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Gloria Jean Williams-Mitchell

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RACE, RACISM, AND THE REPRESENTATION OF NIGER-CONGO WEST AFRICAN  
GRAMMAR IN AFRICAN AMERICAN LANGUAGE: EBONICS  
IN WORKS BY PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR, MARK TWAIN,  
AND ZORA NEALE HURSTON

THESIS

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Master of Arts Degree in the Graduate School  
of Texas Southern University

By

Gloria J. Williams-Mitchell, B.A.

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2023

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RACE, RACISM, AND THE REPRESENTATION OF NIGER-CONGO WEST AFRICAN  
GRAMMAR IN AFRICAN AMERICAN LANGUAGE: EBONICS  
IN WORKS BY PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR, MARK TWAIN,  
AND ZORA NEALE HURSTON

By

Gloria J. Williams-Mitchell, B.A.

Texas Southern University, 2023

Dr. Michael Zeitler, Advisor

An analysis of selected works written in African American Language (AAL): Ebonics

by Paul Laurence Dunbar, Mark Twain, and Zora Neale Hurston in historical, national American literature are used to document “Race, Racism, and the Representation of Niger-Congo West African Grammar in AAL: Ebonics. This study provides an overview of the Enlightenment period by Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. which proved how world-renowned Euro-American meta-physicists justified slavery and colonization based on unsubstantiated science and religious

beliefs. Further, Gates used his research to dispute the outlandish and biased historical documentation provided by some European scholars who claimed that Africans were animals

and could not speak languages. During the last 50 years, renowned linguist, Dr. Ernie A. Smith has provided research which has proven that slave authors could always speak languages. Evidence has demonstrated that AAs can learn to read and write languages comparable to Caucasians and all other human beings. In this study, Smith has presented a comparative analysis of Niger-Congo grammar with AAL: Ebonics' grammar which validated that AAL: Ebonics is a continuation of the Niger-Congo grammar structure.

Paul Laurence Dunbar, Mark Twain, and Zora Neal Hurston learned to speak fluently in English and "plantation talk". In fact, when Dunbar and Joel Chandler Harris's work in Ebonics was looked at diachronically and synchronically, it was proven that both men spoke Ebonics using the same rule-governed language. Mark Twain wrote a novel which proved that language develops through nurture vs. nature. Twain demonstrated how a slave protagonist and the slave owner's baby learned to speak each other's home language when the slave protagonist switched her slave son for the plantation owner's son. In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Hurston built the first all-AA township to demonstrate how AAL: Ebonics was maintained through social isolation for 20 years.

In summary, Dunbar, Twain, and Hurston documented AA history through literature. They were able to support the work of great scholars, such as, Gates, Smith and others by writing realistic stories experienced by African Americans by racist groups, such as, Jim Crow and minstrelsy who were the primary culprits of "race and racism."

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VITA

1983.....B.A., Political Science  
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With the deepest appreciation and highest respect, I acknowledge and honor the foregoing mentors that God placed in my life. I could not have made this journey without them. First and foremost, I want to thank Ms. Shaba Shabaka, a self-taught student of Kamitic (Egyptian) history and culture, and Dr. Ernie A. Smith, a renowned comparative linguist, who forced me to see African culture through new lenses. Shabaka taught me ancient African history, and Dr. Smith connected my American heritage to my Niger-Congo West African ancestry. Shabaka opened my eyes to self-love when she introduced me to the teachings of Dr. Smith, which included four of the world's most precious and prestigious n-words: "Neggur," "N-gers," "Nigritia," and "Nigritian." These words could lift the veil from the blinded eyes of many other Africans in the diaspora if only they knew them. The etymological origins and true meanings of these terms contradict one of America's most misinterpreted terms: "nigger," *misguidedly referred to as "the 'n' word"*, while opening the door of knowledge about Ancient Egypt. Even now, I continue to hear the sing-song chimes in Shabaka's voice as she would whisper, "Gloria, 'Nigger' means 'Neggur. 'Neggur' means the 'Goose goddess that laid the Golden Egg', and 'N-gers' means 'God of the 8th Aat; vam' according to E. A. Wallis Budge in *An Egyptian Hieroglyphics Dictionary* (398).

We are ‘Neggurs’ and “N-gers’ from Nigritia. She often exclaims, “Nigritia is the original name of Africa!” Shabaka would further explain, “We are Nigritians. Ni- references the Nile River as ‘the source’ and Griots as the ‘first people’. Therefore, Nigritia means the first people from the source.

The map of Nigritia is in the ancient Atlas maps at the TSU library. We speak ‘Nigritics. Our history is not lost!”

This new knowledge I would later learn under the training of Dr. Smith, one of the most scholarly AA men who ever lived. Dr. Smith demonstrated to colleagues and me in the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) and the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) how our grammar was preserved and maintained in the substratum of our AAL/Ebonics due to social isolation. Ironically, it was “race and racism” that preserved our Niger-Congo West African (“Niger-Congo”) grammar, and it was social isolation through segregation that further maintained it in the substratum of our language.

Sometimes, Dr. Smith taught us in English, and sometimes he taught us in Ebonics. He demanded that every ‘i’ was dotted and every ‘t’ was crossed if we were to represent his teachings. It was through Dr. Smith’s teachings that I fell in love with the science of linguistics.

That love finally led me to Texas Southern University (TSU) to attain a Masters in English. I chose TSU because I was craving the “Black Experience.” I wanted to know what it felt like to participate in a predominantly educated African American environment.

At TSU, I encountered compassionate professors concerned about each student's individualized educational plan: Drs. Charlene Evans, Michael Zeitler, Brooks de Vita, Michael Sollars, and Professor Jennifer L. Julian. I especially want to thank Dr. Evans for giving me Zora Neale Hurston's novel; *Their Eyes Were Watching God* because it centralized my life's purpose. I am forever indebted to her and each of my professors because they used their literary capabilities to give me a proper perspective on Euro-American (EA) and African American history that inspired me to take everything I know and *Go Tell It on the Mountain*.

Also, I want to thank my father and mother, Teal and Elmira King-Williams, for their love and my interesting siblings: Charlene, Carl, Velma, Robert, Florence, Geneva, and Lefonza. I especially thank my big sister, Velma, who loved me unconditionally throughout my life and through the thesis process. I thank God for my brilliant children: Dennis Damonn, Kiesha Melanie, Lomira Shawntelle Jaishma, Jasmin Amber, and lovely grandbaby, *Aliana* and goddaughters: Shilonda, Lafonda, Samantha, Sabina, and my sweet grandniece: *India*, along with my awesome grandsons: Amonn, Roman, Kameron, and Elijah and handsome nephew and godson: Melvin. They are the best! I thank my best friends: Sonya, Angela, Derotha, Diane, Carolyn, Jean, and Catherine, because they have been there for me in many ways, and they make me laugh. I also thank Dennis Fermon Spurling for loving me and my son, Jerome Mitchell, who has always been the force that could motivate me, and Mark Furr for being my hero. Finally, I must thank my advisor, Dr. Michael Zeitler, because this thesis was written with his knowledge, guidance, and patience. He is the modern-day Mark Twain.

Author, Gloria J. Williams-Mitchell

## DEDICATION

To My Family

The Nigritians and Africans in Diaspora  
Civil War Veterans (over 250,000 Euro-Americans  
and Immigrant soldiers,  
and over 180,000 African American soldiers)  
Civil Rights Leaders. **Dr. MLK, Jr.**  
The Abolitionists, Freedom Fighters  
and the CANADIANS

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

AAL: Ebonics is a natural Niger-Congo West African (Niger-Congo) language phenomenon. AAL: Ebonics, often called “Black English,” combines Niger -Congo West African Grammar and English vocabulary. Since AAL: Ebonics relexifies its English vocabulary with the Niger-Congo grammar vs. the German grammar of English, it sounds different from English and has been labeled as a “broken,” “substandard,” “Black English,” and as an ignorant way of speaking English. The term “relexification” is a term Linguist J. L. Dillard in *Black English* defines as “...the replacement of a vocabulary item in a language with a word from another, without a change in the grammar (Dillard 30)

However, when AAs sing in AAL: Ebonics, it is revered throughout the universe. Therefore, AAL: Ebonics is consumed with irony, hypocrisy, and conflict. It is a language that is both hated and loved simultaneously. Ironically, both EAs and AAs show similar hypocrisy against AA speech. To date, corporate America and society at large continue to discriminate against speakers of AAL: Ebonics daily unless they use their voice as an art form or to entertain, i.e., as a literary expression in Hip Hop, Rap, Gospel, Blues, Rhythm and Blues, jazz, and ole Negro spirituals which is a multi-billion-dollar music industry that makes others rich.

AA authors, from slavery to the present, such as Phillis Wheatley, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Zora Neale Hurston, Reverend Jessie Jackson, and Maya Angelou’s acclaim to fame is that.

they are fluent in English and AAL: Ebonics. Some artists prefer to write in what is historically called “Surinaam” and is referred to as “plantation talk” or, most recently, Ebonics or Nigritic-Ebonics. These artists captivate the world with their artistic, rhythmic, and literary expressions.

However, some of these artists and orators who speak and choose to write in Ebonics also deny its existence because they fear Jim Crow and Minstrelsy condemnation. Today, many AA parents, like many other educators, employers, and Americans in general, detest AA speech and will not accept Ebonics in public schools, elitist social groups, or the workplace.

Unfortunately, AA parents in the workplace are held to the same racist standards as their children in public schools. Many AA parents do not have the opportunity for promotion on the job because they speak Ebonics. As a result, they feel inhibited when they use their voices to advocate for their children and themselves in parent, community, and staff meetings. Further, hypocrisy overshadows their lives. For example, they deny that they speak Ebonics, although it is the only language they know, which is, at its least, oxymoronic. They believe that Jim Crow’s racist labels and stereotypes attached to the language may be used against them. Therefore, they argue against their right to speak their language. However, these families, educated or not, code-switch (to code-switch languages means to go back and forth between languages being spoken) and speak Nigritic-Ebonics fluently when they return to the safety of their own homes.

Some administrators, heads of organizations, and employers show the same hypocrisy regarding AA speech. Ironically, the executive management pays AA singers and entertainers to fill school auditoriums, banquet halls, sports, and musical arenas and lavish others with gift baskets filled with AA music when celebrating holidays, weddings, birthdays, sorority and fraternity events, retirement parties, championship and award ceremonies, and their pastors’ anniversaries.



All who hear AAs sing encourage them for their ability to sing well. Regardless of the ambivalence, irony, hypocrisy, and conflict surrounding AAL: Ebonics, AA music continues to survive. AA musical geniuses spark the entire world with the rhythm of their words and promote a nation of dancers in each new generation to be outdone by no one. Clubs, restaurants, talent and sports arenas, radio stations, television shows, movie theaters, and all their affiliates would be economically lost without continuing this AA treasure.

Many Americans grew up with AA music. However, as an AA child growing up on a plantation near Tutwiler, Mississippi (approximately 100 miles from Tennessee) and listening to radio station WDIA in the “Deep South” under racial segregation during the 1950s and 1960s, it was easy to become filled with soulfulness. AA youths were allowed to live and love in a predominantly AA culture daily and learned to speak and sing only in AAL: Ebonics. Although life at the time was filled with a harsh and bitter reality between AAs and EAs during “de jure” and “de facto” segregation: social isolation, discrimination, outdoor toilets for “Colored Only,” police brutality, little or no medical services, etc., there were memories to be treasured.

At the time, AA music was the air in which AA children breathed: listening to big brothers, cousins, and friends “playing the Dozens” and making beats on the low end of the cotton fields; one “sista” chasing rabbits for dinner in the rain after the fieldwork is done; going fishing, picking blackberries in the woods and on railroad tracks for snacks; having an older “sista” making up animal tales out the clear dark sky in the quiet of star-filled country nights until baby brother falls asleep; listening to ghost stories and legends about hants that only a dad could tell on long, cold, stormy pitch-black nights which leaves one feeling scared and protected all at the same time; waking up to mother singing Mahalia Jackson gospel in perfect pitch in perfect rhyme, while washing clothes in a big black wrought iron pot on sunny Mississippi Saturday mornings when the

crops are done; wearing tight jeans during puberty; flirting and courting while hiding among the tall Egyptian cotton stalks and feeling sexy and sassy in the rain; listening to Pastor preach in a old rhythmic language that only AAs could understand; playing softball in the pasture after church on Sundays; preaching and singing songs in the backyard with the chickens until late into each Sunday evening while the grown folk cooked and talked grown folk talk; southern children are never told about “race and racism” or that their language is an ignorant language, so they listened, sang, and danced in it every day. Many AA and EA parents shielded their children from the harsh reality of “race and racism ,” They were not in denial. It was understood. AA and EA parents did not teach their children that “race and racism” were unfair. However, the parents knew, “The elephant was in the room.

After careful study, it became clear that the real culprits of “race and racism” were Jim Crow and Minstrelsy, which have existed from the 19th century into the new millennium due to their symbiotic relationship with the Jim Crow Movement: Black Codes. During Post-slavery, angry southern racists in the Jim Crow Movement used negative images of Jim Crow and Minstrelsy to teach EAs to hate AAs and caused AAs to hate themselves. The early chuckles of “Blackface” became sinister. The laughter was replaced by wild images of black male rapists and “low-life” thieves. What started in the media as a lightweight racist comedy became a cesspool of hate and violence as demonstrated during Reconstruction, Post-Civil War, and in popular films like D.W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation* in the early 19th century.

Unfortunately, Jim Crow Laws: and Black Codes continued to be a part of America’s race problem. The judiciary system, as it stands, allows police officers who commit unjust acts of excessive, erratic, and deadly force upon AA males to do so without consequences. Further, public education systems fail to adequately define and address the foreign language needs of Africans

and slave descendants of Africans, which cripple AA students' capacity to learn English, get a good education, and gain meaningful job opportunities in America because, in the past, some racist "white" European scholars perpetuated the belief that enslaved Africans never spoke languages.

To date, EAs and AAs have not reconciled the issues of "Slavery" and "Colonization": "White Supremacy," "Race and Racism," "AA Language," and the "Civil War." In 2021, several EA citizens and a few others violently stormed the Nation's Capital because they hoped that the then-current president, Donald Trump, would be re-elected for a second term and return the nation to its Antebellum Days under Confederacy rule. Fortunately, those days are "*Gone with the Wind*" for some. Luckily for others who remain nostalgic about the Antebellum South, there may be some in America who are still willing to do menial jobs for low wages. However, it is fair to say "welfare" through slavery is no longer an option for EAs. However, in 2022, there is certainly a conversation to be had in America regarding slavery and colonization in the Antebellum South by all racial groups.

To date, the Confederacy continues to be angry about losing the Civil War and believes the Confederacy would not have lost the War had President Lincoln not freed the over 180,000 enslaved people who were given the right to bear arms against the Confederacy during the War. On New Year's Day in 1863, Lincoln freed over 60,000 enslaved people in the states that seceded from the Union. Many AA soldiers were anxious to go to war. It is well documented that "African American soldiers served the Union Army well and distinguished themselves in many battles" (<https://www.loc.gov>african>soldiersduringthecivilwar). Many Confederate soldiers felt Lincoln's action to arm the Union with AA soldiers against "Whites" was incomprehensible and gave cause for Lincoln's assassination.

According to the NAACP, when the Confederate army was defeated in 1865, ex-slave owners were angry and vengeful. Enslavers lost their rights to enslave people and experienced extreme economic loss: their mansions, properties, crops, etc., were destroyed. Immediately after the Civil War, the American judiciary system was infiltrated by proponents of Jim Crow Laws: Black Codes, the Ku Klux Klan, and other “white” racist organizations that strategized to re-enact slavery. Plantation owners and railroad and mining companies sought ways to imprison “black” males and made laws to regain free “black” labor through “white” dominance in the south. For example, AA males were charged and imprisoned with stiff sentences for Vagrancy if ex-slaves were caught moving about without a card to identify their employment with a “white” employer and for other minor crimes, such as not driving off a sidewalk to allow “whites” to pass.

Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, Jim Crow and Minstrelsy continued to mock AAs and their language learned through the parody of Blackface in the media and public ridicule. AAs were taunted for the color of their skin, hair texture, and facial features: thick lips, wide nostrils, and manner of speaking. Jim Crow and Minstrelsy began in the early 19th century and became extremely popular in the United States and Europe during the 1880s. “Blackface” was so popular among “whites” it became America’s first national art form. This thesis takes as its hypothesis that Niger-Congo grammar has been maintained in the due to segregation and social isolation. The thesis presents evidence that proves children learn languages from their primary caretakers through nurture vs. nature. This study provides research which proves that AA language is a continuation of the Niger-Congo Languages, and its genesis is in the African Language family tree.

In this study, the argument for Race, Racism, and the Representation of Niger-Congo West African grammar in AA language: Ebonics will be presented as follows:

In Chapter 1, the Introductory chapter will give an overview of the thesis and focus on how famous AA: Gates, Smith, Dunbar, Hurston and EA author Twain use science and/or literature to document “race and racism” and its effect upon AA history, culture, and language.

In Chapter 2, *Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Reader*, Gates refutes racist claims made by EAs scholars during the Enlightenment Period, which alleged that enslaved Africans were animals who were incapable of speaking “grammatically proper” languages due to their anatomy and lack of intelligence. Further, Gates addresses the origin of these scholars’ misconceptions about language based on their antiquated religious beliefs and unsubstantiated scientific findings, which were used to justify slavery and colonization.

In Chapter 3, Comparative linguists Ernie A. Smith and other scholars attached to this study provide research which shows that Niger-Congo grammar continues to exist in the substratum of AAL: Ebonics. Smith posits that Niger-Congo grammar has been maintained and protected in the deep structure of Ebonics for over four centuries due to social isolation. Smith also provides a comparative analysis based on Smith’s research which shows the differences between the relexification of English by the German grammar vs. Niger-Congo grammar. Smith’s research proves that when Ebonics is reviewed synchronically and diachronically, over time and at specific times, AAL: Ebonics confirms that AAL is a rule-governed grammar maintained in the substratum of AAL: Ebonics for over 400 years due to social isolation. Therefore, Smith posit that AAL: Ebonics is a continuation of the Niger-Congo grammar and has its roots in the Niger-Congo language family tree.

In Chapters 4, 5, and 6, the thesis provides literary work by AA authors: Dunbar, and Hurston, as well as EA author, Twain, to demonstrate how all humans learn languages from their primary caregivers in the environment in which they are raised and through social interaction. In Chapter

4, this study provides a comparative analysis between Dunbar and EA author, Harris's literary works in AAL: Ebonics which demonstrates that AA speech is rooted in and governed by the autochthonous Niger-Congo West African grammar rules, not "race." Further, in Chapter 5, Twain provides a provocative Topos narrative in *Pudd'nhead* in which the slave protagonist switches her newborn baby, born out of miscegenation, with the enslaver's newborn son to show further that the environment vs. genetics dictates the language one speaks, not the child's DNA. Further, Twain's literary work in *Pudd'nhead* shows how both boys grow up and adhere to the language and culture of their respective environments. Finally, Twain uses the court scene to prove his theory on nurture vs. nature is scientifically correct. In Chapter 7, in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Hurston uses her exemplary literary and anthropological background to create an all-AA township that existed for twenty years to show how Niger-Congo grammar has been maintained in the substratum of AA: Ebonics for 400 years due to social isolation. Hurston also creates a replica of the segregated and socially isolated environments in the United States since slavery and colonization to demonstrate how children learn language from their primary caregivers in the environment in which they are raised. Ultimately, Hurston uses her voice and background in the novel to help deconstruct "race and racism" in AA history, culture, and language.

In conclusion, a summary of the scientific and literary works of Gates and Smith prove that slave descendants of Africa arrived in the Americas speaking autochthonous Niger-Congo West African languages and maintained the grammar of those languages throughout the diaspora. The documented literary works by Dunbar, Twain, and Hurston are summarized and provide evidence supporting Gates and Smith's research on AA history, culture, and language.

This study best serves students seeking bachelor's, master's, and Ph.D.'s in English, history, politics, linguistics, foreign languages, humanities, music, and other professions and programs that

address the needs of AA students from language backgrounds other than English. This study is particularly beneficial for educators: superintendents, school board members, principals, Professors, bilingual/multilingual education administrators, general education teachers, counselors, and others whose business is to educate the American tax-paying public properly.

Therefore, this thesis is written with the specific intent to inform educators, parents, students, and leaders of the dire need for public school institutions to provide proper pedagogical instructions to teach AA students who have a language other than English in their language background English. Since many American educators, parents, students, and leaders are not aware, linguistically, that the grammar structure of AAL: Ebonics and “Black English” is Niger-Congo West African, many parents do not indicate on their children’s school Home Language Survey Form that their children have a language other than English in their language background. Moreover, educators do not test AAL: Ebonics-speaking students for English fluency. Therefore, it is incumbent upon public school officials to identify the language needs of AAL: Ebonics-speaking students so that federal, state, and district-level officials can provide an equal opportunity for education to all students attending public schools in America.

## CHAPTER 2

HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR. –

A HISTORICAL RELIGIOUS AND SCIENTIFIC OVERVIEW

ON “RACE AND RACISM” IN LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

In *"Race, Writing, and Difference"*, Gates' research shows that several meta-physicists and philosophers from the Enlightenment period defined "race" based on religion and science to understand the origin of man. In *Stony the Road*, Gates provides research that reveals and discusses how "Racial Science and Scientific Racism" impacted the views of proponents of monogenesis and polygenesis theories on race. Also, during the Enlightenment, European scientists used literacy as a standard to distinguish whether African lineages were from that of an animal or man. These scholars claimed that slave descendants from Africa were kin to monkeys and apes because they were not literate. However, Gates makes it clear that "race and racism" are the basis for both the monogenesis and polygenesis theories on the origination of man (*Stony the Road* 57 - 59). In fact, according to Gates, Nineteenth-century racial science is often cited as the justification for racial slavery (56).

Gates states that the racial science concept developed basically from looking at the longstanding debates in Europe and the United States, which preoccupied the minds of scientists.



in the eighteenth century. During the time, Europe and the United States heavily debated the issue of race and were curious to know, "What was the cause of the blackness of Africans?"(56) Specifically, they wanted to know if whites and blacks, or other "races of man," originated from the same place as believed by monogenesis "...despite differences in skin color, hair texture, and facial features, or had there been distinct "races" from the very beginning of the creation of human beings" as believed by polygenesis. The Academy of Bordeaux challenged respondents to address this problem in 1741; indeed, they did (56).

Gates states that the religious proponents of Monogenesis believed that "...the original people were white and therefore superior to black people and members of other races, who had "degenerated" from an original white archetype" (57). The Monogenesis gave two reasons why they thought "whites" were superior to "blacks." First, they believed that "whites" were superior to "blacks" due to 1) their religion and because; 2) "blacks" were cursed by God (57). Gates said that the "Religious proponents of monogenesis looked to the authority of the Bible as the basis for their belief in a hierarchical Great Chain of Being, although all people descended from a single Adam and Eve..." (57). Some religious proponents of Monogenesis also believed that "...God had created a new, inferior race as a punishment, turning Cain black - branding him with the "...mark of Cain" for killing his brother Abel" (57). Proponents of Monogenesis also provided another theory on why degeneration took place. Believed that some religious proponents of Monogenesis believed blacks were cursed to be servants by the Bible character, Noah, in the Noah/Ham story (Holy Bible Genesis 9:20 -27). The Noah/Ham story is about Noah cursing Canaan, Ham's grandson, because his son Ham found him naked in his tent when he and his brothers Shem and Japheth returned from the fields. It is said that Noah cursed Canaan to be the servant of his brothers.

because Ham exposed his father's naked body to his brothers instead of covering him and protecting him from being shamed.

Further, Gates looked at the documentation of Lee D. Baker, a Cultural Anthropologist who provided research on racial science on polygenesis, and Louis Agassiz, a famous paleontologist and naturalist who became a professor of natural history at Harvard in 1846.

According to Baker, for years, Agassiz argued that "all races were created at the same time but came from different "creation centers" and that each "creation center" had its own Adam. For example, Agassiz believed there were European and African Adams, etc. (Gates, *Stony the Road* 58). Baker also stated that Agassiz believed that all humans were created simultaneously. Baker stated that Agassiz did not feel it was wrong to assume that all "races" would not have the same abilities, powers, and dispositions or would not be equally entitled to the same position in human society (58-59). Baker substantiated his beliefs about Agassiz with a letter Agassiz wrote his mother to describe his first encounter with "men of color." In the letter. He told his mother, "The feeling that they inspired in me...is contrary to all our ideas about the confraternity of the human type (genre) and the unique origin of our species." Therefore, according to Baker, Agassiz said,

"...it is impossible for me to repress the feeling that they are not of the same blood as us."

He gave details on why he had changed his opinion on the origin of man. He described the colored men as "their black faces with their thick lips and grimacing teeth, the wool on their head, their bent knees, their elongated hands" (Gates, *Stony the Road* 59).

He submitted that how he described "blacks" would become hallmarks of the feral (and beastly) imagery that flooded the press and publications of the Jim Crow "era." (59)

According to Gates, neither the monotheists nor the polytheists' theories held any substantiated religious or scientific value because both theories held positions designed to control the political and economic agenda of "blacks," and Gates submitted that he needed further information in order "...to examine how the ideology of white supremacy took shape in the attached four discourses: racial science, journalism, political rhetoric, and finally fiction and folklore." (56)

As a result of the European scholars' unfounded religious and scientific beliefs during the Enlightenment period, Africans were labeled inhuman. European scholars claimed that Africans were animals that arrived on the shores of America as "blank slates" without cultures or intelligence and were incapable of learning languages. The scholars also believed that they were superior to Africans and were ordained by God to own and rule nations of "black" Africans based on the scholars' interpretation of the Bible scripture, which was fouled with assumptions. Although European scholars labeled Africans as inhuman and incapable of speaking languages, laws were made which forbid "AAs" from speaking their autochthonous Niger-Congo languages, which appear to be both contradictory and oxymoronic since the enslavers labeled Africans as animals and incapable of speaking languages. European colonists and enslavers used these false claims as the basis for enslaving and colonizing Africans. Therefore, enslaved Africans were legally stolen, sold, and traded as property by European enslavers and colonists for centuries.

During slavery and colonialization, no one would have imagined when captives forbid Africans from speaking their autochthonous African languages, which violated their Freedom of Speech under the First Amendment Rights that their Niger-Congo grammar would lay hidden, mysteriously, in the substratum of AAL: Ebonics grammar for over four centuries. Gates provides biblical, scientific, and literary documentation which discredits unfounded religious beliefs and

pseudoscience practiced by some racist Christian European scholars and meta-physicists during the Enlightenment period. He also validates AAs's humanity by researching the documentation of slave authors: Wheatley, Crafts, Wilson, Hurston's, etc., literary works in English and Ebonics.

The article "The Circle and The Cross" by Author and Professor of AA Literature at Texas Southern University, Dr. Alexis Brooks de Vita, provides research that reveals how African cultures were destroyed due to Europe's dominance over Africa's economic and social-legal systems since colonization (21:413). In the article, Brooks de Vita weighs in on how European colonists ravished Africans' homeland for its diamond, gold, silver, and other natural resources, including human resources, since colonialism. Ironically, many European colonists captured and enslaved Africans in a beastly manner, yet they sent missionaries into African societies to civilize Africans whom they claimed were savages. For example, the King of the Belgian Congo, Leopold II, killed over 10 million Africans in the Congo by cutting off their hands, feet, and private parts when workers did not make their rubber quota. In the photo below, the artist captures a picture of an African father staring at his five-year-old daughter's hands and feet severed by Leopold II men because the young child did not meet her rubber quota.

Historically, it is common knowledge that the Middle Passage was a horrific experience.

Massive numbers of enslaved Africans were stolen, sold, traded, and hoarded onto slave ships by European captors (Wikle and Lightfoot 3 - 4); They were separated from their home villagers, ordered to live in small cubicles, and were made to sit in their feces for the duration of the voyage.

in route to the United States, West Indies and the Caribbean's so they could be sold for the sole purpose of making a profit for the enslavers.

When enslaved people arrived in the Americas, they continued to live under horrendous conditions and in constant fear of “white” supremacists. AA males and females were beaten at will. Further, some enslavers routinely separated, threatened, sold, and traded captives “down the river” in the Deep South: Mississippi, Georgia, Louisiana, Alabama, South Carolina, Arkansas, and sometimes Texas, as a fear tactic. As enslaved people, Africans were left with nothing more than their belief in their ancient African religion: Kongo Cosmogram (Karma) and their ancient Gods. According to Brooks de Vita, the Kongo Cosmogram is the belief that everything in the world exists in its opposition, and all deeds done to others will return to its sender in a 360-degree cycle. Undoubtedly, AAs religious faith in God sustained AAs will to live.

According to Franz Fanon, psychoanalyst, in *Black Skin, White Mask*, the fear tactics used against Africans were so horrific during slavery and colonialization that it caused some enslaved people to adopt a persona Fanon termed “fissiparousness” (Fanon 9). In the text, Fanon defined “fissiparousness” is a psychological condition in which captives appear docile, anxious, nervous, and cowardly. Fanon stated that “all colonized races adapted an inferiority complex” (9). Fanon clarified that this condition “was not specifically tailored to Africans, but rather, it referred to all people treated in such an inferior manner. Brooks de Vita agrees and further explains that in

Fanon’s *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs (Black Skin, White Masks)*, it is the psycho-emotional orientation of the colonized victim which causes him not to see himself positively and not to work in his best interest (Fanon 9).” Modern Americans see this behavior played out in the media from the past to the present. Before the 1970s, the media aired images of Jim Crow and Minstrelsy

“Blackface” characters with nervous conditions: slurred Nigritic-Ebonics speech, bucked eyes, and dimwitted. Such characters were commonly found in such shows as Amos, Andy, and Buckwheat.

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon explained how the effects of colonialism and slavery devastated Africans in the diaspora. Fanon stated that enslaved people were indoctrinated to believe that Europeans were superior to Africans; therefore, everything associated with Europeans was better than anything associated with being African. According to Fanon, some Africans in the diaspora denied their cultures and languages because they were forced to accept a false sense of inferiority, which caused some Africans and Africans in the diaspora to attempt to escape their own cultures and languages to be accepted by Europeans (9). In addition, Fanon stated that colonialism caused some Europeans to feel superior to Africans due to colonialism's politics, which lured Europeans to position themselves over Africans at every level. Fanon submitted:

All colonized people in whom an inferiority complex has taken root, whose local cultural originality has been committed to the grave – position themselves in relation to the civilizing language: i.e., the metropolitan culture. The more the colonized has assimilated the cultural values of the metropolis, the more he will have escaped the bush. The more he rejects his blackness and the bush, the whiter he will become. He further stated that, “...we are well aware, however, that this same behavior can be found in any race subjected to colonization” (Fanon). However, Fanon believed colonization could not have possibly happened without the strict application of fear. (Fanon 2 -3)

In her article, Brooks de Vita supports Fanon's work along with the research done by other prominent authors, such as Aime Cesaire, who Brooks de Vita quotes as follows: "millions of men in whom have been skillfully inculcated fear, an inferiority complex, trembling, genuflection,

despair, flunkey-ism" which is a result of being terrified by European rulers (Brooks de Vita 413)." Brooks de Vita believes that the "insidious interpersonal erosions caused by cultural oppression and resultant evidence of African self-hatred" is still apparent today (413). These authors agree that the continuation of the self-hatred and "fissiparousness" fester from the continued indoctrination of racism and self-hate imposed upon Africans in the diaspora by the ruling classes in mainstream America (413). For example, in the past and to a limited degree, to date, some EAs continue to believe that God made the Europeans superior to Africans, which has caused several racist EAs to continue to promote the concept of "white supremacy and white rule; black inferiority and black fear."

Kwame Anthony Appiah agrees with Fanon, Brooks de Vita, and other critics who believe Africans and Africans in the diaspora hold self-contempt, which appears in many forms due to their forced inferiority complex (Introduction to Fanon ix). In his text, Fanon explained that one of how Africans show that they feel inferior to EAs is when they become anxious in the presence of Europeans. Fanon gave an example of how some Africans and Africans in the diaspora leave their native homes to visit a European city and return home transformed or mutated (Fanon 3). Fanon noted that these individuals look down upon their fellow citizens and boast of the wonders of European cities visited when they return home (3). For instance, when AAs judge English and AAL: Ebonics, which share the same Latin vocabulary but has different language grammar which relexifies the Latin vocabulary according to their language grammar rules, many AAs will agree with EAs and judge AAL: Ebonics based on its vocabulary and consider it to be a broken or corrupt English and judge English based on its grammar and consider it a superior European language. According to Fanon, some Africans and Africans in the diaspora have been so indoctrinated by the

concept of "white supremacy" that they believe everything European is superior to anything African.

Some social theoreticians, meta-physicists, and others, including slaveholders, explicated and justified their false conclusions on judging languages based on "race and racism" out of ignorance. Americans, in general, were taught that AA's anatomy: big lips, thick tongues, android noses, and other differences prevented AAs from articulating the "fine sounds" of English and have little or no knowledge regarding the science of linguistics (Stony the Road 57). Americans, in general, were also told that Africans had specific attributes because they were "black": athleticism and rhythm. Moreover, Caucasians had certain other attributes because they were "white": intelligence and imagination, which are meant to define "race" based on stereotypes (Writing, "Race" and the Differences It Makes, p.5). Unfortunately, many Americans continue to believe that these old stereotypes are valid.

Before the 20th century, some EA scientists also designed culturally biased Intelligence Quotient (IQ) tests written in English. These IQ tests were used to document the discrepancies between the test scores of EAs and AAs' intelligence. The results laid the groundwork for the hate and racial discrimination directed toward AAs based on the false assumption of inferiority. Americans paid close attention to such scholars. These flawed IQ tests were designed and administered in English to AAs as science, advancing the "white" Supremacy theory. Some theorists used the differences in African and European IQ test scores to label one-half of Africans tested as mentally retarded and to further classify Africans as inhuman. These culturally biased and unscientific exams were published and used to malign Africans' intelligence and to convince others that AAs, as well as all other groups, were born genetically inferior to Europeans.



According to Gates, "race and racism" was a broad discourse in the 18th century and was spelled out by European scholars. In *The Trials of Phillis Wheatley, America's First Black Poet and Her Encounters with the Founding Fathers*, Gates points out that one of Britain's most honored scholars, David Hume, from the Enlightenment period, made a rather odd and erroneous statement about AAs and others in humanity when he stated:

I am apt to suspect the Negroes, and in general all the other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufacturers amongst them, no arts, no sciences...  
(Gates, *The Trials of Phillis Wheatley* 23, 24).

Apparently, Hume had not studied the works of ancient Egyptians, or he would have known that the Egyptians invented the first writing, Hieroglyphics, and the Phoenicians created the first alphabet.

Obviously, Gates believes that whether Africans were human or not was less related to color than to the possession of reason, a tradition inaugurated by 16th - 17th-century French Philosopher Rene Descartes. Descartes, a well-respected scholar, set standards of intelligence for Africans based on literacy. Therefore, the question for the major scholars becomes,

...whether or not Africans could write, that is, could create imaginative literature? If they could "...then they stood as members of the human family on the Great Chain of Being. If they could not, then Africans were a species, sub-human more related to the apes than to Europeans. Gates adds, "To summarize a vast and complex body of literature involving Francis Bacon, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and George Frederick Hegel, many

Philosophers of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment were vexed by the question of what kind of creatures Africans truly were – that is, were they human beings, descended along with Europeans from a common ancestor and fundamentally related to other human beings, or were they, as Hume put it in 1753, “another species of men,” related more to apes than to Europeans?” (Gates, *The Trials of Phillis Wheatley* 26)

In the text, Gates reminds Americans that Thomas Jefferson, the Third President of the United States, fathered various children by his slave mistress, Sally Hemmings, yet he associated Africans with apes. Incidentally, although mating with an animal is considered an act of bestiality, many EA males had sex with African women they considered animals, socially and politically. Nevertheless, these prominent dignitaries were still respected and protected by their stature in life. Gates also credits theoretician Hippolyte-Adolphe Taine as one of the best-known social theorists of his time. However, Gates challenged Taine’s definition of race in the following manner. According to Taine,

What was called “race” was the source of all structures of feeling and thought: to “track the root of man,” he writes, is “to consider the race itself...the structure of his character and mind, his general processes of thought and feeling, the irregularity and revolution of his conception, which arrest in him the birth of fair dispositions and harmonious forms, the disdain for appearances, the desire for truth, the attachment for bare and abstract ideas, which develop in his conscience at the expense of all else. (Gates, *Writing, “Race, and the Differences It Makes* 3)

When Gates critiques Taine’s beliefs regarding race, Gates states that Taine believed “race” was predetermined and was inseparable from man’s intellect and heart. Further, Gates quotes Taine’s

causes for racial inequality. He states, “Here lie the grand causes, for they are the universal and permanent causes, ...indestructible, and finally infallibly supreme” causes for the inequality of the races” (Gates, “Writing, “Race” and the Differences It Makes p 3) (qtd, Hippolyte-Adolphe Taine Intro, to the History of Literate-criticism p.19). Gates further states that “Taine’s originality is not due to his ideas about the nature and role of race but rather in their almost “scientific” application to the history of literature.” Gates describes the lack of literacy on the part of AAs as previously used by EAs to justify their view on AA humanity. In “Race,” Writing, and Difference, Gates responds to the Enlightenment period scholars as follows:

The growth of canonical national literatures was coterminous with shared assumption among intellectuals that race was a “thing,” an ineffaceable quantity, which irresistible determined the shape and contour of thought and feeling as surely as it did the shape and contour of human *anatomy* (Gates, “Writing, “Race” and the Differences It Makes p3)

Further, Gates responds to Taine’s views on race in the following manner,

Race has become a trope of ultimate, irreducible difference between cultures, linguistic groups, or adherents of specific belief systems which – more often than not -- also have fundamentally opposed economic interest (Gates, “Writing, “Race,” and the Differences It Makes P. 5).

Gates adds that the individual sensibilities toward “race and racism” are so complex that several world scholars sometimes find it difficult, confusing, and impossible to define. For instance, Appiah, in *The Uncompleted Argument*, makes comments on how W.E.B. DuBois spent his entire life studying race from a socio-historical perspective but was never able to complete his argument. Appiah says that DuBois disagreed with the results of the scientific investigations done

on race in the 19th century because, at the time, scientists believed that “We have at least two, perhaps three, great families of human beings - The whites and negroes, possible the yellow race (Appiah 23).

DuBois faithfully believed and argued that the “grosser physical differences of color, hair, and bone” was not the issue. DuBois believed that the “differences – subtle, delicate, and elusive though they may be – which have silently but separated men into groups” were not based on science. DuBois further explained his viewpoint in the following manner. He stated,

While these subtle forces have generally followed the natural cleavage of common blood, descent and physical peculiarities, they have at other times swept across and ignored these. At all times, however, they have divided human beings into races, which, while they perhaps transcend scientific definition, nevertheless, are clearly defined to the eye of the historian and sociologist. (Appiah 23)

DuBois struggled with the issue of race and questioned whether the above statements would hold true until his death. He further questioned,

...individuals, but of groups, not of nations, but of races...What, then, is a race? It is a vast family of human beings, generally of common blood and language, always of common history, traditions and impulses, who are both voluntarily and involuntarily striving together for the accomplishment of certain more or less vividly conceived ideals of life. (Appiah 23)

Gates' research pokes holes in the various theories of "race and racism," which leads Gates to pose further the essential question of whether Immanuel Kant stopped thinking that there existed a natural, predetermined relation between "stupidity" and "blackness" (his terms) when he wrote,

'*Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* (Hardly!) (Gates, Talkin' That Talk 408).' Gates makes it obvious and believes, "To be anti-slavery was not the same thing as not being a racist: one could very well oppose slavery yet believe black people to be innately or naturally inferior (407 - 408). Gates argues, for example, that President Lincoln, the 16th President of the United States and Chief of Staff, ordered a Civil War to free the enslaved people, yet, Gates believed that there were many "natural" racial differences between "blacks" and "whites" that could never be reconciled and Lincoln thought the "differences" between Africans and Europeans as the thing that made Africans inferior and unequal to Europeans (*Gates, "Writing. "Race, and the Difference It Makes* 3) When Lincoln summoned the slaves to the White House and explained his feelings to them, Lincoln told the slaves, "You and we are different races," and added, "We have between us a broader difference than exists between any other two races" (qtd. Michael P. Bantoan), (*Gates, Writing, "Race" and Difference It Makes* p. 3). Gates believes that when Lincoln refers to the differences between the "races," he refers to AAs lacking mental equality to "whites."

Further, in "Talkin' That Talk," Gates explains that when critics like Tzvetan Todorov and others like him attempted to valorize the Enlightenment period, they were historically inaccurate and dangerous to democracy. Gates continues to make his point in *Black Letters and the Enlightenment* when he critiques Hume's inability to write literature.

...racism and – dare I say it? – logocentrism marched arm in arm to de-limit black people in perhaps the most pernicious way of all: to claim that they were subhuman, “a different species of men,” as Hume put it so plainly, because they could not “write” literature. (Gates, “Talkin’ That Talk” 408)

Gates further explains why AAs need not listen to egalitarians when they critique AA literature and speech. Gates argues that if critics use the same literary tropes to analyze AA literature and

speech from the same point of view as English, AAs will fall into the same practice of neocolonialism. Gates further argues that the AA experience is different from the European experience and must be looked at from the perspective of AA culture.

Gates's perspective on "discursive dualism" concerning ethnic, cultural, gender, economic, and educational differences is relevant because, many times, those who come from different backgrounds see things differently. Therefore, Gates believes that "We must attack the racism of Egalitarianism and Universalism in as many languages as we can utter" (Gates, "Talkin' That Talk" ...409). Gates uses sarcasm to criticize Todorov when he addresses the matter with his colleagues. Gates quotes, "Todorov can't even hear us, ...when we talk his academic talk, how he gonna hear us if we "talk that talk," the talk of the black idiom." Gates concludes his point in AAL: Ebonics when he warns his colleagues, "Things is just gettin' innerestin', as LeRoi says." (409)

Gates also explains why he does not trust egalitarians when they claim to be non-biased and stand for freedom and equality. Gates states that the egalitarians are the same people who "Somehow always end up lopping off our arms, legs, and pug noses, muffing the timbres of our voices and trying to always straighten our already kinky hair." Gates believes that when such critics define racism from an Egalitarian and Universal point of view, they speak of "AAs" and Africans in the diaspora as innately or naturally inferior (Gates, "Talkin' that Talk" p.408 - 409).

Finally, in the *Reader*, Gates not only deconstructs unfounded religious and antiquated scientific beliefs which purport that Africans were inhuman and could not speak languages, but Gates also provides literature that documents that enslaved people could and did write well in English and AA/Ebonics during slavery which proved Africans' humanity. In *The Trials of Phillis Wheatley: America's First Black Poet and Her Encounters with the Founding Fathers*, Gates showcases how Wheatley wrote about some of the most significant Greek Gods in the late 18th

century with scholarship. Gates also brags about other such slave authors as Hannah Craft in *The Bondwoman's Narrative* and Harriet E. Wilson in *Our Nig*, who wrote books that read like autobiographies. Gates relishes that these AA slave authors had great command of the English language and were just as proud when slave authors wrote about Africans using "plantation talk." These findings prompted Gates to make a profound statement in praise of and tribute to Wheatley's remarkable work (*Gates, Reader* 122). Gates submits,

Since the beginning of the seventeenth century, Europeans had wondered aloud whether or not the African "species of men," as they were most commonly called, *could* ever create formal literature, could ever master "the arts and sciences." If they could, the argument ran, then the African variety of humanity was fundamentally related to the European variety. If not then it seemed clear that the African was destined by nature to be a slave. This was the burden shouldered by Phillis Wheatley when she successfully defended herself and the authorship of her book against counterclaims and doubts." (123)

Gates champions Wheatley's successes and boasts about her work with unadulterated pride. He praises Wheatley because "Wheatley launches two traditions at once – the black American literary tradition and the black woman's literary tradition" (123). In summary, Gates states that Wheatley's legacy is undeniable because, as a young teenage, enslaved person, Wheatley could bear the weight of proving AA humanity on her shoulders and succeeded in establishing both genres.

When Gates analyzes the inequality of "race and racism" in America and the negative and devastating effects it had upon Africans, religiously and scientifically, Gates cannot help feeling prideful of Wheatley's work.

In Gates's final arguments against those who advocated for slavery and colonialism based on Christian curses and racial science, Gates argues that God never granted Noah the power to put a

generational course on Noah's grandson Canaan and that "white Supremacy" was simply a means to obtain free slave labor. Gates states that science was used to divide humans based on "race" and has long been recognized as fiction. Gates states that when humans are referred to as,

“...the White race or “the Black race,” “the Jewish race, “or “the Aryan race,” they speak in biological misnomers and, more generally, in metaphors. Gates states that in modern times, “...our conversations are replete with usages of race which have their sources in the dubious pseudoscience of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries attributes such as: rhythm, athleticism, fidelity, ability, and so forth when referencing “race.” Further, Gates says that the relationship between “racial character” and specific characteristics of “race” is inscribed through tropes of race, which lends to a sanction by God, biology or the natural order to presumably unbiased description of cultural tendencies and differences.

Further, Gates goes so far as to say that there is “The sense of difference defined in popular usages of the word “race” (Gates, “Writing, “Race,,” and the Differences It Makes p. 5).

Gates further explains his position. He says there are described and inscribed differences of language, belief system, artistic tradition, and gender pool, as well as all sorts of supposedly natural attributes such as rhythm, athleticism, fidelity, and ability when referencing “race.” Further, Gates believes that the relationship between “racial character” and specific characteristics of “race” is inscribed through tropes of race, which lends to a sanction by God, biology, or the natural order to the presumably unbiased description of cultural tendencies and differences (Gates, “Writing, “Race,,” and the Differences It Makes p. 5).

Gates states that in the past, “race and racism” seriously impacted many AAs drive to become literate to prove their intelligence and humanity. Gates also quotes critic and author Richard



Wright, who polemically argues “that if white racism did not exist, then black literature would not exist” (*Gates, Reader* 179).

In the *Reader*, Gates criticizes Kant for associating being “black” with being “stupid.” Instead, Gates accuses Kant of using skin color as if it was self-evident of AA’s inhumanity or lack of intelligence. Gates also speaks out against Hume’s statement, which claims that “Negroes” and “...all other species of men were naturally inferior to the European male,” and criticizes Hegel, whom he believes simply echoed Hume and Kant’s beliefs about “race and racism” when he claimed that “Africans had no history because they had developed no systems of writing and had not mastered the art of writing in European languages” (220).

AA authors responded to these profoundly serious omissions and inaccurate racist allegations against “AAs history, language, and culture as directly as possible. Further, Gates’s research proved that the EA scholars’ claims and accusations could not be substantiated with religious or scientific evidence.

## CHAPTER 3

### DR. ERNIE A. SMITH – PRESENTS SCIENTIFIC DOCUMENTATION TO SHOW THE CONTINUATION OF AUTOCHTHONOUS NIGER-CONGO WEST AFRICAN GRAMMAR IN AFRICAN AMERICAN LANGUAGE: EBONICS FROM THE 17<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY

After a century of fighting against Jim Crow Laws, segregation, and discrimination, AAs firmly opposed "race and racism" perpetrated against them in the United States during the mid-1900s. In 1954, in The Supreme Court case *Brown vs. Board of Education*, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People won a significant lawsuit to desegregate America's public schools and facilities. In the mid-1960s, AAs won a host of civil rights by protesting under Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s leadership and other Civil Rights leaders. The protestors challenged discrimination in schools, restaurants, buses, and other public facilities. They also went after the media to monitor and remove Jim Crow and its Minstrelsy from American television. By the early 1970s, "Black Pride" became synonymous with "Black Identity." AAs started to accept their anatomy: kinky-curly hair, full lips, and big hips. They began to thrive on "Black Pride." AAs around the country began to wear their natural hair: afros, braids, dreadlocks. Some European employers threatened to fire them for what some employers considered

unprofessional dress. To some EA employers and others in authority, afros were considered a sign of militancy and rebellion.

In this paper, the thesis writer provides documentation by Dr. Ernie A. Smith, other linguists, and scholars to define AA language, give historical background on AAL: Ebonics, and explain how AAL: Ebonics was learned and maintained in America for over four hundred years. Smith also provides a comparative analysis between Niger-Congo grammar and the grammar of Ebonics. Smith continues to fight for AA students' rights to be included in the Bilingual Program and their rights to learn English as a Second Language (ESL).

In the 1970s, the resurgence of AA speech rose, and AA top scholars from the various discourses began to debate "What exactly is AAL that is frequently termed "Black English?" Comparative Linguist Smith, other prominent linguists, and scholars argue that AA language is not "Black English." Some critics question whether "Black English" is an oxymoronic term since there are no black, red, yellow, or white people. Modern scientists agree that all humans are from a dark brown phenotype are various shades of brown. Smith purports that the terms "Substandard English" or "Broken English" are deficit models of English and reflect negatively upon AA speech. Further, AAL nor "Black English" can be named for AA speech because they are phrases that indicate who is speaking the language. Furthermore, the grammar of "Black English" and AAL is Niger-Congo West Africans, and the vocabulary is about 85% Latin and 15% English according to Building English Skills – Red Level – a book prepared by the Staff of The Writing Improvement Project pp 4 -5 and Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary 20a -29a).

In 1973, Dr. Robert Williams, Professor of Psychology from Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, summoned AA master scholars from around the country to a National Institute

of Mental Health conference to address the Cognitive and Linguistics Development of the AA child. The NIMH had previously given independent grants to various scholars: anthropologists, psychologists, linguists, educators, and speech pathologists, to study the language development of AA children. The presenters found conflicts in the research regarding AA speech. When the scholars convened, they deemed defining the term "Black English" was necessary. They agreed, from a scientific point of view, since "Black English" has a Niger-Congo West African Grammar and English European vocabulary. AAL cannot be termed "Black English" because the genesis or classification of a language is not based on its vocabulary but rather its grammar. Therefore, top AA scholars named/renamed languages spoken by Africans in the diaspora with European vocabularies relexified by Niger-Congo grammar. When brainstorming the AAL during the 1973 NIMH conference, Williams came up with the term "Ebonics," an English **blend** of Ebony and Phonics which translates into "Black Sounds." Immediately, Smith framed the term as follows:

Ebonics may be defined as the linguistic and paralinguistic feature which on a concentric continuum represent the communicative competence of the West African, Caribbean, and United States slave descendants of African origin. It includes the grammar, various idioms, patois, argots, idiolects, and social dialects of Black people. Ebonics, also, includes non-verbal sounds, cues and gestures which are systematically and predictably utilized in the process of communication by Afro-Americans (Smith 2017).

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, self-taught author and president of the Nigritian Commission, Shaba Shabaka (aka Jurlene Wooten), along with The Nigritian Consulate began studying AA history, culture, and language in the greater Los Angeles community. The Nigritian Commission and the Nigritian Consulate produced historical documentation to show that the entire

continent of Africa was initially called Nigritia and that Nigritians spoke the Nigritic languages. The research is supported by ancient Atlas maps of Africa dating back to the World at the Treaty of Paris map and the AFRI TA BVLA Map of Nigritia (See Figure 1 and 2 below). According to Shabaka, during the Berlin Conference of 1884 -1885, European colonists partitioned the entire continent of “Nigritia” in the Berlin Treaty. They renamed Nigritia “Africa” in order to prevent European leaders from warring over the ownership of the newly discovered diamonds, gold, and riches of the land.

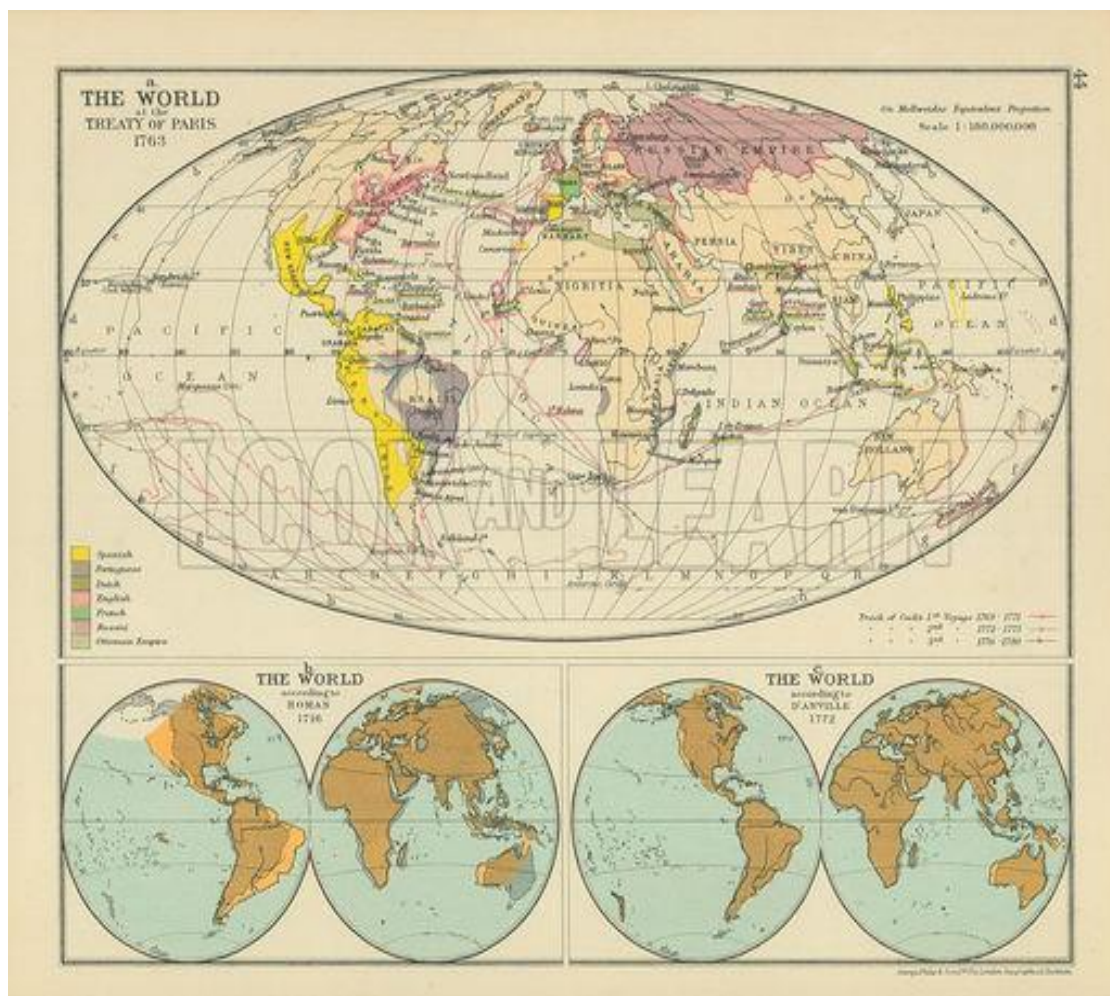


Figure 1. The World at the Treaty of Paris.



Figure 2. AFRI CAE TA BVLA NOVA. Map of Nigritia RVM REGIO. NUBIA

The Nigritian Commission President, Shabaka, informed and provided the Nigritian Commission members with maps of Nigritia and ancient English dictionaries that defined several very important words, "Neggur," "N-gers," "Nigritia," and "Nigritic" as shown below. She instructed the thesis writer/vice president of The Nigritian Commission and other commission members to read the above "n" words from *An Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary*, as interpreted into English by European world scholar E.A. Wallace Budge. As seen below, Budge interpreted the word "Neggur" to mean "The goose goddess that laid the sun egg" (Budge 398). Shabaka stated that the term "Neggur" was written in hieroglyphics on the walls of the pyramids in Egypt, as well. Shabaka also stated that young AA rappers had invented a new word, "Nigga" which means "comrade". Shabaka believed the ancient African ancestors spiritually inspired the word. Further, Shabaka informed the members that according to *Webster's Third New International*

*Dictionary Unabridged* version, the term "Nigritia" was defined as the name of Sudan (fr. L. Nigr- niger black) + E -an]: SUDANESE" (1528). Further, Shabaka defined "Nigritian," according to *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, as "b. A native or inhabitant of Nigritia: A Sudanese" (2:1928). "Nigritian" and was further defined by *Oxford English Dictionary* as "A. Of or belonging to Nigritia, a region in Central Africa nearly co-extensive with Sudan, the home of the most pronounced types of the negro race: hence, of or belonging to the Negro race" (7: 149). Therefore, slave descendants from Africa brought to America during slavery and colonization as Africans who arrived in America during slavery and colonization are legally Nigritians from Nigritia.



Figure 3. Map of Africa. Rnd, McNelly, and Co. 1890. (Soudan now called Sudan).



Figure 4. World Map. [www.mapsofworld.com](http://www.mapsofworld.com). 01-May 2012

Further, Shabaka provided the Nigritian members with the definition for “Nigritic” as defined by *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, Sixth Edition* as “[origin from Latin *nigr-*, *niger* black, + *itic*.] Negritic (Of or about) the Sudanic group of languages. Nigrotic/*ni*’grotike (rare)” (2: 1928). Therefore, Shabaka stated, Nigritics was the language of the Nigritians. In addition, Shabaka produced evidence to show that Nigritic was defined by The Oxford English Dictionary as “Of or about the Negro race, spec., the Oceanic Negroes (Cent. Dict. 1890)” (7:149) (See figure 1 and 2). Shabaka further informed the group that Sudan’s original name was Soudan, but European colonists renamed it Sudan. Previously, Soudan stretched from Central Africa to West Africa (See figure 3) and (See figure 4). Today, Sudan only encompassed a significant part of Central Africa.



In 1996, when the Ebonics controversy was at its height, Shabaka, author and president of the Nigritian Commission; Smith, Comparative Linguist, and Ombudsman for the Black Community Education Task Force (BCETF) along with other community organizations met regarding extending AAL: Ebonics name from AAL to Nigritic-Ebonics. Further, the various “black “community organizations voted unanimously to accept the term Ebonics” coined and framed by Dr. Robert Williams and Dr. Ernie A. Smith, respectively in 1973 at the NIMH, as the official name for all languages that have a European vocabulary and Niger-Congo West African grammar. They further agreed that there was no conflict between renaming AAL itself as Nigritic-Ebonics. Therefore, All Niger-Congo language` officially named “Ebonics” by top AA scholars in 1973 at the NIMH will henceforth be respectably referred to as Ebonics, and that AAL also synonymously be called Nigritic-Ebonics in this thesis and elsewhere throughout the nation.

At the time, many Americans and others ask the essential question, “Why have AAs not learned English although AAs have been in the United States for approximately four hundred years? They make a valid point. However, that same question could be asked of other foreigners whose ancestors have lived under somewhat similar conditions in the United States for centuries and continue to relexify English with their native language grammar. As many teachers and students can attest to, there has been a growing number of non-English speaking students entering the public school system and community since the late 1960s and early 1970s, yet, due to the lack of social interaction between the student groups, many of these groups have not learned Standard English or any other languages spoken by other groups. Immigrant children from language backgrounds other than English do not learn to speak English by being a student in the general population. It is common knowledge that these students learn English or any other languages from participating in multibillion-dollar bilingual/ Multilingual Education Programs that offer

specialized instructions for second-language learners. Unfortunately, Africans from the continent and Africans in the diaspora have rarely, if ever, been included in these services.

In this study, Smith provides work done by top linguists nationwide which help educators understand the function of grammar in languages. For example, Smith provides work by William O'Grady in *Contemporary Linguistics*, which identifies and describes the various components of the grammar system: phonetics, phonology/phonological system, Morphology, Syntax, and Semantics of the language. The evidence shows that Ebonics is not a sub-Standard, broken English, or "Black English." Instead, it is a new African dialect. According to the Linguistic Society of America (*Linguistic Society of America p. 27*), *it is as much of a language as English or any other language.*

Also, Smith provides further documentation to show how Janheinz Jahn in "MUNTU An Outline of the New African Culture" explains the impact of grammar on vocabulary and acts as the foundation of languages. Jahn explains the AAL/Ebonics Niger-Congo Grammar phenomenon as follows:

In the Afro-American world some hybrid languages have arisen: Creole, Surinaam, Papiamentu and others, which are generally designated as dialects. Creole counts as spoiled French, Surinaam is also called Negro-English. The vocabulary consists predominantly of European words, but the syntax and word formation follow the rules of African grammar. It is wrong therefore to call these languages "spoilt' English or 'spoilt' French. If one considers the essence of a language to be its vocabulary, Creole and Papiamentu must be called the youngest of the Romance languages, Surinaam must be called the youngest of the Germanic languages. But if one considers the grammatical structure of a language more important than its vocabulary, then the three languages mentioned do not

belong to the Indo-European group. In the light of African culture, which places function ahead of object, for which Kuntu is more important in concrete life than Kintu, Creole, Suranaam and Papiamentu must be described as neo-African languages (Jahn 194).

Smith also identifies and agrees with other historians that Niger-Congo, West Africa is the area in which most Africans were captured and enslaved. For instance, research on linguistics done by Lorenzo D. Turner in *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* supports this finding. Turner states that the enslaved people delivered to South Carolina and Georgia came directly from Africa's West Coast, from Senegal to Angola. Comparative Linguists have looked at Niger-Congo West African grammar structure and found commonalities. The cutting-edge research on language is so sophisticated that scientists can now distinguish children's home language based on the baby's babble (Smith 2017). When comparative linguists look at the grammar structure of slave descendants from Niger-Congo of west Africa, they show kinship within these languages' grammar structures and the grammar structure of AAL: Ebonics and the grammar structure of languages spoken by other Africans in the diaspora, as well. According to Turner, slave descendants of Africa were captured from Africa's West coast from the countries listed below:

These countries include Senegal, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, the Gold Coast, Togo, Dahomey, Nigeria, and Angola, as well as, a few others. Turner states that the languages spoken in those countries were: Wolof, Malenke, Mandinka, Bambara Jula, Mende, Vai, Twi, Yoruba, Bini, Hausa, Ibo, Efik, Ga, Ewe, Fon, Fante, Ibibio, Kongo, Umbundu, Kinkundu. To date, the Gullah people on the Salt Sea Islands of South Carolina and

Georgia retain language features from languages indicated above. The Gullah language spoken on these isolated islands by Africans in diaspora are relexified and are living proof of how Africans in diaspora maintained their Niger-Congo West African grammar for centuries (Turner 2-8).

In the study, Smith makes a comparative analysis between Nigritic-Ebonics and Niger-Congo West African grammar which proves that Niger-Congo grammar continues to exist in the substratum of AAL: Ebonics. Smith compares several grammatical features which exist between Niger-Congo languages and Nigritic-Ebonics. In addition, Smith demonstrates and provides research below to show how Victoria Fromkin and Robert Rodman, in “An Introduction to Language,” explains, in detail, how African grammar features were maintained in AAL: Ebonics. According to Fromkin and Rodman,

The phonological systems of languages differ. Different languages have different inventories of sounds, though all languages will have some of the same sounds; in fact, certain sounds are found in every language. All languages have vowels and consonants, and the consonants always include stops and continuants, while the vowels always include a high front vowel. Consider, for example, English and Twi, two widely different languages, from two distinct language families.

They both contain the consonants /p/, /t/, /k/, /b/, /d/, /g/, /m/, /n /, /ng/, /f/, /s/, /h/, /r/, /w/, /y/, / /, /and /j/ and the vowels /i /, /I / /e/, /E/, /u /, /U /, / o /, / /, and /a/. There are sounds in English not found in Twi, such as /z/, /v/, / /, / /, and /I/, and there are sounds in Twi not found in English, such as / / (which is like the ch sound in church but with your lips rounded) or /j/ (like the j sound in judge with the lips rounded) (Fromkin and Rodman p.192 – 193).

Further, Smith states that all languages' grammatical structures exist in the substratum of their language. All humans approximate sounds that do not exist in their native language system or grammar with the closest sound to it (Smith 2017). For example, Ebonics speakers relexify "wid" and "wif" for "with" since Niger-Congo languages do not have the "th" in its sound system. Therefore, speakers of Niger-Congo languages relexify "that," "this," "these" or "those," for "dat," "dis," "dese" or "dose," respectively. Smith provides some examples of how AAL: Ebonics speakers will relexify English sentences, such as, "This is not the one that I ordered." as "Dis ain't de one dat I o'de'ed." In the Niger-Congo grammar, the retroflex /r/ in the word "ordered" will be relexified as "o'de'ded." Chinese speakers relexify the capital /R/ with the velarized alveolar lateral "l." According to Smith, the English sentence, "Robert Redford likes fried rice." will be relexified by Chinese speakers as "Lobert Ledfo'd like flied lice" (Smith 2017).

Smith compares English sentences and AAL: Ebonics sentences as seen in Examples 1 – 9 below. Sentences will be relexified from English to AAL:Ebonics as follows: 1) Did you see Bobby and them? 2) I want some candied yams and greens. 3) Don't ask me. 4) Let's go to Rascos. 5) Well, let us get something to eat. 6) No, they take too long. 7) Not today. 8) You are the teacher. 9) Did you eat yet? and 10) Did you eat yet? The preceding sentences will be relexified as: 1. Di j' si babi nim? 2. A won sam kende yaemz en grinz. 3. Don aeks mi. 4. Les go de Rasgoz. 5. Wel, les gi semtit. 6. Naw, de te tu lon'. 7. Na tede. 8. Yu de tica. 9) Dij'eet yet? 10. "Jeet Yet? (Smith 2017) The cvcvcv pattern helps readers to see and understand how the Niger-Congo grammar relexifies English (Latin) vocabulary into Ebonics. The photo below shows how Nigritic Ebonics

grammar relexifies the English sentence from “Did you eat, yet?” to “Jeet Yet?”



Smith provides other Niger-Congo language features that show how the Morphosyntax, personal aspect, or recapitulative pronoun is used in Topic/Comment sentences in AAL: Ebonics. For example, a Topic/Comment sentence is commonly used in the syntax position in Niger-Congo, West Africa. Many AAs use the Topic/Comment vs. the English Subject/Verb Agreement sentence structure. Smith provides some common Topic/Comment sentences (Morphosyntax –Personal Aspect or recapitulative Pronoun sentences) spoken by Ebonic speakers. Ebonics-speakers relexify English sentences with their Niger-Congo grammar. Therefore, English sentences such as: 1) My sister is smart, 2) My brother plays football. 3) That doctor is rich. 4) That baby girl is so big, and 5) That teacher is mean will be relexified as: 1) My sister she smart. 2) My brother he play football. 3) That doctor he rich. 4) That baby she so big. 5) That teacher she mean. These Topic/Comment sentences are considered recapitulative because the personal aspect pronoun in the comment restates the topic in the sentence.

In Africa, there are two ways to describe that which has already happened: past and remote past. Further, there are no copula or auxiliary verbs in the Niger-Congo languages. Therefore,

English sentences using the past tense will be relexified by the Niger-Congo grammar as follows:

1) He is gone, or he has been gone for a long time, and 2) She is married, or she has been married for some time will be relexified by AAL: Ebonics as 1) He been gone or he been done gone, 2) She done married or she been done married. Likewise, AAL will relexify the Morphosyntax aspect of complete sentences in English: Ebonics as follows: 1) I ate or I have eaten will be relexified as I done ate and I been done ate. 2) The wind has stopped, or The wind stopped a long time ago and will be relexified by AAL: Ebonics as follows: 1) The wind done stopped, or The wind been done stopped . 4) I did all I could or I have done all I could will be relexified by AAL: Ebonics as I done all I could, and I been done done all I could.

According to Smith, English (German) grammar does not permit double, triple, or serial negations in the syntax position as double negatives in English. In fact, in English, two negatives in sentences will convert into a positive. In the Niger-Congo grammar, double, triple, and serial negatives in sentences will be seen as a negative but will be permitted in AAL:Ebonics as shown below. For example, in the syntax of AAL: Ebonics. For example, the following English sentences will be relexified: 1) Nobody likes Nini. 2) I am not going over there anymore. 3) I do not know anything, and 4) He is never on time would be expressed as double negation sentences in Ebonics in the following manner: Don't nobody like Nini 2) I ain't goin' over there no mo 3) I don't know nothin and, 4) He don't never be on time. Triple Negation English sentences written below as, 1) I have never asked you for anything. 2) I am not going over there anymore. 3) I will not ever do anything for her, again would be expressed as, 1) I ain't never aek you for nothin. 2) I ain't never gone ov'r there no mo. The following English sentences below would become serial negation sentences in Ebonics a follows: 1) I will never do anything for her again. 2) No one will do anything to me again. 3) Do not ever call me at three O'clock in the the morning, girl. For example, 1) I ain't

never gon do nothin for her no mo. 2) Ain't nobody gon never do nothin to me no mo. 3) Don never call me at three O'clock in the morn', gir'l.

In 1996, Oakland Unified School District, "OUSD," spearheaded a language development program to teach ESL to descendants of enslaved people. Africa most efficiently uses linguistic strategies, methodologies, and comparative analysis. However, it incited a minstrel show that took place on the world stage. When Los Angeles Unified School District ("LAUSD") Board Member, Barbara Boudreaux ("Boudreaux"), signed off on the LAUSD Board language resolution, which was based on OUSD's language resolution and to an extent, modeled after the Language Development Program for African American Students (LDPAAS) in LAUSD, Boudreaux was eliminated from the Board during the next political election cycle. Ironically, "LAUSD" had a similar program which had become successful operating out of LAUSD (District Wide) for over a decade under the charge of Dr. Noma Le Moine, one of Smith's many protegees.

Near the turn of the century, the long, heated argument on whether AA speech was a Black English or Ebonics raged through America and abroad like wildfire. Racist Jim Crow advocates put on their "Blackface" and shamed faced AAs who became very angry and shed tears of hate for their own language. Many AAs forgot what Carter G. Woodson said in *The Mis-Education of the Negro*. (Woodson 9). AAs could not remember Malcolm X's warning. They were bamboozled. Apparently, they had failed to read Geneses 9:20-27 and did not know their God's position on speaking only in one language. Amid the controversy, on January 3, 1997, the Linguistic Society of America, the most knowledgeable and powerful educational institution in the United States of America stood up, wrote and passed a Resolution on Ebonics which supported the Resolution of



USD. The Linguistic Society of America armed the nation with a written documentation which verified the legality of AAL: Ebonics. It stated:

...the Linguistic Society of America, as a society of scholars engaged in the scientific study of language, hereby resolves to make it known that: a) The variety known as “Ebonics, African American Vernacular English” (AAVE), and “Vernacular Black English” and by other names is systematic and rule governed like all-natural speech varieties. In fact, all human linguistic systems – spoken, signed, and written – are fundamentally regular. The systematic and expressive nature of the grammar and pronunciation patterns of the African-American vernacular has been established by numerous scientific studies over the past 30 years, Characterizations of Ebonics as “slang,” “mutant,” “lazy,” “defective,” “ungrammatical,” or “broken English” are incorrect and demeaning (ReThinking Schools 27).

It is common knowledge that "race and racism" has remained at the seat of the heated debate over whether or not the AA language is a sub-Standard, broken "Black English" or a prideful dialect of the Niger-Congo West African language family tree and that it will take the entire American village to decide whether or not to allow AA children the opportunity to learn to read English as ESL students vs. "English Only" students.

As many already know, Smith continues to champion the rights of Nigrific-Ebonics speakers in America's public schools as he has done throughout the community for the last half-century in order to lead the debate on whether-or-no AAL:Ebonics is African or European. Further, many language conscious Americans have witnessed Smith's use of his work as a professor at Charles Drew University, ombudsman of BCETF, and other community organizations which served to uplift and promote the esteem of AAs while correcting the misunderstandings associated with AA

language due to “race and racism”. Therefore, Smith must be recognized for his relentless efforts and Linguist, Dr. William Labov must be commended for his change of heart. In 2022, Linguist Dr. William Labov submitted that he had reversed his evaluation of "black vernacular" (Botan and Smitherman 169). He, too, confirmed that AA language is a dialect of the Niger-Congo languages (Botan and Smitherman 169).

CHAPTER 4  
PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR'S WORK DEPICTS  
THE ART AND SCIENCE OF PLANTATION TALK/NIGRITIC-EBONICS DURING  
POST SLAVERY

African American literature has been documented since the late 18th century. Even though enslaved people were forbidden to read, write or attend school by law and could be severely punished, a few learned to read and write. Some of the enslaved people, as well as EAs, jeopardized their lives to teach other enslaved people to do so. In the study, the thesis writer provides research by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. to show how Phillis Wheatley used English literacy to prove Africans' humanity, founded the AA female genre, and laid the foundation for Paul Laurence Dunbar and other AA writers to become authors in America.

The thesis writer will provide a brief biography of Dunbar's life which contrasts how Dunbar is honored by prominent EAs and Europeans for his excellent work in Ebonics while, at the same time, during Reconstruction and Post Slavery America was overshadowed by "Jim Crow and Minstrelsy: "Black Face" which condemned AA speech. Further, the thesis writer provides a synchronic and diachronic review through a comparative analysis of Nigritic-Ebonics

spoken by Dunbar and Euro-American Joel Chandler Harris, demonstrating that AA grammar was rule-governed and determined by Nurture vs. Nature.

In order to understand the importance of Dunbar's literary works, the readers need to be familiar with the significance of slave author Wheatley's work. Wheatley arrived in the United States in 1761 at the age of about seven or eight on the slave ship "Phillis," for which she was named. John Wheatley, a wealthy Euro-American tailor, and his wife, Susannah, attended a slave auction and bought Phillis as a personal servant for Susannah. Like most other enslaved people, Wheatley led an impressive life as an enslaved person in America. Wheatley grew up in the "Big House" as the enslaver's daughter. Wheatley learned to speak English in about 16 months. Susannah felt challenged and excited to teach Wheatley more advanced literature and geography and asked her biological daughter to help her. Susannah was compelled to prove that enslaved people could learn to read and write. She, indeed, was successful. When Wheatley attempted to publish her book of poems in impeccable English, she was turned down because no one believed a slave girl could write such poems. Finally, at age eighteen, Wheatley was summoned for an investigation to prove she was the author of such literary work by eighteen prominent Boston dignitaries. After a close examination, she proved that she was the author of the poems.

According to Gates, Wheatley becomes world-renowned by proving the humanity of Africans. In 1771, Wheatley was celebrated as the first AA to write a book in the United States. Wheatley became literate in English and proved that Africans could learn languages on the same par as Europeans. Wheatley was credited for founding the AA female genre. In 1773, she became the first AA to publish a book of poems entitled: *Various Subjects: Religious and Moral* (Wheatley xvi). One such poem was: *To MAECENAS*, which reads as follows:

MAECENAS, you, beneath the myrtle shade,  
 Read o'er what poets sung, and shepherds play'd.  
 What felt those poets, but you feel the same?  
 Does not your soul possess the sacred flame?  
 Their noble strains your equal genius shares In  
 softer language, and diviner airs.  
 While Homer paints lo! Circumfus'd in air,  
 Celestial Gods in mortal forms appear.  
 Swift as they move hear each recess rebound,  
 Heav'n quakes, earth trembles, and the shores resound.  
 Great sire of verse, before my mortal eyes,  
 The lightnings blaze across the vaulted skies,  
 And, as the thunder shakes the heav'nly plains,  
 A deep-felt horror thrills through all my veins  
 When gentler strains demand thy graceful song,  
 The length'ning line moves languishing along.  
 When great Patroclus courts Achilles' aid,  
 The grateful tribute of my tears is paid;  
 Prone on the shore he feels the pangs of love,  
 And stern Pelides ten'rest passions move.

Wheatley set the groundwork for Dunbar and other AAs to become authors when she proved that Africans could become literate in English.

According to W.D. Howells, who wrote the Introduction to *Life and Works of Paul Laurence Dunbar* by Lida Keck Wiggins, Dunbar was the first male of pure African descent in America to write a book: *Ivy and Oaks* in 1893 (Wiggins 15). Further, Dunbar was the first “AA” male author to write a book in what was then termed “Plantation Talk.” Howells named several African males who wrote books in other countries during the 18th and 19th centuries before Dunbar’s first book was written in America. According to Howells, one of the authors, Alexander Dumas, born Thomas-Alexandre Davy de la Pailleterie in France in 1762, wrote the world-famous book, *The Three Musketeers* in 1844 (JSTOR ). A second author, Alexander Pushkin from Russia, born in 1799, a literary genius and the grandson of an enslaved African, wrote a world-class opera, ‘Eugene Onegin,’ between 1825 and 1832 (The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education No. 27). However, neither of these men was credited as the first male author of African descent because some critics felt that some Europeans may have argued against either of them being recognized as such because they were of mixed ancestry. Their intelligence would have been questioned and attributed to their European bloodline (Wiggins 15).

Therefore, Howells credited Dunbar as the first full-blooded male descendant from Africa to write the first book approximately 60 or 70 years later because, according to Howells, “Paul Dunbar was the only man of pure African blood who felt the Negro life aesthetically and expressed it lyrically” (Wiggins 15). Ironically, Harris, an E-A, was the first author to document AAL: Ebonics in his book: *Uncle Remus His Songs and His Sayings* in 1880, thirteen years before Dunbar published *Oats and Ivy* in 1893.

According to Sheryl James in her article, The Forgotten Author: “A Place in History for Uncle Remus.” Harris learned to write in “Plantation Talk” when he lived on his family’s plantation as a young boy during slavery and the Civil War. James said Harris spent hours in the

slave quarters listening in fascination with an old enslaved person, Uncle Remus, telling stories from traditional African folklore in Ebonics. Some of the stories Harris recorded were: “The Wonderful Tar-Baby Story,” “Mr. Rabbit finds his Match at Last,” and “Mr. Rabbit and Mr. Bear.” Harris realized there were various versions of AAL: Ebonics, but never attempted to embellish or distort “AAL: Ebonics by exaggerating it. He observed that his dialect “was different from that of the Hon. Pompey Smash and his literary descendants (Introduction viii). Harris attacked Jim Crow and Minstrelsy “Blackface” for its intolerable misrepresentations of AAL: Ebonics on the minstrel stage. Harris was proud to say his version of AAL was “... at least phonetically genuine” (Introduction viii). Further, Harris was apologetic when he addressed “race and racism” in AAL: Ebonics. He stated,

If the language of Uncle Remus fails to give vivid hints really poetic imagination of the Negro; if it does not suggest certain picturesque sensitiveness – a curious exaltation of mind and temperament not to be defined by words –then I have reproduced the form of the dialect merely, and not the essence, and my attempt may be accounted a failure. At any rate, I trust I have been successful in presenting what must be, at least to a large portion of American readers, a new and by no means unattractive case Negro character...” (Introduction viii).

Harris attempted to support a common belief held among "whites" that AAs were happy being enslaved at the time. However, the thesis writer contends that there is no defense for enslavement (Introduction viii, xvii). Therefore, Harris's work will be used in this paper to document AA speech from a diachronic and synchronic perspective. To that point, "Dunbar's poem, "An Antebellum Sermon," and Harris's Uncle Remus folktale, "Mr. Rabbit and Mr. Bear," will be used here to show how AAL/Ebonics was written between 1880 and 1906 in order that the

readers can make a comparative analysis between Niger-Congo grammar and AAL grammar synchronically and diachronically without prejudice to "race." Furthermore, both authors' work will be used to show that both authors were fluent in Nigritic-Ebonics and relexified the English vocabulary similarly. However, they published their first books in Ebonics over a decade apart.

The thesis writer will provide a comparative analysis of Dunbar and Harris's literary work in Ebonics to show that both AA authors used the same rule-governed grammar.

In "An Ante-Bellum Sermon," Dunbar presented an ole preacher who speaks out against slavery in the United States but pretends to speak against slavery in Egypt during Biblical times. On the other hand, Harris uses Ancient African storytelling to tell an ancient African folktale he learned from Uncle Remus during slavery and the Civil War. Both authors prove diachronically and synchronically that Niger-Congo grammar is rule-governed because they both use the same Niger-Congo Grammar structure during a particular period. For example, the ole Baptist preacher begins the "The Antebellum Sermon," Stanza 1, Line 1 with "We is...", which violates the English Syntax subject/verb grammar rules but follows the Niger-Congo "to be" verb structure. The old preacher relexifies the word "this" to "dis" following the Niger-Congo grammar rules. Since the interdental /th/ sound does not exist in the Niger-Congo grammar, the ole preacher approximates the /th/ sound with the Apico alveolar /d/ and fricative /f/. Further, in Stanza 1, Line 2 the ole preacher relexifies words, such as: "howling" to "howlin'" because the /ng/ is a voiced homogenous constant cluster which means that the final sound will not be permitted. The preacher relexifies words, such as: "comfort" as "comfo't" because the retroflex "r" does not exist in the Niger-Congo grammar. When the preacher refers to anti-slavery in America but claims he is speaking against slavery in Egypt when he calls on Moses. He recites several stanzas of the poem as follows:

“We is gathahed hyeah, my brothahs,



In dis howlin' wildaness,  
 Fu' to speak some words of comfo't  
 To each othah in distress.  
 Now ole Pher'oh, down in Egypt,  
 Was de wuss man evah bo'n,  
 An' he had de Hebrew chillum  
 Down dah wukin' in his co'n; (144)

As seen in the poem, he sees God as omnipotent and all-powerful; He says God is all-mighty and would bear the battle's brunt. He states that God is so mighty he girds their armor. He also says that God is omnipresent and everywhere because God exists "f'om de mountain to de sea." He says that God is omnipresent and all-knowing. He adds, "an de lawd shall hyeah his thundah" "lak a blas' f'om Gab'el ho'n."

In Stanza 4, Lines 5 an 6, the ole preacher relexifies the English words, such as "from," "forge," and "your" into Ebonics as, F'om," "fo'ge," and "yo" because there is no retroflex /r/ or capital /R/ in Niger-Congo grammar.

An' yo' enemies may 'sail you  
 In de back an' in de front;  
 But de Lawd is all aroun' you,  
 Fu' to ba' de battle's brunt.  
 Dey kin fo'ge yo' chains an' shackles  
 F'om de mountains to de sea;  
 But de Lawd will sen' some Moses  
 Fu' to set his chillun free.  
 An' de lan' shall hyeah his thundah,  
 Lak a blas' fom Gab'el's ho'n,(144)

In the middle of his sermon, in Stanza 5, Lines 1 – 4, the ole preacher pauses to tell his people not to mistake his sermon as a means to stir up discontent in America. The preacher is watching out for the "snitches" or "Sambos," who are customarily wrongfully referred to as "Uncle Toms," according to Dr. Claude Anderson. Anderson correctly refers to "Uncle Tom" as a man loyal to the AA community. According to Anderson, "Sambo" was said to snitch because AAs were paid to snitch on other AAs when they intended to rebel against "white" dominance or cause harm to "whites." Finally, the ole preacher admits that he is speaking about freedom for the enslaved people in the United States. Later, he submits that God intends everyone to live free and that Pharaoh believes in slavery. The ole preacher states, "But de Lawd he let him see, Dat de people he put bref in,-- Evah mothah's son was free." Therefore, it appears to the thesis writer that Dunbar is also contradicting colonists and Christian Missionaries.' who claimed that Noah cursed the Canaanites to be bound in slavery by Europeans because of their black skin color.

Finally, in Stanza 5, Line 1 and English words, such as /and/ and /land/ is relexified by the Niger-Congo grammar as /an/ and /lan /. Further, since Niger-Congo languages do not have consonant clusters, and if they do, those consonant clusters only occur under certain restrictions. Only one sound will be pronounced if both sounds are homogeneous, voiced, or unvoiced. Therefore, English words, such as /blast (homogenous/voiced)/ and /world (homogeneous voiced)/ would be relexified as /blas'/, /wor!/. However, if the consonant clusters are heterogenous, as in the word: /heterogenous /ancient /, both sounds would be heard as in English.

We kin hyeah his trumpit blas'. But fu'  
feah someone mistakes me,  
I will pause right hyeah to say,  
Dat I'm still a-preachin ancient

I ain't talkin' 'bout today  
 But I tell you, fellah christuns,  
 Now, don't run and' tell yo' mastahs  
 Dat I's preachin' discontent  
 Cose ole Pher'oh b'lieved in slav'ry,  
 But de Lawd he let him see,  
 Dat de people he put bref in,--  
 Evah mothah's son was free.  
 So you see de Lawd's intention,  
 Evah sence de worl' began,  
 But when Moses wit his powah  
 Comes an' sets us chillun free  
 We will praise de gracious Mastah (144)  
 Dat has gin us liberty;  
 An' we'll shout ouah halleluyahs,  
 On dat mighty reck'nin day,  
 When we'se reco'nised ez citiz'—  
 Huh uh! Chillun, let us pray! (144)

In the middle of his sermon, in Stanza 5, Lines 1 – 4, the ole preacher pauses to tell his people not to mistake his sermon as a means to stir up discontent in America. The preacher is watching out for the "snitches," Further, the thesis writer believes that Dunbar may have been using his poem 'An Ante-bellum Sermon' not only to address early colonialists who justified slavery based on the Ham/Noah parable but the thesis writer also believes that Dunbar was taking a bold stance against the European Christian scholars of the Enlightenment period and the enslavers when the ole preacher states that anyone who goes against what the Bible says, is calling the scripture a liar.

In this poem, Dunbar makes it clear that he believes that it was God's intention from the beginning of time to adjudicate freedom to everyone because, at the end of his sermon, the preacher admits to his congregation that he is talking about their freedom in a biblicistic way. He states that the Bible says slaves would be free and that it would be the enslaver that would get it done. Therefore, the ole preacher asks the children to praise God with a hallelujah! And calls out to them: "Let us pray!" (144)

In reviewing the grammar of "An Antebellum Serman" and "Uncle Remus' folktale, "Mr. Rabbit and Mr. Bear" by Harris, readers will find that both authors use the same rule-governed Niger-Congo grammar. In the folktale, Uncle Remus explains how Mr. Fox plans to catch the thief stealing his goobers by setting a trap for him. However, according to Uncle Remus, the slick rabbit tricks Mr. Bear and Mr. Fox. Uncle Remus tells the folktale in Ebonics, but the story will be translated into English.

“Sho’nuff w’en de goobers ‘gun ter ripen up, eve’y  
time Brer Fox go down ter his patch, he fine whar  
somebody bin grabblin’ ‘mongst de vines, en he git  
mighty mad. He sorter speck who de somebody is,  
but ole Brer Rabbit he cover his tracks so cute dat  
Brer Fox dunner how ter ketch ‘im. Bimeby, one day  
Brer Fox take a walk all aroun’ de groun’-pea patch,  
en ‘twan’t long ‘fo’ he fine a crack in de fence whar  
de rail done bin rub right Smoove, en right dar he  
sot’im a trap. He tuck’n ben’ down a hick;ry saplin’,  
growin’ in de fence-cornder, enn tie one een’ un a  
plow-line on de top, en in de udder een’ he fix a

loop-knot, end dat he faten wid a trigger right in de crack.

(Uncle Remus 113 – 114)

In English, the Ancient African folktale is translated by the thesis writer as follows:

Sure enough, when the peanuts began to ripen, every time  
 Brother Fox goes down to his patch, he finds where somebody  
 has been grappling amongst the vines, and he gets very angry.  
 He somewhat suspects or he has an idea who the somebody" is,  
 but ole Brother Rabbit covers his traks so well that Brother Fox  
 doesn't know how to catch him. By and By, one day Brother Fox  
 takes a walk all around the ground - pea patch, And it isn't long  
 before he finds a crack in the fence where the rail has been rubbed  
 very smooth. Then, right there, he sat a trap. He bent a hickory  
 sapling down that was growing in the fence-corner, Then, tied one  
 end on a plow-line on the top, and on the other end, he fixed a loop-  
 knot end that he fastened with a trigger right in the crack.

Dubar was born January 27, 1872, six years after the Civil War ended, during Reconstruction, and amid the chaos which followed the Civil War (Gpi;d 5). In That Dunbar Boy, Dunbar became proficient in English and Nigritic-Ebonics. According to the author, as a youth, Dunbar attended integrated schools and was taught by all-EA teachers who spoke only English. Dunbar reported no incidents of "race and racism" (Gould 8). Dunbar's mother, Matilda, and father, Joshua, spoke only in Ebonics. Dunbar's mother and teachers treasured Dunbar's ability to write poetry, inspired him to write poetry, and played a significant part in his literary success. By the

time Dunbar was seven, he had written his first poem (Gould ). According to Gould, Dunbar's mind became enriched by the stories his father and mother told him about enslavement in childhood. Their stories stimulated Dunbar's imagination and inspired his creativity in writing. Dunbar, like Wheatley, had a great imagination, and Dunbar used his imagination to read and write, which defied claims made by scholars from the Enlightenment period who said Africans had no imagination. Dunbar imagined his father's escape from slavery on the Underground Railroad as an adventure and wrote several poems about slavery and freedom. Unfortunately, Dunbar's father abandoned the family when Dunbar was a youth, died in 1884, and never had a chance to enjoy Dunbar's literary contributions to the world (Life and Works of Paul Laurence Dunbar 29).

As a young boy, Dunbar tirelessly listened to his mother's stories about her childhood as an enslaved person. He was impressed with her recollection of the ole master's tales the slave children enjoyed while sitting around the plantation owner's fireplace at night. Such a gesture showed that some enslavers were more humane toward the enslaved people than others. In the text, Dunbar relished in the jubilation his mother described when she and other ex-slaves expressed how they felt when President Lincoln freed the enslaved people. According to Gould, AAs enjoyed twelve years of freedom during Reconstruction and, for the first time, were legally able to attend school and learn to read and write in America. Gould boasted that AAs seized every opportunity to attend school during Reconstruction, whether day or night.

Ironically, Jim Crow and Minstrelsy: "Blackface" was at its height during the 1880s. Simultaneously, Jim Crow Laws were being implemented, and efforts to re-enact slavery were being strategized. During this time, Jim Crow and Minstrelsy metamorphosed from a racist comedy act into a hate-filled, racist horror story. Historically, minstrelsy was founded on the comic

enactment of racial stereotypes (<https://www.britannica.com/art/minstrel>). During Reconstruction and Post-slavery, Dunbar recalls Jim Crow and Minstrelsy being extremely popular with "EAs" which inspired Dunbar to invite his friends to see the show with him. Many EAs could not get enough of "Blackface," a theatre comedy filled with "white" characters who, seemingly, made attempts to play "the Dozens" dance and sing to AA music. "Blackface" was so popular that it became the first National Artform in America. Many Minstrel troupes were performing in "Blackface."

Interestingly to note, "Blackface" was so popular that AAs were also putting on "Blackface" to cut in on the profits, as well. However, after Dunbar and his AA friends saw the show, he and his friends were not impressed. According to Gould, Dunbar and his friends were disappointed in the show and felt they could have put on a better show themselves. In how Dunbar critiques the show, Dunbar and his friends did not appreciate the classlessness in which Jim Crow and Minstrelsy "lampooned black people as dimwitted, lazy, buffoonish, superstitious and happy-go-lucky" ([en.m.wikipedia.org](http://en.m.wikipedia.org)). After all, the Minstrel shows used enslaved person and dandy archetypes, and Mammy, old darky, mulatto wench, and black soldier sub-archetypes as some of their favorite characters.

Historically, Jim Crow was created by EA actor Thomas Darmouth Rice, "Daddy Rice" was inspired to create the Jim Crow caricature after watching an old, crippled enslaved person named "Jim Crow" or "Jim Cru" dance effortlessly on a crippled leg with a deformed shoulder (.). Rice was fascinated by Jim Crow's amazing swag. According to the text, Rice painted himself in "Blackface": jet black colored skin with big, white circles around his mouth and eyes to exaggerate the superficiality of AA's skin color and facial features. Once the actor perfected the "Jim Crow"

look, dance, song, and swag and learned to mimic AA speech, Rice took his act on the road. Daddy Rice performed his first show in front of a live audience in 1828. Jim Crow and Minstrelsy became known in the United States and Europe in the 1830s and 1840s. Within a few years, Rice became very rich and famous in America and throughout Europe for his enactment of "Blackface." Ironically, Rice, like "Jim Crow," became paralyzed, and limited in speech and body movement. He died in September 1860 at the age of 52.

Please note: The lyrics attached to the song entitled below: "Jump Jim Crow," appear to have been written by someone who was Limited in Ebonics Proficiency and was corrected as follows: In Ebonics, words, such as: /fighting/ and /shining/ would be relexified as /fightin') and (shinin'), ('altogether'/ would be relexified as /' awtogeder'/. The word /although/ would be relexified as /'aldouh/ Also, the words /bigger/, and /nigger/ would be relexified as /bigga'/, and /nigga'/. Further, the word/' brother'/ would be relexified as /broduh'/.

Should dey get to fighting,  
 Perhaps de blacks will rise,  
 For deir wish for freedom is  
 shining in deir eyes.  
 and if de blacks should get free,  
 I guess dey'll see some bigger,  
 An I shall consider it,  
 A bold stroke for de nigger.  
 I'm for freedom,  
 An for Union altogether,  
 Although I'm a black man  
 De white is call'd my brodar



During Reconstruction and Post slavery, Jim Crow Laws and Black Code, along with the 1896 Supreme Court case, Plessy vs. Ferguson, which legalized segregation, devastated American society during post-slavery. The popularity of racism attached to Jim Crow and Minstrelsy showed the violence attached to Jim Crow Laws and Black Codes established to re-enact slavery and to dominate “blacks.”

The racial tension between “whites” and “blacks” grew exponentially during this time. Angry southern “white Supremacists” used Jim Crow Laws: and Black Codes to retaliate against the approximately 180,000 AA soldiers who fought on the side of the Union against the Confederacy, as well ( ). According to the NAACP, during this time, there were approximately 5000 retaliatory lynching that took place in the United States from the end of slavery to the mid-1950s. AA soldiers fought so valiantly against the Confederacy in the Civil War many Confederates believed that the Union would not have won the war had it not been for the “Negro soldiers.” According to the author of *Remembering Jim Crow*, this was a time in which racist southerners exploited the concept of “white Supremacy” as a tactic to regain and maintain “white control” of black bodies through free prison labor and segregation as sanctioned by Plessy vs. Ferguson in 1896.

During Dunbar’s senior year in high school, Dunbar was very fluent in English and became the editor of his high school newspaper. He worked closely on the senior yearbook with Orville Wright, who later worked with his brother and invented the first airplane. Unfortunately, Dunbar did not graduate on schedule with his classmates because he failed his math class. After graduation, Dunbar immediately began to work as an elevator operator, which caused Dunbar to question the meaning of success. As a remedy to the boredom of the job, Dunbar dutifully wrote poetry as he

took patrons up and down the elevator daily. Amazingly, Dunbar wrote his first book while working as an elevator man.

As a young adult, Dunbar became a famous poet and was well-recognized by prominent EAs and European dignitaries and politicians, such as United States President Theodore Roosevelt, Ambassador to England, Honorable John Hay; Dr. Henry A. Tobey, Dr. William Burns, Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll, Honorable Frederick Douglass, Mayor of Toledo, Brand Whitlock, and William Dean Howell, author of the Introduction of *Life and Works* throughout the United States and in Europe for his literary genius in Ebonics. However, ironically, while Dunbar was being lavished with accolades and goodwill for his outstanding work in Ebonics, many other AAs were being made a mockery of for their speech used in “Blackface,” which shamed and dehumanized them.

According to Dunbar’s biographer, there were several instances, however, when Dunbar did experience “race and racism” and was heartbroken by the words of both EA and AAs. Dunbar experienced his first battle with “race and racism” when Dr. W. C. Chapman, Keynote Speaker and reputable EA, spoke at the prestigious West End Club on the theme, “Severe Criticisms of the Negro” and went so far as to stereotype “blacks” as “lazy.” The second and third times Dunbar experienced additional issues of “race and racism” were when an “AA” porter and an AA waiter, respectively, treated Dunbar as if he was not good enough to stay in the same exclusive hotels as “whites.

Dunbar’s first bout with “race and racism” happened when Dunbar sat in thaudience, listening to Chapman speak as he waited for his turn to speak. Chapman was embarrassed whenhe realizedDunbar was in the audience and on the agenda to recite poetry (37). Chapman declared thatDunbar was an exception to the rule and was certainly not a lazy “black: man.

Dunbar was outraged. In general, Dunbar's biographer, Wiggins, explained that Dunbar was a very mild-mannered man, but when Dunbar rose to speak that evening, he was filled with emotion. She said, "He seemed to feel that an attack had been made upon his "race" and that he was the defender. Wiggins said when Dunbar spoke, he showed "zeal and ardor." She said it seemed as if his "soul was in the theme" (Wiggins ). When Dunbar took the stage, Wiggins said, "His eyes flashed, his white teeth gleamed, and his whole person was a-tremble with emotion. Further, she said, when Dunbar recited his poem 'An Ode to Ethiopia,' he did so with sheer passion. His voice was filled with emotion as he called out to his AA people with dignity.

"Go on and up! Our souls and eyes  
 Shall follow thy continuous rise:  
 Our ears shall list thy story  
 From bards who from thy root shall spring  
 And proudly their lyrics to sing  
 Of Ethiopia's glory." (Life and Works of  
 Paul Laurence Dunbar 145)

Wiggins said that when Dunbar took his seat, he knew he had been overly emotional, but it was obvious that the crowd was impressed.

Dunbar's biographer recalled two other incidents of "race and racism hurt Dunbar." Wiggins recalled the second time was when an "AA" male porter treated Dunbar as if he did not deserve the same royal treatment as EAs. Dunbar became irritated when the porter asked Dunbar three times, out of disbelief, where he was supposed to put Dunbar's bags and wanted to know, "What yo' gwine to do dah?" at the hotel. Wiggins stated that Dunbar became so angry he yelled to the man to "Stop." (80 -81) However, once Dunbar realizes that "The Negro porter is only a type" of

Negro that has been held back so long under the bonds of the slaver that the Negro porter felt inferior to EAs (Life and Works of Paul Laurence Dunbar 81).

Wiggins recalled a final episode near the end of Dunbar's life in which Dunbar experienced "race and racism" for a third time. Wiggins spoke of the incident one evening when Dunbar returned to his exclusive hotel suite, and a Negro waiter came to take his dinner order. She said the waiter was surprised that Dunbar was AA and, out of curiosity, asked Dunbar, "How did you get dese rooms?" and continued, "Dese is de rooms dat Helen Gould occupied las' week. Guess Mis' Merrill done seed de pr'ietah." Dunbar became very angry at the Negro waiter who exhibited the same behavior he had experienced from the Negro porter, which caused Dunbar to shout out bitterly: "My position was most unfortunate. I am a black, white man" (81). Wiggins said she agreed with him but added sorrowfully, "...and so he was" ( ). Wiggins said that Dunbar felt especially insulted "because of his color, by one of his race! Blind, narrow, prejudiced humanity!" Wiggins stated that the Negro would not have dared to say such words to a white patron, regardless of his mental caliber, but she believed that he dared to say it to one of the greatest geniuses the world has known because he was "black" (82).

In essence, Dunbar lived a short but productive life as a literary artist. He could write several poems, books, and papers over a few years. He died in 1906 at the age of 34. Even in death, it was evident that Dunbar felt the sting of "race and racism" because as he dies, one of the last things that he does is leave a hand-written note on a scrap paper in s room that questions" race and racism" and "white" Supremacy. His deathbed note read, "It is one of the peculiar phases of Anglo-Saxon conceit to refuse to believe that every black man does not want to be white" (83). Dunbar's note was an addendum to his poem "We Wear the Veil" and a commendation on how Dunbar felt as an

AA man. During his life, it is evident that Dunbar was concerned about how AA men had to act in the presence of EAs to be accepted in mainstream society.

Finally, as the study shows, Dunbar, like Wheatley, proved that "AA" could and did speak languages. The literary work done by Dunbar from the early 1890s until the early 1900s proved that Dunbar was fluent in English and AAL: Ebonics. As demonstrated by the research attached to this thesis, historically, prominent European and Euro-American dignitaries praised Dunbar's literary works. However, AAL: Ebonics was being made a mockery of by Jim Crow and the Minstrelsy then as it is now due to "white Supremacy." Science has proven AAL: Ebonics continues the Niger-Congo West African Language family tree. However, some ashamed AAs live in denial and pain and continue to cr

## CHAPTER 5

### MARK TWAIN – NURTURE VS. NATURE:

#### 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY CONSTRUCTS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN SPEECH

Historically, European meta-physicists believed that languages were grounded in "race" and that Africans were not human because they were illiterate in English. In *Pudd'nhead*, famous EA writer Mark Twain creates a topos where the slave protagonist switches her newborn son with the master's son. Twain uses the constructs of AA speech in his 1896 publication of *Pudd'nhead* in an attempt by Twain to prove in the late 19th century what linguists now know to be accurate; Language is a product of environment, not genetics, and is learned from the primary caregivers: nurture vs. nature. Twain uses a courthouse scene to unveil the boys' identities and prove through literary documentation that the boys had been raised in the opposite environment by the opposite race and had adapted to the language and culture in which they were raised.

In his novel, Twain provides a provocative plot. In contrast, Roxy, mother, maid, "mammy" slave protagonist, demonstrates her intelligence or ability to think when she wrestles with the drastic decision of how to prevent her infant son from being sold down the river (*Pudd'nhead* 28-31). In the text, the narrator states that Roxy is overwhelmed by anxiety when the enslaver becomes

enraged when he realizes that a small amount of money is missing from his home (28). Likewise, Roxy and the other captives are terrified when Driscoll threatens to sell all those he enslaved "down the river" for such a minor offense (29). Roxy becomes even more fearful when she realizes that Driscoll may also sell her newborn son down the river. In general, plantation masters instilled fear in enslaved people as a common practice to coerce enslaved people into obedience. Enslaved people know that when they are bought, sold, or traded "down the river" in the "Deep South," they will be brutalized (*Pudd'nhead* 29).

Immediately, Roxy plans to take extreme measures to protect her son from being sold "down the river." She contemplates killing her son and then killing herself. Roxy feels her son will be better off dead and in heaven than being alive and tortured by slavers (70). In this scenario, Twain helps the reader understand why enslaved people often develop a sense of "fissiparousness" (29). Fissiparousness is a term coined by Franz Fanon in *Black Face, White Masks*, which describes the anxiousness and fear Africans and others adapt when colonized (Fanon 9). During Roxy's state of fissiparousness, Roxy is filled with anxiety. She talks to her son in a stream of consciousness as she tries to soothe her newborn son with her plans to protect him from the enslaver (28). She cries out,

Mammy's got to kill you – how kin I do it? But yo' mammy ain't gwine to desert you, - no no: dah, don't cry – she gwine wid you, she gwine to kill herself too. Come along, honey, come along wid mammy, we gwine to jump in de river, den de troubles o' dis worl' is all over – dey don't sell po' niggers down the river over yonder. (30)

Driscoll's concerns over the petty theft become overshadowed by Roxy's sense of fissiparousness.

Roxy's desperate state of mind causes her to think of desperate actions regarding

her son's life (30) k In the text, Twain demonstrates how the other enslaved people also show signs of fissiparousness (29, 31). When three of the four enslaved people accused of theft confess to the thievery, they wail, beg, and pray to Driscoll for forgiveness, and eventually, Driscoll forgives them (29). When he does, the enslaved people drop to their knees in tears: thanking and praising the master for his goodness and mercy, although there is no evidence that they committed the crime. Some critics and captives question whether captives steal when they take small sums of money, food items, and clothing. Their enslavers because enslavers do not pay enslaved people for their work and rob enslaved people of "an inestimable treasure....," of their liberty (28)

In *Pudd'nhead*, the thesis writer shows how Twain uses a narrative topos to create an allusion. In contrast, Roxy switches her newborn son, Chambers, born out of miscegenation, with her enslaver's son, Tom, to document how children learn languages from their caregivers through nurture vs. nature (33). When Roxy changes Chambers' shabby clothing and puts Tom's clothing on Chambers, she becomes more convinced that Chambers looks precisely like Tom (30, 31). Roxy continues to speak in a stream of consciousness as she convinces herself that she can switch the infants without anyone noticing it (31). The fact that Tom's mother passes away a few days after childbirth, and his father, Driscoll, cannot tell the difference between the boys gives Roxy confidence that no one will know if she switches the boys (31). She says, "When I' uz a washin' 'em in de tub, yistiddy, his pappy asked me which of 'em was his'n" (31). Roxy also believes that she can switch the boys because she and Chambers are born out of miscegenation, and they could easily pass for "white." Roxy knows that she and her son, Chambers, are only



designated as Negroes in the United States because of the "one drop" law. According to the narrator's calculations, Roxy is 1/16 percent Negro, and Chambers is 1/32 percent Negro (157).

As Roxy wrestles with switching the infants, she begins to experience some additional fear of being caught. She begins to question whether New York Attorney David Wilson, nicknamed and characterized as a "Pudd'nhead" in Dawson Landings, may be able to trace the boys' identity through the fingerprints he took of the boys when they were first born. Roxy recalls that Wilson had been deemed unemployable in the township for twenty years because he told an offensive off-colored joke to his neighbors about killing his half of an imaginary dog when he first arrived there. The township had never forgiven him for such a foolish and off-centered remark. She also knows that *Pudd'nhead* could use the newborn boys' fingerprints to entrap her if he got wind of the fact that she had switched the identities of her slave child with the enslaver's son (23, 41). However, Roxy continues to talk to herself in a stream of consciousness because she is nervous about switching her newborn baby with the plantation owner's baby. She submits,

Dey ain't but one man dat I's afeared of, en dat's dat Pudd'nhead  
Wilson. Dey calls him a Pudd'nhead, en says he's a fool. My lan',  
dat man ain't no mo fool den I is! He's de smartes' man in dis town,  
les'n it's Judge Driscoll or Pem Howard. (*Pudd'nhead* 32)

Roxy worries that Pudd'nhead may realize she has switched the boys' identities and could reveal her secret to Driscoll's brother, Judge Driscoll. Roxy knows that the Driscoll brothers are part of the First Fathers of Virginia (FFV) and powerful community men. She knows they could cause her some serious problems if they found out that she switched the boys' identities (32, 33).

However, Roxy convinces herself that switching the boys' identities would be the right thing to do when she recalls the parable an ole Negro preacher told her about a Negro woman in England who

successfully switches her infant with the queen's baby. Roxy remembers that the queen unknowingly sold her child "down the river" to settle a real estate debt (32). The incident solidifies for Roxy that she has to switch the infants despite her fears so her son can be safe from being sold down the river and live a better life as the son of the plantation owner (32).

Twain's decision to have Roxy switch the boys at birth is carried out like a science experiment in the plot and increases the authenticity of Twain's literary work. Twain provides literary proof that languages are learned from the primary caregivers through nurture vs. nature. In this case, Twain demonstrates how the babies' languages develop when the E-A male, Tom, is raised in an Ebonics-speaking environment and the AA enslaved man, Chambers, is reared in an English-speaking environment. Both boys learn the language of their primary caregiver in the environment in which they were raised.

Roxy never imagines the impact that switching the boys' identities would have on the boys' language, culture, and behavior. When Roxy changes Chambers' environment from that of a captive living in poverty in the slave quarters to that of a wealthy EA child living in the "Big House" with the wealthy enslaver and his family, she makes major changes in the lives of the wealthy EA family where she works and her own impoverished slave family.

As a result of the boys' identities being switched, the master's son, Tom, lives a life of poverty as Chambers in the slave quarters with Roxy and the other enslaved people who speak in Ebonics. In contrast, Roxy's son, Chambers, lives with the wealthy Driscoll family and learns to speak English. Since Tom is raised in the slave quarters as Chambers by uneducated enslaved people and not allowed to attend school, he does not become refined in the wealthy southern European traditions. From childhood, Tom, as Chambers, worked tirelessly in the grain fields, raised the pigs, and tended the crops to maintain the Driscoll's wealthy estate. As Chambers, Tom

learns to be humble and takes his place as an enslaved person in a racist environment (35). Since Chambers grows up as a privileged Euro-American and wealthy plantation owner's son, he is taught that he belongs to a superior race and sees himself as superior to the enslaved people. He treats the enslaved people as if they are subhuman and as his servants. As Tom, Chambers has access to the best schools and is accepted into Yale, one of the finest universities in America (39). The narrator states that Chambers has been socialized as Tom and grows up spoiled, dependent, arrogant, and cruel (35). He learns to wield power over the enslaved people (35). Ironically, Chambers gets the brunt of his abuse (35).

Historically, due to slavery and colonialism, AAs and EAs live in two relatively distinct societies based on "black Inferiority" and "white Superiority." As the boys grow up, both Chambers and Tom fully adopt the culture and language of their new environment. As a result, the community at large perceives and treats Chambers as inferior because he is seen as African and is considered less. As time passes, Chambers remains humble while Tom becomes an atypical son of a racist enslaver. Roxy is well aware of her son's attitude towards enslaved people based on "race and racism" and "white Superiority" (38). At first, Roxy is thrilled to know that Chambers, as Tom, is living in the capacity of an E-A man and has developed a take-charge personality. The narrator says that Roxy sees Tom as her "darling, her master, and her deity all in one, and in her worship of him, she forges who he was and what he had been" (38). However, over the years, Tom becomes more physically aggressive toward the enslaved people and disrespectful toward Roxy. The narrator states that Tom treats Roxy as if "She was merely his chattel, now, his convenience, his dog, his cringing and helpless slave, the humble and unresisting victim of his capricious temper and vicious nature" (38). The narrator states that Tom has gone so far as to hit Roxy in the face in front of others for no reason (38). The narrator also states that Tom

uses the racial slur "nigger" towards Roxy, one of the most derogatory racial slurs that could be used to insult AAs at that time (38). The narrator states that when Roxy thinks about how Tom treats her, "her rage would boil" and says that Roxy mumbles and mutters to herself and wants revenge. (38). Undoubtedly, Roxy thinks about the sacrifices she made in order to save her son from being sent "down the river" and wants some reciprocity.

Tom benefitted from Roxy's sacrifices and will continue to do so. When Percy Driscoll died, Judge Driscoll took guardianship over Tom and freed Roxy as promised. She returns to Dawson Landing, broke and needing Tom's help after working on the Riverboat for eight years (53). Chambers explained Tom's condition to Roxy. He let her know that Judge Driscoll had "...disinherited him ca'se he had to pay two hundred dollahs for Marse Tom's gamblin' debts and added, ,", en dat's true, mammy, Jes as dead sure as you's bawn" (40, 51 ). Chambers is animated when he describes Judge Driscoll as outraged by Tom's actions and exclaims, "En, oh my lan'd, ole Marse was jest a-hoppin'! he was b'ilin' mad, I tell you! He tuck 'n' disenhurrit him," but after calming down, he reinstated Tom in his will (51, 52). Roxy was relieved. The EA Chambers spoke Ebonics as well as any Ebonics-speaking AA.

When Tom finally returned to the Big House, Roxy was overjoyed. She tried to show Tom how much he meant to her, but he appeared disgusted to see her. During the dialogue, as the readers can see, the biological AA, Tom, addressed Roxy using a good command of the English language. When Roxy asks Tom for "...a dollah....," Tom threatens, "A dollar! — give you a dollar! I've a notion to strangle you!" Further, when Roxy asks Tom, "Ain't you ever gwine to he'p me Marse Tom?" He shouted in plain English, "No! Now go away and don't bother me anymore" (54). However, after all the disrespect Tom had shown Roxy over the years, Roxy finally found her voice. She had had enough of his "white Supremacy" and racist attacks. She took complete control

of the situation; She raised her head and took on a masterful position. She pointed her finger at him and scolded him with every bit of grit. She stated, "You has said de word. You has had yo' chance, en you has trompled it under yo' foot. She shouted, "When you git another one, you'll git down on yo' knees en beg for it! Roxy uses a powerful voice when she says to Tom, I... will tell Judge Driscoll "every las' thing I knows 'bout you" (107). The narrator said that Tom's demeanor changed immediately because he thinks Roxy knows about his gambling debts and home robberies. Roxy demanded that Tom meet her later that night, and he agreed. The narrator said that when Tom and Roxy met that night, Roxy's eyes looked like fire. She told Tom he was not a Euro-American man and that he was her son. The narrator said that when Roxy exposed Tom's true identity, Roxy cut Tom like glass. He was horrified when Roxy exclaimed!

Yassir, en dat aint all! You is a nigger! – bawn a nigger en a slave! –  
 en you's a nigger en a slave dis minute; en if I opens my mouf  
 Marse Driscoll'' sell you down de river befo' you is two days  
 older den what you is now. (117)

It changed the trajectory of his life. Tom knew that if anyone found out he was of African descent, he would be ostracized from the privileged E-A society. Roxy changes from a mother who sacrifices everything for her son, including risking her own life to switch his slave identity with that of the enslaver's child, to a mother who is willing to take everything from him by exposing his slave identity if he does not pay her to keep silent. Tom knows that he has to do whatever Roxy asks or risk being cast out of the Euro-American society and losing his inheritance from Judge Driscoll.

In *Pudd'nhead* provocative plot, Twain, unlike many other EA writers at the time, characterized AAs as intelligent beings in his literary work. Twain uses Roxy's character to devise

strategies to help Tom sell his stolen goods and pay his gambling debts. Roxy shows Tom how to draw up papers to advertise her sale as an enslaved person and to buy her back after he sells the stolen goods. After Roxy leaves, the narrator says that Tom tries to act like a slave for about a week, but because of his selfish, racist, and privileged upbringing, he cannot do it ( ). Since Tom had adopted the behavior of the racist, E-A enslaver, he could not act like a slave. Tom follows Roxy's well-thought-out instructions and accomplishes his financial objectives. However, unbeknownst to Roxy, Tom buys Roxy back but then sells her "down the river." She is furious when Roxy finds out what he has done ( ). The narrator says that Roxy's friends help her escape prison and return to Dawson Landings. When she finds Tom, she scolds him for his reckless behavior and spits in his face. She exclaims,

What could you do? You could be Judas to yo ['own mother to save yo' wuthless hide! Would anybody b'lieve it. No – a dog couldn't! You is de low-donest orneriest hound dat was ver pupp'd into dis worl' – en 's sponsible for it! (117).

In the end, Roxy demands that Tom pay her enslaver from his savings; and borrow the rest of the money from his uncle, Judge Driscoll, to buy back her freedom. Immediately, Tom tries to get on Judge Driscoll's "good side." He begins to help Judge Driscoll use dirty politics to get the Judge's good friend, *Pudd'nhead*, elected as mayor. In the interlogue, Twain shows how quickly an EA male status can rise or fall. Twain shows how the popular Italian twins' reputations are ruined when Tom and his uncle label the twins as con artists, sideshow freaks, and criminals during the mayor's election campaign. Twain also shows how *Pudd'nhead's* status changes after winning the mayoral election. One could say, *Pudd'nhead's* status rises from an idiot to a leader overnight.

In the climax of the story, Twain sets up a scenario that plays out in the courtroom, where Tom is held accountable for his uncle's death which serves to unmask Tom and Chambers's true identities. Initially, Tom intends to borrow money from Judge Driscoll to pay for Roxy's freedom to keep Roxy from disclosing his identity to the Judge. However, Tom ends up in a robbery gone wrong. When Tom tries to rob Judge Driscoll, the Judge catches Tom in the act. Tom knows he has to kill his uncle, Judge Driscoll because if he does not, the Judge will prosecute him. On the night that Tom murders Judge Driscoll, the Twins come unexpectedly to Judge Driscoll's door. Tom drops the bloody knife and flees the scene. When the police arrive, they charge Luigi, one of the twins, with the Judge's death because the police found Luigi standing over Judge Driscoll's body, holding the bloody knife. The police believe that the twin had a motive to murder the Judge because Judge Driscoll and Tom had defamed the twins' image during the mayoral election campaign, which caused the twin to lose the race for mayor.

According to the narrator, from the time of the murder, Tom showed no remorse or guilt for the murder. When Tom escaped the scene, he shouted in perfect English, "How lucky! It is the knife that has done him this grace" ( ). Tom looked at the Judge's death as a means for him to become wealthy and independent. Although Tom discovered he was of African descent, he was unaware of his Ancient African ancestors' belief in the Kongo Cosmogram; He did not know that it was the African ancestral belief that Karma would return upon its doer.

Further, Tom had no idea that *Pudd'nhead* would become the Twin's legal counsel and would use Tom and Chamber's fingerprints from infancy as a scientific means to track him down. As *Pudd'nhead* tried the case, Tom made a mockery of *Pudd'nhead's* work because he continued to perceive *Pudd'nhead* as an idiot. However, Tom made a fatal mistake. He visited *Pudd'nhead* at

his home and touched a glass that belonged to Roxy. Later, *Pudd'nhead* took the fingerprints and compared them to those he took of Tom and Chambers as infants. When *Pudd'nhead* discovered that the fingerprints did not match, he realized that the identities of Chambers and Tom had been switched. *Pudd'nhead* was thrilled to see how the science of fingerprinting helped him solve the case. When court resumed the next day, *Pudd'nhead*, aka Attorney David Wilson, gave his findings to the court and demanded the enslaved person, “Chambers, Valet de Chambre, Negro, and slave – falsely called Thomas A. Becker Driscoll – make upon the window the fingerprints that will hang you!” ( ) *Pudd'nhead* passed the fingerprints to the Judge as evidence which proved that Tom was Chambers. The court found that the fingerprints on the knife also matched the biological Chambers’ fingerprints. Chambers had no choice but to confess. At that point, Roxy fell to her knees and begged God for forgiveness. The Judge sentenced Chambers to life in prison. Once the creditors from Driscoll’s estate found that Tom was the slave Chambers, they petitioned the governor for a pardon to release Tom to them. The governor immediately pardoned Tom and the creditors, sold Tom “down the river,” and settled Judge Driscoll’s debt.

Chambers, as the biological Tom, fate caught up with him. Ironically, Roxy went to great lengths to save Chambers from being sent “down the river” as a child, but he was sent “down the river” as an adult because of his doings. Some of *Pudd'nhead*’s critics believed that the governor pardoned the biological Chambers because he was more valuable as an enslaved person “down the river” than an enslaved person sitting in prison. However, the court and Dawson’s Landing community were impressed with *Pudd'nhead*’s ability to law and honored him as the newly elected mayor. Amazingly, *Pudd'nhead* status moved from a fool to a dignitary within a few days.

In the courts, it becomes evident that both Tom and Chambers were able to reverse their assigned roles. Once Tom and Chambers’ disguises were removed, it was obvious that Twain



proved that switching the infants' identities did not change the biological makeup of the boys' DNA. In court, the presiding Judge named Chambers as the biological Tom, the nephew of Judge Driscoll and heir to Driscoll's estate. However, when Chambers realized he was the biological Tom and heir to Driscoll's estate, he was unprepared to represent himself as an EA man. He had no experience with being E-A, nor did he know how to take the position of ownership or operate.

a business. He only knows how to speak in Ebonics due to the environment in which he was raised, and he was left unable to figure out what he was to do with the dilemma.

Some EAs in the Dawson Landing community have conflictive emotions about the matter. Some E-As in the community found it difficult to accept Tom as an EA because he acted like a slave and spoke like a slave. The community could no longer see the biological Tom living in the slave quarters because he was EA. Neither Chambers nor Tom could accept his biological "race" after living in his assigned race for many years. Once, *Pudd'nhead* exposed Tom and Chambers' identities in the court, Twain's allusion was revealed to Dawson's landing community. The community realized that for 20 years, they had believed that the boys were whom they said they were and had never suspected Chambers or Tom of being anything other than the "race" they were perceived to be. Of course, the township had a problem changing their views about both men.

As a writer, Twain showed sheer genius when he demonstrated to his readers through literature that the languages and cultures of Tom and Chambers were learned through nurture vs. nature. In *Pudd'nhead*, Twain proved that the biology of the babies at birth had nothing to do with the languages they learned to speak. Twain's literary work supported the thesis argument: children learn their native languages from their primary caregiver in the environment in which they are raised unless something is medically wrong with the child's hearing or speaking apparatus.

In the text, Twain created an allusion between an African slave family and the wealthy EA master's family which showed when Chambers and Tom were nurtured in opposite cultures it affected their views on "race and racism" and since they lived with the opposite "race" all their lives, Chambers and Tom spoke in English and Ebonics only, respectively. Twain also showed that after being conditioned to live and speak as a particular "race" and culture into adulthood it was impossible for either of the boys, as men, to function outside his assigned "race" and culture

## CHAPTER 6

### ZORA NEALE HURSTON – USE OF LITERATURE AND ANTHROPOLOGY TO PIONEER A MOVEMENT TO RECONSTRUCT A RACIST WORLD’S VIEW ON NIGRITIC-EBONICS IN THE 21st CENTURY

Zora Neale Hurston, in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* uses anthropology and linguistics to pioneer a movement to reconstruct the world’s view of AAL: Ebonics. The deconstruction of “race and racism” in AAL/Ebonics is the last frontier to eradicate the issues of discrimination against AAs. In the early 1930s, after Hurston graduated from Howard with an English major in 1924, Hurston was awarded a scholarship to study anthropology under the world-renowned anthropologist and scholar Franz Boas at Barnard University. Later, she receives a grant from Carter G. Woodson, author of *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, to do a ‘Study of Negro Life in History’. Hurston’s work includes “seven books - four novels, two books of folklore, and an autobiography – and more than 50 shorter works.” Hurston’s most recent novel, *Barracoon*, the story of the last enslaved person to be captured and brought to America, was recently found and edited by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. in 2018. According to Gates, all Hurston’s literary works, except for one novel, were written in Ebonics (Afterward). Hurston’s unique writing style maybe attributed to her close association with Woodson, author/mentor, or Professor Turner.

It would certainly stand to reason why Woodson advocated for AAs and Africans in the diaspora to study and accept their own culture and language. Woodson was the first to connect the grammatical structure of AAs and Africans in the diaspora's speech to the autochthonous Niger-Congo West African ("Niger-Congo") grammar system. In his book, Woodson states

In the study of language in school, pupils were made to scoff at the Negro dialect as some peculiar possession of the Negro, which they should despise rather than directed to study the background of this language as a broken-down African tongue—in short to understand their own linguistic history, which is certainly more important for them than the study of French Phonetics or Historical Spanish Grammar. (*The Mis-Education of the Negro* Woodson 19)

Hurston is the first AA female author who embraces the Nigritic-Ebonics Language genre for its linguistic and artistic value. In *Dust Tracks on the Rocks*, Hurston states that Professor Turner, who headed the English Department at Howard University during Hurston's enrollment at Howard from 1919 – 1924, and an authority on the *Africanisms in the Gullah language*, was "The teacher who most influenced me" (136). In the text, Hurston states that it was Turner who motivated her to want to become an English teacher. In fact, in *Dust Tracks*, Hurston admits that she admired Turner because "He was a Harvard man and knew his subject" (*Dust Tracks* 137). Further, there is a possibility that Hurston's close professional association with her English professor and mentor offered Hurston some linguistic insight and knowledge concerning AAL/Ebonics speech and may have also influenced Hurston to write in English and Ebonics. As documented, Turner's research in the Gullah language earned him the status of the first to investigate the "*African*

*isms in the Gullah languages.”*

According to Turner, in his article, “Africanisms in the Gullah language,” The Gullah languages comprise the Niger-Congo grammar. Currently, the Gullah language is spoken by Africans in the diaspora who live on the Sea Islands of South Carolina (Turner 1 - 11). A visual documentation of the Gullah language can be seen on cable television at CNN-The United Shades of America with W. Kamau Bell, S3 Ep 3 – entitled: The South Carolina Gullah. In the documentary, Bell visits the Coast of South Carolina to meet the Gullah Geechee people on 5/12/18 (End date 12/31/19). Turner also states that these Africanisms are maintained in AAL: Ebonics, Patwai, and other Niger-Congo languages with a European vocabulary.

In 1937, Hurston, a former student of Turner and one of the most prominent AA female writers during the Harlem Renaissance, published her most famous and controversial novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. In the novel, Hurston asserts her right to use her voice by writing in AAL: Ebonics against the will of the male Harlem Renaissance leaders. Hurston utilizes her academic background and scientific scholarship in anthropology to integrate African folklore into AAL: Ebonics speech and increase its authenticity.

Throughout the text, Hurston switches from first person to third person in free indirect discourse. Free indirect discourse allows the characters and narrator’s voices to be heard. In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Hurston also uses her literary work to establish herself as a bilingual and bicultural writer. Hurston's code switches from English to Nigritic Ebonics throughout her novel with confidence, expertise, and sheer genius.

As an anthropologist, Hurston created a realistic fiction in an all-AA township in Eatonville, Florida. In contrast, Hurston develops a twenty-year plot replicating the segregated and socially isolated south to show how Niger-Congo West African Grammar was maintained in the substratum

of AAL: Ebonics language for over four centuries. Hurston proved that children learn languages from their primary caregivers in the environment they were raised in, nurture vs. nature. Further, Hurston uses her voice not only to fight “race and racism” but also to validate ordinary AA people, their language, and their culture.

In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Hurston builds a township with little or no chance for social interaction between AAL: Ebonics and English speakers. This demonstrates why AAs have not learned English through social interaction for over 400 years. In the plot, Hurston builds a segregated society with only Nigritic-Ebonics speakers. This clearly shows how slave descendants from Africa maintained the Niger-Congo African grammar in the substratum of AAL: Ebonics. Therefore, it is not by coincidence that all the characters in the novel speak only in Nigritic-Ebonics, and the narrator speaks only in idealized standard English. It is for certain, after four hundred years of segregation, whether by “dejure,” “defacto” or more recently, “by choice,” AA language was preserved and solidified in the substratum of AAL: Ebonics.

Hurston provides a setting that defines what linguists discover through research, which Dunbar expresses in poetry. Twain proves in *Puddn'head*: that children learn languages from their primary caregivers in the environment in which they are raised. Obviously, in the novel, Janie was raised by her Nanny and spoke in the same manner as her grandmother. The AA girls who taunted Janie about her mixed ancestry during childhood spoke only in AAL: Ebonics, as well, and obviously, spoke in the same manner as their primary caregivers.

Hurston used her voice in *Their Eyes* to point out how “race and racism,” through racist vocabulary and stereotypes passed down through the generations from slavery, promote negative images and poor self-esteem for AAs, especially AA males, even upon AAs as to date.

Further, Hurston paints an explicit, innocent, and intimate scene in which Janie encounters Johnny while sitting under a pear tree, watching a bee pollinate a flower (*Their Eyes* 11). Hurston designs this complicated scene to describe Janie's intimacy when Johnny embraces and kisses her the moment, which defines her womanhood and allows Janie to see Johnny as “a gorgeous being.” With a stretch of the imagination, the readers can easily see why a young girl would see Johnny as an African prince. Of course, when Nanny wakes up and witnesses Janie being intimate with Johnny, whom she feels has no academic or financial future, Nanny is outraged. She fears that Janie has begun to experience puberty and is ripe for miscegenation and molestation. Nanny believes that Janie will be molested and impregnated by some “white” molester or some young, worthless “Negro” who is lazy and broke and will work Janie like a mule. Therefore, Nanny forces Janie to end the blossoming relationship with Johnny and demands that she marry ‘old man Killicks’, who is twice Janie’s age but owns sixty acres of land. Killicks are someone whom Nanny believes could take care of Janie when Nanny passes (13-15). When Janie objects, the Nanny slaps Janie until she cries. When her Nanny realizes what she has done, she cradles Janie in her arms and explains her fears to Janie.

After Hurston published, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Hurston received much criticism from AA male writers from the Harlem Renaissance for writing in her home language. Richard Wright, one of the most prominent Harlem Renaissance writers and Hurston’s worst rival, believes that Hurston uses AA characters to speak in Nigritic-Ebonics to demean the image of AAs and as a blatant attack upon AA writers who are making attempts to change how EAs look at AAs. Wright and some other Harlem Renaissance elitists also accuse Hurston of being a sell-out and a “minstrel” writer simply because she writes in Ebonics (Bloom 81). Wright accuses Hurston of

not writing in social protest and not supporting the Harlem Black Renaissance “uplift” ideology because she panders to her EA financial supporters (81). Wright says Hurston voluntarily continues in her novel the tradition, which is forced upon the Negro theater, that is, the minstrel technique that makes the “white folks” laugh. Wright states that Hurston’s characters eat, laugh, cry, and work and kill; ...The sensory sweep of her novel carries no theme, message, or thought. In the main, her novel is not addressed to the Negro, but to a ‘white’ audience whose chauvinistic tastes she knows how to satisfy. She exploits the phase for Negro life, which is “quaint,” which evokes a piteous smile on the lips of the “superior” race? (81). In response to Wright’s criticism of her work, Hurston retaliates against Wright with sarcasm. She attacks Wright’s ability to write about AA speech realistically. Hurston accuses Wright of being tone-deaf about his take on AA speech in his book, *Native Son* (160). Hurston states, “Since the author is a Negro his dialect is a puzzling thing...certainly he did not write by ear unless he is tone deaf” (160).

However, some critics applaud Hurston’s work agreeing that she does not need to help set up programs to combat how some racist E-As feel about AAs and language. They believe that Hurston feels free to use her voice to express herself in Ebonics and is proud when she refuses to marginalize the culture and language of AA people to gain the acceptance of EAs (81). On the other hand, many of Hurston’s critics are convinced that some E-As will use Hurston’s novel to make more racist remarks against AAs and cause E-As to further look down upon AAs because of their speech (81). Ironically, many EAs support Hurston’s effort to write about AA folklore using Nigritic-Ebonics. Some critics believe that challenging mainstream America on its “racial” prejudices advances AAs assimilation and acceptance into mainstream society. Presently, AAs have overcome some of the stigmas Jim Crow and Minstrelsy left behind regarding dark skin and



distinct African features, i.e., large lips, big hips, and flat noses, out of self-pride. However, the debate over whether Ebonics is to be respected for its powerful Niger-Congo grammar roots or considered a sub-standard English is still up for debate.

In an article written by E-A teacher and critic Rosemary V. Hathaway, she states that she and her Euro-American students find Hurston's use of AAL to be authentic and valuable. Hathaway disagrees with Wright and other critics who state that Hurston's writing is a minstrel and that it has "no theme, no message – in short with no political sensibility whatsoever – when the novel addresses issues of miscegenation, Jim Crow racism, and questions of black self-determination" (Hathaway 180). The thesis writer agrees with Hathaway when she says that Hurston not only uses AAL to combat "race and racism," but she believes that Hurston also makes attempts to find acceptance of self-identity, independence, and her individuality or "self-determination" in her writing (173).

Further, Hathaway believes Hurston's search parallels Janie's search for her voice through love relationships and independence. Hathaway states that Hurston appears to make efforts to "represent' AA culture on some level." She objects to "The reductive notion that Hurston's writing was produced solely for the didactic and egocentric agenda of representing an entire culture, however, is undermined by the texts themselves" (1992; 56) (Hathaway 173). Hathaway states that *Their Eyes* is based on "empirical reality" (173). Hathaway believes, and the thesis writer agrees, that Hurston's work is an attempt by Hurston to use scientific, anthropological facts and literature to deconstruct the establishment or structure in mainstream America denouncing AA culture and language. Hathaway recalls that when reading *Their Eyes* in her classroom, one of her Euro-American students found that AA language is essential to African folktales and, as one "the student noted – especially because much of the

dialect functions to illustrate verbal folk exchanges such as signifying, the dozens, joke cycles and stories, such as the mule tale. She says Hurston can make “art appear as reality” (171).

In addition, Hathaway feels that when Hurston uses “Porch Talk,” “Signifyin’” or “The Dozens” in *Their Eyes*, it gives the reader the sense of when that folkloric element or activity might be employed in reality (173). Hathaway explains, “In fact, the dialect is framed by the much more traditionally literary – even epic in its tone – narration provided by Hurston’s omniscient narrator.” (178). It appears that Hathaway’s criticism aligns with Hurston’s belief that the Harlem Renaissance writers and other AAs condemn the culture and speech of AA because of Euro-Americans’ non-acceptance and racist remarks toward AA culture and language not based on facts. Hathaway feels that the Harlem Renaissance writers are reacting to some Euro-Americans’ false claims of superiority, and the thesis writer agrees.

Also, author, teacher, and critic Lisa Garrigues state in her article that she is impressed with Hurston’s novel. She comments, “Throughout the novel, the reader feels as though he or she were eavesdropping on the many storytellers who sit on the front and back porches of Janie’s life” (Garrigues 21). Further, Garrigues states that she finds Hurston a masterful storyteller and commends her for her writing excellence.

In the Afterword of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Gates praises Hurston’s ability to use Nigritic-Ebonics. Gates states that Hurston’s use of Nigritic-Ebonics in *Their Eyes* is particularly effective because in Hurston’s attempt to find her voice, she uses “language as an instrument of injury and salvation, selfhood and empowerment” (*Their Eyes* 197). Gates states that he believes authors such as Alice Walker, Gayle Jones, Gloria Naylor, and Toni Cade Bambara have a strong affinity with Hurston for various reasons (196). However, Gates believes that AA female authors

treasure Hurston's work because Hurston writes honestly and authentically. He believes that those who read Hurston's do so "for the spiritual kinship inherent in the work, but she also uses AA speech and rituals...to help the coming to consciousness of AA women, so glaringly absent in other AA fiction (196)." Gates further states that Hurston's ability to connect her writing with anthropology creates a "suspended linguistic moment," which Gates sees as a phenomenon because it captivates the audiences (201).

Gates further states that Hurston, as a bilingual writer, can "move in and out of these distinct voices effortlessly, seamlessly" (203). Also, Gates strongly believes that this is one of how Hurston finds her individuality (203). He says that Hurston's ability to use "a divided voice, a double voice unreconciled" and her ability to write fluently in both languages, "strikes me as her greatest achievement, a very analog of her double experiences as a woman in a male-dominated world and as an AA person in a non-AA world. Gates says that Hurston provides a woman writer's revision of W.E.B. Dubois's metaphor or "double consciousness for the hyphenated African-American" (203). Gates sees Hurston's ability to move in and out of the double consciousness as a skill that requires the ability to separate and connect two voices throughout the text, which he also says "retains the power to unsettle" (203). Gates quotes author Barbara Johnson when she writes "Hurston is "both and neither 'bilingual and mute'" (qtd. In Hurston 204). However, since this statement is both oxymoronic and true, it validates the need for this thesis.

In 1937, when Hurston publishes *Their Eyes*, again, Hurston has the last word. However, her actions may have put a nail in her coffin because the AA critics nearly destroyed her for validating Ebonics. She certainly faces criticism from several Harlem Renaissance writers for writing in Ebonics. However, Hurston is valorized because she wrote on this important issue with

such independence in the late 1930s. Due to her determination to legitimize the AA voice, Hurston started nothing less than a revolution in language. She risked her livelihood to prove her point: AAs have always spoken languages, which have been maintained in the substratum of Ebonics for centuries due to social isolation, and AA language has been passed down throughout the generations by their caregivers. Unfortunately, Hurston did not live to see her work manifest to its fruition. However, she leaves a legacy as a leader in the literary arts for undertaking a masterful challenge to deconstruct the effect of “race and racism” against AA people and their language.

It is easy to see why so many of Hurston’s critics see one of the most provocative moments in Hurston’s novel, *Their Eyes* as the time in which the narrator states that Janie is called to the witness stand to use her newfound voice to speak on behalf of herself and she declines it. Janie decides not to allow the readers to hear her side of the story. According to the narrator, “She didn’t plead to anybody” (187). It was her choice, and Janie chose to remain silent.

In December 1979, a decade later, during the MLA Conference, some critics continued questioning Hurston’s protagonist on “Why Janie did not use her voice to defend herself in court since one of the major themes in *Their Eyes* was for Janie to find her voice.” To everyone’s surprise, Walker, who revitalized Hurston’s work a decade earlier, stood and stunned the audience with her answer to the question no one could seem to answer (*Their Eyes* xiv). Walker stated with great confidence that Janie did not use her voice because when she found her voice, she felt it was her prerogative to decide when, where, and if she wanted to use it (xiv).

The thesis writer believes that it can also be argued that Janie does not use her voice because she realizes that the all-Euro-American court in which Janie was tried may have condemned Janie for her “AA” speech had she represented herself in court. Possibly, Janie may have thought that

the Euro-Americans who supported her did so because she was of mixed ancestry. However, they would look at her through the same racist or stereotypical lens as many other AAs if they heard her speak in the African dialect. If that was the case, it could be said that Hurston understood her character's limitations and the times Janie existed. After all, *Their Eyes* were published before Brown vs. Board, Rap, and Hip Hop. Therefore, it could be further surmised that Hurston was thinking about herself. Perhaps Hurston knew the climate in which her critics existed and knew that she, too, could be further condemned for allowing her protagonist to speak in Nigritic-Ebonics in a courthouse setting in the presence of a Euro-American jury. Hurston may have worried that Euro-Americans may have thought that Janie was ignorant for speaking in such a manner. Then again, why should Janie have spoken? The truth had been presented, and the argument "had been won" or "It had done been won." Obviously, at that point in the courtroom, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION: THE REAL CULPRITS OF

#### RACE AND RACISM: JIM CROW AND THE MINSTRELSY, ET. AL.

##### 19<sup>TH</sup> – 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

It can be argued that Race, Racism, and the Representation of Niger-Congo West African (Niger-Congo) grammar continues to exist in African American Language (AAL), and it has its genesis in the African language family tree. Historically, “race and racism” has been used by Jim Crow and Minstrelsy to divide the human race based on superficial markings, such as skin color, hair texture, facial features, and, most importantly, speech sounds. This study has attempted to prove that the markings of “race and racism” were used to establish and maintain “white Supremacy” and justify slavery and colonization to attain and maintain economic wealth through political dominance.

As documented through scientific studies in this thesis, all humans are a part of one race and are of one color: brown. Furthermore, research shows that the variations in the color of the human skin, hair texture, and facial features have more to do to human adjustments to climate differences than DNA. Further, in this thesis, it has been well-documented that humans learn their speech sounds from their primary caregivers in the environment where they are raised, not through

their DNA, and that AAL has been maintained for over 400 years due to racial segregation and social isolation. In conclusion, scholar Henry Louis Gates, Jr. proves “...without a shadow of a doubt” that there was no religious or scientific justification for slavery and colonialization.

Gates used the literary works of slave author Phillis Wheatley and other enslaved people to prove that Africans were not animals. Therefore, they could become literate and arrived in America speaking autochthonous Niger-Congo West African languages. Also, this study unequivocally proves that research done by Comparative Linguist Dr. Ernie A. Smith demonstrates how Race, Racism, and the Representation of Niger-Congo West African (“Niger-Congo”) grammar was maintained in the substratum of “AA language: Ebonics for over four hundred years due to centuries of social isolation: segregation and discrimination. Further, this study provides a comparative analysis of English and Ebonics done by Smith, which explains how the German and the Niger-Congo grammar relexified the English vocabulary differently (Smith 2017).

Further, this study presents literary works by Paul Laurence Dunbar published in English and Ebonics during post-slavery. These publications documented the historical existence of Dunbar’s written work in English and AAL: Ebonics during post-slavery. The research shows that prominent Euro-Americans and Europeans praised Dunbar for his literary works done in Ebonics. At the same time, Jim Crow and Minstrelsy made every effort to demean AAs and AAL: Ebonics. Further, the thesis writer includes a comparative analysis between the Ebonics spoken by Euro-American writer Joel Chandler Harris and AA writer Dunbar. Both authors used the same Niger-Congo grammar to relexify the English vocabulary. As expected, both authors relexified the English language using AAL: Ebonics in the same manner, and “race” was not a factor in how either author spoke or wrote in Ebonics.

In *Pudd'nhead*, Twain created a narrative topos, whereas, the slave protagonist, Roxy, switched her newborn son with the master's newborn son to prove that languages are learned through nurture vs. nature. Both boys grew up in environments opposite their biological "race." However, both boys learned to speak only in the language spoken by their primary caretaker. In her novel, *Their Eyes*, Zora Neal Hurston provided literary documentation which replicated, explained, and validated the living environment in which "AAs" lived during slavery and post-slavery in order to show how living in a socially isolated environment caused AAs to maintain their Niger-Congo grammar in the substratum of AA language for over four centuries. In *Their Eyes*, Hurston developed a 20-year plot in Eatonville, Florida, where all the characters spoke only in Ebonics. After 20 years, the community continued to speak only in Ebonics since they voluntarily segregated themselves into an all-AA society.

In Gates's overview, Gates clearly states that monogenesis and polygenesis theoretical beliefs are symptoms of "white superiority" based on unsubstantiated biblical curses and racial science. According to the author of *Remembering Jim Crow*, the concept of "white Supremacy" was a strategy conjured up to advance the political and economic status of "whites" after the Civil War. Further, as stated in *Stony the Road*, Gates' research refutes the thinking of Rationalists and Egalitarians, such as Immanuel Kant, George Hegel, David Hume, and other theoreticians who were the primary advocates of "white supremacy" from the 17th through the 19th century. Instead, they argue that AAs were inferior to "whites" because AAs were drastically different from "whites" anatomically and were unintelligent due to their illiteracy. They claim that AAs lacked imagination and were on the same mental level as apes and monkeys. The thesis writer finds it difficult to believe that some of these scholars had the audacity to say that AAs had no imagination



and further judged AAs intelligence based on the size of their noses, the texture of their hair, the color of their skin, and the sound of their voice.

Biblically, Gates dispels the myth in Genesis: 9:20-27 that God cursed Noah. Instead, gates explain the Ham/Noah story more accurately as follows: Gates states, according to the scripture, when Shem, Japheth, and Ham return home from the fields, Ham finds their father, Noah, drunk and naked on the floor of his tent. At this time, Ham returns outside and tells his brothers about their father's shameful condition. Noah's two brothers, out of respect for their father, walk backward into the tent and cover them with a cloth so that they, and no one else, see their father in such a state. The scripture never suggests that Ham laughs at, makes fun of, or condemns their father for his strange behavior. Many Christians believe that the two brothers act honorable, whereas they feel Ham does not. When Noah awakens, the scripture says that Noah curses his grandson Canaan for Ham's actions. Many critics argue whether the Noah/Ham story is true because no scriptures in the Bible state that God curses Ham. Further, Gates provides numerous arguments against those made by Enlightenment scholars who believe that "Africans" were inferior to "whites" due to racial science. Gates also argues against other theorists' beliefs that Africans were cursed to be inferior by God to have "black skin" because Abel killed his brother Cain.

In this study, Gates's research on Phillis Wheatley and other slave authors proves that AAs were not animals and could become literate. According to the text, when Wheatley arrived in America on the slave ship, "Phillis," in 1771, she was more than likely at the age of seven or eight and spoke an autochthonous Niger-Congo language. Although Gates's research shows that Wheatley was bought as a personal enslaved person for the wealthy tailor, John Wheatley's wife,

Susannah, Wheatley was raised as the enslaver's daughter in an English-speaking environment. According to the text, Susannah was shocked to see how quickly Wheatley learned to speak English. Wheatley learned to speak English within 16 months of her arrival in the United States and began to write poetry immediately. Soon, Wheatley became literate in English and was gifted with writing poems. As a matter of fact, Wheatley is honored as the first AA woman to write a book in America. According to the text, prominent Euro-American dignitaries could not believe Wheatley was the author of such amazing poetry and called for a thorough examination of her works to prove whether she was the author. Finally, Wheatley proves she authored such literary works and became known as one of the world's greatest poets. Further, Wheatley is notarized for being the first AA female author in the United States and for establishing the AA female genre in literature. Gates uses Wheatley's literary work to argue that Africans have the same mental capacity to learn languages as Europeans.

In the study, Smith makes a comparative analysis between Niger-Congo grammar and Ebonics, substantiating that "AA" children learn language from their primary caregiver (Smith 2017). Smith also provides research to show how the Niger-Congo grammar has been maintained in the substratum of the AA language for over four hundred years due to social isolation. It has been difficult for AAs to learn English through social interaction due to segregation forbidden, legalized, and enforced by law due to the Supreme Court case, *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, in 1896.

Fortunately, in 1954, fifty-eight years after *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, the Supreme Court found segregation in public facilities unlawful. It violated AAs Civil Rights in the *Brown vs. the Board of Education*. The Supreme Court attempted to remediate the issue of segregation by ordering the desegregation of all public facilities which should have given AA students better access to English

through social interaction. Unfortunately, the new law did not enforce social interaction between “blacks” and “whites” because some government officials and Euro-American parents refused to follow the mandates for integrating American public schools and other public facilities.

Understandably, many Euro-American parents refused to consent to send their children to deficient intercity schools. For obvious reasons, many “white” parents opted to home-school or send their children to private schools. Naturally, some AA parents were excited to send their students to more affluent all “white” schools, hoping their children would receive a better education. After all, *Brown vs. the Board of Education* overturned *Plessy vs. Ferguson* because segregation legalized through *Plessy vs. Ferguson* was based on “separate but unequal” laws. Due to “race and racism,” AA students that were bussed to all “white” schools did not work for the following reasons: 1) many AA students who were enrolled in the all “white” schools were assigned to classrooms with only AA students, 2) some AA students were assigned to classrooms filled with all “white” students and allowed only one AA student to enroll in that classroom, and 3) sometimes, the AA student enrolled in the classroom was assigned a seat under the teacher’s desk. Needless to say, bussing students as a means of desegregation did little or nothing to help AA students learn English through social interaction.

By the late 1960s, during the Great Migration, many AA sharecroppers attempted to escape the “race and racism” they faced in the south. Therefore, large numbers of AA parents moved their families to the north and west so their children could get a better education and find industrialized jobs in the urban areas for themselves. They dreamed of a life in the “Promise Land.” However, once AAs moved into Urban America, they found that the “Promise Land” did not exist, and assimilation was impossible. In time, AA youth were no longer trying “... to act, look, and sound white,” they began “to act, look and sound as ‘black’ as possible.” In fact, during that period, Dr.

Martin Luther King and a group of educated Afro-Centric AAs leaders rose and began taking a more aggressive stand against “white Supremacy” vs. “black Inferiority” on every level.

As previously stated in Chapter 3, in 1973, Dr. Robert Williams, a “black” Psychologist, hosted a National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) conference to study the cognitive development of AA children. Participants, Comparative Linguists, Smith, other linguists, and scholars were highly concerned about the issues surrounding AA language. During the conference, the scholars listed above discussed, named, and framed the term Ebonics as the official name for all languages with a Niger-Congo grammar and a European (Latin) vocabulary. As stated previously, Ebonics is a blend of Ebony and Phonics, meaning “Black Sounds.” Later, in the 1970s, some of these scholars and other such scholars were joined by a number of Euro-American college professors and youth who walked hand-in-hand with the nation’s “black” scholars in their symbolic march toward freedom for AAs: Afros and all.

By the early 1980s, many inner-city youths began accepting their voices. They began a new genre of music: Rap, which was done in crude, slang Ebonics which spread across the planet like wildfire. Although many AAs adults were disgusted by Rap and fought against it, they believed it would give Jim Crow and Minstrelsy good reason to further attack AAs for being “minstrels.” Ironically, American youth and youth around the world connected to the music of “black” America” and used their buying power to solidify Rap infinitely. Although Jim Crow and Minstrelsy continued to demean AA speech, Corporate America made billions: The Rap business became so lucrative that many intercity AA gangsters began moving from street gangs to gangster rappers.

Smith and his many advocates for Ebonics made lots of gains from the 1970s through the late 1990s. Smith, other linguists and scholars, the Black Community Education Task Force, Shaba Shabaka, and the Nigritian Commission, along with Board Member Barbara Boudreaux, Los Angeles Unified School District (“LAUSD”) and Board Members from the Oakland School District (“OUSD”) fought to enroll AA students in the Bilingual/Multilingual Education programs and other like programs. However, unfortunately, they experienced devastating setbacks due to the Oakland Ebonics Controversy in 1996. Some could say Jim Crow and Minstrelsy “rose from the dead.” Ironically, many Americans who did not have a clue about linguistics and the African language phenomenon ignored the well-documented, cutting-edge science of linguistics to make a mockery of world-renowned scholars named above because they dared to reveal the name of the “AA” language and asked that Ebonics be recognized as a legitimate Niger-Congo language vs. a broken-down English dialect. For example, Dr. Noma LeMoine, Director of the Language Development Program for African American Students (“LDPAAS”), which was established to teach AAs students to learn English as a separate language and to teach students to respect their own AA language was forced to change the name of her program from LDPAAS to Mainstream English Language Development program (“MELD”) because it was discriminatory for a language program to address the language needs of only one group although Ebonics includes all Niger-Congo based languages that have European vocabularies. At that time, many mainstream Americans and shamed AAs refused to recognize AA speech as a language.

No one could have foreseen the racist attacks that would be made upon AAs speech by some EAs and shamed AAs, nor could they have imagined the anger, hate, and hurt AAs would experience as a result of the gruesome attacks made against Ebonics by Jim Crow critics, primarily because of its name. One Euro-American Republican politician, with the support of some other

racist EAs and shamed AA politicians, immediately wrote and endorsed laws to forbid public education funds from being spent on Ebonics-speaking students in the Bilingual/ Multilingual Education programs. It stands to reason. However, some United States congressmen were fully aware of the fact that if Ebonics were acknowledged as having a language other than English in its background, it would have been mandatory for AA students to be tested for the Bilingual/Multilingual Education Programs, which would have opened the doors for AAs to finally learn English as a Second Language (ESL) using proper pedagogical strategies, methodologies, and techniques. They knew that AA students' new status would further give AAs legal access to AA history, culture, and language through the public school system. In addition, it would have made it possible for all American students to learn some autochthonous African languages, such as Yoruba, Ewe, and Ebo.

Further, African, AAs, and other Africans in diaspora authors would have been sought out to write and teach about Africans, AAs, and other Africans in the diaspora. Undoubtedly, everyone, including the media, came looking for Smith: the "genius linguist." However, Smith refused to talk. He remained silent, as did his mentees, including the thesis writer. Finally, in January 1997, the most knowledgeable and influential language institute in the world, The Linguistic Society of America, spoke out on behalf of Ebonics. They bore witness that the AA language was most certainly, a language as is any other language (The Linguistic Society of America 1997). However, Jim Crow and Minstrelsy were so powerful in 1996-1997 during the Ebonics Controversy that Jim Crow racists and shamed AAs would not accept the science of Ebonics.

Jim Crow and Minstrelsy were established in the 1830s and 1840s. It began as a theatrical act that mimicked "black face." However, by the time the Civil War ended, Jim Crow had become

a “white Supremacy” movement and its main objective was to dominate AAs and help cause AAs to live in a permanent state of slavery. Plantation owners, gold miners, and railroad companies strategized to reenact slavery through: the Black Codes, The Compromise of 1877, and Plessy vs. Ferguson in 1896. Jim Crow laws were established under the Black Codes with the sole intent to arrest and imprison AA males in order to reinstate slavery. For example, if an AA male could not prove that he was registered to work for a “white” male, he could be charged with vagrancy and imprisoned for it.

The system of arresting AA men for petty crimes or suspicion of a crime worked well because the purpose of imprisoning AA males was to lock them up so they could be rented out by such companies as listed above, which reenacted slavery ( ). The system worked so well that, at any given time, no AA males remained in jail ( ). Plantation owners, gold miners, and railroad companies could rent out these prisoners for pennies per day. The Jim Crow Laws under The Black Codes were easier to enforce due to The Compromise of 1877 which ended the Reconstruction Era. The Compromise was an informal, unwritten, “backdoor deal” made among congressmen to end the heated debate over who won the presidential election between Republican Rutherford Hayes and Democratic politician Samuel J. Tilden. The Republicans won the electoral vote, and the Southern Democrats won the popular vote. The Republican presidency remained in control of the United States, and in return, the northern troops agreed to return to the north, which gave control of the south back to the Confederates. As stated, in 1896, Plessy vs. Ferguson was heard in the United States Supreme Court and used by the south to legalize segregation. Signs for “Colored Only” and “Whites Only” were posted throughout the south with the full intent to strictly enforce “white Supremacy.” Jim Crow Laws and “white” supremacy ruled the south for the next half-century. Black Codes based on Jim Crow Laws and Segregation authorized by Plessy vs.

Ferguson legally existed in the United States until the Supreme Court ruled in 1954 in *Brown vs. the Board of Education* that segregation in public facilities was illegal.

Unfortunately, Dunbar's success in writing in Ebonics was not enough to undo the shame and images projected by Jim Crow and Minstrelsy attached to Ebonics. As stated above, Dunbar was credited as the first African male writer and was the first person of African descent to publish a book in Ebonics in 1893, thirteen years after Euro-American author Harris published *Uncle Remus* in Ebonics in 1880. Although Dunbar received high praise from prominent Americans and European scholars regarding his literary works in Ebonics in the late 19th and early 20th century, Jim Crow and Minstrelsy and others of such ilk continued to espouse hate for AAs and AAL. They could not be silenced although the top linguists in America, The Linguistic Society of America, wrote a Resolution in January 1997 to resolve the issue of whether Ebonics was a language or some broken English.

Fortunately, in 1896, Twain's published his most remarkable novel, *Pudd'nhead*, which addresses issues of "race and racism" in AA language. In the text, Twain makes it painstakingly clear that "race and racism" have nothing to do with how children learn languages. Instead, Twain dedicates his entire novel to proving that children learn languages through their primary caregivers, not genetics. In Twain's novel, Twain shows how his protagonist, a slave mother, switches her AA son with her enslaver's E-A son to show how the AA infant learns English from the wealthy, educated EA family and the E-A infant learns to speak Ebonics from the enslaved people in the slave quarters. The "white" Tom grows up as Chambers and learns to be humble and hardworking from living in the capacity of an enslaved person. In contrast, Roxy's slave son, Chambers, grows up selfish, mean-spirited, and racist from living in the capacity of a wealthy, racist enslaver's son.



Tom commits crimes, while Chambers spends his life working in the fields doing gruesome farm work.

Near the end of the text, twain provides a scene of a “robbery gone bad” in order to show how Chambers, as Tom, kills his Uncle Driscoll and allows the famous Italian twins to be charged for the crime. During Discovery, when *Pudd'nhead* finds that Tom and Chambers' identity has been switched during infancy. Therefore, the fingerprints *Pudd'nhead* had taken of the boys as infants were misleading. *Pudd'nhead* rightfully concludes that the biological Chambers killed Judge Driscoll during the robbery. *Pudd'nhead* presents Tom and Chambers' fingerprints from infancy to the sitting judge. Based on the fingerprints, the judge finds the biological Chambers guilty of murder. Therefore, Judge Driscoll's creditors insist that Chambers, acting as Tom, be released to them. The judge grants the creditors their request, and they sell Tom down the river. The judge frees Chambers and awards him the title of his Uncle Judge Driscoll's estate. By the end of the story, Chambers and Tom's identity has been switched at birth. However, the townspeople cannot accept the new status of either Tom or Chambers because the township has seen both boys in their traditional roles all their lives. Neither young men can see themselves as members of their own “race.”

In 1937, Hurston publishes her most famous and controversial novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, during the Harlem Renaissance. At the time, Hurston was Harlem's most popular AA female writer. Hurston creates a well-thought-out plot spanning over twenty years in the text. Hurston uses her imagination and anthropological skills to ensure that the-all “black” township is modeled as close as possible to the segregated and socially isolated south environments which existed during slavery, post-slavery, and to some extent, to date. Experiencing what segregation was like was Hurston's intent. Therefore, it was no coincidence that Hurston used her

narrator to orchestrate *Their Eyes* in the idealized standard English while all her characters spoke only in Ebonics. In *Their Eyes*, Hurston's characters not only spoke in Nigritic Ebonics but also used "AA" folklore to display AA culture.

In *Their Eyes*, Hurston unveiled a unique "AA" style of talking called playing "The Dozens," which AA continue to use, to date, to entertain and verbally defend themselves against "instigators." Undoubtedly, Hurston knew that the Harlem Renaissance writers and other AA leaders who fought to uplift AAs from their plight in life would be furious at Hurston for valorizing Ebonics. She had to know that it would be easy for her critics to believe she opted to give Jim Crow and Minstrelsy weapons to use against AAs.

When Hurston writes about AAs as a-typical Nigritic-Ebonics speakers in the manner in which she does, a frustrated Richard Wright harshly criticizes Hurston because her characters speak Ebonics and live in an a-typical AA culture of which, he seems to be ashamed. As expected, Wright sees Hurston's characters through the lens of Jim Crow and Minstrelsy and uses the "racist" energy to bash Hurston for what he considers to be pandering to Hurston's Euro-American financial supporters. It is not surprising, however, when Hurston strikes back with deep-seated sarcasm. Hurston chooses not to give an intellectual explanation for why her characters speak in Ebonics. Instead, Hurston accuses Wright of being tone deaf because Wright portrays his main character, "Bigger," as a fluent English speaker when such a character would have undoubtedly spoken in Ebonics. In his novel, Wright portrays Bigger as a fluent English speaker so that "Bigger's image would be more acceptable to "whites."

Also, the thesis writer believes that Wright, along with other shamed AAs, avoids answering the essential question that critics of Ebonics most often ask, "Why have AAs not learned to speak English after living in the United States for over 400 years?" Instead, Wright appeared to

be more concerned about hiding AA culture and language from Euro-Americans to give the appearance that AA culture and language do not exist, which caused Hurston to accuse Wright of being “tone-deaf” and caused the thesis writer to believe that Wright may have lived in a state of denial. Therefore, the thesis writer will ask that the readers of the thesis be held accountable for making the final decision on whether Niger-Congo West African grammar continues to exist in AA language/Ebonics and mandate that the thesis readers label AA language as a Niger-Congo West African language vs. a substandard English.

The thesis writer believes that Henry Louis Gates, Jr. presented concrete evidence that unequivocally proved that Africans and Africans in the diaspora were never apes, monkeys, buffoons, or other such animals. Further, according to Smith, all humans were born with the propensity to speak languages unless their speaking and hearing apparatus were impaired ( ). Therefore, Africans, Africans in the diaspora, as well as all other humans were genetically designed to speak languages learned in the environment in which they were raised, regardless of “race and racism.” Smith posited that AAs maintained their Niger-Congo grammar because they were not formally taught to learn English. They were not allowed to read books and lived in social isolation from English speakers. Therefore, Africans in diaspora everywhere enslaved by Europeans (French, Dutch, Portugal, Spanish, and English) relexified European vocabularies of their enslavers with their autochthonous Niger-Congo languages. Smith and other linguistic scholars, both European and AA, have proven that the Niger-Congo grammar continues to exist in the deep structure of Patwai, French Creole, Dutch Creole, Portuguese Creole, Spanglish, and Surinaam/Ebonics. Other languages are spoken by slave descendants of Africa who were colonized or enslaved by European (French, Dutch, Portugal, Spanish, and English) captors. Therefore,

Smith and his many followers recommend that all Africans and Africans in the diaspora in the United States public schools be assessed for the retention of Niger-Congo grammar in the language background of Africans, AAs, and all other Africans in the diaspora. Many Americans are unaware that AAL was officially named Ebonics in 1973 at the National Institute of Mental Health Conference by Dr. Robert Williams, Professor of Psychology at the University of Missouri, and framed by Smith, as stated in Chapter 3. For centuries, Jim Crow and Minstrelsy have used the anatomy of Africans: skin color, facial features, hair texture, and language to stigmatize, condemn, demean, and oppress “AAs and” their voice so that “white Supremacy” could be used to justify how “black bodies” could benefit Europeans and E-A economically, politically and socially. Therefore, the thesis writer asks that all Americans, both E-As and shamed AAs, no longer listen to the voices of Jim Crow and Minstrelsy and ask that Americans listen to the science of linguistics and, specifically, listen to those scholars who have studied comparative linguistics regarding AA language.

The thesis writer understands that it is difficult for some E-As and shamed AAs to accept that West Africans arrived in America speaking autochthonous Niger-Congo languages, just as other immigrants arrived in America speaking languages from their native lands. Since Europeans were taught that Africans were animals that never spoke languages in Africa, it is difficult for some Americans to accept the fact that many scholarly Americans, both AAs, and E-As, have researched the matter and are conclusive on the debate on whether Nigritic Ebonics is a continuation of the prideful Niger-Congo West African languages or a broken-down substandard, Black English.

The writer believes that when this thesis has been shared with American teachers and professors, they will be relieved and enlightened by the information. The thesis writer also believes

that once American teachers and professors are exposed to the proper pedagogy to teach African, AA, and African in diaspora students English Language Arts as ESL students vs. English-only students, American teachers and professors will experience a feeling of jubilation because they will finally be able to accomplish their English teaching goals. Americans who genuinely are English-only have no idea how difficult it is for AAs who speak only in Nigritic-Ebonics to learn to speak the idealized standard English as English-only students for the following reasons: 1) When many teachers/professors use the Correction Model, they find almost every word in the English sentence is spoken differently in Ebonics than English because English sentences use a subject/verb agreement. Ebonics requires a Topic/comment sentence structure, as seen in Chapter 3 of this thesis. 2) The rules for pronouncing the sounds are different in many cases because some sounds in the German grammar do not exist in the Niger-Congo grammar and vice versa. 3) Many words in English will be relexified into Ebonics by Nigritic-Ebonics speakers. 4) Many teachers/professors, parents, and students must know the differences between German and Niger-Congo. 5) sometimes, teachers embarrass, humiliate, and offend AA students for relexifying words using their Niger-Congo grammar because they are not aware that AAs and Africans in the diaspora have maintained their Niger-Congo grammar in the substratum of their home language, and 6) Often, AA parents and children are not cognizant of and cannot decipher the differences between the way they speak English and how English speakers speak English.

After studying comparative linguistics under Smith for some years and working in Dr. Noma LeMoine's LDPASS/MELD programs as a GSAT Teacher/Leader for some time in the Los Angeles Unified School District ("LAUSD"), the thesis writer learned how to detect Nigritic Ebonics from English. However, it is complicated for those who speak only in Ebonics to correct

themselves in English because they do not know English grammar structure well enough to know what they are doing wrong.

In closing, the thesis writer would like to say. However, the main objective of this thesis is to prove that Ebonics/Nigritic-Ebonics is a continuation of Niger-Congo grammar in order to qualify AA students to enroll in the bilingual/multilingual education programs in the United States public schools so that AA students can learn English using proper pedagogy, it is not by any means, an attempt to shame, demean, or ridicule AA students for speaking Nigritic-Ebonics. In fact, a second objective of this thesis is to raise the value of AA language to the same status as English.

The thesis writer submits that the 1995- 1997 Ebonics Controversy caused many mainstream Americans and shamed AAs to attack OUSD. Jim Crow and Minstrelsy created so much outrage when the American public realized that the AA language had been named “Ebonics.” Young African-centric AA mothers who gave their children African-based names vs traditional European names were also outcasts. “Why was there such a minstrel show when scholarly AA men named AAL? Many educated AA scholars also wanted to know, “Why did racist Euro-American and shamed AAs believe that European-based names were better for AA children than African-based names?” The thesis writer and many AA mothers were certainly offended when Euro-Americans and shamed AAs dared to complain that AA mothers who named their children African-based names were “ghetto” because they chose to name AA children after their African ancestors vs. the E-As lave owners’ ancestors.

As many Americans know, many AAs have tried to change their skin color, facial features, hair texture, and voices to assimilate into European culture. However, they have not been successful in doing so. They could not understand why American society continually tried to teach young AA women that naming their children “white” heritage names would be impressive.

Nigritic-Ebonics speakers were told that Europeans would not accept their children in the workplace if they embraced the Africanisms in AA culture and language. Historically, some AAs have been fired because they have worn their natural hair in the workplace. However, at this time, many states have abandoned those actions and can be sued for discrimination after revisiting Alex Haley's book. *Roots*, the thesis writer began to ask, "Why not Kunte Kinte" vs. Toby"? "Why Erin, Megan, and Ashley, and why not Damonn, Kiesha, Shantelle Jaishma, and Jasmin (Yassmin)?" When the thesis writers asked EAs and AAs the above questions during the Ebonics Controversy, both AAs and E-As responded similarly. A number of Americans believed that AAs would not be hired, could lose, or should lose their opportunity for employment if they were named African ancestral names. Each group said that African names would identify those employment applicants as AAs and those applicants would be discriminated against through their job applications based on the applicants' names. The author of this thesis is hopeful that, with this study's publication, some authentic ways of uplifting the AA people will occur. For example, public schools could be set

up all over the United States to teach AA students, Africans, and other Africans in diaspora English as a Second Language. Such schools could include the study of autochthonous West African languages, such as Yoruba and English, Swahili and English, Ewe and Ebo, AA history, and culture. At this time, there are many African students from the continent of Africa attending public schools in the United States. However, only some, if any, autochthonous African languages are listed as part of the Bilingual/Multilingual Education programs. Therefore, due to the systematic racism towards AAs and AA language, Africanism in the AA language has not been recognized, accepted, or addressed in the Bilingualism/Multilingual Education Programs in public schools in

the United States. Fortunately, in Houston, Texas, AA students learned English at a higher level in the past years than their peers taught in monolingual classes when AA students participated in Bilingual/Multilingual-Dual Language programs. However, they are placed in ESL classes that are Spanish and English, Vietnamese and English.

If the writer is victorious in defense of her thesis: proving the Africanisms in Nigritic-Ebonics, then the expected outcome would be that Ebonics-speaking AAs, other Africans in the diaspora, and African students would be tested for entrance into the Bilingual/Multilingual Educational programs in America immediately. In the future, bilingual/multilingual classrooms could include autochthonous Niger-Congo languages, such as Yoruba and English, Ewe and English, and Ebo and English. Therefore, AA students and all other students could learn to speak autochthonous Niger-Congo languages and, one day, travel to places like Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria, and Egypt. and learn to speak those languages fluently. They could also learn more about African cultures, ancestry, and legacy.

The opportunity to expose this African language phenomenon to educators, youth, and others has been exhilarating. However, the research for the thesis has been grueling. The thesis writer has spent hundreds of hours probing the works of great scholars who have worked a half-century or more furthering the academic argument surrounding the issue of AAL. However, the reward for such a task is humbling. Therefore, the thesis writer asks that readers of this thesis understand that it is essential that speakers of Nigritic-Ebonics be taught English as ESL students vs. “English Only” students because:

AAs have a language other than English in their language background, AAs need to learn to speak English so that they can function in American society, as well as the global society,



and because AAs deserve the right to study their African ancestors' history, culture, and language in public schools.

Scholarly educators and readers of this document must read this document with scientific objectivity and acknowledge the facts of linguistics to stand up to Jim Crow and Minstrelsy et al. and free-shamed AAs from the past teachings associated with slavery and colonialism. All of which would serve to uplift the image of AAs and show respect to all the great AAL:Ebonics authors. It would certainly advance the image of Zora Neale Hurston, who was vigorously attacked and villainized by both AAs, and EAs because she dared to write in Ebonics.

Historically, Great linguists have studied AAL:Ebonics for decades and found the question of whether AAL:Ebonics is a continuation of the Niger-Congo West African languages based on its grammar or some form of "Black English" based on its Latin vocabulary. However, AA and EA authors and readers from the past to present continue to be intrigued by its literary expression.

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