experience, particularly in revealing and healing the psychological damage of colonialism and slavery on the Black psyche anywhere in the globe.

One of the best examples illustrating how Smitherman researches and theorizes Black language as a transnational project is her work on African Verbal Tradition (AVT). In her essay “‘How I Got Ovuh’: African World View and African American Oral Tradition,” for instance, Smitherman illustrates how Africans, as oral communicators, centralize “Nommo,” the magic or the power of the word in their everyday life. Smitherman observes that the concept of Nommo, realized through various oral communicative practices—signifying, narrativizing, call and response, and indirection, among others—was transferred to the New World through slavery. To illustrate this application, she puts the lessons she learned from Bailey into practice by analyzing literary works from Africa. For example, she analyzes the *Epic of Sundiata*, citing a lengthy exchange between the two main characters, Soumaoro Kanté and Sundiata Keita, who, before engaging in physical war, must first battle with their words. Commenting on this exchange, Smitherman argues that such an adept way of using words is commonplace among US Blacks, noting that the “exchange of word-arrows is not unlike that of two bloods squaring off on any street corner or in any cottonfield in the US” (204). Similarly, in explaining indirection or circumlocutory rhetoric, an African discourse strategy, Smitherman draws from Chinua Achebe’s novel, *Things Fall Apart*, citing a scene where Okonkwo’s father, Unoka, uses indirection

to avoid paying the money he owed his fellow villager, Okoye. Smitherman emphasizes the importance of doing this comparative work, noting that examining “the many facets of the oral tradition, the residue of the African world view” can “unify such seemingly disparate black groups as preachers and poets, bluesmen and Gospels, testifiers and toast-tellers, reverends and revolutionaries” (201).

Smitherman’s research on proverbs, another example of AVT, further reveals her global and transnational orientation to Black language. She draws examples of proverbs from the global Black diaspora to illustrate the value of this communicative practice across various Black communities. In the essay, “‘Makin a Way Outa No Way’: The Proverb Tradition in the Black Experience,” Smitherman studies the works of African literary writers like J. P. Clark, Wole Soyinka, Gabriel Okara, Chinua Achebe, Ama Ata Aidoo, Christopher Okigbo, and Amos Tutuola to show how and why they use proverbs in their writing. She also collects an extensive body of proverbs from Africa, the Caribbean, and the US, comparing and contrasting them, but most importantly, emphasizing the importance of this communicative practice in the global African world. While many Black language scholars have built on Smitherman’s work, particularly in demonstrating how AVT manifests itself in various rhetorical contexts, including students’ writing (see Gilyard and Richardson; Perryman-Clark; Williams-Farrier), my essay implores further centralizing of AVT to connect and unify “disparate Black groups,” as Smitherman imagines. For example, as a former transnational graduate Kenyan student, reading Smitherman analyzing African literature, and especially citing my fellow tribesman, John Mbiti, to theorize AVT, I saw myself not only included and represented in Black language scholarship, but also connected and unified with other Blacks. My essay, following Smitherman’s scholarship, suggests that we need a Black language pedagogy that connects and unifies *all* Black groups while also recognizing our language differences as shaped by various histories and experiences. While some emerging Black language scholarship seems to have moved away from this model set forth by Smitherman, I argue that such a powerful solidarity can work more effectively against anti-Black language discrimination of all types.

Further, Smitherman does not identify African American communities in the US as only speaking US Ebonics or other English varieties; rather, she also mentions that “Arabic, Spanish, Swahili, Creole (and other foreign languages)” are also spoken in the US African American community (20). This observation demonstrates how and why we need to theorize Black language in ways that recognize the growing Black ethnic and linguistic diversity in the US. Other scholars have also begun explaining why it is important to expand what and who gets included in Black language scholarship. In *Vernacular Insurrections*, Carmen Kynard asks us to pay extra attention to the diversity of racialized subjects

who bring various language backgrounds, colonial histories, and racialization experiences to writing classrooms. In one of her teaching interludes, she shares an incident where she observed an opportunity to broaden Black language conversations when students from various Afro-Diasporic contexts converged in one of her composition classrooms:

[M]y students were story-ing varied histories under colonialism, melding multiple languages and Englishes, spanning numerous land masses and continents, bumping up against competing racialized hierarchies of gender, and articulating many migratory subjectivities, all as if it was just meant to be. It is also this kind of stance that can best capture an ideology in which Black Language is not merely a set of structures and usages to study and quantify, but a polemic from which to challenge the social reproduction of schooling, society, and literacy paradigms. (17)

Kynard shows that students from the Black diaspora have a diversity of language experiences and racialization histories arising from various colonialisms. These histories and experiences, she notes, complicate conversations about Black language and challenge us to rethink how we theorize literacy education and schooling, warning that we should be careful not to reproduce the same power relations and practices. Similarly, in their introduction to *Creole Composition*, Milson-Whyte et al. note that as US composition continues to internationalize and become transnational, conversations about language, power, and rights in local and global contexts should be of interest to all writing teachers and scholars (x). In their book, they argue for a uniquely Caribbean writing pedagogy, not just within the Caribbean, but also in transnational contexts like the US. They also emphasize the importance of accounting for the impact of British colonial legacies in the Afro-Caribbean, the implications of the “encroaching American hegemony in language and education” in the region, and the diverse Creole English histories resulting from “the contact of English with the numerous African languages spoken by Black Caribbean people’s slave ancestors” (viii, ix). This scholarship, the growing Black diaspora in US colleges, and the increasing transnationalism across Black nations calls for a transnational Black pedagogy that attends to Blacks students’ language and learning needs in the US, and in transnational contexts.

EXPLORING DIVERSITY OF RACIOLINGUISTIC EXPERIENCES IN A FIRST-YEAR WRITING CLASSROOM

In order to demonstrate the need for a transnational Black language pedagogy that is inclusive of diverse Black students, the remainder of this essay offers examples of raciolinguistic ideologies and experiences of five African students: Patrick, Jack, John, Osa, and Chinelo (pseudonyms), students in my FYW class

at a predominantly white institution in the Midwest.¹ I refer to these students as Africans because they are not descendants of enslaved Black people. Jack, Patrick, and John attended elementary and high school in Africa and planned to return to their home countries after completing their undergraduate degrees. Osa and Chinelo are second-generation Nigerians, born and raised in the US. I focus on these five students because in their writing, they described their language identity and writing development to have been shaped by their learning experiences in Africa or because they identify as Africans. Table 1 below summarizes the students' national backgrounds, academic major, and language identities.

Throughout the semester, I analyzed writing assignments produced by students taking my course to understand what language backgrounds, ideologies, and experiences they brought to my classroom and how these shaped their literacy and writing development. One of the main assignments for this class was a literacy autobiography (LA). The goal of the assignment was to invite students to reflect on past and present events and practices associated with literacy and to consider the relationship of those to their lives now. As they worked toward completion of this assignment, they also read and critically responded to autobiographical writings by Geneva Smitherman, Amy Tan, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Ofelia Zepeda.

The five students' writing stood out because they not only theorized their language histories, identities, and experiences by making explicit connections to Africa but also shared how their raciolinguistic experiences shaped their language development. I became interested in studying their diverse raciolinguistic histories and experiences as part of my effort to develop what Seltzer and de los

Table 1. Study Participants and Their National and Language Backgrounds

Student	Description	Country of Origin	Student's Major	Languages Spoken
Patrick	Transnational Angolan	Angola	Mechanical engineering	Portuguese and English
Jack	Transnational Angolan	Angola	Mechanical engineering	Portuguese, English, Spanish, and Lingala
John	Transnational Rwandese	Rwanda	Geology	Kinyarwanda, French, and English
Osa	Second-generation Nigerian	United States	Pre-med/psychology	US Ebonics and Standard English
Chinelo	Second-generation Nigerian	United States	Pre-med	US Ebonics and Standard English

Ríos call “raciolinguistic literacies,” which includes teachers developing a sound knowledge of the historical and contemporary relationship among language, colonization, and racialization. In my analysis, I incorporate excerpts from my students’ LA assignment and critical reading responses to the aforementioned readings. These excerpts are framed around two primary themes: the raciolinguistic ideologies and experiences African students bring to US writing classrooms and the impact of US raciolinguistic ideologies on immigrant African students. While I focus on each student’s linguistic history and experience, my discussion of raciolinguistic ideologies is based on the students’ country of origin. In other words, I use the students’ writing as a springboard to build out complex histories and raciolinguistic experiences that support an argument for a transnational Black language pedagogy informed by a raciolinguistics framework.

Raciolinguistics emphasizes the importance of researching, teaching, and analyzing language and race together. According to Samy Alim, raciolinguistics scholars and teachers study and teach language and race together, not as separate or unrelated concepts (“Introducing”). In this vein, many influential scholars and teachers in our field teach language and race together. Critical-race and antiracist language pedagogues, for example, emphasize that we are not in a post-racial society and that race and racism should be centralized in any theorization, teaching, and assessment of writing (see Inoue; Inoue and Poe; Ayash; Condon; Condon and Young; Craig; Banks; Grobman; Kareem; Martinez; Olson; Prendergast; Villanueva). These pedagogies focus on revealing and dismantling larger racist structures and systems of control that marginalize language practices of racialized students. Both critical-race and antiracist pedagogies are effective and relevant in theorizing a transnational Black language pedagogy; however, I believe they can be enhanced by a raciolinguistics framework because it encourages writing scholars and teachers to consider how racial formation theories (Omi and Winant) and raciolinguistic ideologies (Flores and Rosa) in global contexts impact the language identities, ideologies, and experiences of students from former colonial contexts. In my analysis of transnational students’ writing, I examine how European colonization in Africa introduced racialization practices and raciolinguistic ideologies in the continent. I also consider how and why they framed European languages as superior over African Indigenous languages and the implications of these experiences for African students studying in the continent and in transnational contexts. I also examine how US raciolinguistic ideologies and white linguistic hegemony affects and harms Black students who also identify as African.

Raciolinguistic Ideologies and Experiences from Africa

Patrick: “Five centuries (500 years)” of Portuguese colonization

Reading Patrick's LA and critical reading responses sparked my interest in researching raciolinguistic experiences and ideologies in Angola. In one of his critical reading responses (which I cite at length later), Patrick wrote: "During almost five centuries (500 years), Portuguese government required Angolan people to forget their national language and to speak only Portuguese." This statement caught me by surprise, and I initially thought it was a mistake. My African history classes had miseducated me that colonization in Africa began after the 1884 Berlin conference, also known as the European scramble for Africa, when European powers convened in Berlin, Germany, to assign each other regions of Africa to colonize. Since almost all African states gained independence in the 1960s and 1970s, including Angola, which gained its independence in 1975, I was confused by Patrick's claim that his country was colonized by Portugal for nearly five centuries. Instead of ignoring the claim, I became interested in understanding Portugal's colonial history in Angola and how it may have shaped Patrick's current language practices and identity. I summarize the history and connect it to excerpts by Patrick (and later Jack) to show how it shaped their raciolinguistic experiences, language identities, and histories.

As early as the 1480s, Portugal started establishing trade relations with local leaders and setting up trading posts and settlements along the Angolan coastline. Portugal's initial interest in Angola was transatlantic slave trade, which, according to Daniel B. Domingues da Silva, saw approximately 4,434,900 enslaved people shipped from Angola to work in Portuguese colonies (110). With the abolition of slavery, and after the 1884 Berlin conference, Portugal established more aggressive settler colonial practices in Angola and six other African states/territories. Like in many colonial contexts, European powers introduced racialization practices that framed Europeans as superior to Africans. In Angola, this was done through the passing of a bill aimed at distinguishing the two races. The categories of "Citizen" and "Native" were introduced to emphasize the distinction:

The bill defined the native as an individual of colour and who did not fulfil three specific conditions: *a*) of speaking Portuguese or one of its dialects, or some other "civilised language"; *b*) of abandoning native uses and customs, and *c*) of carrying on some profession, trade or industry, or having private means sufficient to maintain himself. After fulfilling these conditions he would be regarded as a citizen of the republic, no longer subject to the laws and regulations made specifically for those regarded as "natives." (Soremekun 365)

This bill not only introduced racialization practices but also raciolinguistic ideologies that framed European languages as superior over the 46 Indigenous Angolan languages. Notable in this bill was a provision for natives to assimilate and become citizens. For African natives to achieve the legal status of a citizen,

or *assimilado*, one had to adopt European cultural ways of being and speak Portuguese. Assimilated parents were forbidden from teaching their children African languages because it was prohibited through the Decreto de Norton de Matos, also known as decree number 77 of 1927, named after a Portuguese governor-general ruling Angola during this period.

This brief history shows how European colonialism introduced a new sociolinguistic order in Angola by putting Portuguese at a privileged position over Angolan Indigenous languages. Raciolinguistic ideologies associated Portuguese with humanity, class, civilization, access, and privilege, a reserve for those who aspired to be like whites, while African Indigenous languages were racialized as “inhuman” and “shameful” and associated with those who wanted to remain as uncivilized African natives. These raciolinguistic ideologies were strongly presented in Patrick’s critical reading response to Geneva Smitherman’s “From Ghetto Lady to Critical Linguist” and Gloria Anzaldúa’s “How to Tame a Wild Tongue”:

After analyzing both texts I realized something very similar that did happen in large scale in my country, Angola, before its independence, and, unfortunately, it still happens nowadays, but relatively on small proportion. During almost five centuries (500 years), Portuguese government required Angolan people to forget their national language and to speak only Portuguese. There was a huge campaign of coercion for promoting Portuguese around the country as the most perfect language, and the national language as “inhuman” and “shameful.” People who spoke Portuguese were seen as the “smartest” and “educated” while people who did speak Angolan languages [were] seen as “stupid” and “loser.”

Patrick continued to explain that despite Angola’s post-colonial efforts to decolonize its education system and incorporate African languages in the curriculum, the deeply entrenched Portuguese raciolinguistic ideology in the country discourages students and parents from learning Indigenous languages as many only desire to assimilate to whiteness and Europeanness:

[T]he ability of one to speak well [in] Portuguese was decisive to get a job or other social benefits. [. . .] As one could expect, a great number of Angolan parents stopped teaching their children national language. Nowadays, the generations who were born after independence of Angola, mainly the ones who live in urban areas [. . .], they just speak Portuguese (unfortunately, I am one of them). And even worst, they do not want to learn any national language, and they usually make fun of people who can speak one.

This excerpt shows how Angolans have bought into the superiority of Portuguese over Indigenous languages. By 2018, “Ethnologue” recorded that 60% of Angolans speak Portuguese, 40% as their first language. In fact, by the time Patrick and Jack joined my institution, they only had school-based literate experiences

in Portuguese. They started learning English in college by completing three semesters of English remedial classes before joining my FYW class.

Patrick used his writing to reflect on the negative impact of European cultural and linguistic hegemony on his African cultural and linguistic identity. In his final course reflection, he expressed guilt and shame in privileging European languages over his Indigenous languages:

This course really challenges me to think about how much I was disinterested about my culture. I was astonished to find out that I know little about my own culture, but a lot about Western culture. I am ashamed to admit that I cannot speak any Angolan language. [. . .] I blindly adopt Western culture as my own. My first language is a European one (Portuguese). I dress, eat, and talk much more as a European than Angolan guy, and I was indifferent about it. This course gave me a cirurgical [*sic*] slap to wake up me. Deep down, I was self discriminating my culture with my indifference, and promoting Western culture.

In this final course reflection, he also included two short writing genres: a poem, reflecting on his identity, and a letter to his grandmother which captures how the course helped him develop critical consciousness about his African heritage:

Who am I?

I am more complex tha[n] I could imagine
 Deeper than any ocean
 And larger than any universe
 Just like iceberg,
 most of my being is invisible to the public
 But it can be visible to you
 If you take a few time
 To think
 about where I came from.

Dear Grandma,

I am proud of your past
 I am proud of your culture
 I am proud of you
 I am sorry for taking so long
 to accept your cultural gift
 Now, I started to understand
 how much you were happy
 because you never denied your true identity
 Proud of you,
 Your Grandson

Patrick's two reflective excerpts hint at the potential benefits of a transnational language pedagogy for all Black students. Instead of writing instructors focusing only on US Black language history, they can ask Black students also to interrogate

their language histories and experiences outside the US. Such a pedagogical approach can help students like Patrick affirm their African linguistic heritage and begin their process of linguistic, cultural, and mental decolonization.

Jack: On writing in grammatically correct Portuguese

The dominance of Portuguese and impact of raciolinguistic ideologies in Angola was also apparent in Jack's writing. In his LA, he identified learning how to write in grammatically correct Portuguese as critical in his writing development:

In 2013 I remember working on my church's youth group. I was chosen to work with the person who had to write the report of all the activities done by the group and present it to the church leadership. The pastor was a very educated man who did his studies on Brazil and Russia, and I wanted to make sure that my writing wouldn't bother him. I started to learn the patterns of good writing on Portuguese, and work on my grammar and vocabulary, and it was very important for me because it helped me to account for responsibility and also the idea of growing over duties.

Jack's emphasis on "good writing in Portuguese" that will not "bother" his immediate boss and "church leadership" reveals internalized raciolinguistic and standard language ideologies. Arguably, these ideologies may have shaped how he responded to the course readings. I noted throughout his writing that, while he was against language discrimination toward minoritized groups, he emphasized that they should learn standard language because it was their pathway to success, as seen in his response to Amy Tan's "Mother Tongue":

The possibility of a good communication lies principally on the hands of those who have problems with poor speech to enhance their language and work as much they can to develop their speech as near as possible to the standardized language by working on the grammar and pronunciation for their own success.

He also had a nearly identical response to Gloria Anzaldúa's "How to Tame a Wild Tongue":

Gloria Anzaldúa in her article stated something that really caught my attention, she said "Until I take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself. Until I can accept as legitimate Chicano Texas Spanish, Tex-Mex, and all the other languages I speak, I cannot accept the legitimacy of myself." It is very important that people need to be proud of their language even when it is the one that suffer[s] much prejudice among others. However, I think that perhaps this same quote raises the question of, how [proud] do we need to be concerning our language and how it affect[s] our communication with other people in [a] society that don't have the same background as us. So, it is important to realize that we have the burden of facilitating our communication within the society and principally to those that have [a] hard time understanding the language we speak [and] this counts from trying to speak clearly as much as we can.

In these two excerpts, Jack emphasizes that “good communication” is only possible through use of standardized forms. He also puts the “responsibility,” or the “burden of communication,” on those with “poor speech” patterns. In other words, according to Jack, speakers of standard forms should not share in the communication burden. Jack’s use of the phrase “poor speech” to describe language practices of minoritized speakers implies that he considers the practices as deviant. This way of thinking shows that Jack has not only internalized raciolinguistic ideologies but also standard language ideologies. This might also explain why Jack did not feel the need to talk about his multilingual identity in his writing. In a follow up email exchange to clarify if he spoke any other languages besides Portuguese and English, he shared that he was fluent in Lingala, having learned it from his older relatives who had fled to neighboring DRC during the Angolan civil war. He was also learning Spanish on his own. Arguably, Jack’s decision not to reveal Lingala as part of his language repertoire can be attributed to raciolinguistic ideologies that framed Angolans who speak Indigenous languages as “stupid” and “losers,” to borrow Patrick’s words. Given Jack’s deep belief in standard language ideologies, coupled with his country’s raciolinguistic ideologies, it is possible that he did not see Lingala as a “real” language to be recognized as part of his language repertoire, particularly in a US context. To an extent, Jack’s way of thinking confirms Jonathan Rosa’s argument about the dangers of raciolinguistic ideologies, that, if combined with standard language ideologies, tend to not only question minority speakers’ “linguistic competence” and “personhood” but also frame such speakers as “languageless” (“Standardization” 162).

John: Navigating Kinyarwanda, French, and English

John’s literacy development was shaped by three languages: Kinyarwanda, French, and English. Reading his LA, I was particularly interested in interrogating how two colonial languages became part of his language repertoire and how they shaped his writing and literacy development. To gain a better understanding of his linguistic background, I had to learn about his country’s colonization, racialization, and raciolinguistic history. John began his LA affirming that he was literate in three languages: Kinyarwanda, French, and English. “I got to learn how to write different words in my mother tongue. In my early primary education,” he continued, “I got to experience learning both English and French as foreign languages. However, the official academic language for many schools including mine was French.” John noted that as he transitioned to high school, the official language of instruction in Rwanda changed from French to English, which affected his literacy and learning experiences. “I had to overcome a new language barrier,” he wrote. “[T]he education system was changed from French to English so I had to adjust to the new teaching medium.”

When I read in John's LA that his country transitioned from French to English, I was curious to know why. Typically, African countries tend to make ex-colonial languages the language of instruction; for Rwanda this language is French because the country was colonized by Belgium and France. While the growing economic value and dominance of English globally is prompting African countries formerly colonized by French to transition to English as the language of instruction (Plonski et al.), for Rwanda, the change was part of a larger effort toward decolonization, to distance itself from French colonial influence. Rwanda, like many African countries, has been making efforts to achieve language decolonization from European linguistic imperialism. For example, after independence, Rwanda's language decolonization involved making Kinyarwanda, the country's lingua franca, the language of instruction in its eight years of elementary schooling through a reform called "Rwandazation." However, in 1991, the country reverted to the colonial system of using transitional mother tongue instruction in which students' L1, Kinyarwanda, was used as the medium of instruction in grades 1–3, while French was used as the medium of instruction from fourth grade on. This is what John experienced as mentioned in his LA. The reversal to the colonial language policy was prompted "after a nationwide exam revealed poor overall French language ability among students" (Trudell 56).

The most dramatic and notable decolonial language policy was instituted in 2008 when Rwanda changed its official language of instruction from French to English. The 1994 genocide was a major catalyst for the language policy change. Rwanda blamed France for being complicit in the genocide and for introducing and promoting ethnic divisions through racialization practices (See Samuelson and Freedman). Belgium/France's racialization practices advanced a theory that the Tutsi, one of the three ethnic groups in Rwanda, had a Caucasian ancestry and were more racially "superior" to the other two, Hutu and Twa, because they were lighter skinned, taller, and had Hamitic origins. In 1931, these racialization practices were solidified with the introduction of identification cards that detailed each person's ethnic identity. Throughout the colonial period, the colonists favored the Tutsi by giving them economic and political power and other privileges. Years of systematic exclusion and disenfranchisement led Hutu rebels to turn against the Tutsi, leading to two genocides targeting Tutsis, including the one in 1994, during which an estimated 800,000–1,000,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu were killed within a period of 100 days. Many Tutsi fled to neighboring Anglophone Africa (e.g., Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya) as refugees.

After the genocide, many Rwandese started returning home under the leadership of President Paul Kagame, who began gradually introducing English as the language of instruction in some selected schools dominated by Tutsi returnees who now spoke English. In 2008, English was officially adopted as the language of instruction for the entire country. These language changes

were part of Rwanda's effort to reimagine the role of language in reconciling and bonding its three ethnic groups damaged by Eurocentric racialization practices. Kinyarwanda was chosen to play this role. According to Samuelson and Freedman, President Kagame's government "asserted that all Rwandans are first and foremost citizens of Rwanda and that the sharp divisions over ethnicity are a legacy of colonization under the Belgians . . . [and] since Rwandans share Kinyarwanda in common, they are therefore of the same ethnic group" (196). From a raciolinguistic perspective, Kinyarwanda can also be seen as working to denaturalize the co-naturalization of race/ethnicity and language in the country. Further, unlike French, which carries colonial, racialization, and genocidal ideology, English is seen as a lesser evil, touted as a "neutral" language that can unify Rwandese people.

John's LA was a window for me into an additional raciolinguistic and racialization history from Africa. His story, along with those of Patrick and Jack, offers US writing instructors and scholars examples of the very distinct Black language histories that African students bring to US writing classrooms. The three students also have distinct personal language histories depending on various local sociolinguistic factors in their respective countries: the language of the colonizing power, African Indigenous language heritage, acquisition of new language repertoires through migration and displacement, and each African country's localized efforts toward language decolonization. These African language histories and experiences are very different from those of Black students who are descendants of enslaved people. Yet, like them, these students' three stories reveal how colonization introduced racialization and raciolinguistic ideologies in the continent contributing to marginalization of African Indigenous languages, racial and linguistic trauma, and internalized linguisticism and racism among African people. Students like Jack, John, and Patrick bring these experiences to US writing classrooms. Therefore, knowledge of diverse Black language histories and experiences is critical in theorizing an inclusive Black language pedagogy that acknowledges Black language differences and works towards helping all Black students heal from the linguistic trauma caused by oppressive experiences like colonialism, slavery, and racism.

In addition to dealing with raciolinguistic ideologies arising from European colonization, African students must also navigate US raciolinguistic ideologies. Jack, Patrick, and John did not share this in their writing, perhaps because they had been in the US for less than three years and had not developed "raciolinguistic literacies" to recognize and name US raciolinguistic ideologies. However, the writing of Osa and Chinelo, second-generation Nigerians, revealed awareness of how US raciolinguistic ideologies impact African immigrants. In their writing, they shared that they were racialized as both Black and African, particularly in educational settings. Notable in their writing was their struggle to navigate

US raciolinguistic ideologies and white linguistic hegemony as descendants of African immigrants. I discuss their experiences in the next section.

US Raciolinguistic Ideologies and Immigrant African Students

Osa: When African heritage feels more like a curse than a blessing

Osa used her African name to frame her LA and to reflect on how her African identity shaped her literacy development and how she navigated racialization and raciolinguistic ideologies in the US. She reflected on how, from a young age, her parents encouraged her to assimilate to the dominant American English and culture. She also admitted how hard the decision was for her parents because even in doing so, they made sure she maintained her Nigerian identity, so they gave her an African name:

When I was born, my mother gifted me with a name that she hoped would one day predict my future. She gave me this beautiful Edo name (Edo is one of the primary languages of Nigeria); however, she insisted that I learn English as my first and ONLY language. She did this because she wanted me to always remember where she came from, where my family came from. But my mother also wanted me to be able to assimilate into American culture. She did not want anyone to be able to tell me that I was not an American. I would be able to speak English accent free. She knew that if I was to assimilate, I would be losing parts of my Nigerian culture, so she made sure I would never forget.

But even after assimilating, Osa continued to experience racialization, which left her harboring shameful feelings toward her name and African heritage. To her, the African name “feels like a curse because it is a part of me that can never assimilate.” In her LA, Osa located the origin of her negative perception toward her African heritage in her early schooling experiences. “In third grade,” she wrote, “my teacher would not help me when I asked for extra help.” This left Osa reading and writing below grade level and being “known as the dumb black girl.” As a young child, Osa wondered if she was being marginalized for being Black, especially because she was one of the only three Black students in a school of 500, or because of her African identity:

Imagine being three years old, in the midst of finger-painting, cookies, and glue, and being told that you must learn how to spell all twenty-five letters of your name. A name that will never be on keychains. A name that will make me seem foreign in a world of Ashleys and Rebeccas. A name that even your teachers of four years will not even care to learn how to pronounce. This feels like realizing that you have been cursed with a name that will never fit on a line. But is this really a curse? With a name that loosely translate to “God Gives Me Wealth” it must be a blessing. So why does this not feel like one?

Osa indicated that her Nigerian name added to her racialization experiences. Echoing Osa’s experience, Mary Bucholtz explains how sociolinguistically

marginalized students face linguistic violence and racism because of their ethnoracially marked names. She notes, for example, they are ethnicized and racialized through practices like “indexical bleaching,” a technique that “allows the literal reshaping of ethnoracially marked names—phonologically, orthographically, and even lexically—in ways that reduce their ethnoracial specificity” (275). Other forms of linguistic violence and racism based on ethnic names include mispronunciation, renaming, and in some cases, total erasure. As Bucholtz explains, these practices are exacerbated by US schooling requirements that ask students to use names that are legible, recognizable, and pronounceable by their teachers and educational administrators (275–76). Such requirements, in addition to raciolinguistic ideologies, make students like Osa more prone to ethnicization and racialization. Yet, despite her unusually long name that made her hyper-visible, Osa felt invisible, almost erased.

And just as she could not get rid of her Africanness, so, too, she could not get rid of her Blackness. Dominant discourses expected her to act and speak Black. Osa started identifying with African American culture, speaking and affirming Ebonics as part of her linguistic identity. However, she expressed regret losing her African linguistic heritage and questioned whether her parents’ decision for her to assimilate was worthwhile:

My entire life has been trying to find a mix between all of the cultures that I am a part of. In the end, I found that my language is me. My language comes from how I speak, how I write, and how I think. My language is a mixture of both Ebonics and Standard English. Neither language has dominance of the other; neither language is less important than the other. If only my mom could see that I can choose multiple languages to be literate in, not just one. Maybe I would be talking about how fluent I am in three languages instead of two.

Here, Osa speaks to the ways that US raciolinguistic ideologies contribute to feelings of shame among immigrant African students, making them suppress their African language identities, similar to Savini’s student in the introduction. Yet, assimilating to dominant English norms, it does not guarantee an escape from raciolinguistic expectations and stereotypes. In one of her critical reading responses, Osa shared that navigating raciolinguistics ideologies is a daily struggle since many of the groups she is part of have internalized various forms of raciolinguistic ideologies that they continually project on her:

People from Nigeria see me as an American. They see me as a person that has rejected her culture. They only see me as a person that is illiterate in the language of my own people. Americans view me as a foreigner. As soon as they see or hear my name, they assume that I am not an American. They assume that I am from out of the country and that I cannot speak English. They always ask “Where are you REALLY from” like I did not just tell them I was born in New Jersey. Also as a black girl that speaks African American Language (Ebonics) people marginalize

me to be the stereotypical black girl. People from the black community assume that when I speak Standard English I am trying to be something that I am not. They think that I am trying to be white.

This excerpt highlights not only how whites project raciolinguistic ideologies on Blacks but also how various Black groups use the ideologies against each other, or to “out-Black” each other. A Black language pedagogy of solidarity can therefore help Black groups educate each other about their language differences and also their shared experiences with linguistic discrimination and racism. Such a pedagogy can more effectively work to counter white linguistic hegemony and what Baker-Bell calls “Anti-Black Linguistic Racism.”

Chinelo: I am neither “ghetto” nor “white”

Like Osa, Chinelo used her LA to explore how the racialization and raciolinguistic ideologies she encountered in various school contexts in the US shaped her literacy development. She began her LA questioning her Black identity and attempted to answer it: “Am I African American? Yes and no. I am technically Nigerian, but I happened to be born in the United States when my parents migrated over here from our home country 19 years ago.” Chinelo also used her LA to interrogate the ways in which the Blackness that whites and other Blacks projected on her aligned with her African Black identity. When she began school, Chinelo did not know what Ebonics was, or how Ebonics differed from Standard English. She attended a private and predominantly white Catholic elementary school where she was praised for speaking and writing in “proper” English. According to Chinelo, white teachers “would always praise me, saying that they’re so impressed that I don’t sound ghetto [and . . .] it increased their respect for me.” Chinelo appreciated her teachers’ acceptance, which she attributed to speaking “proper” and to her “upbringing in an African home.” Unknown to her, however, white teachers were racializing her as Black and also projecting their dominant raciolinguistic stereotypes on her. Their respect for her was based on her successful assimilation and acculturation to dominant white middle-class language norms. Her instructors’ incorrect assumptions thus led her to develop a negative attitude toward Ebonics and its speakers. They also miseducated her that Ebonics was “ghetto talk.”

After joining a predominantly Black high school, Chinelo gained more awareness of Ebonics and African Americans. However, because she spoke “proper” English, her Black peers started marginalizing her. Chinelo reflected on how “Black people would tell me that I spoke too proper or that I was trying too hard to be white because even my papers that I wrote sounded too literate.” This experience left Chinelo confused: “I had no idea what ‘being white’ meant or what that had to do with the way I was talking. All I knew was that I was an African girl that spoke in the way that I always have, in the way that I learned from

my environment. [. . .] [T]o put it bluntly, I was a nervous wreck.” Chinelo’s awareness of her African identity was heightened in high school when she started interacting with Black students who are descendants of enslaved people, writing, “I didn’t realize just how naïve I really was about my new situation. These Black people really weren’t like me. I didn’t speak like them, I didn’t act like them. I didn’t understand how we could be so different from one another when our skin colors matched.”

As Chinelo struggled to understand her Black identity in high school, even the well-meaning among her white peers did not make it easier for her. She wrote, “white people would always praise me, saying that they’re so impressed that I don’t sound ghetto.” Chinelo narrated how she struggled with these raciolinguistic ideologies from both sides, always trying to figure out how to linguistically fit in as her marginalization “quadrupled.” Chinelo’s marginalization forced her to learn how to use language to navigate both groups. She explained, “if I was surrounded by white friends, I would make a point to sound what they call ‘proper,’ and when I was around black people my ‘ghetto’ side would shine more. It was exhausting and to be honest, not who I really was.” In her LA, Chinelo shared her strategy of resisting raciolinguistic ideologies from both whites and African Americans through writing:

I was proud that I was a girl that knew how to express myself in my writing and knew how to express myself in my language skills too. I was done not being enough for either group of people and decided to focus on myself and the skills that I had to offer to the world. I decided to drop the pretense and show others who I really am and that I didn’t care about their input of whether I was being white, black, yellow, orange or any other color! [. . .] I am neither “ghetto” nor “white.” I am just [Chinelo].

Like Osa’s account, Chinelo’s story shows how the linguistic performances of immigrant African students are shaped by the racialized identities they embody and how they are socialized through language to become racially “Black” in America. Most importantly, it shows how their racialization negatively impacts their learning experiences. Chinelo’s experience in particular reveals how raciolinguistic ideologies also contribute to intra-racial linguisticism in the US Black community, an issue that can be addressed through a language pedagogy that seeks to unify all Black people in countering white linguistic hegemony and US raciolinguistic ideologies.

TOWARD A TRANSNATIONAL BLACK LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY

Students like Patrick, Jack, John, Osa, and Chinelo are not exceptions—they are in our writing classrooms—but their language backgrounds and raciolinguistic

tic experiences are unknown to many writing and literacy instructors because Black language conversations are dominated by one Black language history and experience: that of students who are descendants of enslaved Black people. While this is critically important, these five experiences also remind us that as we continue to develop linguistically and socially just pedagogies for Black students, we must also ensure we don't erase or flatten their language differences and experiences. My proposed transnational Black language pedagogy, which stands in solidarity with existing Black language scholarship, emphasizes Black people's common African ancestry and shared communicative practices rooted in African thought and worldview. Most importantly, it emphasizes the need to acknowledge Black language differences as shaped by different histories and experiences while also being subjected to an overwhelming anti-Black racism within US contexts. My proposed pedagogy aligns with Baker-Bell's proposed anti-Black racist pedagogy, which is global in orientation. Baker-Bell calls upon us to "radically imagine and create a world free of anti-blackness. A call to create an education system where Black students, their language, their literacies, their culture, their creativity, their joy, their imagination, their brilliance, their freedom, their existence, their resistance MATTERS" (3, emphasis in original). This theorization is important because it includes all Black students in the US and globally. Specifically, the term "anti-Black linguistic racism" is theoretically and politically powerful in connecting and uniting all Black communities in resisting white linguistic hegemony and ideologies that harm all Black students. However, unlike Baker-Bell's theorization that focuses on the language history of US Blacks, descendants of enslaved Black people, the transnational Black language pedagogy I propose considers the diversity of language practices and language histories other Black students bring to US writing and language arts classrooms and seeks to address the learning challenges they encounter. My students' racialization and raciolinguistic experiences also suggest that we can no longer continue to research, theorize, and teach Black language as monolithic or homogeneous because this risks flattening or erasing language differences in the US Black community.

Collectively, the five stories reveal that the main experiences that tie and continue to affect all Black people's linguistic practices are slavery, colonialism, and racism. Patrick and Jack's stories reveal the impact of slavery in Angola. Like US slavery, Portuguese slavery and other European slaveries adversely affected Blacks in other Afro-Diasporic contexts. This trauma also lives with descendants of enslaved families left behind on the African continent, a fact rarely acknowledged. Because of this, my proposed pedagogy recommends teaching slavery, colonialism, and racism together to better reveal how they contributed to raciolinguistic ideologies, racialization practices, and racist sociolinguistic

order in US and various Afro-Diasporic contexts. Teaching these experiences together can bond and bind these disparate Black communities and perhaps lead to more effective and unified antiracist strategies that counter Eurocentric linguistic hegemony, white supremacy, racism, and violence toward all Black people in the US contexts and global contexts. To do this work, however, Black language scholars must make a deliberate effort to study communicative practices, language histories, and raciolinguistic experiences from Africa and other Afro-Diasporic contexts. To do so, I suggest we follow the model set forth by Geneva Smitherman of doing transnational Black language work. Adopting such a pedagogy might force us to consider using an encompassing term or category, like “people of African descent,” as Renée Blake suggests, since it “would allow for more complex discussions of race and identity in the United States” (165). This could also allow complex conversations about what *really* constitutes Black language.

Since raciolinguistic ideologies in Africa and other Afro-Diasporic contexts are rooted in European colonialism, the proposed transnational Black language pedagogy should work toward helping Black students achieve language decolonization and heal racial and linguistic trauma caused by colonialism. As shown by my students’ stories, Afro-Diasporic Blacks experience race-based psychological disorders arising from racism and raciolinguistic ideologies and colonization, disorders discussed by Afro-Diasporic scholars like Frantz Fanon and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o. These disorders compare to what Vershawn Ashanti Young, building on W. E. B. Du Bois, calls the problem of “linguistic double consciousness,” a psychological disorder suffered by speakers of African American language as a result of race-based language discrimination (See “Nah We Straight”). The proposed transnational Black language pedagogy should thus work to help Black students decolonize their languages and minds (wa Thiong’o); heal the trauma and violence caused by Eurocentric linguistic hegemony; and also help them recover, affirm, and celebrate all their languages, Englishes, dialects, and accents. To help students achieve this goal, writing instructors must familiarize themselves with various approaches to language decolonization in Africa and other Afro-Diasporic contexts. In Africa, for example, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o has proposed using Indigenous languages as one path to decolonization, while Chinua Achebe, working from a world-Englishes perspective, has proposed use of Africanized Englishes. In “Translingualism, Kenyan Hip-Hop and Emergent Ethnicities,” and in a collaborative essay by De Costa et al., I have suggested that translingualism should be considered as an additional option to language decolonization in Africa. This is because languaging practices in post-colonial Africa, especially among the youth, are translingual. A translingual approach to writing (Horner et al.) acknowledges the linguistic heterogeneity among users of language in

the US and globally and gives agency to users to draw language resources from their linguistic repertoire to achieve various writing and communicative ends. A translanguaging approach to writing also rejects monolingual assumptions that emphasize standardized, static, and discrete approaches to language.

While some Black language scholarship has suggested that a translanguaging approach to writing is not appropriate for Black students because it does not emphasize race in its theorization, or it is race-flattening (Gilyard; Baker-Bell et al.), I argue that it can be one of the most relevant approaches in addressing African students' language needs studying in the continent and in transnational contexts given their multilingual identities. Collectively, Jack, Patrick, and John's stories revealed that their linguistic identities are shaped by six language systems—Lingala, Kinyarwanda, Spanish, Portuguese, French, and English. Kigamwa and Ndemanu have also suggested that the translanguaging approach to writing is more effective in addressing the language and literacy needs of African immigrant students since their Englishes are translanguaging in character as influenced by various factors and histories, some of which I discussed in this essay.

Similarly, Osa and Chinelo's stories revealed how they use US Ebonics and Standard English to navigate their African and African American identities. Kendra Mitchell, whose study is based on working with various Blacks (non-African Americans) from the Black diaspora, suggests that a translanguaging approach to writing works better for such students because it gives them agency to engage in languaging practices that push the boundaries and norms of both African American language and Edited American English. Similarly drawing from the Anglo-Caribbean, Milson-Whyte et al. note that as US composition continues to "internationalize and translanguify," it can learn a lot from a "sociolinguistically fascinating translanguaging teaching and research site: the postcolonial Anglophone Caribbean" (4). These two contexts, Africa and the Caribbean, suggest that translanguaging is a pedagogical option for Black students in local and transnational contexts like the US. However, like the transnational Black pedagogy I propose here, a translanguaging pedagogy for Black students should be informed by raciolinguistics, decolonial frameworks, and other critical language awareness perspectives.

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NOTES

1. The data presented in this article is part of a larger, IRB-approved project on investigating students' multilingual practices in a first-year writing class.

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