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“What I care bout dogs?”

How the hegemony of the English language colonizes marginalized groups

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate School at the  
University of Missouri-St. Louis in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Education  
With an emphasis in Metropolitan Leadership and Policy Studies

April, 2014

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## Abstract

Language has always seemed to play a pivotal role in the identity of individuals and groups who are relegated to the status of *other* by members of the dominant group. The misshapen identities of the *others* are further exacerbated by systems and structures in place, like education, which ensure the continued hegemonic status of dominant groups. Not being a part of the dominant group, and yet being required to conform to their standards, can be confusing for those on the outside. The character Celie, expressed this confusion, “Whitefolks all over them, talking bout apples and dogs. *What I care bout dogs?* [emphasis added] [...] Look like to me only a fool would want you to talk in a way that peculiar to your mind.” (Walker, 1982, pp. 193-194).

This autoethnography is informed by Critical Race Theory and Critical Research. CRT states that racism is a normal part of American life, and in terms of Critical Research, Merriam (2009) wrote that “power in combination with hegemonic social structures results in the marginalization and oppression of those without power.” (p. 35). My own memories of living in South Africa and the United States, give voice to this phenomenon. I want to explore whether language is replacing race as a social and political identifier. Finally, this ethnographic study will hopefully encourage others to come forth and add their own voices. If all dialects hold equal status in a society, would this lessen the chance of language replacing race as a social identifier? Would structures like the police then serve all people, and would the people, and their identities, begin the process of healing?

This dissertation is dedicated to my sons Liam Scott Andrews and Myles Eric Andrews.

You inspire me daily, and you bring joy to my life.

I also dedicate this work to the memory of my parents Maria and Joseph Andrews, as well as my brother Gerald Andrews, all of whom never experienced freedom from

Apartheid in South Africa.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Bilingual

Bilingual,  
That's me.  
    Out of my mouth  
    Comes sounds,  
Weaved into words  
For all to see,  
But not understand.  
    Out of my mouth  
    Other words knitted  
    From bitter sounds  
Force-fed by men and women  
Who do not see me  
As human.

Bilingual,  
That's me.  
    Yet my bi-ling-ual-ism  
    Does not reveal  
    What language I dream in  
Or does it?  
    As I stutter-step through  
    A language  
    Embedded in my brain  
But not my heart  
Am I  
Truly  
Bilingual?

Tweetalig,  
Dis ek.  
    Van my mond  
    Straal uit klanke,  
    Waarvan ek woorde weef  
Sodat almal kan sien,  
Maar nie verstaan nie.  
    Van my mond  
    Brei bitter woorde  
    Van verbitterde klanke  
Deur krag en mag gedwing  
Deur mense wat my nie sien  
As mens nie.

Tweetalig  
Is ek.  
    Alhoewel in my twee-tal-ig-heid  
    Vertoon ek nie  
    Die taal van my drome  
Of nie?  
    Ek hikkel-sukkel voorentoe  
    In a taal  
    Diep in my verstand  
Maar nie in my hart  
Is ek dan  
Werklik  
Tweetalig?

I wrote the poem above as I learned, in the final year of my Master's studies, how insidious language is and what role it plays in power dynamics in society. I regard this as the start of my journey into acquiring knowledge of the hegemonic nature of the English language and the role it has played in my life.



Language has played a pivotal role in the identity of individuals and groups. Language has also presented barriers for those who are not considered or accepted by the dominant group in a society. The individuals and groups who are denied access and relegated to the status of *other* by those who are members of the dominant group may never achieve a status on par with the hegemonic group members. Oftentimes members of oppressed groups cannot understand this rejection, but have grown accustomed to behaving in a certain way. Celie, a central character in *The Color Purple* expressed this confusion:

Darlene try to teach me how to talk. [...] You say US where most people say WE, she say, and peoples think you dumb. What I care? I ast. I'm happy. But she say I feel more happier talking like she talk. [...] Bring me a bunch of books.

Whitefolks all over them, talking bout apples and dogs. *What I care bout dogs?* [emphasis added] I think. [...] But I let Darlene worry on. Sometimes I think bout the apples and the dogs, sometimes I don't. Look like to me only a fool would want you to talk in a way that peculiar to your mind. (Walker, 1982, pp. 193-194)

This expression exemplifies an essential part of my proposed dissertation. For me identity is often directly linked to language, and the language of a dominant culture tends to place certain groups in subordinate positions. In providing the information in my own memories of growing up in societies where the hegemony of the English language is prevalent, I hope to give voice to this phenomenon that is rarely spoken about in public. Moreover, this autoethnographic study will hopefully encourage others to come forth and voice their opinions and share their own narratives. Marginalized individuals and communities do not often feel empowered to speak out and let their voices be heard, or

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that, in fact, that their voices carry any weight. It is my belief that the more people talk about things the less power it will have. That then is the goal, to change the power dynamics surrounding the English language so that all dialects may eventually hold equal status.

### **Rationale for Study**

“Our language embraces us long before we are defined by any other medium of identity” (Delpit & Kilgour Dowdy, 2002, p. xvii). Language has been an important factor in many environments, and has contributed to the power relationship dynamics in those environments. This may be best exemplified when one thinks of the hegemonic nature of colonial forces during the exploration age of Bartholomew Diaz, James Cook, Vasco Da Gama, and the American-celebrated icon, Christopher Columbus. The occupying European settlers who followed these explorers to the newly discovered countries and territories inevitably resulted in hardship, degradation, and lives of servitude for native inhabitants of these lands. Mufwene (2002) wrote that, “colonisation conjures up political and economic domination of one population by another. This form of control is often associated with military power, which, based on human history, is the means typically used to effect such domination. This has been made more obvious by the European colonisation of the world over the past four centuries.” (p. 63). One way in which power was exercised by the occupying nations was to force the local inhabitants to communicate in the language of the colonialists. My own history of growing up in South Africa, where language was used to influence forced societal segregation and oppression, gives me a personal perspective of how language can be used in such power relationships. In the colonial and post-colonial South African context, two of eleven

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languages spoken by the citizens were declared official status. Kamwangamalu (2000) wrote that, "In the apartheid era, South Africa was officially considered a bilingual state, with English and Afrikaans as the sole official languages of the state." (p. 119).

The other languages were seldom used in any official capacity or even allowed in the mainstream media. Occasionally some words were co-opted by the official languages because of its daily use. The dialect and accent whites used were often regarded as the standard way to speak the language. As a member of an oppressed community, our manner of speaking was often considered inferior. This perception often influenced how people treated those who did not speak Standard English or Afrikaans. In the article, *Languages of South Africa* (2010), the following is offered to explain Afrikaans:

Initially known as Cape Dutch, Afrikaans was largely a spoken language for people living in the Cape, with proper Dutch the formal, written language.

Afrikaans came into its own with the growth of Afrikaner identity, being declared an official language - with English - of the Union of South Africa in 1925. The language was promoted alongside Afrikaner nationalism after 1948 and played an important role in minority white rule in apartheid South Africa. The 1976 schoolchildren's uprising was sparked by the proposed imposition of Afrikaans in township schools. (p. 1)

I have found that teachers I have had in my schooling career held this perception of those in my community who did not speak Standard English or Afrikaans.

In 1998, I immigrated to the United States, and I immediately was made aware of two things with regard to language. First, there was a strong general opposition to people who did not speak English. Speakers of what was considered non-standard English were

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often regarded as ignorant by those who spoke the more standard version of the language. When I became a teacher in New York City, I often heard teachers berate students and their parents for the language they spoke. These students and parents were often African Americans. Purcell-Gates (2002) recalled, when visiting a fourth grade classroom, how the teacher, speaking about an illiterate parent, said to her, “I *knew* she was ignorant as soon as she opened her mouth!” (p. 123). This statement demonstrates that the attitude is not only displayed towards African Americans, but is more widespread, because the teacher is speaking about a white parent.

When I moved to Saint Louis to teach, this attitude towards speakers of heritage languages and African Americans was often reinforced by the teachers at my school. One teacher once asked me after a parent/student conference, which I attended as the special education teacher of the student, if I understood what the parent had been saying. It was not so much that she asked me that question, but that she reflected a certain attitude towards the parent, an African American female, which I had not seen her have towards white parents from similar socio-economic backgrounds.

Students in urban areas who are English language learners, and African American students who do not speak Standard English, are marginalized in American schools. Sook Lee and Oxelson (2006) reported how an Arabic-speaking mother discovers that her son has been “labeled as an ESL student” (p. 453) after she checked a box noting that he spoke a foreign language at home. The mother also noted that the attitudes of teachers, and discovery of problems with her son’s English by teachers, started appearing after she checked the box on the school’s form, not before.

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But it is not only the students who suffer under the oppressive conditions of English dominance in the United States. The attitude of English speakers toward Heritage language speakers as well as speakers of African American Vernacular English (AAVE), contribute to the tension, and negative perceptions of these marginalized groups. As a native English speaker I was once again commended last week on how articulate I was. I find this interesting, as I seldom feel compelled to congratulate others on how articulate they are.

Students in urban areas, especially African Americans and Hispanic students, have to run the gauntlet of language on a daily basis. This may be at school, or while performing translation duties for parents and other family members. Many more students who are English language learners have become a part of the urban academic landscape due to an influx of immigrants to the cities of the United States. Alonso, Anderson, Su and Theoharis (2009) further explored the attitudes of students toward learning and schools, and found that the widely held and reported belief that inner city students do not care about learning was not borne out by their research. Alonso (2009) explained that “While many of the scholars, journalists, and public intellectuals surveyed here claim to care deeply about the schooling of today’s young people of color, in their talk one finds very little righteous denunciation of the conditions under which these young people receive an education. Those representations, in turn, shape the way we as a society perceive and treat these young people.” (p. 35). The conditions then, are not openly acknowledged by those most qualified to comment and effect change. Alonso (2009) suggested then that experts give “currency to one-dimensional and devastating

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perceptions of young people of color as being anti-intellectual.” (p. 36). According to Alonso (2009):

In doing so, this common sense draws the public’s gaze away from racially segregated, physically decaying, and crowded places where [...] instruction continues to occur. Instead it draws the gaze towards students of color. It is the students, the expert voices emphasize, that are dysfunctional and in need of fixing rather than the school system or the social structures in which students find themselves. (p. 36)

My aim is to build on the research of Alonso et al. (2009), by offering my own experiences with language in South Africa and the United States as narratives and vignettes. English is the language of the minority in South Africa, and the language of the majority in the United States, yet the language itself exerts similar power, and evokes similar relationships between those belonging to the hegemonic culture, and those suffering under it.

### **English Only**

Monolingual-land  
Is where I find myself now.  
People speaking the same language  
But hiding very different thoughts  
Double-speak  
Awkward silences  
Sshhhhh  
Don’t say it  
And it doesn’t exist.

English Only!  
Love it or leave it!  
Don’t say anything  
That might offend me.  
Speak my language,  
But don’t speak to me.

Welcome!  
But keep your distance.

Bilingual  
Or  
Monolingual  
I am still  
On the outside  
Looking in.  
And still  
I  
Think  
My  
Thoughts  
And  
Speak  
My  
Mind.

This was the second of two poems I wrote during my postgraduate studies in New York City. I discovered that language caged and securely boxed me in as much as the color of my skin does.

### **Research Questions**

My research purposes are stated in the form of questions. The question I want to address is as follows:

1. Is language used as a social and political identifier in the same way that other identifiers such as race, ethnicity, and class are used?

Within this main question the following subordinate questions will also be addressed:

- a. How is language used as an identifier in institutions like law or education within the cultures of the United States, South Africa, and New Zealand?
- b. Does one's use of the English language influence how one is treated by the police or by teachers?

Asa Hilliard (2002) wrote that we must not forget that:

Africans were said by some historians to have had no history, by linguists to have had inferior language, by political scientists to have had poor self-government, by psychologists to have had low intelligence, by biologists to have had inferior genes, and by the theologians to have had no soul. [...] These views were enshrined in scientific literature of recent decades. They were taught in universities and colleges. (p. 90)

I find that these perceptions are still pervasive in schools and society in general, and unless they are addressed, we cannot expect African American, Latino, or other marginalized groups to succeed.

It is my hope that this and any future research I pursue in the area of the hegemony of the English language will invite new and supplementary counterstories to be offered. Such counterstories will offer a foil to existing majoritarian stories, and advocate a means of validating the truths of those who are marginalized and not often heard. If language is indeed being used as a social and political identifier, it should be noted that it is gender neutral. It would be beneficial if dialects or languages are no longer placed in the realm of “other” (Chang, 2008, p.26) especially in education, but are instead regarded as an asset. We should also not underestimate how people are affected by the attitudes and prejudices they encounter because of lingual hierarchy. I am again reminded of the words of Baugh (2009), who wrote that, “I did not know many white people other than schoolteachers, and they derided my use of English along with that of most of my African American peers.” (p. 67). Baugh (2009) recalled that “I suffered the early



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indignity of being tracked into low reading groups as I tried very hard to hear differences in pronunciation of *pin* versus *pen*.” (p. 67).

In discussing the police, and the discrimination and brutality I and others have experienced, it is my hope to expand on the broader aspect of the hegemonic culture in the United States. Dyson (2007) offered the following with regard to race and the police:

This is similar to when black people say, “We’re not against the police. We’re against police being unable to make the distinction between us and the bad guy. And when the police show up at our house, they shoot us. When they see us in the street, they arrest us. When they arrest us, they brutalize us. (p. 292)

The philosophy and approach by the police that Dyson (2007) suggests has been borne out by my own experiences. That has been a huge contributing factor to my fear of the police, both in the United States and South Africa. The link between schools and prisons has also been studied at length. Biehl (2011) offered the following information:

Since the 1970s, school suspension and expulsion rates in the United States have more than doubled to more than three million suspensions and over 97,000 expulsions in the year 2000. [...] “Zero-tolerance” discipline policies have fueled the increase in recent years, as has the increasing reliance of school administrators and educators on law enforcement tactics to discipline children. (para. 4)

Biehl (2011) further argued that:

These trends are bad for the children and families who are directly affected by them, helping to further entrench intergenerational poverty and marginalization and effectively cutting off children’s hopes for successful futures as productive adults. They are also destructive for communities as a whole because large

numbers of uneducated young people who are more likely to commit crime put all of us at a greater risk of becoming victims of crime, in addition to the fact that young people who are and remain unemployed do not build strong, self-sustainable communities as adults. (para. 8)

Students are therefore less likely to succeed in the larger society when they do not succeed in school. The school becomes a breeding ground for failure, and language is a part of that equation of failure. Baugh (2009) explained that, “Although our teachers, all of whom were White, did not sound exactly like Whites on television, they made it clear to Black students that our vernacular speech was inferior and must be avoided if professional ‘success’ was our ultimate objective.” (p. 68). A student, then, who does not display the requisite knowledge of, or adherence to the standards for English as set by the teacher and the larger school policies was expected to fail. Baugh (2009) went on to clarify that these messages of failure “were conveyed in both subtle and overt ways through praise, admonition, and linguistic sanctions in the classroom.” (p. 68).

“Education has both enslaving and emancipatory possibilities, especially during this period of economic restructuring and rapid change in our social life, and may, in turn, forge new ways of thinking about social life” (Brown, 2003, p. 148). I believe it should be our goal as educators and seekers of social justice that we explore all avenues that would construct opportunities leading to enfranchisement of those who might otherwise find themselves incarcerated and/or colonized by systemic structures of power.

### **Theoretical Framework**

My early forays into research in language and education have been informed by critical research. Merriam (2009), has stated that “power dynamics” (p. 35) are central to

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critical research. Another factor is that “power in combination with hegemonic social structures results in the marginalization and oppression of those without power”

(Merriam, 2009, p. 35). This type of qualitative research I am pursuing has been further under-girded by critical race theory. My own background and experience, as well as the tenets of critical race theory are essential to how I approached research. Critical race theory’s tenets (Ladson-Billings (1998); Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995); Yosso, Villalpando, Delgado Bernal, and Solórzano (2001)) that have influenced my research include the following:

- Racism is a normal part of American life (and of life in various other parts of the world).
- Neutrality, objectivity, and being colorblind are terms which have to be considered with caution.
- Storytelling is an essential way for the voices of marginalized peoples to be legitimized.

Finally, Ladson-Billings (1998), stated how “one of the central connections in understanding the relationship of this [CRT] scholarship to educational issues [...] is the “property issue” (pp. 14-15). Harris (1993) wrote that “Possession - the act necessary to lay basis for rights in property - was defined to include only the cultural practices of Whites. This definition laid the foundation for the idea that whiteness - that which Whites alone possess - is valuable and is property.” (p. 1721). Gilroy (2010) offered the opinion that property or lack thereof, “contributed to a problematic tendency to conceive culture itself as a form of property which is held as compensation for low status and heavily restricted access to both rights and wealth.” (p. 21). I would like to contend therefore, that

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language is a component of culture, and therefore is also a form of property. I intend to further explore the concept of language as property and how it has influenced my identity.

In exploring research, I have moved from case study, which Merriam (2009) defined as “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (p. 40), and now find myself looking more closely at autoethnography as a vehicle for my research and dissertation. Ellis (2004), in defining autoethnography, stated that, “Usually written in first-person voice, autoethnographic texts appear in a variety of forms – short stories, poetry, fiction, novels, photographic essays, scripts, personal essays, journals, fragmented and layered writing, and social science prose.” (p. 38).

My own experience as well as the influence of the rich storytelling of researchers and authors like Lisa Delpit, Gloria Ladson-Billings, and others in the literature I have reviewed, affirms that autoethnography is the vehicle that will best present the results of this research. Delpit (1988) related the story of a Black teacher discussing a book written in Black English which she had given to a Black high school student named Joey. The dialogue Delpit uses brings the story to life, and gives it much more meaning. To best illustrate this, I offer the full text from Delpit (1988):

*Teacher:* What do you think about that book?

*Joey:* I think it's nice.

*Teacher:* Why?

*Joey:* I don't know. It just told about black folk, that's all.

*Teacher:* Was it difficult to read?

*Joey:* No.

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*Teacher:* Was the text different from what you have seen in other books?

*Joey:* Yeah. The writing was?

*Teacher:* How?

*Joey:* It use more of a Southern-like accent in this book?

*Teacher:* Uhm-hmm. Do you think that's good or bad?

*Joey:* Well, uh, I don't think it's good for people down this a way, cause that's the way they grow up talking anyway. They ought to get the right way to talk.

*Teacher:* Oh. So you think it's wrong to talk that way?

*Joey:* Uh ... [Laughs]

*Teacher:* Hard question, huh?

*Joey:* Uhm-hmm, that's a hard question. But I think they shouldn't make books like that.

*Teacher:* Why?

*Joey:* Because they not using the right way to talk and in school they take off for that and li'l chirren grow up talking like that and reading like that so they might think that's right and all the time they getting bad grades in school, talking like that and writing like that.

*Teacher:* Do you think they should be getting bad grades for talking like that?

*Joey:* [Pauses, answers very slowly] No ... No.

*Teacher:* So you don't think that it matters whether you talk one way or another?

*Joey:* No, not as long as you understood.

*Teacher:* Uhm-hmm. Well that's a hard question for me to answer, too. It's, ah, that's a question that's come up a lot in schools now as to whether they should

correct children the way we speak all the time. Cause when we're talking to each other we talk like that even though we might not talk like that when we get into other situations, and who's to say whether it's -

*Joey:* [Interrupting] Right or wrong.

*Teacher:* Yeah.

*Joey:* Maybe they ought to come up with another kind of ... maybe Black English or something. A course in Black English. Maybe Black folks would be good in that cause people talk like that, so ... but I guess there's a right way and wrong way to talk, you know, not regarding what race. I don't know.

*Teacher:* But who decided what's right or wrong?

*Joey:* Well that's true ... I guess White people did.

[Laughter. End of tape.] (pp. 294-295)

Ladson-Billings (1988) also uses storytelling to relate her encounter with racism in a hotel after she attended a conference:

Shortly after I sat down comfortably with my newspaper, a White man peeked his head into the lounge, looked at me sitting there in my best (and conservative) "dress for success" outfit - high heels and all - and said with a pronounced Southern accent, "What time are y'all gonna be servin'?" (p. 8)

### **Delimitations**

Autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of writing and research, and there are many definitions. By definition, autoethnography employs self-narratives, and "the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis" (Merriam, 1998, p. 7). As such, this paradigm imposes its own constraints. The experiences I choose to put

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forth in this work is a delimitation. The fact that I am recognizing language as an identifier within such institutions as the law, the police, and education, narrows the scope of this autoethnography.

### **Limitations**

Besides the fact that autoethnography is being utilized as the method of choice, my own experiences in South Africa and the United States limits the scope of the study, and will prove to limit its generalizability in the traditional sense. Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2010), stated that “Generalizability is also important to autoethnographers, though not in the traditional, social scientific meaning that stems from, and applies to, large random samples of respondents. In autoethnography, the focus of generalizability moves from respondents to readers, and is always being tested by readers as they determine if a story speaks to them about their experience or about the lives of others they know” (4.4 Reliability, generalizability, and validity, para. 4). Generalizability becomes important and relevant in how readers of this autoethnography find it relevant to their lives or can relate to those they know or whose circumstances they may be aware of, even as *others*. As Ellis (2004) explained, readers think “about how our lives are similar and different and the reasons why. Some stories inform readers about unfamiliar people or lives.” (p. 195). Using my own experiences, recognizing language as a social identifier, and focusing on legal and education institutions, allows readers to either identify with my story, or see some of my story reflected in their own experiences. The generalizability in this sense is therefore validated by the readers of this autoethnography.

### **Definition of Terms**

➤ Hegemonic – the dominant position a group or entity has over other groups or entities

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- Heritage Language – a language that is spoken in the homes of people who do not speak the dominant language as a first language, if at all
- Lingual hierarchy – the ranking of languages in a culture or across a group of cultures

### **Significance of the Study**

Contrary to strongly held beliefs by some, English is not the sacred cow in culture. Hilliard (2002) noted the following misconceptions of English in America:

1. English is immaculately conceived and is a pure language
2. English is superior to other languages.
3. English is a fixed or permanent language.
4. English is essentially the same in all English-speaking countries and in the United States.
5. English in America is uninfluenced by African language.
6. English is language, not simply a language. (p. 92)

We need to open discussions in an environment where people are prepared to speak, and almost more importantly, people are prepared to listen. The research and scholarship is out there. It must be made available to the broader community so that perceptions and policies with regard to language can be changed. My own journey through languages, politics, education, and cultures has brought me to this point in my life. I therefore feel that it is incumbent on me to take what knowledge has been gained to the next level. This is the first step.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Introduction

#### Language and hegemony: A global issue

That language plays a critical role in the power dynamics and hegemonic nature of forces especially in colonial settings is difficult to dispute. I have found these dynamics to be present in the countries I have lived in (South Africa and the United States), as well as a country I have visited (New Zealand). In referencing the impact of colonialism, Gilroy (2010) wrote that, “how did they [the West] shape uneven moral sensibilities that could blur the formal lines of political ideology [...] [and] debates over who could qualify for recognition as a rights-bearing subject in a rights-bearing body.” (p. 57). In attending to this aspect of whether a body has rights, Gilroy (2010) stated the following:

Frederick Douglass [...] in his extraordinary 1852 speech on the meaning of the Fourth of July to the slave [...] They were compared with all the abuse to be found in “the monarchies and despotisms of the Old World [and in] South America.” Douglass declared that “for revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy, America reigns without rival,” and then continued [...] “Must I undertake to prove that the slave is a man? That point is conceded already. Nobody doubts it.” (p. 61)

This point about whether a human being from an oppressed group has to prove his humanity is carried forward in the struggle for civil rights in the United States. According to Estes (2005), in 1968, “The marchers were demonstrating their support for 1,300 striking sanitation workers, many of whom wore placards that proclaimed, “I am a

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Man”.” (p. 131). Estes (2005) went on to explain that the marchers wanted acknowledgement and validation of “dignity and humanity for all African Americans” (p. 131).

Gilroy (2010) stated that, “The idea of natural hierarchy was an intrinsic ingredient. Humanity – like history, historicity, and historicity – would be monopolized by Europeans” (p. 58). This can clearly be seen in the histories of South Africa, the United States, and New Zealand. Indigenous as well as people brought as slaves, as in the case of South Africa and the United States, have borne the brunt of laws set in place specifically to oppress them. Now, Gilroy (2010), is addressing what he called the “belligerent civilizationism and its projection of race as a key category in politics, economics, and culture” (p. 60). This makes it easier for “racial hierarchy and the domination of a large number of people by a much smaller number with a greater measure of force set up particular patterns.” (Gilroy, 2010, p. 86). The shift in the focus from race to language becomes almost inevitable, especially following the laws enacted to ensure civil rights. “Black Americans did indeed furnish [...] new conceptions of freedom. Those precious gifts have now been widely exported. They altered the world’s moral architecture. The ongoing battle against racism demands that we draw attention to that process.” (Gilroy, 2010, p. 152). On the issue of race and language Dyson (1996) posited that:

In many ways, orality and literacy, in Walter J. Ong’s memorable phrase, are flip sides of the same rhetorical articulation that is at the heart of fierce debates in American life over the value and status of black identity and intelligence. It all boils down to whether or not black folk are able to read, write, or speak in ways

that prove their facility with language and, hence, prove their identity as true Americans and their status as intelligent human beings. That's why there's still a great deal of white cultural energy focused on the fact that a figure like Colin Powell is so articulate, an observation that captures at once surprise and relief.

(p. 33)

Even closer to the present, commentators, opponents as well as supporters were found to comment on President Barack Obama's articulate quality. Samy Alim and Smitherman (2012) recalled how then Senator Joseph Biden described then Senator Barack Obama as the "first mainstream African-American who is articulate" (p. 34). The battle for equality on the racial side continues, but a more insidious battle with language wages in parallel to the more obvious and more notorious racial one. After all, it is much easier to openly campaign for English Only than to campaign for No Hispanics.

Fazzaro (1990) wrote that, "Gramsci's hegemony can be broadly defined as influence by leadership and consent than by domination and coercion" (p. 13). It is more tempting to believe the earlier assertion that "Gramsci believed that a state that maintains its dominance over civil society through coercion needs no sophisticated political structures to maintain its control" (Fazzaro, 1990, p. 11). Gramsci also made the link between culture and the hegemony of language. As Fazzaro (1990) noted, "Gramsci conceived culture as languages (hegemonic instruments), all aspects that constitutes man's humanness, and education in civil society" (p. 14). McNally and Schwarzmantel (2009) confirmed Gramsci's approach to language and hegemony with their assertion that, "One recent commentator remarks that Gramsci's historical approach and his

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concern with language make “Gramsci especially relevant in a world of debates about postmodernism, new social movements and globalization”.” (p. 9).

The role of English hegemony is supported by Ferguson (2007) who wrote that, “The rise of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) as a major branch of language teaching in the last half century is firmly rooted in [...] the spread of English as a global language” (p. 8). Ferguson (2007) went on to say that “English [is] in control of high prestige domains of higher education, scientific communication and transnational business” (p.15). If that is the case, English certainly will maintain a powerful position in culture, society and politics. Ferguson (2007) postulated that “global linguistic diversity is clearly diminishing, and there are situations of language contact with English where the consequences have been very adverse for indigenous vernaculars” (p.14).

Clearly English has through colonialism, and subsequent dominance of economic and political arenas, continued to exert an influence that negatively impacts on marginalized communities. Erling (2005) opined that “literate English needs to embrace a range of settings and bind diverse periphery and centre communities together so that its users can put the language to ‘critical and creative use, challenging and dismantling the hegemony of English in its conventional forms and uses’ [and] her proposal does not only attempt to make English more democratic and neutral, but also more suitable as a tool of critical reflection and resistance.” (p. 42). The term “literate English” (Erling, 2005, p. 42) implies educated, informed, or well-read. The spirit of the quotation suggests, however that all English be included, whether literate or not. In this way an attempt can be made to dismantle the traditional hegemony of the English language.

## **Critical Race Theory**

### **History of Critical Race Theory**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is widely used in the field of education. Yet its origins emanate from the legal field. Ladson-Billings (1998) writes that it was the writings of Lani Guinier, the Clinton Administration's proposed Assistant Attorney General, which brought Critical Race Theory to national prominence. After vilification from the media, Guinier's nomination was withdrawn, but Critical Race Theory has grown in scholarship and acceptance. The link to South Africa is even present in this event. According to Ladson-Billings (1998), Guinier proposed that:

In electoral situations where particular racial groups were a clear (and persistent) minority, the only possibility for an equitable chance at social benefits and fair political representation might be for minority votes to count for more than their actual numbers. Guinier first proposed such a strategy as a solution for a post-apartheid South Africa. Because Whites are in the obvious minority, the only way for them to participate in the governing of a new South Africa would be to insure them some seats in the newly formed government. (p. 10)

This is remarkable in itself as Guinier was advocating for whites to be represented fairly by some kind of quota system, the very concept for which she was vilified.

However, it was Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) who subsequently attempted to address CRT and race in their writings. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) spend some time exploring the origins of critical legal studies, the double consciousness proposed by Du Bois, and the issue of property rights. What I am most drawn to in CRT is the acknowledgement that racism is endemic in American culture and society. Delgado

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(1995) was of the opinion that racism is “normal, not aberrant, in American society” (p. xiv). It is perhaps why proponents of Critical Race Theory are still vilified in academia today.

### **Tenets of Critical Race Theory**

The tenets of Critical Race Theory that I wish to focus on are:

- **Racism is a normal part of American life.**

Long before Critical Race Theory had a name W.E.B Du Bois made a statement. The particular DuBois line is from *The Souls of Black Folk*, “the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line” (Du Bois, 1969, p. 1). This problem extends both before and beyond the twentieth century, despite some gains made in societies where oppression still occurs. McDonald (2003) explained that “racism is more than just acts of individual prejudice. Rather, it is seem [sic] as an endemic part of life, deeply ingrained in the education system through historical consciousness and ideological choices about race” (p. 3). Ladson-Billings (1998) explained that racism “is so enmeshed in the fabric of our social order, it appears both normal and natural to people in this culture” (p. 11). It is therefore essential that this be exposed through dialogue, writing, and public discourse to create the necessary dissonance that will eventually create change. Ladson-Billings (2005) lamented that session organizers amended the title of the symposium of American Educational Research Association (AERA) in April 2004 to, “‘And we are still not saved’ as an indicator of the limited progress that we have made in educational equity since William Tate and I raised the issue of critical race theory in education 10 years” (p. 115). In another ten years we should not be lamenting the same limited progress.

- **Skepticism of neutrality, objectivity, and being colorblind.**

A questioning approach to whether neutrality, objectivity, and colorblindness exist in our society might be one way to look at the second tenet of Critical Race Theory. Yosso et al. (2001), in expounding on the tenets of Critical Race Theory, wrote that this tenet is a “challenge to Dominant Ideology” (p. 91). Yosso et al. (2001) went on to write:

A critical race theory in education challenges the traditional claims of the educational system such as objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity. Critical race theorists argue that these traditional claims act as a camouflage for the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups in U.S. society. (p. 91)

Those in society who make this claim or have the worldview that we are living in a post-racial society, cloak racism under a veil of ignorance or naiveté. Ladson-Billings (1998) stated that, “The race-neutral or colorblind perspective, evident in the way the curriculum resents people of color, presumes a homogenized “we” in a celebration of diversity.” (p. 18).

- **Storytelling in CRT is a way to counter the dominant cultures’ own storytelling.**

Much of the discourse in societies where one culture is dominated by another lends itself to the dominant cultures narratives being told most often. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) regarded this aspect of CRT as “a way to communicate the experiences and realities of the oppressed, a first step on the road to justice” (p.58). If there is no outlet for voices of marginalized communities to be heard, how will equality ever even be approached? Ladson-Billings (1998) explained that “Stories provide the necessary

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context for understanding, feeling, and interpreting.” (p. 13). McDonald (2003) wrote that the storytelling component of CRT “legitimizes and promotes the voices of people of colour by using storytelling to integrate experiential knowledge drawn from a shared history as ‘the other’ into critiques of dominant social orders.” (p. 2).

### **Critical Research**

Merriam (2009) asserted that “power dynamics” (p. 35) is central to critical research. In her study, English (2005) also examines this and her study researches how colonization ostracizes people because of characteristics like race and ethnicity. The component that is missing from the previous reference is that of language, and how it contributes to the marginalization of groups. However, it should be remembered that race, ethnicity, and language are often interwoven into the same fabric of oppression. Holborow (2006) addressed this aspect of culture:

Some social interpretations of language stress that language plays a decisive social role and argue that language is not just part of society but constitutive of it. In this way of thinking, the direction is from language to the social and manages to give language reality-creating powers quite as formidable as those to be found in claims that language is society-free. For example, Foucault [1969/1982], maintained that ‘discursive practices’ were all-encompassing. For him, discourse itself constituted and reproduced power relations in society. Foucault’s view of language has remained influential in studies of language and power. (p. 2)

Chang (2008) differentiated between other narratives and autoethnography, and wrote that there is a cultural examination and interpretation that is included in autoethnography. Autoethnography should lay bare the underlying cultural and power dynamics that



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interplay, and how that in turns shapes identities. Ellis (2004) has written that, “Autoethnography overlaps art and science” (p. 31). This should be interpreted as meaning that it goes not only beyond the classroom, but beyond the disciplines of science and art in terms of research and producing literature. Ellis (1999) warned that “honest autoethnographic exploration generates a lot of fears and self-doubts—and emotional pain. Just when you think you can’t stand the pain anymore, well that’s when the real work has only begun” (p. 672). Of course this is something one has to understand and get beyond. Ellis (2009) further elaborated about the reality of rewards, and wrote that, “you come to understand yourself in deeper ways. And with understanding yourself comes understanding others. Autoethnography provides an avenue for doing something meaningful for yourself and the world.” (p. 672).

### **The Hegemony of Language in South Africa**

Language has always seemed to play a pivotal role in the identity of a man, woman, or child and has always represented a key in culture and a society. Individuals and groups who are denied access to resources are perhaps commonly labeled as other by those in positions of power; an easy and well-used method to marginalize entire groups. The specific language policies of apartheid South Africa granted official status to English and Afrikaans. What this meant in practical terms for those whose home-language was neither English nor Afrikaans, was that they had to learn a new language in order to negotiate even their daily existence in South Africa. Education was offered only in English or Afrikaans. Newspapers and other multi-media were almost entirely presented in the official languages. Commerce was conducted in English or Afrikaans, and the signage presenting the laws of apartheid were offered in the official languages. As long

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as language plays this role, access to some form of equal education would appear to remain fraught with inconsistently applied policies encouraged by perceptions of speakers of languages of hegemonic groups in society.

### **History and Language in South Africa**

South Africa and its racial policies, apartheid, and everything associated with those policies, has represented, by design, stagnation for some groups and individuals and success for others for many generations. Language has certainly played an important role in the formation of the status quo in South Africa. From the taking up of Afrikaans by the Boers as they battled the English in the Boer Wars at the turn of the twentieth century, to the riots against the use of Afrikaans as a forced Medium of Instruction (MOI) by student protesters almost a hundred years later, language has taken center stage. In fact, both White Afrikaans speakers and English speakers reached a compromise by giving each other's language an equal status in the apartheid South African landscape. Both English and Afrikaans were given official status. Kamwangamalu (2000) has written that, "In the apartheid era, South Africa was officially considered a bilingual state, with English and Afrikaans as the sole official languages of the state" (p. 119).

With regard to language and identity, Olivier (1976) expressed the following in a paper presented at the World Educators Conferences in Hawaii, "Although language serves as the most intimate articulation of the individual and his group, it can also serve as a barrier to those who do not speak or understand the official language" (p. 1). Olivier (1976) went on to say that, "Language has been called the soul-expression of a total people, because it is so intimately bound up with one's background, with the "national", with the most intimate articulation of the individual and his group" (p. 4). This time, and

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this author's words are chosen because this presentation was made at the height of the student riots in Soweto in 1976. Olivier stated that , "Disruption is positively related to integration. Schools which are almost all White or all Black are less likely to be disrupted. This might suggest a policy of 'apartheid' as a solution to disruption." (p. 5). The irony is that Olivier is quoting researchers from Syracuse University, who were writing about American schools. These sentences show that a distinct parallel existed, and continues to exist between South African education and American education and its respective institutions. At least it shows that some of the brightest minds of the time thought alike. What is further alarming is that Olivier (1976) went on to express the following thoughts:

- [1.] [black] People in Africa are like elephants: they rarely forget – although they will tolerate – for centuries – if need be
- [2.] the first description of an ideal, harmonious (and therefore "just" society), was outlined by Plato. *Here the wisest and noblest were to be rulers* [emphasis added] – the guardian, the most talented advance.
- [3.] The Asian and Coloured [sic] [people] being indifferent. (pp. 6-7)

### **Language Policy and Attitudes in South Africa**

Language has, and continues to play a major role in how individuals and groups are perceived. This is especially true in multilingual societies where one or two languages play a hegemonic role. The fact that scholarship about this topic exists globally is a testament to the importance language plays in education and more importantly, in the larger culture. The Bantu Education Act of 1953 was the most insidious of the policies introduced into South Africa. Forcing students to learn two additional languages other

than their home language in order to gain the advantage education offers was exactly what the authors of apartheid wanted. The irony of this position by the South African government is presented by Robertson and Robertson (1977) who offered the following:

Afrikaners believe firmly in the right of all people to live and be educated in their own languages. The attempt by the nationalist government to impose Afrikaans [and English] on blacks, therefore, is a surprising contradiction of their own philosophy. President Steyn of the former Boer Orange Free State stated emphatically at the conclusion of the Boer War when the language of his people was denied and they were forced to learn English: *The language of the conqueror in the mouth of the conquered is the language of the slave.* (p. 31)

Despite proposals that blacks be instructed in their mother tongue, Robertson and Robertson (1977) presented that, “Although it was agreed that a full inquiry should take place, the official policy remained unaltered. Indeed, the Department of Bantu Education apparently went a step further than the official policy by insisting which subjects should be taught in each language.” (p. 32). More currently, Dixon and Peake (2008) offered that “The National Language in Education Policy (DoE, 1997) encourages mother tongue instruction, especially in the early years. The reality is that this is not necessarily happening. Many children are taught in their second, third or fourth language, English, by teachers who are not necessarily proficient in English themselves” (p. 75). It is these policies which first led to violence emanating from the schools. Robertson and Robertson (1977) stated that “Beginning in February, 1976, overt evidence of rising resentment in the form of student, teacher, and parent protests became an almost daily occurrence. In

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spite of growing pressure, there was virtually no official reaction and the series of events predictably erupted into tragic violence on June 16.” (p. 32).

Language attitudes in South Africa represent the hegemonic role of English in South African classrooms. Fingone (2012) has written that “not every language has the same linguistic capital; some languages wield more economic, social, cultural, and political power and status than others.” (p. 8). Fingone (2012) went on to assert that “Official Languages are examples of languages with great cultural capital. Once a language has been granted official status by a nation-state it will likely be taught in public schools, used in the market as the means of economic exchange, and eventually used predominantly in the private sphere.” (p. 9). South African blacks, Indians, and coloreds still do not have equity when it comes to education, despite the fact that political equality was promised with the first open elections in 1994.

### **Language and Politics in South Africa**

South Africa was built not only on racial hierarchy, but linguistic hierarchy as well. With up to eleven major languages being spoken in South Africa, the architects of apartheid were sure to use their policies to ensure that blacks, coloreds, and Indians were given the smallest opportunities of success in the larger society as well as at school. Much like inner city African Americans, so-called coloreds were labeled as ignorant because the English they spoke was not regarded as standard. Race and language were seated at the same bench, sometimes race trumped language, and vice versa.

Dr. H.F. Verwoerd, a former Prime Minister of South Africa, and widely regarded as one of the architects of apartheid was instrumental in supporting and implementing

policies in South Africa that oppressed other groups, especially blacks. Van den Berg and Meerkotter (1993) related the following about Verwoerd:

These twin purposes – separation and inequality – were clearly articulated by Dr H F Verwoerd in an infamous speech in the Senate on the occasion of the creation of the Department of Bantu Education in the early 1950's [...]

Verwoerd's speech was replete with racist, supremacist and sexist insensitivities:

The salaries which European (i.e. 'white') teachers enjoy are in no way a fit or permissible criterion for the salaries of Bantu teachers...the Bantu teacher serves the Bantu community and his salary must be fixed accordingly... new salary scales for newly-appointed teachers... will be possibly less favourable [sic] than the existing scales... an increase in the percentage of woman teachers will bring about a considerable saving.

The Bantu teacher must be integrated as an active agent in the process of the development of the Bantu community. He must learn not feel above his community, with a consequent desire to become integrated into the life of the European community. He becomes frustrated and rebellious when this does not take place, and he tries to make his community dissatisfied because of such misdirected ambitions which are alien to his people. (p. 3)

The Oxford Color Dictionary and Thesaurus (1996) has defined "Bantu" as being a "(member) of an African Negroid peoples" (p. 36). In the context of South Africa, it was merely used in a pejorative manner to identify blacks in South Africa, much like the *N-word* is used in the United States. Verwoerd, architect of apartheid, clearly intimated that other races should be educated only so far as opportunities would be allowed them by the

hegemonic white culture. This was a speech given a mere generation ago, and the possibility that similar attitudes exist today would certainly be open to discussion.

May (2003) wrote that the covert goals of these Acts [Education Policies] [...] were “(a) to protect white workers from the threat of native African competition for skilled jobs, (b) to meet the demands of white farmers for unskilled African labor; (c) to produce a black population only educated to a level considered adequate for unskilled work and subordinated, and (d) to ensure a people who would also accept its subordination and inferior education as natural for a ‘racially inferior’ people” (p.36). May (2003) concluded that the language policies in South Africa were implemented to retain the ideological beliefs of South Africa’s white population.

In the new South Africa, English maintains its dominance as it is the lingua franca, Medium of Instruction, commonly referred to as MOI as it is the language used to instruct in schools, and language of business. Chick (2001) argued that groups are “constantly in conflict, with dominant groups seeking to build and maintain their hegemony, and subordinate groups seeking to wrest power from them.” (p.5). Chick (2001) explained further that “dominant groups establish and sustain their hegemony by means of ideological strategies [...] such as:

- projecting their discourse conventions and the assumptions implicit in them as commonsensical, natural, or appropriate (i.e. naturalizing their own discourse); and
- stigmatizing the discourse conventions of subordinate groups. (p.5)

Language, and discourse then, it seems reasonably clear, is used by dominant groups to further subjugate subordinate groups. This is common in my experience of the cultures of South Africa and the United States. This vanquishing of subordinate groups

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has seeped from the greater society into the schools of both South African and American cultures.

Bilingualism, communicating in both English and Afrikaans, is common in South Africa as well as other previously colonized countries. Kilgour Dowdy (2002) wrote about her mother's perspective on language, that "my mother always reminded us that we needed to learn to "curse in white" [...] we had to remember there was a white way, and that was the right way" (p. 6). This was typically the position in South Africa as well. White men and women were known as master and madam respectively in English, or bass and merrem respectively in Afrikaans. Kilgour Dowdy's mother's reality that white was right would fit well into the South African context.

Roncalla (2000) espoused the following about growing up in Peru, "Thus, the tragedy of the criolla spirit becomes apparent. You hate what is yours and make it marginal and inferior (Indian) while you admire what oppresses you and makes you want to become "the other" (European)." (p. 66). I am entirely empathetic to this line of thought, as it was evident in the communities I grew up in in South Africa. There was a distinct hierarchy not only in terms of race and ethnicity, but in terms of language as well. If you did not speak the standard white English and Afrikaans, you were regarded as unintelligent and also sub-standard as a human being.

### **Language Policy in Schools in South Africa**

Marginalized communities in South Africa stumble over an education system not created to ensure their success. This is partly due to language, and the medium of instruction in schools. As Alexander (2009) stated, "African language speakers in the Western Cape [South Africa] will tend to do badly in the matriculation examination



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largely because the medium of instruction and assessment is not the mother tongue, but a second or third language” (p. 60). I would add that other marginalized communities (who speak different dialects of English and Afrikaans), also perform badly because of this. It was exactly because of this problem that students had with the medium of instruction in schools (Afrikaans), which led to the student protests of 1976 and 1986 in South Africa.

In South African schools, to this day, English remains not only the lingua franca, but the primary Medium of Instruction (MOI) in South Africa, even though there are eleven languages which have been designated official status since the 1994 elections. Just as in the United States, knowledge of English in South Africa is paramount for access to other sources of knowledge. Lafon (2009) wrote that “Being familiar with English (or Afrikaans) is important for accessing knowledge in the South African schooling system” (p. v). English is the key to success. May (2007) opined that “English qualifies as the language of learning, without which one can do nothing, cannot get a job, and cannot succeed in life.” (p. 34).

Lafon (2009) concurred with what Olivier said some thirty four years ago, namely that “for many learners it [English] remains a foreign language [...] [and] English is the fundamental barrier to learning” (p. v). This might as well have been written about urban students in America, and confirms the strong parallels between the roles of language in the two countries. Mother-tongue instruction in South Africa (as compared with Heritage language or Immersion programs in the United States) has become an important debate in South Africa partly because it is accepted, especially among researchers that English-only instruction has, and continues to discriminate against certain segments of the population. According to Dixon and Peake (2008), their “analysis shows that the status quo of

previous policies remains [...] [and that] the hegemony of English is entrenched at the expense of other languages.” (p. 73). Parents and students realize that they have to conform to the standards that English demands. Bekker (2003) claimed that “there is in South Africa “persistent functional deficiency and low levels of development for indigenous languages in terms of corpus, status, and prestige.” (p. 2) [...] [and] finds that there is a “tension between the love of one’s mother-tongue versus the perceived superiority of English.” (p. 5). This is the unfortunate result of years of policies denigrating subordinate languages.

Van den Berg and Meerkotter (1993) wrote that the teachers in South Africa are not only a product of the Bantu education they received, but also perpetuate the behaviors and attitudes they were exposed to at school, to the detriment, or at the expense, of the training they received as teachers. It is clear that because of policies of the South African Department of Education, that the factors involved in teaching, like teachers, students, and language, as well as the complexities of the discourses and interactions, make implementing the policies that much more difficult.

Brock-Utne, Desai, Qorro and Pitman (2010) stated that “The excuses for using English as a medium of instruction based on “global trends” and the use of English as a global “ICT language [Information and Communication Technologies]” have surfaced every now and then among policy makers, parents, teachers, and even students” (p. 148). Brock-Utne et al. (2010) went on to assert that “English can no longer serve efficiently as a medium of instruction” (p. 148) but more importantly that “parents use isiXhosa with their children although they were in favour of English as a medium of instruction” (p. 192). This perfectly represents the hegemonic nature of English, it is deemed necessary to

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use in academic circles even though the first choice of language is the heritage language or mother tongue. In South Africa English plays such a hegemonic role.

The use of mother-tongue instruction in South Africa could be equated with the bilingual debate in the United States. Whether students should be taught in their heritage languages in the United States is a difficult subject because of the political implications of the English-only debate. Certainly teachers' attitudes towards students who do not speak English as their first language appear similar. Teachers generally regard such students as being academically below standard. Something like code-switching is also common in both countries. Lafon (2009) asserted that, "code-switching is a typical feature of multilingual societies such as South Africa" (p. 15). Code-switching occurs when someone switches between two different ways of talking, for example switching between one's home language, or mother tongue, and the language one was forced to adopt, that of the colonizer (Sprott, 2000).

Bourdieu (1991) asserted the following:

In this sense, like the sociology of culture, the sociology of language is logically inseparable from the sociology of education. As a linguistic market strictly subject to the verdicts of the guardians of legitimate culture, the education market is strictly dominated by the linguistic products of the dominant class and tends to sanction the pre-existing differences in capital. The combined effect of low cultural capital and the associated low propensity to increase it through educational investment condemns the least favoured classes to the negative sanctions of the scholastic market, i.e. exclusion or early self-exclusion induced by lack of success. The initial disparities therefore tend to be reproduced since the

length of inculcation tends to vary with its efficiency: those least inclined and least able to accept and adopt the language of the school are also those that are exposed for the shortest time to this language and to educational monitoring, correction, and sanction. (p. 62)

What Bourdieu (1991) is saying is that the dominant culture controls not only the language, but the educational system as well, and those not a part of the dominant culture are punished by such policies. It is not only in South Africa, but many other countries, like the United States, where English holds this hegemonic status. May (2007) concurred and wrote that “The English language is perceived throughout the world as the language of power and prestige.” (p. 34). Parents, educators, and policy makers in both countries seem to choose English as the appropriate Medium of Instruction. This may be because all of these groups feel that going up against the hegemony that the English language represents an exercise in futility. The use of English as a medium of instruction, as well as the lingua franca continues in South Africa despite the intent to change and proposals for change submitted by advocates for change. When reality will reflect intent is not certain, but efforts should be, and are ongoing.

### **History of Afrikaans**

With regard to the history of Afrikaans, it must be remembered that it was the so-called colored, Malay, and other minority communities which gave birth to Afrikaans as a language. The History of Afrikaans (1997) has given the following explanation of the origins of Afrikaans:

This unique language ‘just grew’ from the soil of South Africa. In the human melting pot of the Cape it was inevitable that, from the original Dutch spoken by

the first settlers, a colloquial form would be evolved by people such as the Khoikhoi and slaves from Malaya, Indonesia, Madagascar and West Africa. (p. 1)

According to Hahn (2011), the following is written with regard to the origin of Afrikaans:

Afrikaans began in the 17th century as a language variety then referred to as “Cape Dutch.” It developed essentially from Dutch, Zealandic and other Low Franconian varieties with influences from Low Saxon, Malay, Khoi-San and Bantu languages, French, English and many others, creating a language that is uniquely suited for life in Southern Africa. (para. 1)

Afrikaans, whose hegemonic white speakers, namely Afrikaners, regarded people who are not white as second-class citizens or non-humans. Language and race showed itself to be closely associated. The White speakers of Afrikaans and English considered the language that they spoke to be superior to the language spoken by other South Africans. And their version of the language was considered the standard.

### **Where to Now?**

English is the “language of wider communication” (Smitherman, 2002, p. 170) in South Africa. Smitherman (2002) explained that “The language of wider communication is the language of literacy and technology, as well as the medium in which even the historical experiences and lessons of the Blood have been captured.” (pp. 170-171). Relating to India, Venkateswaran (2000) expressed that there are parallels, in that “A universe of languages abounds in every street corner, restaurant, subway, and universities in this country, but these languages are not given a nod of recognition, due to the predominance of English” (pp. 59-60).

As Mallinson (2008) related the story of a black Appalachian woman, who moved to Ohio and found herself being singled out, bullied:

And I says, why, you know, stop making fun of the way I talk, you know, stuff like that. So it was obvious. And I think that's another reason why they zeroed in on me to take advantage, too, because I'm not from here. (p. 71)

Hilliard (2002) notes the following misconceptions of English in America:

1. English is immaculately conceived and is a pure language
2. English is superior to other languages.
3. English is a fixed or permanent language.
4. English is essentially the same in all English-speaking countries and in the United States.
5. English in America is uninfluenced by African language.
6. English is language, not simply a language.” (p. 92)

### **Language and Education in the United States**

In the mid nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, many European immigrants were successful in challenging whether their children had the right to be instructed in their own language. Tyack (1974) wrote about the Germans that their influence was due to the size and wealth of the German community (p. 107). Tyack (1974) confirmed that the clout Germans had in Cincinnati and St. Louis because of their wealth enabled them to persuade the school boards in both cities to include instruction in German in the schools of both cities (pp. 106-207). What was significant was that non-German speaking students flocked to the German schools (Tyack, 1974). In fact, with regard to the German community's desire to maintain their heritage, Tyack (1974) stated:

In 1875 William T. Harris, then St. Louis superintendent, staunchly defended the teaching of language in elementary school [and claimed that] by including the German minority that felt excluded, he said, the entire public system became more useful and more stable: “to eradicate caste distinctions in the community, is, perhaps the most important function of the public school system [and that] [...] national memories and aspirations, family traditions, custom, and habits, moral and religious observances – all these form what may be called the substance of the character of each individual. (p. 107)

This attitude was by no means the only one represented at the time. But character and morals would, in the meantime, be usurped by proponents of monolinguisism. It was not only German that was mounting what “Anglophile cultural chauvinists” (Tyack, 1974, p. 108) would no doubt call an attack on the American way of life. From the cosmopolitan school in San Francisco to the Polish, Italian, and German schools in Milwaukee, there was still a huge interest in other languages being offered at public schools (Tyack, 1974). The drive for monolinguisism grew, and bills were passed in Illinois and Wisconsin in 1889 to try to “regulate immigrant private and parochial schools by requiring that most instruction be conducted in English” (Tyack, 1974, p. 109). The cry for English-only instruction, and the accompanying shaping of attitudes, had begun.

Over one hundred years of English-only sentiment is, I feel, what shapes the negative attitudes of the dominant culture to speakers of non-standard English. Immigration to the United States continues to this day, and there is a constant influx of speakers of foreign languages. It must also not be forgotten that speakers of non-standard English (like African American Vernacular English) are also subject to the same negative

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attitudes. In creating the education system, the belief was to integrate European children into American society, while at the same time “they spoke little of the segregation of black people” (Tyack, 1974, p. 232). Both groups of students spoke “non-standard” English, but were treated entirely differently. The trend continues in schools today.

Tyack (1974) wrote that in 1908, “U.S. Senate Immigration Commission [...] counted more than sixty nationalities and discovered that 58 percent of all students had fathers who were born abroad” (p. 230). Even then, as Adele Marie Shaw, a reporter, wrote that two newly arrived Cuban students had “melted into the rank of file and were losing their distinctly foreign look” (Tyack, 1974, pp. 230-231) after merely a few days.

### **Language in American Schools Today**

Sook Lee and Oxelson (2006) observed from previous studies that “effective instruction of linguistically diverse students relates directly to teachers’ dispositions towards students and their backgrounds.” (p. 456). Teachers who display these attitudes then evoke counter-attitudes by students who feel teachers do not care and that some teachers merely come to school to get paid (Alonso, Anderson, Su, & Theoharis, 2009). One student interviewed said, “I hate it when they treat me like a fxxx-up,” and when students say that “schools suck,” they may not be reflecting “attitudes” but actual physical and organizational deficits (Alonso, et al., 2009, pp. 83-84). Many teachers feel that competence in English is a direct indication of intelligence. Sook Lee and Oxelson (2006) have written that some teachers feel that “to participate in this society [...] they [students] need English” (p. 462). Some teachers also expressed that “I don’t know whose job it [heritage language maintenance] is, but...not mine!” (Sook Lee & Oxelson, 2006, p. 462). Ball and Lardner (1997) argued that “negative attitudes towards children



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who speak it [heritage language], that in effect, their attitudes constituted a language barrier impeding students' educational progress" (p. 472). Sook Lee and Oxelson (2006) further asserted that "The main reasons provided by teachers as to why they are not concerned by heritage language maintenance were: (a) They saw it as a personal or family activity; (b) They did not have time in class to address the issues; and (c) They did not know how to support heritage language maintenance." (p. 465). Such attitudes undermine the confidence students should have in their teachers. African American students continually have to make adjustments, concessions, and contortions to adapt in schools. African American students find that they have to code-switch, or adopt mannerisms and behaviors foreign to them to satisfy expectations of their teachers who are white.

Students in schools in the United States have to battle daily against negative perceptions of them by others in the school environment as well as those beyond it. The connection of the United States to Africa is more than just historical, in terms of the slave trade. Linguistically there is also a connection. Hilliard (2002) stated that "the language spoken by African Americans is a fusion of languages" (p. 94). Hilliard (2002) opined that African languages have not only been retained in the speech of African Americans, but have influenced American English as well. The connection to Africa is then established historically and linguistically, and since English is the hegemonic language in both South Africa and the United States, the attitude to language should be explored.

### **Education in America After Slavery**

My own perception of the education system in the United States was one which reflected what I consider the general naïveté of the American public with regard to

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education and its availability. That access to school has been the domain of the rich is abundantly clear, when one has access to the true historic record. It is the privileged that benefited from education in early America, and that trend continues largely today. Tyack (1974) wrote that “Despite frequent good intentions and abundant rhetoric about ‘equal educational opportunity,’ schools have rarely taught the children of the poor effectively – and this failure has been systematic, not idiosyncratic” (p. 11). To me this means that the inadequate schools and ineffective education was pervasive and probably accepted. Sedlak (1995) stated that high schools were, “once primarily dedicated to serving the elite” and it was only after 1880 that high schools came to serve the general masses (p. 58). In this respect, the land of opportunity proved to be no better for the new immigrants in terms of education opportunities.

### **Education of Blacks in the South**

If schooling was inherently for the elite, and prejudicial against poor white students, as well as being biased against new ethnic immigrants from eastern and southern Europe, then it was horrendous for blacks in the south after the Civil War. Prior to the Civil War, Anderson (1988) wrote that “Between 1800 and 1835, most of the southern states enacted legislation making it a crime to teach enslaved children to read or write” (p. 2). The black population was legally denied the right to acquire language skills. However, the black population also realized how important education was for them to participate in American society, and “blacks emerged from slavery with a strong belief in the desirability to read and write” (Anderson, 1988, p. 5).

### **Urban Education**

In the urban centers, free blacks “zealously sought education and invested much income and effort in establishing their own voluntary schools” (Tyack, 1974, p. 111). In 1868, Tyack (1974) wrote that “M. B. Goodwin wrote a history of educational opportunities for Negroes [...] [and] that as many free blacks attended school before the Civil War in proportion to the population as did after emancipation” (p. 112). This did not sit well with certain whites. Tyack (1974) explained that “this zeal for learning galled lower-class whites became clear during a riot in 1835, when shipyard workers raged through black classrooms, demolishing furniture, breaking windows, and burning schools to the ground” (p. 112). Though the hooded specter of whites raging through black neighborhoods is not that distant in history, the attacks have become more subtle, and language is an important weapon in such attacks.

In the political arena, Anderson (1988) expounded that the campaign for citizenship “was successfully undermined by federal and state governments and by extralegal organization and tactics” (p. 2). Blacks faced lack of leadership by reformers and institutions on the issue of schooling and, in fact, they found rugged opposition. He goes on further to say that “black education [was] part and parcel of the larger political subordination of blacks, for it was the social system in which blacks lived that made their educational institutions so fundamentally different from those of other Americans” (Anderson, 1988, p. 2). Therefore it was never the intent to have blacks assimilated into American society, as many of the immigrants were able to be after initial prejudices suffered at the hands of native-born Americans.

Anderson (1988) asserted that it was the “intensity and the frequency of their [slaves] anger at slavery for keeping them illiterate” (p. 5) which resulted in their yearning for literacy. I realize how that rage is what is missing in current society and that fire needs to be rekindled. It seems that communities (African American, Latino, and the poor) who find themselves in the midst of the continuing crisis that is urban education need to wrest back control. Indeed as Anderson (1988) wrote about the situation in the mid nineteenth century, “Other hands cannot mark for them; other tongues cannot speak for them; other eyes cannot see for them; they must see and speak for themselves, and make their own characters on the map, however crooked or illegible” (p. 10).

Anderson (1988) wrote that, “When Carl Shurz toured the South in late 1865, he found planters believing that “learning will spoil the nigger for work”” (pp. 20-21). Further, “planters chose a labor-repressive system when given the option of that over free labor and mass literacy” (Anderson, 1988, p. 21). As is the case nowadays, it is merely the language that changed to give the appearance of a benign system. Anderson writes that after the Civil War “planters [...] reestablish[ed] the plantation system [...] with the overseer renamed “manager” or “agent”” (p. 21). Language is powerful, and knowledge has to be attained so that the voices of marginalized communities can be heard.

### **Language and Education**

Germans were also vilified as they sought to maintain their language and culture in schools. They were more successful in places like St. Louis. This was because of their “increasing numbers and wealth [that] they were an effective political pressure group” (Tyack, 1974, p. 107). They succeeded in introducing German in to elementary schools in 1864, and it wasn't until 1888 that school and political leaders not so sympathetic to the

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Germans, abolished the teaching of German in elementary schools. It would seem that the pride associated with the English language and the drive to be recognized as a monolingual society has a long and battle-scarred history. Tyack (1974) wrote that “In the late 1880’s there was a concerted drive in some cities and states to eliminate and curb foreign languages in elementary schools [...] and the contest over instruction in languages other than English became a symbolic battle [against] those who welcomed pluralistic forms of education” (p. 109). Just as the Germans, Poles, and Jews were considered *other* by the then native-born Americans, so now, the Latino and other new immigrants are marginalized as *other*.

### **Native Americans**

One of the prime motivators of reformers was to civilize the so-called uncivilized members of society. Graham (1995) wrote that “The Lake Mohonk Conference in 1884 resolved that “education is essential to civilization” [and that] the Indian must have knowledge of the English language” (p. 13). Graham (1995) presented another example that echoed this sentiment when he quoted the founder of the Carlisle School for Indians, Richard Pratt, who said “Kill the Indian and save the man” (p. 13). The education system currently in place for Native Americans, are lacking, to say the least. The National Council of State Legislatures (2008) opined that:

The state of education in our nation’s K-12 schools for Native students is distressing. Native students perform two to three grade levels below their white peers in reading and mathematics. They are 237 percent more likely to drop out of school and 207 percent more likely to be expelled than white students. For every 100 American Indian/Alaskan Native kindergartners, only seven will earn a

bachelor's degree, compared to 34 of every 100 white kindergartners. These statistics represent a snapshot of the current problems facing Native students.

(p. 1)

### **Education in the Twentieth Century**

The problem of the twenty-first century is rooted in the twentieth century and beyond. It is important to examine how education was withheld, and I believe how language played a role in the oppression of blacks, and other marginalized groups. In the South, blacks continued to struggle to create the infrastructure for the schools they so desired, as well as finding the right political and social climate that was supportive of schooling for blacks. According to Anderson (1988), "There were two hurdles to overcome to support the growth of black schooling in the South at the start of the twentieth century. They were, the lack of infrastructure, and secondly, the lack of black teachers." (p. 110-111). The Hampton-Tuskegee model still dominated the south. This was due to the fact that funds were readily available, and that men like Booker T. Washington and Samuel Armstrong advocated fiercely for it as the only practical schooling for blacks. I am entirely convinced that whites wanted to either keep blacks in their place for economic reasons, or that blacks were unacceptable to whites as social equals, or both. Anderson (1988) wrote that "[William H.] Baldwin expressed succinctly this ideology of industrial training for a racially qualified form of class subordination. [...] the Negro and the mule is the only combination, so far, to grow cotton" (p. 82). Anderson (1988) asserted that "The struggle between Washington and Du Bois about the course of black education at the start of the twentieth century was one chapter that was waged to "determine whether black people would be educated to challenge or

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accommodate the oppressive southern political economy” (p. 78). It is ironic that no matter where blacks graduated from, ultimately their fates were not dissimilar.

In the south, it was the case oftentimes that blacks built their own schools, with their own money, time, and labor. Anderson (1988) explained that, “Black southerners [because of their poverty] therefore had to wage a second crusade to establish common schools for their children” (p. 149).

### **Urban Schooling in the United States in the Twentieth Century**

Schooling was no easier in the burgeoning cities of the north. There were additional problems in the cities that compounded providing an equal education for the inhabitants of the cities. The realities of history have been distorted by historians themselves. Nash (1995) wrote that W.E.B Du Bois was “literally aghast at what American historians have done to this field” (p. 134). I am grateful to writers like Gary B Nash, who I believe has chosen to present history in its true form, and not from the point of view of the hegemonic culture. It is difficult not to acknowledge that history is presented by the conqueror through the eyes of the conqueror. This is much like Robertson and Robertson’s (1977) declaration that “*The language of the conqueror in the mouth of the conquered is the language of the slave.*[italics not added]” (p. 31). In my opinion, writers like Nash and Howard Zinn present a less official version of history.

### **Centralization**

In the cities, the poor were once more being marginalized in the early twentieth century. The initial push to larger districts and centralized boards of control, according to Kirst, changed the makeup of the boards from being more representative of the community to being populated by the rich and well-connected (Ravitch & Vinovskis,

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1995, p. 32). Tyack agreed with this and writes that “the immigrant poor were obviously unfit to manage their own educational affairs” (p. 151). Instead, the shift was to the centralization of boards of education. The proponents of reform were members of the elite, and businessmen who wanted to eliminate politics from schools, and place control with a selected few (as opposed to elected members who could invariably include new immigrants) (Tyack, 1974). In contrast, men like William Taggart opposed centralization, claiming that the affluent who wanted to take control had no respect for the ordinary working men and women (Tyack, 1974, pp. 155-156). St. Louis was also prominent in the move to centralization, and was eager to place almost all the power in a superintendent (Tyack, 1974, p. 158). Tyack (1974) wrote that “[Superintendent Louis] Soldan is supreme. He is a pedagogic Pope, absolutely infallible, unamenable to anyone or anything” (pp. 158-159). Franciosi (2004) explained that there were those opposed to centralization:

The earliest teachers’ organization to gain a significant measure of influence was the Chicago Teachers’ Federation (CTF) organized by Margaret Haley. In a 1904 address to the National Education Association, then a small professional organization, Haley complained that poorly paid teachers with little job security were working in overcrowded classrooms. Above all, she protested the weak voice teachers had in school policy. Schools were in danger of becoming factories, [...] Under Haley, the CTF fought for higher pay, pensions, tenure, and teachers’ councils, and struggled against centralization of administrative power. (p. 81)



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In San Francisco, Superintendent Alfred Roncovieri was not impressed with centralization or the corporate model. He served from 1906 to 1923, and “rejected the idea that purpose of the schools was simply to produce the products desired by employees” (Tyack, 1974, p. 164). Franciosi (2004) wrote that “In their eagerness to make schools more equitable or more enlightened, establishment reforms have contributed to the greater bureaucratization and centralization of American schools [...] the various agencies responsible for public education have become geologic monuments, with each layer representing a past reform initiative”. (p. 219).

### **John Ogbu**

It is interesting that Neckerman (2007) introduced the work of John Ogbu and Signithia Fordham in the introduction to her book. In it she cited the work of Ogbu and Fordham in discussing the academic success of urban African American students. Neckerman (2007) wrote that “Oppositional culture [...] in the work of John U. Ogbu and Signithia Fordham, frames academic effort as a betrayal of racial identity – as “acting white” – and discourages students from making a commitment to their education [...] thus racial segregation and hostility of the first half of the [twentieth] century might have fostered a cultural perspective detrimental to academic success” (p. 3). I believe Neckerman (2007) disparages black youth by stating that they are not interested in their education, and the reference to the cultural aspect certainly brings to the front that language, an element of culture, probably plays a role in this point of view.

## **Our Schools (Still) Suck**

### **A new perspective on Ogbu**

The opinion of Neckerman (2007) with regard to Ogbu and Fordham is certainly not supported in the book, *Our Schools Suck: Students Talk Back to a Segregated Nation on the Failures of Urban Education*. Alonso et al. (2009) wrote that Fordham and Ogbu's claim that 'oppositional social identities' and 'cultural differences' were the reason why African Americans did not succeed academically, was false (Alonso et al., 2009, pp. 44-45). The concept that African Americans and Latinos rejected education because it would show that they were acting white, is rejected by Alonso et al. (2009), who wrote that "as Karolyn Tyson has noted, "Tendencies toward disengagement from school and teasing 'nerds' are commonplace among all adolescents [...]" (p. 47). This shift to framing the argument as a cultural issue and, to me reinforces the historical arguments that African Americans are inherently inferior, and are driven by cultural and social deficits. Alonso et al. (2009) wrote that "Fordham and Ogbu's negative representation of 'the cultural meaning of education' held by African Americans overlooks the well-documented historical struggle that African Americans have urged to gain access to equal educational opportunities" (p. 46). This struggle is especially forcefully presented by James Anderson as presented earlier in this paper. Alonso et al. (2009) wrote that John McWhorter (*Losing the Race*) claims that the acting white theory is supported by many nationally known figures like Obama, Clarence Page, and others (pp. 57-58). However, for McWhorter to claim that something is valid just because someone talks about it is inaccurate (Alonso et al., 2009, p. 57). In *Our Schools Suck*, Alonso et al. (2009) gave

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voice to precisely the people who Ogbu and others claimed are immersed in a culture of failure in order to disprove this hypothesis.

### **Conditions in urban schools**

I feel that I have to stress that education is so central to the continued oppression, and the continued hegemony of English in the United States culture, that it had to be examined. Conditions in urban schools sadly reflect conditions in the neighborhoods. Any criticism of the structures of schooling is presented as something that devalues education itself (Alonso et al., 2009, p. 70). Despite the conditions they had to work under, students still displayed a remarkable faith in the fairness of the system, and that hard work would spell success in life for them (Alonso et al., 2009, p. 88). The American Dream, it seemed, lived on in the most trying of conditions, or perhaps because of those conditions. Alonso et al. (2009) concluded that the writings of the students in their study “demonstrate [...] the racial malice that is at the heart of our present system of unequal schooling” (p. 111). With unequal schooling comes an attached disregard for the language of marginalized communities, and the continued silence of its speakers. I would suggest that the racial malice referred to not only represents the current system, but traces the history of schooling of blacks, the poor and other minorities in the United States. Moreover, I believe that it has crossed over to linguistic malice; a practice that sits much easier on the United States psyche.

### **The Near Death of the Maori Language**

In looking at heritage languages and the communities who are waging constant wars against the hegemony of English, it is perhaps wise to look at those who are noting how those heritage languages are surviving. When looking through a Critical Race

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Theory lens, one sees how race and hegemony play an important role in how heritage languages face death or, in fact, survive. Ellul (1973) has written that, “In individualist theory the individual has eminent value, man himself is the master of his life; in individual reality, each human being is subject to innumerable forces and influences, and is not at all master of his own life” (p. 89). The author is indicating how individuals are protected by the groups they belong to. However, I see this quote as more of an indication of how outside forces not only influence, but sometimes determine the lives of those who are not members of the hegemonic culture.

It is important to look at Benton and Benton’s (2001) report, because they present an audit trail of the recovery of the Maori language in New Zealand. They call this RLS or “Reversing Language Shift” (Benton & Benton, 2001, p. 424). The Maori language use is chronicled from studies taken in the 1970s to 2000. In discussing the revitalization of the Maori language, Benton and Benton (2001) reflected on the ““Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale” (GIDS),” which indicates the stages that the language has to pass through on its journey back from “death” (p. 424). The GIDS is represented by 8 stages, with the 8th stage being the stage where the language is closest to death and stage 1 representing the language being used in higher education and government. In New Zealand this is represented, for example, by students being able to obtain a bachelor’s degree by only using Maori or that some government organizations will require fluency in Maori for its employees (Benton & Benton, 2001, p. 442). Similarly, in South Africa, some jobs being advertised require fluency or knowledge of languages other than the previously dominant, and official, English and Afrikaans. In both countries, though, English is still the dominant language. The stages of reversing

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language and revitalizing it to the stage where it is in common use in society are noted by Benton and Benton (2001) as:

Stage 8: the language is only spoken by the older generation (grandparents).

Stage 7: the language is active spoken by adults whose children are adults.

Stage 6: there is intergenerational communication in the language in a stable community (this is considered a critical stage without which further recovery is unlikely).

Stage 5: the oral communication is further extended to the home, school, and community

Stage 4: in this stage the use of the language is formalized at the elementary school level.

Stage 3: the language is spoken in certain work areas which Benton and Benton refer to as the “lower work sphere”

Stage 2: the language is used in the mass media and lower government.

Stage 1: the language is used in higher education and higher government. (p. 438)

The difficulty Maoris continue to experience in New Zealand society is tied to the historical hegemony of English in New Zealand. After all, if English is required in all aspects of social and work environments, there is little incentive to maintain a heritage language. Benton and Benton (2001) noted that, “the differences between the major North Island dialects [of Maori] are very slight when compared with, say, English dialects in England” (p. 431). I think that what they are trying to say is that people speaking different dialects of English are seldom marginalized unless there is some other form of discrimination, like a racial or ethnic component. This can be compared and is

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evident in the treatment of African American speakers of non-standard English, or speakers of Native American languages. I feel another example, more current in America, would be that, with respect to Spanish speakers, that immigrants from Spain are not treated the same way as immigrants from, say, Mexico. If one looks at the media coverage concerning immigration, it would be fair to say that there is considerably more negative coverage given to immigration, and immigrants, from Central or South America, than from Spain.

One thing I liked about the text is that Benton and Benton (2001) used Maori language often in the text. In one example, they described a Maori philosophy, namely, “Te Aho Matua (literally “the first thread”, i.e. the statement of fundamental principles underlying Maori thought and action)” (Benton & Benton, 2001, p. 435). Benton and Benton (2001) went on further to explain the term, and included even more of the Maori language:

Te Aho Matua is a statement that sets out an approach to teaching and learning that applies to Kura Kaupapa Maori [the “Maori Agenda” schools] [...] Te Kaitiaki o Te Aho Matua [‘the Guardian of Te Aho Matua’] is the body identified by the Minister of Maori Affairs as being the most suitable to be responsible for determining the content of Te Aho Matua, and for ensuring that it is not changed to the detriment of Maori. (p. 436)

### **Revival of the Maori language**

It seems that the hegemony of English almost resulted in the death of the Maori language, but that intervention by cultural and government agencies have successfully revived the language so that it is much more widely spoken. There has to be a good faith

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effort, and probably even a strong desire on the part of the hegemonic culture to embrace multilingualism, and not consider it a threat.

### **Conclusion and Link to Research**

I feel that my journey of life has taken me through various geographical regions. Using Critical Race Theory and being cognizant of Critical Research, I want to document my journey through storytelling which is an essential component of Critical Race Theory. More than this, I also want to analyze how my identity and the identities of those around me have been affected. My encounters with language in South Africa, the United States, and New Zealand, and its inevitable connections to politics, race, ethnicity, prejudice, and hegemony, leads me to believe that this is an important step to make in allowing the voices of those, like myself, to be heard.

## Chapter 3: Methods

### Introduction

As a black man in South Africa, and later in the United States, I am also a speaker of English with an accent. That is, my English is not accepted as standard. I had two personal narratives that relate to language that have informed my worldview, and continues to inform it. These narratives are an example of how I intend to use the power of storytelling, which has long been relegated to *lesser status*, to evoke not only my own memories, but to evoke similar responses in readers in the hope that this will encourage others to come forth with their own stories.

### Narrative 1

*I walked into the police station to report a “fender-bender” I had earlier that day. It was required to report any motor vehicle accident where no injuries occurred within 24 hours. I approached the desk, and the policewoman behind the desk started filling out the required form. When she got to the part where she asked, “When did the accident take place?” Following instructions, I literally scratched my head as I tried to recall the exact time of the accident. When I did this, the policewoman gave me a quizzical look, and said, “Well, if you have to think about it, go to the back, and come back when you know what you’re talking about.” Now it has to be said that the officer did not treat the other people in line in the same fashion. None of the people in line were white (as facilities were separate), but most black and colored people knew what behaviors were expected from them when addressing the police. Knowing that I had to report the accident, I walked to the back of the line, not wanting to give her the opportunity to*



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*arrest me, and waited for my turn. I had long since learned that you don't argue with the police.*

## **Narrative 2**

*It was dark when I reached my apartment after a long day at work. I wanted to pull in to my parking space, but a car was already there. As was custom, I honked my horn (offenders normally came out of their apartment and moved their vehicle). This time, two men approached me, and asked me to step out of the car. They proceeded to tell me that they were policemen, and that they could arrest me for "causing a disturbance." I was shocked, and tried to explain that this was the normal custom for residents who wanted to alert people that their parking space was being illegally used (I paid for it). The one officer said to his colleague, "Oh, we have one of the clever ones here." I knew that that was a signal for me to shut up, and I did. I listened to them as they continued to tell me what they thought I should have done. I don't even remember taking in the words. I just prayed that they would not arrest me. My young son was still in the apartment and would need me to get to school the next day.*

Well, let me divulge that the first narrative took place in South Africa, and the second one took place in the United States. In the South African story, the policewoman spoke Afrikaans, a language associated with oppression and probably the main reason that change in South African politics, occurred eventually. In the United States story, I believe the policemen did not expect me to articulate what I thought the problem was, but that I should have perhaps just said "Yessir!!!" or perhaps more accurately "Yessuh!!!". With these two vignettes in mind, I am reminded how powerful language is, and how powerful the English language has become. Individuals and groups are still colonized

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because of the hegemonic nature of the English language, and I feel it is important that this subject be brought to the forefront of discourse on political and cultural marginalization of individuals and groups.

### **Research Questions**

I hope to use my research to answer the following research question:

1. Is language used as a social and political identifier in the same way that other identifiers such as race, ethnicity, and class are used?

Within this main question the following subordinate questions will also be addressed:

- a. How is language used as an identifier in institutions like law or education within the cultures of the United States, South Africa, and New Zealand?
- b. Does one's use of the English language influence how one is treated by the police or by teachers?

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is informed by:

#### **Critical research**

Since the hegemony of the English language with its corresponding diminishing of Heritage languages reflects power dynamics, a critical research framework will be central to my research study. According to Merriam (2009), "power dynamics" (p. 35) are central to critical research. Merriam (2009) also stated that "power in combination with hegemonic social structures results in the marginalization and oppression of those without power" (p. 35).

The relationship between language and power is most powerfully represented by the police. In the context of South Africa, the apartheid government's repression of all

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those who rose and tried to rise in opposition to their policies, are clearly documented.

The United Nations declared apartheid a crime against humanity. The role of the police in exercising oppressive force against the citizens of South Africa is also well documented, and many revelations came to light during the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. “The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was set up by the Government of National Unity to help deal with what happened under apartheid. The conflict during this period resulted in violence and human rights abuses from all sides. No section of society escaped these abuses.” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2009, p. 1).

### **Critical Race Theory (CRT)**

This qualitative research is further under-girded by Critical Race Theory (CRT). My own background and experience, as well as the tenets of CRT are essential to how this research study was approached. Critical Race Theory’s tenets influencing my research are:

- Racism is a normal part of American life.
- Skepticism of neutrality, objectivity, and being colorblind.
- Storytelling is an essential way for the voices of marginalized peoples to be legitimized.

I will also be looking at the concept of property and its intersection with CRT. This will be looked at especially with respect to language and its status as property within the CRT framework as well as its influence on my identity.

Fernandez (2002) emphasized the use of storytelling in Critical Race Theory and stated that, “By placing the marginalised participant at the centre of analysis, critical

research methodology focuses on capturing the stories, counter-stories, and narratives of marginalised students of colour” (p. 46). These counter-stories can also affect the oppressor, catalyzing the “necessary cognitive conflict to jar white dysconscious racism” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 14). Yosso et al. (2001) concurred with the role of storytelling in CRT and wrote that, “CRT in education views this knowledge as a strength and draws explicitly on the lived experiences of Students of Color by including such methods as storytelling, family history, biographies, scenarios, parables, cuentos, chronicles, and narratives” (p. 91).

It is important that the stories of those not considered to be part of the dominant culture be heard. This is the only way that a complete picture (containing multiple realities) could be presented. Yosso (2006) argued that “Majoritarian storytelling is a method of recounting the experiences and perspectives of those with racial and social privilege [...] [whereas] Critical race counterstorytelling [sic] is a method of recounting the experiences and perspectives of racially and socially marginalized people” (pp. 9-10). Yosso (2006) concluded that, “Counterstories reflect on the lived experiences of People of Color to raise the consciousness about social and racial injustice.” (p. 10).

Zamudio, Russell, Rios, and Bridgeman (2011) wrote that, “[...] the 1900s to 1940s saw large scale efforts aimed at replacing heritage languages, the language of immigrants’ national origins, with English – often under the guise of fostering American unity [...] Even President Teddy Roosevelt weighed in on the issue saying, “We have room for only one language in this country and that is the English language” [...] He went so far as to threaten deportation for those who did not speak English within the first five years of their arrival in the United States.” (p. 56). This is clearly an attempt to stifle

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the voices of those who do not have English as their home language. Zamudio et al. (2011) further explained that, “The fourth element [of CRT] is to develop counter-discourses through storytelling, narratives, chronicles, family histories, scenarios, biographies, and parables that draw on the lived experiences students of color bring to the classroom. Students of color, poor students, female students, do not enter classrooms as empty vessels waiting to be filled with knowledge. A rich historical tradition in education exists to counter this belief.” (p. 93). Students of color have something to contribute, if only they are allowed to do so. Through counter storytelling these silent voices can be encouraged to be heard. Duncan (2006) opined that, “The centrality of narrative and storytelling in critical race approaches to educational research is consonant with Paulo Freire’s (1995) view that changing language “is part of the process of changing the world” (pp. 67-68).

## **Research Design**

### **Type of research**

Personal narratives can be powerful markers of culture, whether it is the self or a group which is regarded as representative of the culture. Narratives can represent a wide range of genres in writing. Autoethnography uses narratives as a central feature in order to delve deeper and reveal cultural constructs and the self within those constructs, that is, how the self is identified within the culture. Chang (2008) has written that, “autoethnography shares the storytelling feature with other genres of self-narrative but transcends mere narration of self to engage in cultural analysis and interpretation” (p.43). Therefore this study, using autoethnography, is not merely storytelling, but “cultural analysis and interpretation with narrative details” (Chang, 2008, p. 46). I will be using

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personal experiences and narratives to learn about myself and the cultures I have found myself immersed in. Autoethnography also allows me to be reflexive, understanding I am a part of the larger world I live in. Critical events in my life with respect to language will be presented and interpreted to explain how my identity and life path have been shaped, as reflected in the short narratives that begin this chapter. I will also present the critical events of others and how they have been similarly influenced. Finally, I will examine artifacts and documents to fill in gaps and further inform this phenomenon related to language and power dynamics.

### **Rationale for selection**

Autoethnography allows me to use my personal experiences and personal narratives to learn not only about myself, but also about the cultures I have found myself a part of. I have always considered myself a part of larger cultures in various environments. For the purpose of this research study, those environments are South Africa, the United States of America, and for a brief period, New Zealand. Although my interactions in and with New Zealand have been brief, they had a powerful influence on my identity. I use the prepositions “in” as well as “with” because my interactions were not only limited to what was in New Zealand, but, it seems, with the land itself. I felt a strong sense of belonging (other of similarity).

My interactions with those cultures have not only molded my own identity, but have also pushed back and shaped the cultures I have been a part of. In apartheid South Africa, systemic structures were in place in order to shape the very course of individuals lives as well as the course of the groups those individuals belong to. For example, both the Mixed Marriages Act and Immorality Act made it illegal for anyone to form romantic

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or legal partnerships that involved different ethnic groups; especially between whites and others (Van den Berghe, 2000). But race and ethnicity was only a part of the power dynamics that simply forced people to be associated with groups. Language in South Africa was another. Two languages out of at least eleven were placed in a hegemonic position. If you didn't speak English or Afrikaans, in a predetermined manner, and with a certain accent, you were labeled as *other*.

In the United States, I found myself facing the same hegemonic status of English. The difference was that in the United States, English was associated with the dominant group which was also the majority. In South Africa, the dominant group was the minority. My identity again was shaped by my language, and often my acceptance was dependent on whether my language was considered a factor that made me accepted by the dominant culture, rather than being labeled as *other*.

My experiences in the United States have reinforced my position in the *other* category. My narratives, and my interpretation of those narratives with respect to the subordination of heritage languages and the hegemony of the English language, would enable me to learn more about myself and the cultures I am a part of. I also hope that by this study becoming a part of the discourse in a culture that, in my opinion, is sorely lacking authentic dialogue, there might be an increase in authenticity with regard to discourse. This will also hopefully encourage others to share their stories and experiences; and I mean that in the general as well as the academic sense. Ultimately, my goal is to leave an imprint on the culture that says that all languages, dialects, and therefore speakers of those languages and dialects, have cultural capital; something to contribute. That is, everyone, no matter their socio-economic status, has cultural capital,

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something to contribute beyond what might be considered capital in the financial sense or in terms of power.

By addressing the subject of the hegemony of English in an autoethnography, I hope to encourage others to tell their stories, in whatever form of English they would like to use. It must be made available in the broader community so that perceptions, policies, and attitudes can be changed.

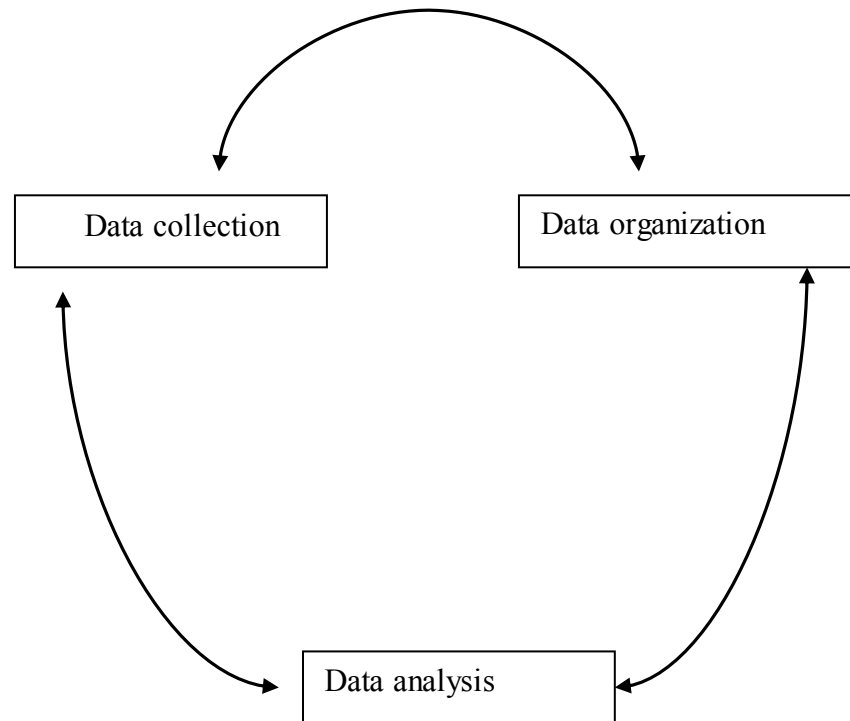
### **Appropriateness of the study**

Much has been researched and written about race and ethnicity in the United States of America. It is my contention that because race and ethnicity have been become taboo topics, it has been replaced by language. That is, that language has replaced race as a social and political identifier. Individuals and groups can be placed in the *other* category because of language, and be accepted, even though that language otherness can be linked to ethnicity or race. I plan to develop this concept further as my research continues. Chang (2008) referred to the three distinct classifications of “others.” (p. 26). These are, “others of similarity [...] others of difference [...] [and] others as opposition” (Chang, 2008, p. 26). It is especially in the “others as opposition” (Chang, 2008, p. 26) category that voices are being muted in the dominant culture. By bringing this subject to the fore, it allows all voices, with whatever accents accompany them, to be heard.



### **Research design illustration**

The illustration is adapted from one proposed by Chang (2008, p. 122). The directions of the arrows are to be regarded to represent continuous, circular movement between the three components.



### **Data Collection**

I will use self-narratives of my experiences in South Africa and the United States of America to answer the research questions I am asking. These self-narratives will be retrieved from memory, notes, journals, poetry and prose. I will also use photographs, newspaper articles, magazines, and other published items that I have either appeared in or produced.

I will use CRT to evaluate critical events that have influenced my concept of my own identity. These events have also influenced the cultural and political space I have inhabited. My identity is closely linked to my culture. De Munck (2000) wrote that:

Obviously, one does not exist as a psyche – a self – outside of Culture; nor does Culture exist independently of its bearers [...] Culture would cease to exist without individuals who make it up [...] Culture requires our presence as individuals. With this symbiosis, self and culture together make each other up and, in that process, make meaning. (pp. 1-2)

It is within this framework that I will attempt to evaluate my interactions with others:

- As a student in South Africa and the United States.
- As a father in South Africa and the United States.
- As a black male in South Africa and the United States where my language was regarded as being outside of the accepted form of English within the dominant culture.

I will also use textual artifacts. These textual artifacts will already be in the public domain, like newspapers and other publications. Chang (2008) related that in autoethnography, “additional evidence is supplied by meaningful artifacts acquired throughout my life [...] to fill in gaps left by the snapshots” (p. 107). It is important to fill in gaps using artifacts as trigger mechanisms and sources of information, as memory alone cannot provide all the information I will need to provide rich data. I will also use literature in order to “gather information on the sociocultural, physical, political, and historical context of my life” (Chang, 2008, 110).

## **Data Analysis**

The crux of autoethnography lies in the data analysis. Chang (2008) wrote that this is where data is transformed into “a text with culturally meaningful explanations” (p. 126). Chang (2008) best described this transformation as a “fracturing” and “connecting” of data (p. 128). This analysis process will take place as data is collected and accumulated. It is a process I still have to investigate thoroughly so that my research is not merely a collection of narratives, but that it achieves culturally significant meaning, and enables others to both learn from as well as expand upon what I produce.

I will use the strategies that Chang (2008) suggested, namely, to search for recurring topics, themes, and patterns that emerge from my narratives. Also, since I am not interested solely in my own experiences, but also the interplay with others (in the cultures I encounter), I will look for cultural themes. Among the topics, themes, and patterns, I will look for and relate exceptional occurrences. I will also think about what has been included and what has been omitted in my storytelling and look for patterns in those. The link from the present to the past has to be found. The relationship between self and others will be explored and analyzed. I will compare myself and others cases where this is possible. It is important that in this approach one should contextualize broadly. Finally, I will reference theories, like CRT and Critical Research, and “compare with social science constructs and ideas” (Chang, 2008, p. 131).

As a last note, the collection and analysis will not be a linear process, but will happen concurrently in a heuristic manner. With regard to heuristic methods, Wall (2006) stated that the purpose was to “awaken and inspire researchers to make contact with and respect their own questions and problems, to suggest a process that affirms imagination,

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intuition, self-reflection, and the tacit dimension as valid ways in the search for knowledge and understanding” (p. 150).

### **Delimitations**

The following delimitations for this study are noted:

- Autoethnography places self narratives at the center of the research, and as the researcher, I am at the center of data collection and texts.
  - “Every bit of writing reflects the disposition [and world view] of the author” (Chang, 2008, p. 141).
- My use of language as a political and social identifier limits the scope.
- The legal and education institutions in which language is used as a political and social identifier limits the scope of this work.
- My choice of public and personal written texts, as well as personal narratives narrow the scope.

### **Limitations**

The delimitations noted above will determine whether readers of this autoethnography find it relevant to their own experiences. Generalizability becomes important and relevant in how readers of this autoethnography find it relevant to their lives or can relate to those they know or whose circumstances they may be aware of.

## Chapter 4: South Africa: Apartheid = Language and Power

### Introduction

When looking at South Africa, its history, and its status quo, the question of language and the role it has played and currently plays is difficult to dispute. Language has represented power. With the advent of apartheid, and the establishment of English and Afrikaans as the official languages, the groundwork had been set for the hegemonic role of English and Afrikaans. My own experience in South Africa has certainly influenced my perceptions and attitudes towards language in society. Similarly, my experiences as a colored South African meant that the languages I spoke were in fact the two official languages of the country. My fluency in those languages however, did not offer me immunity to the fact that I was a colored South African. The intersection of language and race for me is real. My experiences as a South African was a constant reinforcement of my identity as a colored South African. My access to and ownership of language in no way guaranteed my acceptance into the dominant culture. So, for me, language provided a path out of poverty through education, but in many other aspects language was tied to race. Zamudio et al. (2011) clarified how language and CRT intersect:

CRT Scholars identify language and citizenship status as elements in the intersecting web of oppression that schools rely on to subordinate students. [...] intersectionality captures the multiple ways that race intersect with structures of oppression like class, gender, and in this case, **language**, and citizenship to compound students' racialized experiences in schools. [...] Even when language is not an issue, linguistic imperialism, xenophobia, and racism[,] serves to elevate

white monolingual English speakers as the academic norm and devalue rich traditions, cultures, ways of knowing and being that students who do not fit this norm bring to school with them on a daily basis. (p. 60)

It has been noted by scholars therefore, that language and race can be used interchangeably, and language may be used instead of race to discriminate against or oppress individuals or groups of people. Zamudio et al. (2011) further elucidated that language could be used as a surrogate for race:

The role of racism in education is made more tangible when seen in the light of bilingual education. [...] bilingualism is often used as a proxy (i.e. a stand in) for talking about or identifying Latina/o children. (Likewise, immigration talk is also often a proxy for race.) Thus, someone can critique bilingualism and immigration when, in fact, they mean to critique Latinos. (p. 59)

Dyson (1996) also expounded on the complexity of race:

Race as subtext highlights how arguments have been used to mystify or deliberately obscure, the role of race and racism [...] we can describe the different forms that racism takes, the disguises it wears, the tricky, subtle shapes it assumes. Race and racism are not static forces. They mutate, grow, transform, and are redefined in complex ways. Understanding racial mystification helps us grasp the hidden premises, buried perceptions, and cloaked meanings of race as they show up throughout our culture. (pp. 34-35)

### **Language and Power: My First Experiences**

*One of the most powerful experiences in my life came before I entered the first grade in 1967. One of my brothers, Jerry, was one year ahead of me and was already in*

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*the first grade. One day the school had a “Bring your sibling” to school event, and I remember being unable to sleep the night before. I had never been in the school officially before, and even though we jumped the school fence to play soccer on the red gravel soccer field before, this was my first official visit into the hallowed grounds of education. I was the youngest of eleven children, and had spent many days with my face pressed up against the school fence watching children play in the schoolyard during recess. I couldn't wait to attend school.*

*The next morning I enthusiastically accompanied my brother to school. Mrs. Mervyn was the first grade teacher, was older, motherly, with grey streaks in her hair and a kind face and voice. The activities of the day are somewhat important, and I remember them. This includes the recess I had watched from the outside of the fence before. I remember feeling the indentations of the wire fence on my face as I strained against it. This time I was inside, and running around, and shouting, and sometimes just watching, from the inside. I was no longer on the outside but was a part of the school. But it was Mrs. Mervyn's voice that stood out. Although she wasn't white, she almost spoke with the diction and accent of a white person. She was clearly in command in the classroom, even though she never raised her voice. I wanted to be like Mrs. Mervyn. The best part of the day was the end, when Mrs. Mervyn told me that I was very bright and that I would be a good student and be successful in school. I knew then that I wanted to be able to fulfill that prediction.*

Mrs. Mervyn's observation to me that day was not just idle words. Teachers, at that time in South Africa, and especially in my community, were regarded very highly in society. Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd asserted that, “The Bantu teacher must [...] learn not feel

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above his community, with a consequent desire to become integrated into the life of the European community” (Van den Berg & Meerkotter, 1993, p. 3), and although relevant to the colored community, was also not entirely true. As explained earlier, the word *Bantu* was and is used in a pejorative manner to identify blacks in South Africa, much like the *N- word* is used in the United States. In the world of Apartheid South Africa, teachers in poor neighborhoods where I grew up, spoke differently, came from more affluent communities, and many young kids like me looked up to teachers. Significantly, colored teachers spoke differently. They spoke with a dialect that reflected their level of education. As such, language was a commodity, a property that was desirable. Realizing this was a seminal moment in that it was something I knew I would need if I wanted to succeed and pull myself out of the townships of Cape Town. Nunez (2002) wrote that:

In Trinidad we have this expression: “Mout open, ‘tory jump out.” The words are meant to be taken literally: When you open your mouth to speak, the very words you use, your references, your tone of voice, above all, your diction and your accent reveal your life story. They tell of your economic and social status, your family background, your aspirations, your failures. (p. 40)

This code-switching was necessary for survival as well as success. Delpit (2002) perhaps best illustrated the term code-switching in the following narrative:

But my child has other thoughts on the matter. I ask her if she knows why I critique her language, if she understands that there will be people who judge her on the basis of the words that she speaks. She answers, without hesitation, “Well, that’s their problem!” And I hear my own words spoken back to me: “It doesn’t matter what other people think about you, you have to be who you are. It’s their



problem if they can't appreciate how wonderful you are." I try another tack.

"You're right, it is their problem. But suppose they are in charge of whether you get the job you want or the college you want to attend?" "Mom," she grins back at me, "you don't have to worry about me." "And just why is that?" She answers with a cheery nonchalance, "Cause I know how to code switch!" "Code switch," I repeat in astonishment. "Where did you hear that term?" The eleven year-old who has accompanied me to conferences and speaking engagements since she was an infant answered, "You know, I do listen to you sometimes!" as she bolts out of the door to ride her new scooter.

This code-switching business pushes my thinking. She is, of course, absolutely right. She and many her friends do know how to code-switch.

(pp. 38-39)

The practice of code-switching occurs when someone switches between two different ways of talking, for example switching between "the language of the oppressor [...] [and] the language of the street: the warm, democratic language of my childhood friends" (Sprott, 2000, p. 48).

The acquisition of language skills and the ownership of good language, which could be directly equated to white language, were fundamental to success for those of us who were not white. My mother believed that white was right, and often said this to us as children. Therefore, unlike Sprott (2000), who recalled her mother being "acutely aware of the Black collective struggle, and she was afraid for her children to be a part of the world without mastering Standard English" (p. 47), in my mother's opinion, being allied to

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whites was infinitely better than being associated with blacks. Kilgour Dowdy (2002) expressed an almost identical notion when she wrote that:

In Trinidad, my mother always reminded us that we needed to learn to “curse in white.” By this she meant, or so I believed that she meant, that we should always be aware that we had to play to a white audience. We could protest, we could show anger, but we had to remember that there was a white way, and that was the right way. (p. 5)

As a so-called colored, I certainly had greater access to education, since my mother-tongues were English and Afrikaans. The fact that I spoke both official languages of South Africa, namely English and Afrikaans, in no way made opportunities more readily available to me.

In South Africa, the availability of options in life was linked to language and one’s accent and elocution. By elocution I do, indeed, mean how one speaks in the white public. How one spoke amongst one’s friends and family could well be different, and often was. It is something I understood implicitly growing up in the townships of Cape Town. Kilgour Dowdy (2002) asserted that, “In order for a Trinidadian to make progress on the ladder of success, she has to embrace the English Language. If it means forgetting that the language of everyone else around you bears witness to two hundred years of cross-pollination, then so be it.” (p. 7). Some may believe that such a philosophy may represent a denunciation of one’s own culture, and a capitulation to the colonial imperative. To me such an approach represents a reality of how powerful colonialism is, and how the ownership of language influences one’s identity.

Alexander (1999) perhaps stated it most clearly when he expressed that, “the everexpanding global hegemony of the English language and the apparently inexorable corollary marginalisation of local, national and regional languages [represents] [...] the reality of the global village and the processes of conquest and dispossession” (p. 3). As a person who is not white in South Africa, I understood that the ownership of property was not readily available to me. Under Apartheid, blacks in South Africa were not able to own property. This was also true for other low-income People of Color. Legal battles with the remnants of this policy are still ongoing in South Africa. The Southern African Legal Information Institute (2011) illustrated this policy in the following excerpt:

During her lifetime the deceased was the occupant and resident of the house situated at Stand no 210205, 14 Molefe Street, New Brighton, Port Elizabeth under the then called 99 year lease. I shall refer to the stand as the property. The 99 year lease was only available to Black occupants of houses in the townships in South Africa. In terms of the Conversion of Certain Rights into Leasehold or Ownership Act 81 of 1988 (the Act), the houses in the townships which were held in terms of the 99 year lease could be converted into ownership by those who occupy them and upon a satisfaction of certain conditions. (p. 2)

Though property was unattainable to me, language, on the other hand, was available. Sprott (2000) articulated that “I didn’t know it then, but I, too, was working hard to master the language that would give me the tools to later succeed in college and graduate school” (p. 48). Nunez (2000), who spoke about another colonized country, concurred that “The working class, too, understood the social value of “proper” speech. By proper speech they meant [...] speech that did not seem to belong to a colonized

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people, speech that was spoken by people who did the colonizing, people with power” (p.41). Just as for Nunez (2000) and the Trinidadians she wrote about, the same concept held true for South Africans from my perspective, and fits into the larger concept that this held true for colonized people. Alexander’s (1999) comment perhaps best illustrated this power as he wrote, “In South Africa, let me note parenthetically, during the ‘fifties, we debated with waxing passion the question whether we should pay any attention at all to the ‘tribal languages’ instead of concentrating on English, the ‘international language’ .” (p. 4). Neville Alexander spent ten years on Robben Island as a political prisoner with Nelson Mandela. English, because of its status as an official language was generally universally understood in South Africa by anyone who was able to attend school, and the power of English as an outsider, namely, the colonized, was understood. Even back in the nineteen fifties, the strongest, most vociferous voices for equality in South Africa recognized the power of the English language. Language in South Africa, it could be said, translates directly into power. If one had command and ownership of the language, it represented a pathway to power.

### **Language, Power, and the Police**

*The police were a constant companion in my youth. Sometimes they were chasing us from the local golf course in their canary yellow police trucks. The cages on the back of the trucks, felt to me that they were waiting eagerly for us, anticipating engorging us, black and colored kids, like rounded-up stray dogs. The golf course had woods with trees to climb and pigeons to hunt. It also had a stream with reeds and pools containing frogs and tadpoles. It was a paradise for me as a young boy. But mostly, the golf course had grass! We could have a soccer game, or look for wild figs. Figs which were free, and*

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*which we collected by the bagsful. Figs which we sometimes left out in the sun to dry and on many occasions, kept the hunger at bay. We went back to face the possibility of being locked up because we really didn't have a choice.*

*Scattering to all points of the compass, we ran away whenever the police arrived on the scene. I understand perfectly what adrenaline rushes are when being chased by police. With the police behind us, and our bare feet pounding the grass, my heartbeat always seemed to be pounding at a million times a minute as I ran, and ran, untiring. When you finally had the nerve to look behind, the pursuers had long since given up. Then you had to find your way back home, and relive the story again about how you got away. Other times the police would come around the corner with tires squealing as they chased us from where we congregated on the street corners. We loved singing on the street corners in the townships. I've always thought that they had to break up any sense of community we might have. We had to live in constant fear, and feel isolated and alone. Divide and rule. Divide and rule. A policy that is so simple, yet so effective.*

As can be seen from my previous narrative, I was running from the police and from other figures of authority long before I even thought of the possibility of it being a serious event. Now, in retrospect, I understand that had I ever been captured by the police during these episodes, that my life would definitely have taken a different course. As an adult now, it is this grasp of what any contact with the prison system would have for me as a black man that has me be so overtly fearful of the police.

*For me, that relationship between language and power is most powerfully represented by the police. I was the youngest of eleven children because my mother was a devout Catholic and did not believe in contraception. The only reason I remained the*

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*youngest in the family was because doctor's removed my mother's womb after my birth. I'm still not sure if it was with or without her permission. How does this story fit into the hegemonic nature of the English language? English (as spoken by whites) as well as Afrikaans were official languages of South Africa, and as such were spoken by the police. In fact, the two were inseparable. By the time I was aware of my surroundings as a young five or six year old boy, my eldest brother, Neville, was already in the South African prison pipeline. Having a member of the family in prison was not unusual for many families in my community. Though the police often chased us in the township streets, it was their invasion into our homes that forever scarred me. Most of my brothers were in prison at some stage, but my eldest brother was in and out of prison on a regular basis. Unfortunately for my family this meant that there were frequent incursions into our home in the middle of the night. Sometimes my brother was there, often he was not. To the police, it seemed merely to be an excuse to terrorize my family. I believe the police came in the middle of the night for two reasons. It was the "best" time for them to apprehend someone they were looking for, but more insidiously, it presented them an opportunity to instill fear in everyone in the household at a time when we were most vulnerable. For me, the police held absolute power to do as they pleased in our home because of my brother's criminal record, and they were a common presence throughout my childhood. I don't know how many times our front door had to be fixed after police kicked it down.*

*This fear of police and the stories from my brothers of being incarcerated instilled a fear in me that has never left me. I realized at an early age that prison represented stagnation and oftentimes death. When the student protests and riots of the seventies and eighties took place, I was enraged and participated in marches and protests. When*

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*students started disappearing from police custody, my anger was tempered with fear. I knew what prisons meant to members of my own family, and I had first-hand knowledge of the callousness of the police. Those late night and early morning police home-invasions still triggered fear in me.*

*By the time I attended university in South Africa, I was well versed in the practice of code-switching. I knew what speaking “good English” meant to me and my possible success. I also knew that both “proper” English and Afrikaans were intertwined with the police. The official statuses of the languages tied them to the government, the police, and the brutality they represented. My own identity was undoubtedly intertwined with “good” English. I owned it, but the ownership also shamed me.*

Ntshoe (2002) wrote that “Many African colonial states used education to indoctrinate and subordinate the African “natives” servants of the colonial system. Issues regarding language of instruction and underlying cultural values (including religion) were often sources of conflict and violent protest.” (pp.62-63). Even though education represented a path to freedom, it also is well documented that education was a tool used by colonial regimes to subordinate, and that these regimes were supported by police and other forces controlled by the state. The student uprisings in the seventies and eighties, and their brutal suppression by the police and armed forces are a testament to this. According to Ntshoe (2002), “The international media coverage of white South African police taunting and abusing children helped to focus intense pressure on the apartheid regime. While the student uprisings were pivotal in challenging and tearing away at apartheid, there were also several consequences.” (p. 64). This dichotomous aspect of the power the South Africa police displayed in their treatment of students, and the resulting

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revulsion of the international community, was evident. That there were consequences to our actions as student protestors was evident to me as a student as well. I saw the abuse that Ntshoe (2002) speaks about, because I participated in the protests and saw fellow students shot, some injured and others killed. I also read about and heard the stories of students who disappeared, and these were critical too. Some students went to receive training abroad with the ANC, others just disappeared. My knowledge of the police as a child still haunted me as an older student. Not everyone who participated in the student riots disappeared or died, and I believe that there are those like me who made the decision consciously or not, to not be a martyr. As painful as it is now, I believe this decision helped define my identity. I believe there were two aspects to how my identity was shaped. The first aspect was my fear of the police and that I felt that death was not far away from being caught up with the police as a black man. Although I was classified as colored by South Africa, I hated the name colored, and always considered myself as a black man. The fear of the police was very real at that time in South Africa. Krog (1999) related the following story from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings:

Dirk Coetzee [co-founder and commander of the covert South African police unit based at Vlakplaas] has often been accused of stretching stories and fabricating details. Yet it is precisely these details that makes it difficult to dismiss his evidence...because they exude intimate and authentic knowledge. Testifying about the torture of teacher Joe Pillay, Coetzee had Nazi-like scenes unfolding in an underground bunker near Fort Klapperkop in Pretoria. Neither the torture nor the information sought was important, but the experiment preceding the death – that was what counted.



‘They eventually decided to bring in an army doctor in a brown uniform with a drip and so-called Truth Serum...they put Pillay on this stretcher and the doctor controlled the drip in his arm. He lost control over his thinking. It made him fall into a kind of relaxed position.’

[...] The drops have an effect. Four drops for not too big a person...and if you give more, it’s like administering chloroform...more would bring such a deep sleep that one would die. We were all drinking. We gave Kondile his spiked drink. After twenty minutes he sat down uneasily...then he fell over backwards. Then Major Nic van Rensburg said: ‘Well chaps, let’s get on with the job.’ Two of the younger constables with the jeep dragged some dense bushveld wood and tyres and made a fire...A man, tall and with blond hair, took his Makarov pistol with a silencer and shot him on the top of his head. His body gave a short jerk...’

Coetzee is an expert on banal statistics.

‘The burning of a body on an open fire takes seven hours. Whilst that happened we were drinking and braaing [braaing is the South African word for barbequing] next to the fire. I tell this not to hurt the family, but to show you the callousness with which we did things in those days. The fleshier parts of the body take longer...that’s why we frequently had to turn the buttocks and thighs of Kondile...by the morning we raked through the ashes to see that no piece of bone or teeth was left. Then we all went our own ways.’ (pp. 90-91)

The second aspect was the fact that I was never really a part of the South African dominant society. To this effect, Ogulnick (2000) wrote about the “complex interplay between gender, social status, nationality, race, class, and language learning [...] [and]

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the theoretical framework loosely defined in applied linguistics as Introspection [...] [which looks] at one's own language-learning experiences [...] [and] diary studies [...] [that] deal with the impact the process of adapting to another language and culture has on one's sense of self" (p. 3).

Ntshoe (2002) was also of the opinion that "The education system, perhaps more than any other sector, helped to reproduce categories of the "African," "Coloured," "Indian," and "white," and served as a primary means of constructing and reproducing racial and ethnic identities." (p. 63). The South African system of Apartheid reinforced the different classifications of races, with White being the norm, and other races classified being the other. According to Yosso (2006), "Race is a socially constructed category, created to differentiate groups based primarily on skin color, phenotype, ethnicity, and culture for the purpose of showing the superiority or dominance of one group over another." (p. 5).

The education system and the police who helped support and enforce it, also helped to construct individual identities within the system. The Apartheid era officially ended in 1994, but as Ntshoe (2002) stated, "In South Africa in particular, political and ethnic strife, originally fuelled by the apartheid regime, still smolders despite democratic governance and a new social order." (p. 62).

In the Truth Commission: South Africa (1995) article, the mandate for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was given as:

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was created to investigate gross human rights violations that were perpetrated during the period of the Apartheid regime from 1960 to 1994, including abductions, killings, [and] torture. Its mandate

covered violations by both the state and the liberation movements and allowed the commission to hold special hearings focused on specific sectors, institutions, and individuals. Controversially the TRC was empowered to grant amnesty to perpetrators who confessed their crimes truthfully and completely to the commission. (p. 1)

Omar (1995) gave the following insight into the objectives of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa:

The committee [on human rights violations is] to assist in the attainment of the following objectives: [...]

(c) to provide victims and perpetrators with an opportunity to tell their stories;

(d) to establish whether gross human rights violations were the result of deliberate planning on the part of the state, liberation movements, organizations or individuals, and if so, the nature of the planning [...]

It will also help to make recommendations on appropriate legal, institutional and administrative measures to deal with reparations and other claims by victims, bearing in mind the constraints imposed on the democratic state, but also the context, namely, the nation's collective desire to restore the dignity and honor of victims. (pp. 6-7)

This observation was from one of the stalwarts of the anti-apartheid movement, Dullah Omar, and one who was an active member of the anti-apartheid movement, as well as being a member of the South African cabinet until his death in 2004. The establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation committee meant that the truth about so

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many atrocities committed during the Apartheid era could be revealed without people being prosecuted for them. I believe that this aspect of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission brought closure to many, and also enabled the nation to move forward into a new era. Krog (1999), with regard to the TRC explained that “The oppressors are weary; the oppressed foam-in-the-mouth angry.” (p. 5). This is my dilemma, and the dilemma of many others. I still find myself furious at what occurred, impotent to address the past, but finding that I have to move on. On the side of the oppressors, Krog (1999) wrote the following about a former Commissioner of the South African Police:

Yesterday afternoon when we were flying to Cape Town, The General was staring out of the window of the plane. The sun was setting and he said to me – and I hope he forgives me my forwardness – he said in this choked-up voice: “The politicians have prostituted the police. Once I was a proud policeman, but here I am today – humiliated and despised. My career, to which I dedicated my entire life with such pride, is ending in this horrible shame and dishonor.” (p. 5)

My point is simply this; was the General as proud of himself when the police shot unarmed student protesters on the streets of South Africa? Or when they hunted down so-called terrorists who were fighting for the freedom of South Africans broken by years of apartheid? Maditla (2012) attested to the brutality and the frustration still felt by those affected by apartheid when he wrote about a young man that was killed in my home town during the struggle against apartheid:

His family is finally getting a payout after a 10-year legal battle, but the brother of Anton Fransch – killed in November 1989 by police and the SA Defence Force – says he will never forgive his brother’s betrayer. “I don’t even want to think about

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what would happen should I come face to face with that man,” said Marc Fransch this week. Anton, 20, was an Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) commander killed after a seven-hour gun battle with authorities at the house in which he was staying in Athlone. Fransch is one of the 25 claimants from Khulumani, a group representing apartheid victims that recently received \$1.5 million (R11.2m) in a lawsuit against US car manufacturer General Motors. It has been 10 years since Khulumani launched the lawsuit, and two of the claimants have since died, leaving 23 of the original applicants in the case. Fransch gave testimony in front of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in 1995, where he represented his 70-year-old mother, Georgina. He says his mother has been suffering from depression as well as heart problems since losing Anton. Sitting at his home in Bonteheuwel this week, Fransch said he was glad that they would be receiving R10 000 [about \$1,000]. (p. 1)

In another infamous incident from my neighborhood in Cape Town, Olshan (1997) recalled the following event:

On October 15, 1985, the CBS Evening News in the United States broadcast less than two minutes of footage from a disturbance in Athlone, a township in the Cape Flats, outside of Cape Town, South Africa. Viewers watched as armed men shot from crates on the bed of an orange railway truck into a crowd of students. Two children and a young adult were killed and many more wounded as security forces used shotguns to attack the crowd. No tear gas was used in an attempt to clear the crowd, nor were rubber bullets employed. The videotape that held the incident had been rushed to the airport where it was flown out of the reach of

government censors. The broadcast was credited with contributing to the growing opposition to Apartheid, especially in America. Because security forces had either hidden their identity or were concealed in crates, the attack became known as the Trojan Horse Incident. (p. 1)

I remember going to Thornton Road, the scene of the attack, after hearing about the incident. Trying to recall my feelings are difficult. I was outraged, numbed, frozen with fear, and yet wanting so much to exact revenge. I didn't feel I had a viable way of doing so, and to die in such a manner was such a waste of life, I reasoned. Many years later, still no closure had been found for the victims, as Olshan (1997) recalled:

In 1997, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission held a special hearing relating to the Trojan Horse Incident at the Athlone Technical College. Students from Alexander Sinton High School were present to witness the historic event. On two separate dates, the commission listened to the testimony of those involved, victims and perpetrators. It was as much of a chance for those involved to come to terms with the event as it was an investigation into the targeting of children as a deliberate attempt to destabilize communities. While the secrecy surrounding the police action had been removed in part, the officers involved did not fully answer the panel's questions. Commission members often repeated questions several times and security personnel seemed unwilling to stray from their written statements. Many questions, such as the specific purpose and impetus of the Trojan Horse Incident, remain unanswered. The testimony made possible by the TRC pulled together many segments of the story however, highlighting the unavoidable nature of the Trojan Horse Incident, and many others like it from the

Apartheid era. The story of the Trojan Horse Incident illustrates the frustration of non-whites in the 1980's, the consequences of the powers given to security forces, the criminalization of victims of violence, and the failure of the government to include non-whites in the justice process. (p. 9)

Krog (1999) wrote that, "Shirley Gunn brings the audience back to some basic questions: Who should be reconciled? Who will gain from reconciliation? What will they gain? She ties reconciliation in with delivery and echoes the words of Charity Kondile: It is easy for Mandela to forgive – his life has changed; but for the woman in the shack [as for many others in South Africa], it is not possible." (p. 168). The fire that is apartheid still smolders, and English still reigns as the lingua franca, and maintains its hegemonic position in South African society.

The link to language and identity is reiterated by Nunez (2000), who opined that "boys [...] could make their way in the world through education" but she also expressed that "There is this alienation, then, between language and identity that is established early in the life of the individual from a colonized country" (p. 41). Nunez (2000) has written that novelist V.S. Naipaul's anxiety about telling a story "reflects an ordinary and understandable response to the commonplace experience of one whose early education occurred in a colonized country where the implicit message in composition classes was the importance of separating the story from the mouth, the story from the teller of the story, and, too often as a consequence, the story from the truth" (p. 41). This illustrates my dilemma as a young man. I knew that education was my salvation, and that the acquisition of standardized English language was an essential part of that path I had to

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follow, yet that language also represented everything I despised about the country where I was raised, and where I received my primary education.

The police presence in my life was ubiquitous, or so it seemed to me. The intrusion into simple every day parts of my life, were frustrating, scary, and elicited extreme feelings of hate. Such was the case when I walked past a police station one day.

*In South Africa a visit to the police station can be dangerous, even a walk past the police station can be dangerous. I have already related the occurrence when a policewoman ordered me to the back of the room when I went to report an automobile accident. As I have noted before, this type of display of power was very explicit, and not only tied to race but linked to language too. The order she barked out to me might as well have been in English as in Afrikaans as both languages occupied the same hegemonic position in the South African apartheid culture. When my fiancée and I walked by a police station in the suburb of Woodstock, the two policemen on duty whistled at my fiancée, I bristled, and turned to respond. Fortunately for me my partner was less quick to anger, and persuaded me to move on without saying anything. Moving away from them was just another admission on my part of being powerless and ineffective against not only apartheid, but its main protagonist, the South African Police. It filled me with shame, and it is a shame not easily erased, even after decades of being removed from the incident.*

The previous vignette was by no means isolated, as the police were ever-present in my life. Even when I was looking for a simple service from the South African police, I was reminded that I was merely a pawn in the politics of South Africa and its police.



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*In another incident, I was scheduled to leave on my first trip abroad to the United States of America as an exchange student in 1978. I had to have my passport application notarized. The most convenient place to have this done was the police station. When I got the charge office, I had to wait patiently while the police officers behind the counter finished their conversation. The white policeman who approached me spoke to me in English. I told him I need to have my passport application notarized. He looked over the application, and told me that I should not consider myself to be clever because I was going to the United States. He leaned over and said very clearly. We will be watching you. They did. When I returned to the United States ten years later, a friend told me that many of my letters to him had sentences and paragraphs redacted. I still find it strange that the government had gone to such lengths to censor information coming out of South Africa.*

Crystal (1997) wrote that:

The benefits that would flow from the existence of a global language are considerable; but several commentators have pointed to possible risks. Perhaps a global language will cultivate an elite monolingual linguistic class, more complacent and dismissive in their attitudes to other languages. Perhaps those who have such a language at their disposal – and especially those who have it as a mother tongue – will be more able to think and work quickly in it, and to manipulate it to their own advantage at the expense of those who do not have it, thus maintaining in a linguistic guise the chasm between rich and poor. Perhaps a global language will hasten the disappearance of minority languages, or – the

ultimate threat – make **all** other languages unnecessary. [...] It is important to face up to these fears, and to recognize that they are widely held. (pp. 14-15)

My experiences and the experiences of others in South Africa during the apartheid years are clearly in opposition to the claim that there is no link between English and global injustice. I believe that the link between English, Afrikaans and oppression is clear. Ntshoe (2002) stated that:

During the 1970s and 80s education became the center of political struggle in South Africa when fierce and often violent anti-apartheid protests were held in schools throughout South Africa. [...] The culture of violence that arose in schools as part of the resistance movement carried over into the learning climate and the way schooling was viewed. Criticism of the curriculum extended to criticism of teachers and eventually to schools as part of the establishment. As a result, many schools failed to function as centers of learning and many were eventually shut down. The inability of the education sector to educate nearly a generation of students reflects the negative impact of violence and political conflict on education. (p. 64)

The struggle and response to Afrikaans (and by extension English) as a medium of instruction in black South African schools were a result of injustices practiced by the apartheid regime and resulted in even more injustices. Krog (1995), in speaking about Afrikaners (and Afrikaans), argued that:

British abuses against women and children were recorded by the Afrikaners but never officially acknowledged or condemned by the British. Thus the tales of the

war did not become part of an ethos relating to how people should behave towards one another. Rather, they became a folklore supporting the notion of Afrikaners as a threatened group and a belief that any behaviour [sic], however outrageous, was acceptable if it fostered their survival. (p. 115)

Afrikaners in conjunction with the British, and the related languages of Afrikaans and English became joint oppressors of any others in what they saw as the pursuit of their own dominance as well as the retention of the status quo. As a member of the *others* it has always been difficult for me to understand that one group, emerging from oppression can then become the oppressors. Krog (1995) explained that:

Memory is identity. Identities consisting of false or half memories easily commit atrocities. Apartheid divided us so successfully that practically no South African can claim memories other than those forged in isolated vacuums. People lived out their lives unaware that horrific actions sanctioned by apartheid policies were taking place in buildings next to them. Every one of us has half a memory.

Therefore every one of us has a malformed identity which is unsure of how to deal with the reality as it now opens up to us. (p. 115)

The English language, though I am able to speak and write it fluently, still does not belong to me. The English I speak as a colored is decidedly different to that of a white South African. My language or dialect is linked to my ethnicity, and I cannot separate the two.

*My nose was broken by someone I didn't know. The same man bit me on my shoulder that left a fresh scar until the day I got married a few weeks later. Allow me to elaborate. When this incident occurred in November 1984, apartheid was in full swing in*

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*South Africa. Though at the time I had attended University and would have been considered educated and articulate, I was still a colored in South Africa. As such I was not supposed to attend a function where people of different races attended social functions. The student-exchange organization I belonged to however was more liberal. The handful of coloreds who attended all sat at separate tables. While dancing was taking place, a white man approached our table and accused a friend who was sitting next to me that he had looked and whistled at his wife. The man spoke English, but there was no attempt at communication. He clearly felt that my friend had stepped over the lines drawn in the sand by apartheid. When my friend started to answer, the man swung a punch, my friend ducked, and he caught me squarely on the nose as I was looking at them. Of course, I defended myself, and in the ensuing fight, he bit my shoulder. The fight was broken up, as I was hustled into a back room, where we all understood that a call to the police could bring me and the organization into trouble, because our function was illegal. No action was taken, and my nose and the bite mark eventually healed. However, other scars remained.*

The incident for me clearly epitomizes why I am regarded as *other* by white South Africans. The fact that all those involved decided not to involve the police in this matter is also clear. Even though we were attacked, I don't think anyone had a doubt as to who would go to jail. We also understood that the function itself might be illegal because whites and others were socializing, dancing and eating in a single location.

Signage appeared in both official languages in South Africa. They were also markers of apartheid. They guided me to where I was allowed and not allowed. Where I

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could exist and where I was ostracized or banished. Sometimes, in my experiences, the apartheid signage delineated the fine line between freedom and incarceration.

*In another incident, while I was driving to Johannesburg, we stopped at a gas station in the Free State province to refuel. The Free State was a strange name for a South African province because the majority of its inhabitants were not free under apartheid. The signs for the restrooms clearly said “Whites Only/Slegs Blankes” and “Non-Whites Only/Slegs Nie-Blankes”, in the two official languages of South Africa. The languages were clear in their display of power; whether they were spoken or written. On this day I felt rebellious. I walked into the “Whites Only” restroom for men. As I stood at the urinal, two white men entered. I’m still not sure if my fear equaled their shock, but no one spoke. I finished up and did not wash my hands as I walked out of the restroom. I drove away, giddy with adrenaline, and flushed with the stupidity and guts of my actions at the gas station. That action could easily have cost me my life, but on that day I felt reckless.*

What I am trying to illustrate is simple. I have always known that simple actions in South Africa could have cost me my freedom, health, and even my life just as much as protests and activism could. Krog (1999) related the following story from the Truth and

Reconciliation Commission:

It was an ordinary weekday. Japie Maponya went about his work in a building society in Krugersdorp, oblivious of the fact that two askaris [former guerillas recruited by the South African security forces] were watching him through the plate-glass windows. His sin? His brother Odirile Maponya was an ANC guerilla and had been responsible for the death of a black policeman. When Japie left for

home at closing time he was confronted by two men who said they were investigating a case of fraud against him. He should come with them to the police station. Kidnapped, Japie was taken to Vlakplaas where he was assaulted by Eugene De Kock [commander of the South African Police counter insurgency unit stationed at Vlakplaas].

‘De Kock was angry and was shouting and assaulting him,’ one of the askaris testifies. There are ways to make a man talk. ‘De Kock wanted a canister of tear gas...I think he went to fetch it from the back of his car and we blindfolded him, myself and Johannes Mbelo...there was a combi similar to these that sell ice cream which we called the A-Team because it didn’t have any windows. We then put him into this combi. De Kock then took this canister of tear gas and sprayed it on his nose and closed his nose and he remained inside coughing in the combi. After a while he opened up the combi and dragged him out and threw him to the ground. He was not talking at that stage. De Kock asked me if this person would be able to recognize me at a future stage and I said yes. And he told me: “Do not worry, my china, he won’t see you again.”[...] The family asks the Truth Commission to lead them to the remains of Japie, so that the two brothers can rest in peace. (pp. 97-98)

Japie was killed merely because of his brother’s actions. It was something that could happen to anyone in South Africa, especially if one was not white. In his discussion of reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa, Chikane (1995) offered this story:

A highly-placed person came to me and said: “I was partly responsible for your detention at a particular time. I’ve come to say sorry and to ask your forgiveness.”

I relate differently to such a person than to someone who tortured me but remains unchanged because he has not confessed voluntarily. On encountering this second sort of person I would think only of the torture I went through and the bricks I stood on for 50 hours. (p. 101)

Though Chikane's reflection illustrates incidents that are more closely related to overt oppression, I would like to offer that the highly-placed person he refers to is no different than the ordinary South African who forces South African People of Color to face apartheid in a personal way by discriminating against them. Apartheid was insidious, in that for those being oppressed, it was the daily encounters and laws that reminded the oppressed communities of their subservience to the hegemonic culture. By this I mean the train conductor, who puts you off the train of a Whites-only carriage, or the shopkeeper who refuses to serve you, or the white pedestrian who looks at you with disdain on the streets. For me the immediate and visible effects might be different between Chikane being tortured and me being thrown out of a Whites-only train carriage, but I feel the effects on the psyche and identity of the individual are similar. Apartheid clearly stated that as a member of the non-white groups, language, as defined by the official status of English and Afrikaans, did not belong to you. As a corollary to the official status of English and Afrikaans, other languages or variances of English and Afrikaans were not considered real language. Makoni (2003) explained that:

African languages were not constructed and standardized taking into account the communicative practices of the users [...] there is a sharp disjuncture between language praxis and standard forms of the language. [...] The African languages listed in the South African Constitution and those frequently cited in the literature

on African sociolinguistics reinforces the boundaries which were *arbitrarily drawn by missionaries*[emphasis added] and subsequently awarded academic credibility through grammatical descriptions of Zulu, Xhosa, Tswana, and other “indigenous” South African languages. (pp. 136-137)

It seems that even in our current understanding of language, and of race and ethnicities, we are inadvertently being forced to use misconceptions of language and race as defined by people who were not always well-intentioned in their allocations of such terms and concepts.



## **Chapter 5: United States of America: English Only**

**“The world is richer than it is possible to express in any single language” (Prigogine, 1980, p. 51)**

### **Introduction**

Language has been an important component of the identity of the United States as a country, its citizens as individuals, as well as groups or communities. When it comes to the black community and other communities who are regarded as being outside of the hegemonic white culture, language often defines how individuals and groups are allocated identities, as well as how they are treated. This treatment exists because of the complexities that often define issues of race, language and socio-economic status.

Vaillancourt (2009) offered the following with respect to two of these factors, “The most important source of income is usually labor income [...] and it is the kind for which the impact of language skills has been most studied” (p. 151). The influence of socio-economic status on education is also well documented. Baugh (1996) explains that “just as language development is influenced by socioeconomic circumstance, so too is education. Children in poverty, the very children who are least likely to be proficient speakers of standard English, also attend the least fortunate schools” (p. 413).

Vaillancourt (2009) wrote about language being “an ethnic attribute or marker similar to race [...] [and that] “defining language solely as a form of human capital overlooks the ethnic dimension of the first language learned, usually defined as the individual’s mother tongue” (p. 152). Vaillancourt (2009) concluded that “Language is one of various factors that influence poverty” (p. 158). The complexity of language, race, and socio-economic status extends to the subject of power.

Power at times resides in and is expressed by the actions of the agents of the state. My experiences with hegemonic power, in the form of the police, have been highlighted by my interactions due to race, and by association, my language and socio-economic status. These factors are often intertwined, and not easily separated. Crenshaw (2009) argued that “Race, gender, and other identity categories are most often treated in mainstream liberal discourse as vestiges of bias or domination – that is, as intrinsically negative frameworks in which social power works to exclude or marginalize those who are different” (p. 214). I would not agree with the proposition offered by Crenshaw (2009) that social power “need not be the power of domination [...] [but] can instead be the source of social empowerment and reconstruction” (p. 214). All my experience leads me to the contrary, that it always represents domination. Crenshaw (2009) in reference to domestic violence, stated that “Language barriers present another structural problem that often limits opportunities of non-English speaking women to take advantage of existing support structures” (p. 216). Although Crenshaw (2009) referenced the “controversy over Alice Walker’s novel *The Color Purple* [...] [as] an intracommunity debate about the political costs of exposing gender violence within the Black community” (p. 220), I have also shown the link to language, specifically how language is perceived by the character, Celie. Crenshaw (2009) also explained that “It is therefore more reasonable to explore the links between racism and domestic violence. But the chain of it is more complex and extends beyond this single link” (p. 221). As far as youth goes, Males (2005) remarked that, “notwithstanding Charles Murray’s racist *Bell Curve* theories, non-white “dysgenics” is not the explanation for the disparity [in homicide rates between white and non-white youth]. If one adjusts the racial crime rate for the number of individuals living

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in extreme poverty, non-whites have a crime rate similar to that of whites at every age level.” (p.129). The point that I will try to illustrate, is that my personal experiences with the police confirm the observation that “racism denies men of color the power and privilege that dominant men enjoy” (Crenshaw, 2009, p. 221). Language is one of the assets that I continue to endeavor to possess, but it is also one which never seems to be attainable. Language, in this case the English language, it seems, is not as easily claimed by certain minority individuals or groups.

### **Running from the Law**

*“Stay down!” John whispered.*

*“Now!” he said, “Go!”*

*And we were on our way. Crystal and I ran blindly through the dark woods.*

*Branches whipped into my face and across my body. I tried to keep as light on my feet as possible. Each step, in this unfamiliar territory could mean a fall. I had no idea where I was going. I could hear Crystal breathing with short staccato breaths. I kept track of her in this way.*

*“I can’t get sent home,” I thought.*

*Not after two weeks. The cold flush of dread poured over me. I waited for the flashlights, or to hear the command; “Stop!” Neither came. We reached Onondaga Street. And then we walked. Drenched in sweat and grinning foolishly. Our eyes wild. Our hearts racing. We had escaped.*

*The adventure and encounter with the police started out innocently enough. Two weeks previously, I arrived in Skaneateles, New York, from Cape Town, South Africa. It was the start of my year-long stay as an exchange student in upstate New York. That*

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*night I would meet some of the kids I would be attending school with. Amy, my host sister, took me to a favorite gathering place of the high school kids. Amy and I walked from home, and on the way to the woods, we stopped by to pick up Kristen and Stephanie. They were two of Amy's best friends and my future classmates, and I had met them earlier. There was almost no light from the moon or streetlights filtering through the dense trees as we walked to our rendezvous point. The girls knew where they were going. It was unfamiliar territory for me, but I kept up, and listened as attentively as possible to the animated chatting only high school girls know how to have. I weighed in now and then with an observation, or to answer some query about life back in South Africa.*

*Finally we stepped into a small clearing. Six huge pine trees hovered menacingly over us. We had reached Pine Tree Fort. In the yearbook it was abbreviated as PTF, a favorite hangout for high school kids. Parents and teachers would never know, or if they did, they chose to ignore it. Several kids lounged around in the clearing, talking and drinking. A few hurried introductions, handshakes, and "How're you doin's" quickly followed. I had never had a beer in my life. In fact, I don't think I had been to a party where alcohol was served. Here, the beer flowed freely, as the seniors-to-be enjoyed the final days of the summer of 1978 with some cold brewskis.*

*We all saw the flashlights moving through the woods. There were guesses as to which of our classmates would be joining us soon. When the bobbing flashlights reached the PTF, they were accompanied by a harsh command.*

*"Don't anybody move!" came the command.*

*It was the police. I was told to duck behind a shield of bodies, and Crystal joined me. And that's when our night flight through the darkened woods began.*

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Running from the police was not new for me. My narratives from my childhood in chapter four revealed that the police was a constant, imposing, and threatening part of my childhood. Although I didn't fully understand the complications that being caught by the police could bring, even for something as simple as playing soccer on an empty field on a municipal golf course, as a high school student this had changed. The 1976 South African student protests, taught me that being a Person of Color meant that the police did not respect your life, and that any contact with the police should be avoided. Being caught at a high school weekend party in the woods would not have been good for me in any way. The implications could have meant that I could have been sent home to South Africa, my entrance to college could have been seriously impacted, and my already limited possibilities as a Person of Color would definitely have been even further narrowed.

### **Speaking English as an Other**

*One of my first experiences in the United States was as a foreign exchange student. Being South African meant that I was at least bilingual, because South Africa had English and Afrikaans as official languages. They were the languages of the British and the Afrikaners, who dominated the lives of black, coloreds, and Indians in South Africa for as long as I was alive. I thought I had this English language conquered. After all, I spent eighteen years learning to speak it correctly, albeit with a colored accent. This day that I sat in twelfth grade Physics class I had no idea my English would be put up for show. My teacher asked me to read out the formula  $E=1/2mc^2$ . When I pronounced the word "half" (with a British accent), the class burst out laughing. I still don't understand why my teacher felt it necessary to display my differences in language in such*

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*a public manner, but he did. I was embarrassed and hurt. I spent the rest of the year trying to erase my accent, so that I would fit in.*

*On another occasion I was invited to speak to the ladies club at the local Methodist church. I had a preset slide show all set up because we received slides from the organization which ran the student exchanges. After my talk, one elderly lady came over and commended me on my “excellent control of the English language”. I gracefully accepted the intended compliment, and did not mention that English was in fact my native tongue.*

*Many years later, when I returned to the United States as a working adult, I entered the public schools as a teacher. Here my accent was met with even more derision by students who unfortunately are known for their merciless treatment of others. I was called “Osama Bin Laden” to a “dirty African” because of my accent. I found this ironic as most of the criticism came from the African American and Latino students I entered the teaching profession to help. Again I found I had to adjust my speech patterns to try to fit in and not stand out so clearly as an “other.”*

As I have stated earlier, the racial hierarchy that is so often at the forefront of discussion and debates, can be replaced by a lingual hierarchy. That lingual hierarchy, I feel, presents itself in the form of lingual prejudices. Wynne (2002) recounted her experience with a group of African American students she accompanied to receive a journalism award:

We were sitting together, in a sea of White faces, listening to one of the media experts talk about the ways to improve school newspapers. After he had spoken, he opened the session to questions. My students had several they wanted to ask in

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their effort to discover new ways of writing creatively for their peers back at school. One of my editors leaned over to me and whispered, “Here is a list of questions we want you to ask him.”

I said, “No, you ask him,” surprised that my student and his cohort were suddenly shy.

“We don’t talk right. You ask him.”

No amount of encouragement from me would prompt them to speak. What I now know is that until that moment, I did not understand how psychologically damaging language biases are. [...] they felt inferior. They were silenced by language biases born of racism. [...] Their typical bold acts of discovery became impotent in the midst of a White majority. (pp. 205-206)

Not everyone is able to experience the epiphany Wynne (2002) experienced with her students. In fact, Wynne (2002) submitted that, “Looking back now, I recognize the full measure of my own miseducation. My schooling had not prepared me, as an English major, to understand the depth and breadth of language oppression. No one had taught me that the language I had grown up loving was used to bludgeon others into submission and feelings of inferiority.” (p. 206).

I am still unsure of exactly where and when I heard or used the term untouchables as it relates to young African American students. I do know that it occurred in New York City sometime in 2005, after I made the move to New York City from Saint Louis in order to change my profession from computer programming to teaching. Young African American males face unnecessary obstacles in urban schools. Not only are they subject to systemic prejudices with regard to the biased and excessive testing regimen by the states

and districts, but are also subject to bias, bigotry and marginalization in schools because of their culture. In fact, it is often argued that African Americans have no culture, which includes language. Hilliard (2006) offered that, “certain false assumptions are made about [African American] children and their culture. Basically, the erroneous core assumption is that African American children are nothing more than incomplete copies of Western European white children.” (p. 92). Zamudio et al. (2011) stated that, “English-only language instruction sends the message to whites that their language and, by extension, their culture, is more valuable and superior to that of others. [...] Their social status is high because their language status is high. [...] [and] Their parents were never punished for speaking English-only and thus have positive experiences with schools on which to build.” (p. 61).

One of the areas where improvements can be made is in accepting that the English language is dynamic and varied, and African American Vernacular English (AAVE) should be as acceptable as any other form of English. Smitherman (2002) wrote that “The excruciating and embarrassing narrowness of the American populace in language matters is illustrated in the following joke:

What do you call a person who speaks three languages?

Answer: Trilingual.

What do you call a person who speaks two languages?

Answer: Bilingual.

What do you call a person who speaks one language?

Answer: An American.” (p. 175)



### **Discrimination in Urban Schools**

It is widely held opinion that African Americans and other minorities are discriminated against by current standardized testing standards. This puts them not only in danger of failing assessments, but being labeled and tracked in directions which effectively holds no promise. McNeil (2005) has written that “structures of discrimination [...] damage the education of all children, but particularly those who are African American and Latino” (p. 505). The controls put in place in terms of assessment, curriculum, and standardization are detrimental to what learning takes place for African Americans, and ends up widening the achievement gap between the African American and white students (McNeil, 2005). The question is raised as to “whose interests are served in educational institutions and whose cultures and are represented by the knowledge and ways of knowing institutionalized in schools” (McNeil, 2005, p. 508). Standardization should not be confused with standards, and this standardization also extends to what is expected in terms of language ability of minority students in schools. In concurring, McNeil (2005) wrote that “standardization undermines academic standards and seriously limits opportunities for children to learn to a high standard” (p. 507). It seems that recent reforms in education were not effected to enhance learning, but rather to label urban schools and students as failures. Alonso et al. (2009) wrote that more time is taken up for test preparation, and more districts focus on content covered by state tests at the expense of subjects not covered by state test. Teachers also feel the pressure (and normally succumb) to “teach to the test” (Alonso et al., 2009, p. 197). Clearly African American and Latino students bear the brunt of this approach to education reform, and ultimately end up in our prisons. Brown (2005) wrote that the aim to “ensure the success

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for all students” have been usurped by corporations that want to shift the authority in the education field to those in power while simultaneously denying the “dire consequences to youth, especially poor and those of color” (p. 389).

This is not something that is limited to current education policies. Anderson (1988) clearly defined the institutional and societal lynching of black students by describing the education of blacks in the south as being “undermined by federal and state governments,” and involving the “larger political subordination of blacks” (p. 2). The point being that what African American and Latino students currently experience in urban schools are not new issues, and attests to the insidious nature of the attack on African American youth, and the larger community in general. Anderson (1988) wrote that despite all efforts we have “ultimate[ly] fail[ed] to dominate the course of their educational development.” (p. 3). Any systemic and institutional efforts at the continued stifling of African American and Latino students must be opposed in schools. After all, it was in the schools of South Africa that the battle against Apartheid was eventually won. In South Africa the cry in the student uprisings was and still is: “Aluta Continua”, or “The struggle continues”.

### **Black Masculinity, Language and Special Education**

It has been widely noted that African American males are over represented in the special education classes and separate special education schools of America. This de facto segregation legally achieves what has been fought for by hegemonic forces in American politics, education, and society. The new huge influx of white teachers into urban schools further exacerbates the situation. White teachers join programs like Teach for America to reduce or eliminate student loans while working in hard to staff public

schools in the inner cities. My own experience of such a program has had me hear derogatory comments about students and their academic and linguistic abilities. Yet for many teachers it was easier to teach to the bottom than to differentiate instruction. In other words, differentiating instruction would necessitate that a teacher teach content and concepts at different levels depending on the student's abilities. Teaching to the bottom is an easier option, in which the teacher assumes the same low academic level for all students, and therefore teaches lessons which are easier.

According to Meiners (2007), "Nationally [...] teachers are predominantly white (86%) and female (79%) [and] [...] clearly there is an increasingly white female teaching population and a school population that is increasingly not white" (p. 45). Meiners (2007) also wrote that "the role of teaching [...] was to execute class-based surveillance and monitoring" (p. 47). This concept that Meiners (2007) suggested puts teaching students on the back-burner, and babysitting students in the foreground. The concept is not new, as Tyack (1974) explained, "The purpose of schooling, wrote Philbrick, 'is the imposition of tasks; if the pupil likes it, well; if not, the obligation is the same.'" (p. 40). Tyack (1974) also wrote that in the nineteenth century:

[The] plan to educate poor children by the use of monitors and a carefully prescribed program of studies [...] this blueprint for education not only offered identical small steps for learning for the pupils, but also created a hierarchy of offices which offered a ladder of promotion to the industrious: student, monitor, monitor-general, assistant teacher, teacher, principal, and finally assistant superintendent and superintendent. (p. 41)

This profiling in terms of class, race, and language is what often relegates the African American male to special education status in America's urban schools. The NCLB (No Child Left Behind) and IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) legislations make it easy for African American youth to be marginalized. The number of categories which make a student qualify for special education has been so largely expanded that there is a catch-all for almost anything. Stoughton (2006), asserted that "Because an emotional or behavioral disorder is a category that is largely considered to be a catch-all for the behaviors that authority figures consider intolerable, it is viewed by many teachers as a particularly troubling label for students in their classrooms" (p. 149). Slee (1998) concurred, and wrote that:

Terms such as 'special education needs', 'integration', 'normalisation', 'mainstreaming', 'exceptional learners' and 'inclusion' (this list is not exhaustive) merge into a loose vocabulary variously applied to manage the issue of disability as it collides with the regular education system. [...] In other words, those who, for a variety of reasons arising from the interactions between the school and the child, were at risk of failure could be absorbed into a catch-all category of special education needs. (p. 131)

Tie this in with the subjective interpretation of teachers, school psychologists, and administrators, and the ability to recommend a child for services despite the results of testing, places African American children at huge risk. Meiners (2007) wrote that the soft categories of Emotional Disturbance and Educable Mental Retardation have been shown to be "biased against African American children" (p. 37). How African American students speak English is often used against them because the manner in which they

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speak is not considered Standard English. Meiners (2007) continued that “the subjectivity of school-based disciplinary actions, where *disrespect* or *acting out* move children into the category of a disciplinary problem [...] [and] factors that have little to do with objectivity are responsible for placing youth in the category of special education” (p. 37). Ferguson (2005) concurred and wrote that it is often the interpretation of the body language and meaning of verbal expressions that are “potential moments of trouble” (pp. 315-316) for African American students (and males in particular). Here again, it is the “cool pose culture” (Alonso et al., 2009, p. 37) concept (ascribed to African American males) posited by Orlando Paterson that teachers [and especially white teachers] buy into. Teachers are taught these concepts in teacher education classes, and this supports stereotypes that force African American males into special education. Another concept, called stylized sulking, is also ascribed to African American males. I believe that stylized sulking, like the cool pose, is a “ritualized form of masculinity that entails behaviors, scripts, physical posturing, impression management, and carefully crafted performance that delivers a single, critical message: pride strength and control [...] a ‘creative strategy’ deployed by African American men as a way to ‘counter the negative forces of their lives’” (Alonso et al., 2009, p. 37). I believe that white female teachers are more likely to buy into these concepts and are more willing to participate in profiling and monitoring African American males and then recommending them for special education services. My supervisor recently recommended me for not referring my students to the office, something my white female colleagues often did. Actions like referrals lead to suspensions and expulsions, and it is widely accepted that students who are not at school

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are more likely to get in trouble, and as such, tracks them on that school-to-prison pipeline.

### **What Now?**

African American males are especially vulnerable in the public schools of the United States. Ferguson (2007) wrote that, “Two representations of black masculinity are widespread in society and school today. They are the images of the African American male as a criminal and as an endangered species.” (p. 320). Alonso et al. (2009) quoted one of the students they interviewed in their study, Angelo, as feeling that he had two choices in life, to go to college or to go to prison. Part of the problem is the identification of the language of African Americans as inferior. In order to combat this, we need to address the problem at its root, namely at schools where lives are molded and formed by careful and careless teachers alike. We need to heed the cry of a sixth grader, as reported by Jervis (2005), who accounted for a situation where his student, Jerome, after plays written by the students were selected for performance, asked, “How come there are no brothers on that list?” (p.483). Thoughtful listening to the voices of the children, like Jerome, who inevitably will be encountered on the journeys through the educational landscape, is important. Jervis (2005) also quoted Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, in a dissenting opinion on affirmative action - 1995: “Bias, both conscious and unconscious, reflecting traditional and unexamined habits of thought, keeps up barriers that must come down if equal opportunity and non-discrimination are ever genuinely to become this country’s law and practice” (p. 475). The *Brown* decision was immediately challenged by those opposed to the integration of schools. We currently see similar dissent and protest against reasonable legislative changes or even suggestions of change.

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Tyack (1974) wrote that “In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education” (p. 279).

Education must be accepting of different forms of spoken and written English. We cannot have normal education for all of our children in an abnormal society. Teachers should be educated about social justice, white privilege, and the impact of linguistic prejudice. We need to be able to at least figuratively enfold our children in a welcoming embrace that says, “This is your education, your life; and you are welcome here.”

### **Language, the Police, and Power in the United States**

*I have already related the vignette about my interaction with the plainclothes policemen outside my apartment where they confronted me because they had parked in my parking space. There were a few things that became clear to me that night as my brain raced to determine possible outcomes. In fact, I had no initial fear when they approached me. When they assumed the 10 and 2 positions (one has to assume I was located in the middle of a clock), I knew the potential for trouble was there. I felt that old fear creep into me, where I disappear or get killed without any chance to redeem myself, but this time I also had my young son to think of. The second epiphany I had was that police were really no different in the United States than they were in South Africa. The policemen even made the comment that I was “one of the clever ones” when I tried to explain that my parking space was paid for. I realized that my command of English was no more appreciated here than it was in South Africa. The geographical location may have changed, but my proficiency in English in no way helped me.*

The comment of the policeman of my being clever, reminds me of a story Krog (1999) related from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

The brother of Ace Moema sits motionless as Dirk Coetzee testifies that Ace had asked too many intelligent questions about the structures of Vlakplaas operatives to be believed, because he didn't fit in with the other askaris. 'He was a thinker,' says Coetzee, 'always reserved. A non-drinker. A non-smoker.' Ace was discussed, and Brigadier Schoon told Captain Koos Vermeulen – who hated blacks fanatically, according to Coetzee – to do with Ace 'as he saw fit'. After the testimony, Ace Moema's brother addresses the Committee [...] 'If being intelligent, being quiet, is a criterion for one to die, then it really brings to light the kind of anarchy at that time at Vlakplaas'. (pp. 98-99)

When I immigrated to the United States in 1998, my memory of the United States was certainly not crowded with memories of encounters with the police. Though not completely naïve, I held the belief that if I was a law-abiding, professional, I would not likely encounter problems. Within weeks, this illusion was shattered. The police in the United States, I found out, were no different to the ones I had left behind in South Africa.

*In my first week in the United States when I returned in to work on the Y2K projects in 1998, I went to a large grocery store. I spent quite some time in the store, and when I paid for my items and walked out the store, I heard a voice say, "Hey buddy." It was the police. They explained that they were waiting for me because the management had called to say I was shoplifting with a group of friends. After one week, I clearly had made no friends, and certainly none I could go on a shoplifting spree with. After making me stand with my hands up in the air and then warning me not to place my hands in my pockets while they ran my driver's license (which I had just obtained the previous day), the officer approached me. He had an incredulous look on his face when he told me that*



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*the check had come back without any warrants. When I tried to say I was going back inside to speak to the management, the officer told me not to try to complain as it would be “Your word against theirs.” I felt like I had been spun around and slapped to the ground. I was enraged, infuriated, but ever aware of the threat to me that the police personified. “What a welcome to the United States,” I thought, as I walked away.*

The intimidation of the police in the execution of their duties is terrifying as I discovered. Lynch (2000) discussed the “legal limitation on police work that pertains to the power to search – the “knock-and-announce” rule. The knock and announce rule requires police officers to knock on the front door of a home and to state their identity and purpose *before* they make an attempt to force entry.” (p. 7). Notwithstanding this rule, my encounter with the police in the Bronx was a terrifying ordeal.

*In a third encounter with police I was woken early one morning as I lay sleeping in the tiny room I rented in the Bronx when I taught in the New York City public schools. What woke me was loud banging on the door. Not knowing who it was, I tried to ignore the banging, as it was dark outside, but as the banging became more insistent, I went downstairs. When I opened the door I was pushed up against the wall in the hallway. The people banging were some kind of police task force, with guns drawn and wearing bullet-proof vests. They frisked me and told me to stand with my hands up on the wall. I tried to explain that no-one else was in the house. They searched anyway. I remember smiling, and being asked “Why are you smiling.” I’m still not sure myself, but I think it was the incredulity of it all. After about twenty minutes, they left. All this time I wasn’t sure if I was going to be locked up or shot. Once again, I felt my ethnicity was a handicap, and my knowledge of the English language was in no way an asset.*

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According to Gilroy (2010), “Fannon suggests that racial difference has acquired specific capacities in the distinctive social and cultural relations that have endured to the present. [...] [and that the appearance] of the Negro [was] a timely creation that was bound not only to colonial domination but to the global reach of U.S. culture” (p. 161).

Minority communities, especially African American, Latinos, and the poor, often do not feel they are being served by the police. In contrast, these communities often feel that the police practice the use of excessive force against their members. This is done partly in the name of another politically correct term, that is, the so-called fight against crime. The police do not treat all citizens equally. It is my contention that one’s use of the English language influences how one is treated by the police.

### **How Did We Get Here? – The History of the Police**

The United States has strong ties with Britain, now as well as in the past. Bard and Shellow (1976) wrote that in response to the movement of people from the rural areas to the cities, “For the first time in English history, a particular individual [a peace officer or shireeve – named after a shire or county [ – and shireeve is probably where he word sheriff comes from], was given the distinct function of enforcing law and dispensing justice” (p. 6). By 1869, Sir Robert Peale had made radical reforms of the police system (Bard & Shellow, 1976).

Even though the United States initially adopted a policing system that was pre-Peale, “Serious civil riots in the 1830’s and 1840’s finally impelled cities such as Philadelphia, Boston, and New York to adopt Peale’s [quasi-military] model of policing” (Bard & Shellow, 1976, p. 7). Holmes and Smith (2008) agreed that “Despite the prevalence of crime and disorder in American cities and the widely held belief that they

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were ineffective [...] these loosely structured systems of social control persisted well into the nineteenth century” (p. 21). “The use of two-man cars in many cities have also enforced the growing conviction among police officers themselves that “we’ve got each other, so we don’t need anyone else”” (Bard & Shellow, 1976, p. 9).

Modern day police are also determined in “protecting society from wrongdoers” (Holmes & Smith, 200, p.25). Unfortunately, the wrongdoers are often perceived to be members of minority communities like African Americans, Latinos, and the poor.

Ogletree et al. (1995) asserted that “Young black men may have come to experience police stops, questioning, and harassment as their American way of life” (p. 28). This is not a new phenomenon, and this view is supported by Bell (2000) who wrote that “the steady stream of reported instances of police harassment from James Baldwin’s time to the present serves as both a portent of Black holocaust in America and a divergence of that too awful fate” (p. 88). I feel that the harassment of marginalized communities and individuals, and often the excessive force that follows it, is somehow linked to the perception that those communities or individuals do not have either culture or language.

### **A History of Police Brutality/Excessive Force**

It has long been known in the communities where police brutality or excessive force is practiced, that this is taking place. However, this was not always acknowledged by the general public, especially those communities where this practice is not often seen, that is the dominant white communities.

Amadou Diallo, a black immigrant from Guinea, was shot at forty-one times and struck nineteen times as he stood in the doorway of his apartment complex in The Bronx

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in February 1999 (Nelson, 2000, p. 9). An important fact about this shooting is that Diallo was unarmed.

Lynch (2000) wrote that “Amadou Diallo died in a hail of police bullets in February 1999. The police thought Diallo was a serial rapist who was drawing a pistol against them, but Diallo was an innocent man who was unarmed.” (p. 1). Lynch (2000) further asserted that “An investigation of the shooting began immediately. The officers were subsequently indicted on charges of second degree murder, depraved indifference to human life, and reckless endangerment. One year later, after a four-week trial, all four officers were acquitted on all counts.” (p. 2). This result is not unusual either, the police are seldom found guilty when involved in the deaths of individuals belonging to marginalized communities.

In the beating of Rodney King in March of 1991, and the violence that followed the acquittal of police officers responsible for the beating, some change was effected. “The 1991 videotaped beating of Rodney King by L.A.P.D. officers, and subsequent riots triggered by the acquittal of the officers involved, rocked L.A. and the nation. [...] The Rodney King case certainly punched a lot of buttons, especially in the minority community, who have made allegations about police misconduct and use of force. That case gave them the support they needed to bolster their allegations, and it certainly split the city apart. We eventually had the riots when initially the officers were acquitted in state court. It touched on the divide that exists in the community. And certainly, it's always been a sore spot.” (“The Legacy of Rodney King,” n.d.).

Ogletree et al. (1995) wrote that similar cases of civil disorder [...] [occurred in] New York City in 1964; Los Angeles in 1965; Cleveland 1966; Newark and Detroit in

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1967; Los Angeles in 1992” (p. xvi). Ogletree et al. (1995) were quick not to lay the blame completely at the door of the police however, they also noted that:

When the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, commonly called the Kerner Commission, made its report on the events of the long, hot summer of 1967 [...] [they] concluded: “The abrasive relationship between the police and minority communities has been a major – and explosive – source of grievance, tension, and disorder. (p. xvi)

Nelson (2000) affirmed that when she asked a fellow white citizen on the streets of New York City what she thought of the shooting of Amadou Diallo by police forty-one times in The Bronx, the woman replied, “I’m sure they had a reason [...] I mean he must have done something” (pp. 10-11).

The Rodney King beating was, it could be said, an expected incident that finally came to light to the United States and the world. Nelson (2000) agreed and she noted that, “The Kerner Commission Report was not the first report to identify police misconduct as a key element of the fragile relationship between police and communities of color” and that there was “deep hostility between police and ghetto communities as a primary cause of the disorders surveyed by the Commission” (pp. 11-12).

Holmes and Smith (2008) wrote that “police do [...] uniformly enforce criminal laws [...] and do not succumb to racial enmity in their treatment of citizens” (pp. 4-5). This has not been my personal experience, but it does reflect the viewpoint of the dominant culture. They do not see that the police are doing anything wrong. Ogletree et al. (1995) defined the phenomenon in the following way: “Excessive force encompasses everything from brutal beatings to the use of police dogs to police shootings” (p. 30). The

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aforementioned Rodney King and Amadou Diallo cases are highly publicized. However, prominent cases like these are not the most common form of abuse by police. In their report, Ogletree et al. (1995) wrote that “Police were consistently found to use verbal abuse, disrespectful conduct, and harassment in all types of encounters” (p. 39).

According to Holmes and Smith (2008), police brutality is defined “broadly to include a range of abusive practices, such as the use of profanity, racial slurs, and unnecessary searches” (p. 6). The use of unnecessary searches has been exemplified by the stop and frisk law in New York City. Lynch (2000) explained that “In fact, it has become routine for police officers to make arrests without warrants – even in situations in which there is ample opportunity to obtain them. What is worse is that the Supreme Court has sanctioned police detentions or “stops.” A stop is an involuntary citizen-police encounter [...] The court also held that if a police officer believed the suspect might be armed, he could frisk the individual’s clothing in order to neutralize the potential threat.” (pp. 3-4). According to Holmes and Smith (2008), “Police brutality is an unfortunate corollary of the dangerous job of protecting society from its worse citizens” (p. 11).

In other words, people in minority communities get treated badly because they are regarded by police as the worse citizens who must have done *something* to deserve that kind of treatment by the police.

### **Examples of Police Brutality/Excessive Force**

In one of the earlier examples of police brutality, Kelley (2000) related that:

The summer of 1917 turned out to be particularly bloody. In East St. Louis, Illinois, police and local militia joined White mobs in their attack on the Black community. [...] the local paper called on their readers to “Make East St. Louis a

Lily White Town” [...] On the night of July 1, 1917, gangs of White men drove through the Black community and began shooting indiscriminately. [...] at least 150 Black residents had been shot, burned, hanged, or maimed for life [...] [and] thirty-nine Black people lost their lives, including small children whose skulls were crushed or who were tossed into bonfires. (p. 30)

In another incident, Bell (2000) recalled how one of his top white female Harvard Law School students was stopped in 1985 because her partner was a black man, and that, before they were released, her partner had a gun pointed at him and was forced out of the car, amid “profanities and comments about “nigger” and “nigger-lovin’ White sluts.”” (pp. 91-92).

Ogletree et al. (1995) reported how, “on October 31, 1989, in Houston, three drunk, off duty police officers chased a fifty-one year old black woman for thirteen miles on a Texas freeway before shooting her to death” (p. 34). They had apparently become enraged when she cut them off in traffic while on her way to work (Ogletree et al., 1995).

The FBI (2009) reported the following case of excessive force by a police officer: Adam S. Pretti, a former deputy with the Shelby County, Tenn., Sheriff’s Office, was sentenced today in federal court in Memphis to 18 months in prison and two years of supervised release for using excessive force during an encounter with a citizen. Pretti was also ordered to pay a \$4,000 fine and a \$100 special assessment. Pretti pleaded guilty on April 9, 2009, to unnecessarily striking in the head a man he encountered outside a residence in Cordova, Tenn., while conducting an investigation in March or April 2006. Pretti acknowledged that he

abused his authority as a law enforcement officer and agreed that his conduct violated federal law and the constitutional rights of the man he struck. (p. 1)

The United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division (2011) wrote the following in its report concerning the practices of the Puerto Rican Police Department:

Our investigation concluded that a longstanding pattern and practice exists of PRPD [Puerto Rico Police Department] officers violating the Constitution by using force, including deadly force when no force or lesser force was called for. As a result, PRPD officers have unnecessarily injured hundreds of people and killed numerous others. PRPD's overreliance on such tactics is evident in its regular deployment of heavily armed tactical units on routine patrols or "preventative rounds," usually in public housing complexes or low-income neighborhoods. (p. 6)

Nelson (2000) reported that despite what the general perception is, "most police officers who are killed by citizens are not killed by Blacks" (p. 140). Hilliard (2002) offered that, "Language, culture, history, and oppression are inextricably linked together where African American children are concerned" (p. 90). That African American children have been oppressed in the history of the United States is well documented. What must be noted in discussions and writings about such past and continued oppression is that the oppression involves more than race. Yosso (2006) explained that "A CRT in education centralizes race and racism, while also focusing on racisms intersections with other forms of subordination, based on gender, class, sexuality, language, culture, immigrant status, phenotype, accent, and surname" (p. 7).



Samy Alim and Baugh (2007) explained that “Public discourse about the language education of Black youth in the United States often incite discourse about race and race relations, pointing to the fact that racism is still a significant issue in American schooling.” In the minds of many Americans, it is not uncommon for linguistic concerns to become intertwined with issues of race. In practice linguistic “firestorms” (the “Black English case” and the Ebonics controversy, for instance) often reveal a complex array of strategies that perpetuate racist myths about Black people.” (p. 4). The response of Smitherman (2009) best illustrated the Ebonics controversy:

*Question: Why are people so emotionally charged during the Oakland case?*

*What was occurring in the political climate at the time? What impact did the Oakland case have on pedagogical practices?*

Okay, first, before somebody git it twisted. There wasn't an “Oakland case,” i.e. in the sense of a court case. Like with King vs Ann Arbor [Black English case]. The situation in Oakland involved a resolution that the Oakland School Board issued on December 18, 1996. Oakland's “Ebonics resolution” committed the board, and by extension, its teachers, to a recognition and an acknowledgement that the primary, home language of its African American students was “Ebonics” and that this language should be used as a medium of instruction in school subjects and to teach those students “Standard English.” [...] Race and anything to do with race is still a hot button issue in the U.S. Folks were just as emotionally charged during the period of the “Black English” case two decades before Oakland. (p. 26)

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Racism and the accompanying oppression therefore intersect with areas that extend beyond the concept of race, such as language, culture, and history.

## Chapter 6: What can be learned?

**“A language is a dialect with an army and a navy.” (Ogulnick, 2000, p. 8).**

### Introduction

*It seemed simple enough; civility and common sense had to have taken root in South Africa since the first elections for all held in 1994. At least this is what I thought. But a simple example on the streets of Cape Town in 2010 showed me that very little had changed. I had woken up early to go for a swim on the beach and watch the sunrise. After enjoying the solitude on the beach, my nephew and I enjoyed a cup of coffee at the coffee shop as soon as it opened. My nephew had gone on to the car while I paid the check. While walking down the path to the car park, I was approached by a white couple walking in the opposite direction. The woman was pushing a baby stroller. I moved over to the side on which the man was walking thinking he would move over and walk in single file with his partner. He did not. Inevitably, we arrived at the point where he and I were on a collision course. He initially refused to budge, but seeing that I was standing my ground, he moved over, and we continued our journey each party muttering and angry. This display of entitlement on the part of this couple, expecting me to step aside is something I remember from my youth in South Africa, where whites expected coloreds, Indians, or blacks to step off sidewalks into the road when confronted with that situation.*

Sadly, it also reminded me of similar experiences I have encountered in the United States while living there. This refusal of whites to step aside, and the accompanying capitulation of some African Americans or others to step aside when encountering such situations, is not uncommon in my experiences. In fact, I would venture to say that it has become as natural a part of the culture, as the racism which is an

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accepted tenet of Critical Race Theory. What this encounter in South Africa has proved to me was that change may have occurred on the law books in South Africa as it did with the signing of the Civil Rights Act in the United States, but authentic, tangible change has not generally occurred.

South Africa, the United States and New Zealand have all, at some stage, existed under the yoke of colonialism. According to Gilroy (2010):

The pursuit of civil and political rights generated complex reactions against the lingering imprint of racial slavery. That movement, like the organization of colonial peoples towards their independence, devised and projected conceptions of human freedom which were incompatible with racial hierarchy, wherever it was located. This was a universal, human freedom quite different from the freedom to consume that the evolving capitalist market afforded slave descendants by way of distraction from and compensation for a wider inequality. (p. 6)

I would like to propose that the wider inequality that is referred to by Gilroy (2010), includes that of lingual hierarchy, that which often colonizes, and lays claim to individuals and communities who are not a part of the dominant cultures in nations where lingual hierarchy is practiced. In physically revisiting South Africa and recalling the English-only policy of the United States, I intend to expose issues related to racial and linguistic hierarchy. Themes like education, acquisition of language, language policy, and the effects of colonialism will provide us with an opportunity to see what South Africa and the United States can learn from the success of New Zealand's language policies. For example, Macedo (2003) wrote that, "Any colonized person who has experienced

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firsthand the discriminatory language policies of European colonialism can readily see many similarities between colonial ideology and the dominant values that inform the American English-only movement.” (p. 65).

### **South Africa**

On my recent return to the shores of South Africa, I went around Cape Town taking photographs of the schools in the area. The schools, like the suburbs and townships, were still largely segregated despite the political change to democracy in 1994 that saw a largely black government rising to power. I was interested to document what, if any, changes had taken place in the twelve years that I had been absent. I had heard anecdotal evidence that the education system had deteriorated. My fear of the education system falling into this state was one of the main reasons I emigrated almost fifteen years ago. During my visit, I wanted to document what the conditions at the schools in South Africa currently were. This may not be the correct forum to present the photographs I took, but at the time of revisiting South Africa I wanted to illustrate and capture what the South Africa education system looked like physically. The pictures I took certainly provided evidence that the physical buildings and their enclosures looked more like prisons than schools. Barbed wire, steel bars, and security guards presented an almost surreal feeling to what education was. It was as if the education to prison pipeline was physically manifested by the conditions of, and prison-like symbols around the schools. South Africa and its oppressive system, Apartheid, affected education and conditions of schools before the seminal elections in 1994, but very little progress is now evident.

### **The legacy of Apartheid in education**

Apartheid officially came into being after the 1948 elections in South Africa, when the (Herstigde - Reformed) National Party took over control of the government. Apartheid, an Afrikaans word, could be translated into English as *separation*, and basically espoused the philosophy that races should be kept separate. Apartheid would change the country forever. The National Party ascending to power may have been the official start of apartheid, but South Africans who were not white had long been subjected to discrimination and oppression. When South Africa gained independence from Britain at the start of the twentieth century, it did not mean that any of the black, colored or Indian groups achieved equal status as citizens. For example, blacks could vote, but only for white candidates. The Colour [sic] Bar Act barred people of color from receiving certification, and the Education Act ensured non-whites would receive no formal education. Job reservation ensured whites were economically advantaged, and that the social and economic progress of blacks, coloreds, and Indians were impeded.

The new ruling political party was unashamedly racist, and went about systematically putting their policies into effect after their victory. The National Party was comprised mainly of Afrikaners (white citizens from Dutch extract, or those who identified with the South African white nationalism and racism that the Afrikaners advocated). The party of opposition was the United Party, and but for a few exceptions, they merely provided a foil for the ruling National Party in the South African Parliament. I have always contended that the United Party had no intention of taking over from the National Party, but were, instead, working hand in hand with them. They were, as far as I could surmise, merely a faux opposition party.

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One of the first policies which were enacted was the Population Registration Act. This Act was enacted in 1950, and basically divided the population and forced people to be classified into four races. These were: whites, coloreds, Indians, and blacks. The philosophy behind this Act was simple; divide and rule. By creating a hierarchy based on race, the hegemonic white group was ensuring that they would be able to rule over the rest of the population. This would also enable them to ensure the population was divided and would fit into future policies of Apartheid. One of the most absurd practices was when a person's race was in doubt, a pencil was used to establish race. That is, for someone, whose skin color did not clearly establish their race as white, a pencil would be placed in their hair. If the pencil fell out, that person could be classified as white.

There were many pieces of legislation that followed in the 1950s. This is not a timeline, but just a restatement of the kind of legislation that was passed by the white South African government to undergird the policy of Apartheid. The Group Areas Act was passed to allocate the best and largest land areas for whites. Coloreds and Indians were allocated separate areas of land, and were often forcibly removed from their properties, which were then made available to whites. The Bantu Homelands Act allocated barren pieces of land for black ethnic groups (like Indian reservations), which basically relegated blacks to illegal status in their own countries. Blacks had to carry pass books which had to be produced whenever, and by whomever, accosted them in South Africa. Finally, the Separate Amenities Act allocated separate public areas and facilities (from drinking fountains to beaches) for whites or non-whites. Non-white is a term I am particularly disturbed about because, to me, it basically relegates people to sub-human

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status. The Separate Amenities Act also translated to separate facilities in work and business places - for example restaurants - as well.

Acts like the Mixed Marriages Act made it illegal for a white person to marry anyone of another race. The Immorality Act made it illegal for whites to engage in sexual intercourse with people of other races. People were tracked down and jailed for these supposed crimes. Doors were kicked down in the middle of the night as police acted on tips from *good* neighbors. Whites often received suspended or lesser sentences when these offenders were prosecuted.

As horrendous as the previous Acts were, the cherry on the top for me was the Bantu Education Act. To me this Act basically ensured the continued hegemonic position of the white population for generations. As Anderson (1988) wrote:

Armstrong [...] supported new forms of external control over blacks, including disfranchisement, segregation, and civil inequality [and] called for the effective removal of black voters and politicians from southern political life, the relegation of black workers to the lowest forms of labor in the southern economy, and the establishment of a general southern racial hierarchy. (p. 36)

This might as well have been written for the South African situation, and the racial hierarchy existing there. Apartheid had nothing to do with a separate but equal doctrine, but was instead a doctrine of subjugation and oppression. Anderson (1988) also notes that “Each race of men, each class in society, have [sic] to shape their own destinies themselves wrote J. Willis Menard, secretary of the Louisiana Educational Relief Association [1866] [...] The colored people are called to today to mark out on the map of life with their own hands their future course or locality in the great national body politic.



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Other hands cannot mark for them; other tongues cannot speak for them; other eyes cannot speak for them; they must see and speak for themselves, and make their own characters on the map, however crooked or illegible.” (p. 10). This self-determination was not available to blacks, coloreds, or Indians in South Africa. Of course, there is no denying that a racial hierarchy was created by the architects of Apartheid, but oppression was suffered by all (again the degree was worse for some than others). My point is that to try to differentiate the level of discrimination among people of color in South Africa would be like trying to differentiate between slaves working in the house to the slaves working in the field.

### **Education**

The point about education in South Africa is that it was separate with extremely unequal facilities, resources, and curriculum. It was Hendrick Verwoerd who commented that blacks – and coloreds and Indians - should be educated for the positions in life that would be made available to them (Van den Berg & Meerkotter, 1993). He went on to say that people of color had no reason to look over the fence, at what was reserved for whites (Van den Berg & Meerkotter, 1993). Very few whites spoke out against the injustices, and most Indians, blacks, and coloreds lived their realities without much protest. But opposition grew, first with the formation of the African National Congress (ANC), and when their leaders - black, white, colored, and Indian - were banned, it caused the ANC to go underground, and rally later with the protests of school children across South Africa. The rallying cry for the protests was that blacks were being forced to be taught in Afrikaans, but this was not the full story. What was really happening was that blacks, coloreds, and Indians were being educated for a life of subordination. And the protests,

from my perspective, were an attempt to stem the bleeding of African lives of color into oblivion.

Even though the Bantu Education Act legislated compulsory education for everyone, even this legislation was discriminatory. Ocampo (2004) stated that “School was compulsory for Whites from age seven to sixteen, for Asians and Coloureds from seven to fifteen, and for Blacks from age seven to thirteen.” (p. 1). I feel Ocampo (2004) concurs with my assessment as she wrote that, “Clearly, the less education students received, the fewer choices they had in the working world and in accessing more education. Since these policies ensured that the content and amount of education perpetuated social inequalities, changing these policies in a post-apartheid era was the logical step towards social equality.” (p. 1). My recollection is also that despite these compulsory ages, whites, blacks, coloreds, and Indians started school at different ages. Case and Deaton (1999) reinforce my recollection as they noted that:

Enrollment rates among Black and Coloured children are lower. They start school later than Asians or Whites—which in spite of possible cohort and repetition effects appears to be inconsistent with the equality of achievement by age 10 [...] and they stop going to school earlier and in greater numbers so that, by age 18, less than 80 percent of Blacks and Coloureds are enrolled, as opposed to 92 percent of Asians and 97 percent of Whites. Beyond age 18 there are substantial fractions of Blacks in education—more than a third at age 23—as they work to complete their education. At these ages, the Black and White data look similar, but for very different reasons; the Whites are in tertiary education and the Blacks are catching up on high school. (p. 1)

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### **South Africa: Post-Apartheid**

Returning to South Africa recently reinforced that the legacy of Apartheid lives despite over sixteen years of supposedly real democracy.

*A security guard approached me at one of the schools as I took photographs, and I immediately thought his intention was to confront me for trespassing and to ask me to leave. When he asked me if I was from a newspaper, I thought my fears were being realized. Instead, the man introduced himself as Benny, an ex-policeman who was now working as a security guard at the school. The school, Benny explained, was a white school, but now had mostly colored students since it was close to a mainly colored area (that was once separated from a white Group Area by a suburban railroad). He pointed to the potholes in the driveway, and said they received no funds from the Department of Education despite frequent requests. "Please make sure you let people know," Benny pleaded as we stood amid the potholes on that rainy day.*

There may be an indication, from what I observed, of a relaxation of certain apartheid practices. Black faces are no longer hidden behind passbooks, and in townships or homelands. In certain areas, housing is mixed. The status quo, however, is maintained in education, and little seems to have changed to level the playing fields. Apartheid still survives de facto in South Africa.

The English language has always been attainable to South Africans. Whether it was owned by all who spoke it is entirely another notion. It might be advantageous to present the South African language provisions of the South African Constitution in its entirety:

1. The official languages of the Republic are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, and isiZulu.
2. Recognizing the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages of our people, the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages.
3. (a) The national government and provincial governments may use any particular official languages for the purposes of government taking into account usage, practicality, expense, regional circumstances and the balance of the needs and preferences of the population as a whole or in the province concerned; but the national government and each provincial government must use at least two official languages.
3. (b) Municipalities must take into account the language usage and preference of their residents.
4. The national government and provincial governments, by legislative and other measures, must regulate and monitor their use of official languages. Without detracting from the provisions of subsection (2), all official languages must enjoy parity of esteem and must be treated equitably.

(Makoni, 2003, pp. 132-133)

The above are laudable provisions, but this does not mean that all languages are indeed treated equitably as indicated in the constitution. Makoni (2003) in fact argued that “The African languages listed in the South African Constitution and those frequently cited in the literature on African sociolinguistics reinforce the boundaries which were arbitrarily drawn by missionaries and subsequently awarded academic credibility through

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grammatical descriptions of Zulu, Xhosa, Tswana, and other “indigenous” South African languages.” (p. 137).

I was a South African colored, though I never accepted the term. I am now a black American, fluent in English and Afrikaans, but I am still ultimately defined by the color of my skin, and the accent contained in the English that I speak. I am still seeking my identity, an identity that is not entirely defined by the color of my skin or the kind of English I speak.

### **United States: Still English Only**

The physical transition I experienced from South Africa to the United States of America was just that; a physical shift. All the racism I experienced in South Africa is as prevalent in my current environment as it was in my previous environment. Of course, the overt nature of racism of South Africa is more covert and subtle in the United States. However, it has not been any less abrasive. I can truly understand what Dyson (2007) meant when he wrote that “As an African American man who has been subjected to racial profiling, who has been subjected to police brutality despite my educational attainments, I can tell you it frightens the crap out of me when a guy like that [a racist] having a book” (p. 228). The irony of the English-only argument in the United States is perhaps best illustrated by the narratives offered by May (2012):

I want to begin, by way of background, with three revealing vignettes. The first concerns the New York State constitutional convention in 1916 where, during a debate on an English literacy requirement for voting, a proponent of the measure traced the connection between the English language and democratic values *directly* back to the Magna Carta: You have got to learn our language [English]

because that is the vehicle of the thought that has been handed down from the men in whose breasts first burned the fire of freedom [...] the obvious point to be made here is that the Magna Carta was actually written in Latin! The second occurred in the mid-1920s. In opposing the teaching of Spanish as a foreign language in Texas schools at that time, the first female governor of Texas, Miriam (Ma) Ferguson was reputed as saying “If the King’s English was good enough for Jesus, it’s good enough for the children of Texas!” [...] Another recent example, which is documented, concerns a 1995 court case in Amarillo Texas, between a monolingual English father and a bilingual Spanish/English mother over custody of their daughter. In this case, the judge ordered that a key condition of awarding custody to the mother was that she was not to speak Spanish to her child at home on the grounds that it was equivalent to a form of child abuse. (p. 225)

Del Valle (2009) confirmed the Texas court case vignette stating that, “The Court’s order ‘specifically informs the mother that if she does not make the effort to learn English, she is running the risk of losing all connection – legally, morally and physically – with her daughter forever’. In essence, Judge Tatum was prepared to terminate all parental rights, the most extreme punishment in child abuse cases, because of the mother’s limited ability to speak English” (p. 81). The above stories stand as stark reminders of the insidious attempts to maintain the hegemonic status of the English language in the United States.

### **Race and language**

Now I have explored the complexity of racism in earlier sections, and how language is indeed a part of that equation. This is perhaps best illustrated by a vignette where this link between race and language is illustrated.

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*When I moved to New York City in 2005 to teach in the public schools, I had to find an apartment. In my search for an apartment, my initial contact with prospective landlords were normally by telephone, and I often found myself being invited to view the apartment I was interested in. In most cases, I never heard from the prospective landlords once I had met them. The only distinct detail I remember about those encounters, were the unambiguous looks of surprise I saw on the faces of prospective landlords. I have often been told that I do not “sound black.” It reminded me of an incident back in 1979, when a family who hosted me for a week as a high school exchange student, told me they were unsure of what to expect after I told them I was a South African on the phone. I surmised that my encounters with prospective landlords in New York City were due to the fact they expected a white person and got me instead.*

In a practically identical narrative Baugh (2003) related the following personal experiences:

I first became aware of “linguistic profiling” through deeply personal circumstances [...] Any reader who has ever tried to rent a home or apartment knows the experience of scouring the classified advertisements and then calling to make an appointment. During all calls to prospective landlords, I explained my circumstances, as a visiting professor at CASBS, always employing my “professional voice,” which I am told “sounds white.” No prospective landlord ever asked me about my “race,” but in four instances I was abruptly denied access to housing upon arrival for my scheduled appointment. Although I suspected that these refusals were directly the result of my race, which was confirmed through visual racial profiling, my standard English fluency was (and is) such that I

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escaped “linguistic profiling” because I sounded white. (p. 159)

Henderson (2001) further confirmed the existence of linguistic profiling in her story:

I went to a large apartment complex in Philadelphia to inquire about apartments. I was steered to the most expensive apartment in the building and told this was the only apartment available for the following month and that no other apartments would be coming available. However, the next day, using my very best Standard American English on the phone and inquiring about apartments at the same complex, I discovered that, miraculously, several less expensive apartments were immediately available, and I was more than welcome to come and see them.

(pp. 2-3)

These vignettes are so eerily similar to my own experiences that it is at once both affirming and disconcerting. Sprott (2000) corroborated these examples and wrote that “I was always commended by teachers, and when people met me after talking with me on the telephone, they were always surprised that I was Black” (p. 48). I am gratified that my experience is confirmed by others and is therefore a shared reality, yet concurrently, that such incidents continue to take place is distressing. Dyson (2003) asserted that:

In theorizing the relation of race to language, we must pay attention to the important work of cultural studies figures, literary critics, and critical race theorists. [...] While the contribution of cultural studies scholars, literary critics, and critical race theorists to debates about race and language is well established [...] it is neither obvious nor acceptable to some black critics that they should employ European theories in explicating black culture. (p. 48)



For me the above statement articulates that it is not important to only know that a link exists between language and race, but that these phenomena and those who study them must be further studied in order to gain a greater understanding, and hopefully find a solution. Dyson (2003) argued that “We must gritty the smooth surface of poststructuralist theories [...] as we theorize the link between language and black identities” (p. 51). The language we speak has to be accepted and treated as equal to any form of so-called Standard English. However, there are too many anecdotes of African American Vernacular English, Black English, or Black Language not being given equal treatment. Baldwin (1998) expounded on what Black English represents when he wrote that the language that black people constructed in countries they were brought to as slaves enabled them to survive, and that in this construction they also defined the physical and emotional aspects of slavery. Baldwin(1979) further elucidated this concept of Black English within the broader concept of language creation and the struggle against language hegemony when he wrote:

People evolve a language in order to describe and thus control their circumstances, or in order not to be submerged by a reality that they cannot articulate. (And, if they cannot articulate it, they *are* submerged.) [...] What joins all languages, and all men, is the necessity to confront life [...]The price for this is the acceptance [...] of one's temporal identity. [...] And much of the tension in the Basque countries, and in Wales, is due to the Basque and Welsh determination not to allow their languages to be destroyed. This determination also feeds the flames in Ireland for many indignities the Irish have been forced to undergo at English hands is the English contempt for their language. It goes without saying,

then, that language is also a political instrument, means, and proof of power. It is the most vivid and crucial key to identify: It reveals the private identity, and connects one with, or divorces one from, the larger, public, or communal identity. [...] To open your mouth in England is (if I may use black English) to "put your business in the street": You have confessed your parents, your youth, your school, your salary, your self-esteem, and, alas, your future. (p. 1)

The message that Baldwin (1979) articulates here is dire, and speaks to the universality of language hegemony in general, and English in particular. In contrast to the grim message, there is also hope in Baldwin's (1979) message as he further wrote:

We, the blacks, are in trouble, certainly, but we are not doomed, and we are not inarticulate because we are not compelled to defend a morality that we know to be a lie. The brutal truth is that the bulk of white people in American never had any interest in educating black people, except as this could serve white purposes. It is not the black child's language that is in question, it is not his language that is despised: It is his experience. (p. 1)

Samy Alim and Baugh (2007) explained further that "Through the manipulation and control of language and literacy, European slavemasters provided the sociolinguistic conditions that fostered the development of a unique Black Language in the United States." (p. 3). Baldwin (1998) articulated that blacks were not owners of anyone or anything, and that included the standard form of English. Though blacks created a language of their own, the fight for recognition of that language continues. Samy Alim and Baugh (2007) contended that blacks "have suffered under the laws, practices, and ideologies of linguistic supremacy and White racism [...] [and] it is the ideology and

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practice of linguistic supremacy – that is, the false, unsubstantiated notion that certain linguistic norms are inherently superior to the linguistic norms of other communities” (pp. 3-4). It is this false notion of the inherent supremacy of English which has to be addressed in the United States. If English is to be owned by all it must not be reserved for certain individuals and groups only.

### **Hegemony of Standard English**

Language Planning (LP) is “the term used by linguists to describe deliberate efforts to encourage, discourage, or otherwise change the way language is used in a community” (Debose, 2007, p. 30). Debose (2007) explained that:

One of the most important keys to understanding LP in education is the notion of the hegemony of standard English. [...] *hegemony* [is defined] as a function of “civil society” and in one of two ways in which the dominant group maintains its position – the other being “direct domination.” [...] In other words, in addition to being carried out through the coercive means of state power employed by ruling groups to maintain control over society, hegemony is exercised through ideas, attitudes, myths, and values, and these are perpetuated through education and socialization. (p. 31)

Hegemony is then entrenched through the agents of the state both directly and indirectly. In the United States this is particularly evident through the long struggle against other languages dating back to the first settlers and extending through the opposition to German during and after the World Wars. Romaine (2009) explained that “The hegemony of a purely economic account of poverty has been little challenged [and that] a

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similar hegemony operates with respect to linguistic diversity. Diversity has been problematized while monolingualism or linguistic uniformity is normalized” (p. 129).

New Zealand has had a similar colonial background (British) to that of South Africa and the United States, as well as dominant and heritage language dynamics which until the 1980s practiced similar English-only policies. “Major initiatives launched from the 1980s have brought about a revival of te reo.” (“History of the Maori language,” n.d.). The English language in New Zealand held a similar dominant position in New Zealand that still currently exists in South Africa and the United States. South Africa and New Zealand are also both members of the Commonwealth of Nations after South Africa rejoined the Commonwealth in 1994. The other similarities between the three countries are that indigenous people were oppressed and discriminated against. New Zealand, though there is still much to do in terms of equity in society, has moved in a different direction. May (2002) wrote that:

A more accommodative viewpoint *has* been advanced in recent years, recognising a responsibility (and need) for more active state support of the first languages of other ethnic minority groups, particularly within education. Thus, the Ministry of Education has since the mid-1990s begun to look more seriously at the maintenance of Pasifika languages within Aotearoa/New Zealand, and is currently in the process of belatedly, but actively, exploring the issues and possibilities around Pasifika bilingual education. This is in accord with their earlier assurance that ‘students whose mother tongue is a Pacific Islands language or a community language will have the opportunity to develop and use their own language as an integral part of their schooling’. (p. 14)

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### **New Zealand: Language Revival and Growth**

New Zealand has always held both a close historical tie with me in addition to the fascination with reports of the country's beauty and culture. The historical tie is represented by my being a South African by birth, in that New Zealand has always had close sporting ties with my country of birth in both rugby and cricket. During the struggles for independence and freedom from racial oppression in South Africa, New Zealand took a positive stance in favor of the call for equality in South Africa. This was in stark contrast to the United States' policy of Constructive Engagement, a Ronald Reagan position echoed by Margaret Thatcher's government that sought to maintain the status quo in South Africa. In addition, the Maori people and their athletes were also held in high regard in the colored community I grew up in on the Cape Flats of Cape Town. This was largely due to our association with the Maori as a people who also experienced discrimination.

My nexus with New Zealand was further cemented during my year as a high school exchange student in upstate New York, where I developed a close relationship with a New Zealander who was spending the year as an exchange student in the same geographical area.

South Africans, particularly of the colored community, also typically chose New Zealand as a country to emigrate to. Upon my return to the United States, and my interest in language and its effects on disenfranchised communities, I became interested in how the Maori language had reversed the language shift from a status of *language death* to *living language*. Before exploring the Maori language revival, I would like to relate some of my personal experiences in New Zealand.

**Treated like an equal**

*My decision to visit New Zealand was motivated in large part by the death of my son's close friend in the summer of 2010. My son and many of the young man's friends had spiraled into what I perceived as a series of depression and negativity as they struggled to cope with their grief. When I heard that the young man and my son had planned a trip to New Zealand, I decided to book our tickets in an attempt to make him look forward to something positive. It was a trip that the young man's mother encouraged.*

*Thus, in December 2010, we embarked on a short visit to the Pacific nation of New Zealand. These are my reflections of that trip. I felt it important to document my impressions as I feel these impressions may prove definitive in informing my further investigations into education, language, culture, and the power dynamics associated with them. My son left for New Zealand about a week before I did.*

*On my trip to Auckland, I had a stopover in Brisbane, Australia. I mention this because of an experience I had there, and because it stood in stark contrast to my experiences in New Zealand. Because I basically had an almost 12 hour layover in Brisbane, I decided to venture into the city. I ordered a beer in a plaza at an open air café, and upon mentioning to the barman that I was going to New Zealand, he said, "You're going back thirty years in time," as he laughed loudly. I smiled back, not knowing exactly how to respond. While enjoying the sweating beer safe under the canopy above the bar sunshine, I noticed a young white male (perhaps in his early twenties) and his partner take seats near the walkway in the plaza we were in. A few moments later, a man in his forties perhaps, and whom I perceived to be of Aborigine background from his*

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*appearance, walked by. The white man I had seen take a seat earlier, suddenly rose from his chair, and started shouting at the man walking by; "Hey, you black bastard!" He did this a number of times despite no response or acknowledgement from the man walking by. This incident was disturbing and embarrassing to me. It was disturbing and embarrassing because it brought back so many memories of my own experiences with such overt and many other experiences of covert racism, and my own decision not to say anything. It was even more disturbing that no one, including me, made any attempt to support the man who was so viciously verbally attacked. I was still shaken when a few minutes later I left for the airport, and my connecting flight to Auckland, New Zealand.*

*On arrival in New Zealand in the middle of the night, on the drive to my cousin's house, I was struck by a surprising sense of inner peace. There was no visual stimulation, because it was dark, and I am unable to account for root of my feelings. I told my cousin, "I like it here," and to my surprise, she said, that my son had made the same comment on his trip from the airport to the house. My short stay in New Zealand was highlighted by a few incidents and observations.*

*Firstly, I was struck in my forays into the community at what was not necessarily a slower pace of life, but a more relaxed approach to life. People were more casual, and less interested in getting things done now. It was definitely more laid back. Secondly, I was interested to see the number of small businesses, even within and about the large malls. This seemed to represent an encouragement of entrepreneurial endeavors in the community. Then there were a number of incidents in the grocery store when white shoppers spontaneously approached and initiated general conversations with me. This happened on three occasions. While looking at vegetables, two shoppers approached me*

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*at different times, and spoke to me. The first was a man and a second was a woman. On another occasion, a man spoke with me while we waited in line for the cashier. I had bought some beer, and we spoke about my particular purchase as well as, I recall, the different alcohol contents of beers. Now, it may seem unimportant to the casual observer, but I am a fifty year old black man who, as hard as I try, cannot recall any white person initiating casual conversations in grocery stores, in South Africa or the United States.*

*Next was an incident I could not even have imagined would ever happen to me. One morning at 7:00am, while walking in the park, I noticed a woman walking her dog in the park. Fully expecting her to move in a direction away from me, I was surprised when she walked right up to me, asked me how I was, and told me to have a nice day. These experiences were all completely opposite to what I was used to experiencing in my life, and, though they were few, I have to feel that they were representative of what I might encounter over an extended period.*

*Finally, the South African “colored” community was a revelation. There was a large community from South Africa living in Auckland, and during my two weeks there, I met many people from Cape Town. I would have expected South African coloreds, because of the history of apartheid, to try to assimilate into the New Zealand culture. Instead, what I found was that the colored community has essentially closed itself off, and had adopted a more typical immigrant community, with few social interactions with other groups. I found some older children continuing this trend, but also found my cousin’s daughter, for example, choosing to associate more with the local youth, and this caused many instances of tension during my brief stay there. What I also encountered was initially a strange occurrence. Some of the older women (I would say 30+ years old),*



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*who had moved there with their husbands and families, now found themselves divorced or going through divorces. In my discussions with them and others, the theme of colored men being attracted to and leaving their wives for white women became apparent. Many of the women in this position, as well as their friends, obviously appeared angry that they had made such a huge decision to emigrate only to find their lives turned upside down. What I also found was that coloreds were less split up by class as far as my own memory goes. I also thought they were clinging to their old lives and continuing practices that were demeaning in South Africa. One of these was the Cape Coons - a tradition where minstrel groups paraded the streets of Cape Town. The name itself is just insulting to the colored community of Cape Town. These New Year traditions remind me of minstrel traditions in other countries like the United States. It also has a history of demeaning the community and placing them in a side show and out of the mainstream of society. What is surprising to me is that the colored community in New Zealand has chosen to embrace this in a country that should have set them free of such racism. For me, the Cape Coons hardly represented a proud tradition, but memory and nostalgia is often tinted with rose colored glasses.*

This almost total disregard for the pain that was inflicted by being a colored South African seemed totally anomalous, even jarring. Dyson (1996) presented the following about nostalgia:

Nostalgia, of course, is crucial to the project of black identity, largely as a defensive move against the brutal memories of suffering we endured at the hands of those outside our communities, and from within. Nostalgia, at least in that light, is an attempt to exercise sovereignty over memory, to force it into

redemptive channels away from the tributaries of trauma that flood the collective black psyche. It is the attempt to rescue ethical agency – and hence manage and control the perception of suffering – from the fateful forces of racial terror. One of the most bruising racial terrors is to have the dominant culture determine what memories are most important to the dominant minority.

In that case, nostalgia is an attempt to take back the political utility of memory [...] the downside of such nostalgia is that it fails to explicitly engage the radical inequality of such segregated movements. (p. 158)

This insight by Dyson provides me with an understanding of the South African colored experience in New Zealand. There seems to be a desire to hold on to and elevate the past, in order to make some sense of a present where there are few reminders of the past. It is not a practice I feel I would participate in, but I definitely understand how my fellow ex-South Africans cope with their new environment.

I had very little contact with the New Zealand education system, because my visit coincided with the summer vacation. In an interesting talk I had with a Maori elder, I asked him about the different Maori groups, and whether there were any tensions between these different groups. He insisted that all Maori were the same, and that there were no tensions. Once he had left the table, there were no shortages of comments from the South African colored people at my table, claiming the complete opposite.

New Zealand's success with the revival of the Maori language is an achievement that may be informative for other communities or nations to follow. Bale (2002) wrote that, "language revitalization efforts among the Maori in Aotearoa/New Zealand are both well documented and emulated" (p. 55). However, South Africa has a language policy

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that is law, but has little practical value as the dominance of English remains as the lingua franca and essentially the medium of instruction in schools. The United States has emulated New Zealand as it essentially has an English-Only policy. New Zealand has made huge strides in how the Maori language is treated and perceived. May (2002) wrote that:

We also know that traditional educational approaches adopted towards second language learners in New Zealand, as elsewhere, have not served these learners well, to say the least. This is because such approaches have tended to adopt a subtractive rather than additive view of students' bilingualism. That is, they have assumed that the first language of the students is an educational obstacle to be overcome - usually by excluding the use of the language within schools – rather than as an educational and social resource to be valued and used within the school. (p. 7)

This appears to be similar to approaches in both South Africa and the United States where heritage languages are considered obstacles rather than assets. According to May (2002):

The educational and wider social consequences of devaluing and/or excluding the first languages of students from the schooling process are equally clear - subsequent limited educational success for many of them. For example, in the recent adult literacy report *More than Words* (Ministry of Education 2001), it was noted that current adult literacy levels in English are consistently lower overall for both Maori and Pasifika adults when compared to the New Zealand population as a whole. (p.7)

This was clearly an obstacle that New Zealand had to overcome. May (2002) was of the opinion that “The ongoing skepticism towards the further development of multicultural education [as practiced in the United States] in Aotearoa New Zealand” was leading to the practice where “dual-medium bilingual programmes are increasingly being promoted, particularly in relation to the benefits of first-second language transfer in acquiring academic literacy in the second language” (p. 8). May (2002) wanted to:

Develop a properly theorised and coordinated approach to language education which recognises, values, and *uses* the first languages of students as an educational and social resource, rather than perceiving these to be an obstacle to be overcome or eliminated, as in the failed policies of the past (and at times, still, the present). Such an approach might include:

1. The Further Extension of Maori-medium Education [...]
2. Exploring Other Forms of Bilingual Education for Maori [...]
3. Where Possible, We Should Extend Similar Access to Bilingual Education for Ethnic Minority Groups, ‘Where Numbers Warrant’ [...]
4. Where Bilingual Education is Not an Option, We Need to Develop Critical, Language-centred Multicultural Education Programmes in Schools [...]
5. Developing and Adopting a Nationally Coordinated Language Education Policy. (pp. 18-20)

In the present, it seems these objectives have been reached and surpassed as Hornberger (2006) observed that:

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, a grassroots movement was born in the 1980s among the Maori to save their language from further decline; these were the pre-school

language nests, or *kohanga reo*, where English-speaking Maori children are immersed in Maori language and culture using a total immersion approach which goes way beyond language to other media, modes, and content. That early initiative has in turn spawned the development of Maori-medium primary, secondary, and most recently tertiary level Maori-medium education as well, now overseen by the national Ministry of Education and the Education Review Office. (p. 279)

New Zealand is definitely an interesting place, and it would be very informative, I believe, to further investigate the complex relationships and dynamics of the various communities. The success of the Maori language revitalization definitely deserves a second look, especially in the less successful language policies of South Africa and the United States.

### **Critical Race Theory**

#### **South Africa**

*Travelling outside the townships of the Cape Flats brought one face to face with reality of Apartheid. I remember one incident when I visited the bank. As I waited in line at the bank, I observed a black male customer being assisted by a white female teller. The teller was speaking quite loudly, and was asking the customer some questions about his transaction. As the man clearly struggled to answer in English, the teller rolled her eyes, and spoke in a very condescending voice. Everyone, including me, just stood by. I remember wishing that I could speak a black language, so that I could intervene. But more than anything else, I remember the feeling of impotency, about being up against a system that just seems unconquerable. What I did do before I left the bank, was take a*

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*“Service Comment” card and write my objection to the way the man was treated. On the card, I also suggested that they consider having black tellers who could interface with customers who couldn’t speak English at a level at which they could complete transactions.*

My inability to intervene still haunts me to this day. My experience was not isolated as Wynne (2002) submitted the following narrative:

Many years later, during a trip to South Africa, I was more made aware of the contradictions in perceptions of language between a dominant culture and the “other.” While helping to build houses in Alexandria, a black township outside of Johannesburg, I consistently heard from White South Africans how deficient Black South Africans were in their use of language, how they were slow in thinking, and how much “like children” they were. In fact, almost every complaint reminded me of the remarks describing American Blacks that I had heard while growing up in the South. Again, though, these remarks were in conflict with the reality that presented itself to me as I worked in Alexandria. I was often surrounded by young children attempting to help in our construction efforts. [...] Those small children, four, five, six, and seven years old, easily moved from speaking Swahili to Xhosa to English to Afrikaans to Zulu, and several other languages that I can’t even remember the names of now. (p. 206)

It is encouraging and simultaneously disappointing to have this type of behavior confirmed, especially since this is a new century. It is encouraging to me because it confirms my own experiences of this behavior, and yet it is disappointing to face the fact that because the behavior exists, I have to admit that much more needs to be done.

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According to *The History of Afrikaans* (1997), the Afrikaans language was developed by people in the Cape who were not white. The Afrikaners needed a language in the creation of their identity and appropriated Afrikaans for that purpose. Much like property was forcibly taken from blacks, coloreds, and Indians during forced removals in South Africa, the Afrikaans language was similarly forcibly removed from the ownership rights of people who were not white. English, being the other official language, and similarly exemplifying white ownership, had equal status as far as language in South Africa. For me then, English and Afrikaans, although my dual mother tongues, represented a faux ownership. Like the 99-year lease, it represented a false ownership of something I would, in fact, never own.

According to Chang (2002), “Racialized bodies are constructed to serve, and are experienced as, the pleasure that accomplish both domination and submission. Race, then, is maintained not just through the acquiescence (itself an act of power) of the subjugated. Unless this is understood, and perhaps even with this understanding, we are doomed by the color line even as we dream of its demise.” (p. 94). The expectation of the dominant culture is that People of Color will, as a norm, submit to domination. I have encountered this in my dealings with whites who seem to expect me to act in a submissive way, and refuse to acknowledge that I am able to not only speak English, but speak it in a manner that represents that I am educated. This has happened to me in my dealings with the police as well as the general public. Baugh (1996) explained that “as long as racism can be perpetuated via shibboleths, as bigots detect the accents and dialects of speakers whom they abhor” (p. 413), then we still have much to achieve as a society with respect to equality. I am in agreement with Baugh (2009) who opined that

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“Labov’s [...] diligent analyses were consistent with my own life experiences in inner-city African American communities in New York, Philadelphia and Los Angeles” (p. 67).

*Working at IBM in South Africa was an unusual environment. Inside the building, because of because of the Sullivan Principles, which called for equality in the work place, everything was isolated from the horrors of Apartheid. The Sullivan Principles were requirements a corporation had to insist on when doing business in South Africa, and they were adhered to by companies like IBM. The restrooms and other facilities were open to all, but once you stepped outside in the public space, apartheid waited. There was nothing more depressing than stepping out of the doors of IBM, and then walking with colleagues to the train station and having to enter the station under “Whites Only” and “Non-whites Only” signs. Even more bizarre was getting to the same platforms and then having to split up again to enter separate carriages. For me though, the real slap in the face for People of Color like myself is that the apartheid signage was repeated. South Africa had two official languages, English and Afrikaans, and the signage refusing entry to People of Color were doubled: “Whites Only = Slegs Blankes,” “Non-whites only = Coloureds only,” or the “White Area = Blanke gebied” which often marked public places like beaches or parks.*

Baugh (2009) concluded that:

In many instances, linguistic barriers are used to maintain the status quo, thereby thwarting prospects to advance equal opportunities in education, employment and justice. These linguistic tasks may prove to be arduous and daunting, but they may help us break down the barriers typically associated with language and poverty throughout the world. (p. 76)



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Baugh and Smitherman (2007) explained that they “are ever mindful of linguistic oppression and the social dislocation that feeds it” (p. 115).

### **United States of America**

*People welcomed me during my stay in the United States as an exchange student. However, I can recall many incidents where I was clearly made aware that I was a member of the “other”. My speech at the ladies club at the church, where I was told I had such “a wonderful command of the English language.” In another incident, one of my best friends wrote the following in my yearbook:*

*When I first saw you, I said “Hey, look at that black guy from South Africa.” I heard you were a great soccer player but after Kedeto [the previous year’s exchange student] (spelling is definitely wrong) I kind of doubted it. You were a fair soccer player. (Ha! Ha!) You only did good because of my great passes”(Comet 1979 yearbook).*

What is amazing about this note is that this was one of my best friends, but his observation about me being “that black guy from South Africa,” is important. I certainly felt this sentiment in almost all my encounters with people during my stay in the all-white town. Did I think of a similar way about the white people I met? The answer, strangely, is “No!” Daniel Tatum (2009) wrote (about the concept of whiteness) that “We all must be able to embrace who we are in terms of our racial cultural heritage, not in terms of assured superiority or inferiority, but as an integral part of our daily experience in which we can take pride.” (p. 282). Baugh and Smitherman (2007) linked the linguistic events of United States to South Africa:

Readers may recall the 1996 Ebonics episode, in which the Oakland, California, School Board declared Ebonics to be the home language of 28,000 African

American students in that district. However, few readers may be aware how strongly this controversy resonated throughout English speech communities in the Caribbean and Africa. This was especially the case in Ghana and South Africa, where Black English dialects were degraded in comparison to the colonial precursors spoken by Whites who resided in Africa. [...] the quest for linguistic equality in post-apartheid South Africa parallels in significant ways the struggle to overcome racial stigmas associated with AAL [African American Language] and other subordinate dialects of English spoken by non-Whites in the United States. (p. 131)

Del Valle (2009) wrote that, “The town of Brookhaven on Long Island adopted a policy aimed exclusively at day laborers who rented illegal rooms in private houses. Rather than follow a legal process against the homeowners, the town sent its housing code enforcers to throw men out of their homes in the middle of the night. Some men had to take shelter in the surrounding woods. Nevertheless, the town of Brookhaven was sued and, in October 2005, Judge Seybert, a federal district court judge, granted the plaintiffs an injunction prohibiting the town from continuing the policy. The treatment of minority languages, whether historical or current, cannot be excised from the immigration debate. Those who use minority languages most visibly are the recent immigrants. If the immigrants are abhorred, derided, or mistrusted; so too are their languages. In practical, social and political terms, immigrants and their languages are one and the same”. (p. 82). And therefore, my experiences in the United States demonstrated that even though I was largely accepted in the white community in which I lived, I was still regarded as *other*,

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both due to my skin color as well as my accent. Yosso (2006) explained this convergence of race and related forms of hegemony:

I define White privilege as a system of advantage resulting from a legacy of racism and benefitting individuals and groups based on the notions of whiteness. Whiteness intersects with other forms of privilege, including gender, class, phenotype, accent, language, sexuality, immigrant status, and surname. (p. 5)

The importance of counterstories is again illustrated by Yosso (2006) who presented that, “Specifically, they [the group of scholars who originated Critical race theory] argued that critical legal studies did not listen to the lived experiences and histories of people of color.” (p. 6). Richard Delgado (1993) explained, “Majoritarians tell stories too. But the ones they tell, about merit, causation, blame, responsibility, and social justice – do not seem to them like stories at all, but the truth.” (p. 13).

Zamudio et al. (2011) wrote that, “The nation was forged from peoples who came from many countries arriving on a continent that was already multilingual with a wide variety of indigenous languages. [...] More contemporarily, the nation has realized that it is in its own vital interests – for economic development, political cooperation, and military defense – to have a nation of citizens capable of speaking a variety of languages.”(p. 53). Venkateswaran (2000) expressed that “In the predominantly white suburban community I live in, bilingualism is something one reads about in the newspaper; a foreign language is something a family thinks about when their kids has to decide on a choice of language in junior high” (p. 59). The English-only policy in the United States is an impediment to social justice. Del Valle (2009) wrote that in *Garcia v. Spun Steak*, “The court found that an English-only rule, like any other rule or policy,

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cannot be illegal if it does not have a negative effect on anyone. Here, the court found that there could be no negative effect on bilingual employees, because [...] bilinguals make the choice of what language to speak: ‘the bilingual can readily comply with the English-only rule and still enjoy the privilege of speaking on the job.’” (p. 97). The courts in this case clearly see nothing wrong with the English-only rule. Del Valle (2009) however clarified that, “Nervous native US citizens fear becoming the outsiders; their existence, precarious and irrelevant to the future of their country; a country that is quickly becoming unrecognizable. Within this framework it is impossible to carve out rights for those language minorities who frequently represent the very immigrants who are changing the national cultural landscape.” (p. 102).

### **Conclusion**

Darlene [...] Bring me a bunch of books. White folks all over them, talking bout apples and dogs. *What I care bout dogs?* [emphasis added] I think. [...] But I let Darlene worry on. Sometimes I think bout the apples and the dogs, sometimes I don’t. Look like to me only a fool would want you to talk in a way that peculiar to your mind. (Walker, 1982, pp. 193-194)

*The South Africa I grew up in was the most polarized, differentiated, brutalized environment I had ever known. Different communities lived their lives differently. I know that my life in the townships was a struggle for life. I had the distended belly as a child that represented malnutrition. Our needs were at the very basic levels. White people, it seemed to me lived in another world entirely. Even the way we kept pets was different. Our dogs in the township lived outside the house. They were kept to guard the house against intruders. Though we had many dogs, they were seldom part of the family. When*

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*our dogs died we buried them in the yard or on the field and got another one. My perception of how white people kept their dogs was different. The dogs were considered part of the family, and certainly from the movies and television I saw, they actually lived inside the homes. I always felt, and said, that white people treated their dogs better than they treated their servants, or any other people of color. I understood the sentiment that Celie expressed in "The Color Purple." As a black child, youth, and then finally a man, I had more basic needs that had to be fulfilled, like food, shelter, and security. I really did not care about dogs, though they filled the books, television shows and cartoons that white people made available to teach me. I hated dogs. I felt that, as far as white people were concerned, as a person of color, I was hierarchically on a level below their pets. I understood what Celie meant.*

The field of education is filled with controversial policies where education is not always the driving force. Jones (2005) has written that players in the field of education "vie for lucrative contracts [...] at the expense of children and their parents" (p. 7). In looking at the hegemonic role of the English language in South Africa and the United States, much can be learned from the New Zealand model. McKinley et al. (2011) stated that "Recent government policies have responded to the underrepresentation of Maori by acknowledging that "a key aspiration of Maori is that Maori knowledge, Maori ways of doing and knowing things, in essence Maori ways of being, are validated across the tertiary education sector [...] [and that] Tertiary institutions are now expected to have specific goals for access and participation by Maori students within their strategic plans" (p. 117). This is a positive step undertaken by the New Zealand government that enforces

policies aimed at encouraging the use of Maori rather than undermining the heritage language.

With regard to South Africa, Alexander (2007) reiterated the “promotion of multilingualism (including English as one of a package of language resources) as the best strategy for social transformation” (p. 149). Alexander (2009) further proposed that:

In the present phase of its development, post-apartheid South Africa, like most of Africa, should implement an additive bilingual education system. Such a system would include a range of language options approximating a dual-medium ideal, but tailored to the particular conditions prevailing in a given region or locality.  
(p. 149)

Clearly the inclusive nature of the language policies of the South African Constitution still has not ironed out the hegemonic position of the English language, and policy makers and academics continue to debate options.

The United States’ English-only stance is well-documented. Del Valle (2009) reminded us that the anti-German sentiment developed into a “violent and virulent strain [...] [where] mobs raided schools, physically beat Germans, destroyed Lutheran churches and even lynched a German Immigrant. In 1919 alone, nineteen states passed laws restricting the teaching of foreign languages.” (p. 85). Del Valle (2009) suggested that it is the fear of being overrun by Spanish that is driving the current English-only push. Salaberry (2009) concurred that “the underlying fear [...] is that the meanings which anchor your own view of the world are not, after all, shared by everyone, which in turn expresses a more general fear of difference, otherness, relativity” (p. 184). This fear of being overrun is undergirded by misconceptions about the intelligence of those

considered as others. Baugh (1999) addresses this when he expounds that “Arthur Jensen’s 1969 claim that black children were intellectually inferior to white children on *genetic* grounds [...] and that Jensen’s notions were based in part on fallacies about black language” (p. 9). Much needs to be done to counter what Baugh (1999) explained as “linguistic discrimination” even though “all dialects and languages are equal from a theoretical point of view” (p. 71). It is clear that overcoming the fears and prejudices affirmed by years of rhetorical affirmations of the value of English as the sole vehicle for linguistic expression will be a monumental task.

May (2012) warned that the “gains for te reo Maori are significant, but still fragile and easily usurped, not least because of the pervasive national and international dominance of English” (p. 322). The key question for Aotearoa/New Zealand, as for many other nation-states, thus still remains. How can language and education rights that majority language speakers simply take for granted be extended *meaningfully* to minority groups as well?” (p. 322). However, New Zealand has shown that it is possible to embrace a language other than English and not have the society crumble in ruin. Macedo (2003) wrote that:

For most linguistic minority speakers, bilingualism is not characterized by the ability to speak two languages. There is a radical difference between a dominant speaker learning a second language and a minority speaker acquiring a dominant language. While the former involves the addition of a second language to one’s linguistic repertoire, the latter usually inflicts the experience of subordination upon the minority speaker – both when speaking his or her native language, which is devalued by the dominant culture, and when speaking the dominant language

he or she has learned, often under coercive conditions. (p. 80)

My own motivation is not without self-interest, as I feel that my identity would be asserted if I could finally lay claim to, and finally own English as my own. A large part of my life has been devoted to laying claim to the English language. My fluency in the English language has not determined my ownership of it, and the struggle continues, as my ownership of the language does not depend on my efforts but rather depends on my acceptance by the dominant culture. This acceptance is exacerbated by current racial, lingual and socio-economic norms and laws that seek to maintain the status quo. Giroux (1992) explained that “What is being valorized in the dominant language of the culture industry is an undemocratic approach to social authority and a politically regressive move to reconstruct American life within the script of Eurocentricism, racism, and patriarchy.” (p. 5). According to Giroux (1992), “post-colonial criticism has illuminated how Eurocentric-American discourses of identity suppress difference, heterogeneity, and multiplicity in their efforts to maintain hegemonic relations of power.” (p. 21). What I have been trying to achieve is not impossible, it just requires a combined effort. Hart (2000) explained that “as a tutor in an English language learning center [...] I met people from all over the world who were struggling with the hurdle of a new language and culture. [...] The power of language learning also became apparent to me. I learned that English could provide a springboard for students to discover a new part of themselves.” (p. 112). Identity, individual as well as group, is situated in the foreground of the discussion. Mora (2000) related his conflict with the dichotomy of his identity as a Colombian and Ecuadorian and then as an English language learner in the United States. Mora (2000) starts with the narrative that, “After finishing third grade in Ecuador, I was



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taken to Santuario, a rural town in Colombian Andes, where I started fourth grade and faced the first identity conflict I can remember. My conflict started when I unsuccessfully tried to speak and behave like my Colombian classmates, but I could not help acting Ecuadorian.” (p. 51). My own identity was informed by my earliest years, and it continues to evolve. Mora (2000) continued that, “I moved to the student dorms where I experienced my second major identity conflict. I had to learn how to speak to be accepted in the college environment [...] The new game was not to sound provincial.” (p. 53). Mora (2000) eventually wrote that upon moving to the United States, “there was another section of Corona that was predominantly African American, I decided to explore this section in order to find opportunities to practice my English. However, the attempts I made to break the ice with Blacks were a failure. I do not know if they were a failure because my English was limited or because they did not want to break an unspoken rule that African Americans and Hispanics did not mix, at least in this neighborhood at that particular time.” (p. 51). Mora’s identity was not static and was clearly influenced by lingual incidences during his lifetime. Romaine (2009) explained that “the aim of multicultural policies is not to preserve tradition but to protect cultural liberty and expand people’s choices in the way they live and identify themselves without penalizing them for their choices.” (p. 143). Romaine (2009) concluded that “the critical role of language and linguistic diversity in human development and the maintenance of biological diversity. The biodiversity crisis is not just about the loss of thousands of species of plants and animals, but about the resources that sustain most of the world’s indigenous peoples and that give their lives meaning.” (p. 143).

In South Africa, as in the United States, land was not always available to everyone. That hurdle has been largely overcome, but the issue of language remains. Gilroy (2010) wrote that, “He [Fanon] suggested that black and colonized people could damage each other in addition to and as a result of the damage done to them by the effects of racial hierarchy. [...] They were revolutionary sentiments which delivered his readers immediately to the fluid core of his impatient desire for a better, freer, and more dynamically human world than the alienated one for which, in spite of the wounds wrought by colonial rule and its racial hierarchy, he urged us to assume a joint responsibility.” (p. 159).

English in all its dialects and forms should be available for ownership by all and heritage languages should be regarded as complimenting, not diminishing the English language. If English is available for all who speak it or need to speak it, and it is not withheld as a property that is only available to the dominant culture (normally another white privilege indicator), then heritage language speakers would be able to identify with the English language and the larger community. My own experience has always been of being on the outside, unable to gain ownership of the English language despite it being my first language. My fluency in the language has not afforded me full access to the various communities I have found myself a member of. Mora (2000) articulated that he felt distrustful about assuming the identities of the families he came into contact with because he “did not want their identities imposed on me [...] that the communities I wanted to identify with were somewhere else” (p. 54). Though a part of me wanted to be aligned with the communities, I also knew that ultimately I was not, despite my English language abilities. It should be remembered that the English language has never been a

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pure language, but has had many influences and continues to develop. South Africa and the United States would do well to learn from the success of the New Zealand language policy, and be more accepting of, and be proactive in incorporating other languages spoken by its citizens in an inclusive national language policy. Yosso (2006) submitted that “Critical race counterstories [...] brings life to the qualitative, often hard-to-see dimensions of the struggle for equal education in Chicana/o communities [...] [and] [t]hrough these stories the reader gets a more vivid and complex picture of the dimensions of the problems Chicana/o students at all levels of schooling and the barriers put in place by schools and the dominant society.” Gilroy (2010) advanced that:

There are precious narratives of liberation from white supremacy and the pursuit of equality to be gleaned from elsewhere. Conviviality and multiculturalism can be found on our own doorsteps. There are accounts of the movements against slavery, colonialism, and imperial rule that were not centred [sic] in the U.S. racial nomos. The histories of South Africa, India, and Brazil will all contribute abundantly to a deprovincialising reassessment and reconstruction. An antiracist political imaginary will build communicative networks that facilitate a different variety of worldly conversation on these matters. (p. 176)

These narratives need to be encouraged by the production of not only scholarly writings, but poems, songs, sketches and other forms of communication that has too often been overlooked in majoritarian discourses and narratives. Moreover, the production of such narratives requires courage. Valor and boldness are qualities I have not always exhibited in my life, and intimate revelations in writing are an uncomfortable, anguished process for me. Nunez (2000) suggested that “there has to be a willingness to confront one’s truth

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before one sets off on this journey [of discovery], a willingness to tear down barriers, not shore them up, if one hopes to accomplish writing that has value” (p. 43). Matsuda (1996) explained that, “The desire to know history from the bottom has forced scholars to sources often ignored: journals, poems, oral histories, and stories from their own experiences of life in a hierarchically arranged world.” (p. 22). With these founts and wellsprings now available to the writer, Baugh and Smitherman’s (2007) conclusion that, “Linguistic myths continue to perpetuate educational malpractice [...] linguistic profiling [...], and the continued denial of individuals’ rights to their own language [...]. It is these linguistic barriers, and their racially motivated existence, that we ultimately seek to overcome.” (p. 131) may well be achieved. Nunez (2000) wrote the following of her father:

He laughs. He is comfortable with himself. After years of camouflaging identity for the sake of giving evidence of his intelligence, his worth, he is in the castle of his skin. His own judge. *He* validates himself. And now he tells true stories – about his past, about the humiliations he suffered, about his triumphs. (p. 45)

Although my identity has been fragmented by my life experiences and I still find that it is broken. I want to reach this place of assurance, dignity, and poise where Nunez’s father finds himself. My story should ultimately be a story of hope and redemption. It should not end with a malformed identity, but rather the reclamation of an identity that is reconstituted, re-formed and whole once again. Ladson-Billings (2009) wrote that “As an African American I look back two centuries and recognize that I am but three generations away from slavery, two generations away from sharecropping, and one generation away from legal apartheid – state sanctioned segregation. Yet, each of my ancestors had a hope

nestled in a dream. My generation is the beginning of the fulfillment of that hope. The generations that succeed us are the culmination of that hope, and the task to place them on the path to their destiny belongs to those who would be dreamkeepers.” (p. 177). I am even closer to legal apartheid as a South African by birth, yet I have the expectation that my generation has made firm strides and now too stand as the fulfillment of a similar hope. Sprott (2000) expressed that “I attribute all of my strength as a student to my formative years in Harlem. [...] For a few short years, I was affirmed as a special person who had something valuable to contribute.” (p. 50). In a similar way, this is why my experiences in New Zealand, though short, was and continues to be so profound and insightful, because it gave me a vision of where I could and should be; content and comfortable in my skin and my language.

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