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LANGSTON UNIVERSITY: A HISTORY OF TRANSFORMATIVE RHETORICS AT OKLAHOMA'S ONLY HBCU, 1960-1970

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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Dedicated to Lee Allen Ross (9/17/65 – 9/28/15) for his unselfish support over the years, and for helping me realize the possibility of achieving my dream. You always inspired me to reach higher, and I will always love you. Rest in Heaven!

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ABSTRACT

This project presents a history of Langston University, Oklahoma's only historically Black college. Langston has successfully served marginalized groups within and without the territory for over 100 years. The school began as a Land Grant College in 1897. I investigate rhetorical education at Langston University from 1960-1970 to fill a critical gap in past histories of the field of composition and rhetoric that have traditionally omitted the Black experience. Oklahoma provides a unique site for critical inquiry and conversations about race and culture because of the state's history of Black towns and the Tulsa genocide. To educate Black students on the cusps of integration, Langston offered students a culturally relevant liberatory education effectively bridging their home and school lives to better prepare them for integration. The historical racial dynamics in the state, and Black Oklahomans push for independence to govern themselves, and having only one central HBCU to address the needs of the Black population makes Oklahoma unique. The study draws heavily from theoretical interdisciplinary approaches to teaching literacy learning.

President William Henri Hale led Langston through the civil rights and Black liberation eras. Because of the absence of written records and documentation, the research presented relies heavily on personal interviews with students and teachers who attended and taught at Langston during the period of inquiry. A close examination of pedagogies shows that students at Langston during the 60s received an activist education—one that focuses on reading, writing, and civic duties—through racialized pedagogies designed to liberate them. Furthermore, a Black liberatory education at Langston stretched far beyond skills based rhetorical approaches to teaching writing.

Introduction

When I first moved to Oklahoma in the spring of 2008, admittedly, I had no knowledge of its history of all Black towns or of its legacy of racial discrimination. The year also carries broad symbolic importance in America because we elected our first Black president, Barack Obama, that November. I wasn't thinking too much about the election during my job search or my being an African American female. I was more concerned with employment near the Fort Sill Army Base, located in Lawton, Oklahoma. I was excited to take a position teaching English at Western Oklahoma State College (WOSC) in Altus, about 60 miles west of the base. At the time, I also had no idea one of the worst race massacres in history, the Tulsa Riot of 1921, took place only a 3.5 hour drive north of Altus and Cache, Oklahoma where I took a job the next year teaching high school. I also had no idea that Langston University, Oklahoma's only historically Black college and a historical center for the sustainment of Oklahoma's Black intellectual base, sat just 140 miles northeast of Cache.

I found my way to this project as I meditated geographically on my students, Oklahoma's legacy of all Black towns, and literacy learning in America and what that means for different cultural groups. How do we promote anti-racist teaching that leads to community building? Reflecting on patterns of behavior such as the #BlackLivesMatter and other social justice movements as literate acts led me to attempt to reconcile my own personal experiences and pedagogies as a Black woman in education and academe in the state; it became clear to me that Langston was a safe haven for Black students in the past and now. In the lineage of Jaqueline Royster (2000), Deborah Brandt (2001), and the New London Group (Cope and Kalantzis 2000), I posit literacy learning as a socio-

cognitive function. I learned this as I settled into the state as first a teacher and second a PhD student at the University of Oklahoma. As a teacher, I encountered a reckless disregard for others that comes not so much from racism but from an unawareness of how culture and place define and control space. As a graduate student in Oklahoma, dealing with peers, I came to realize that many of my white peers possessed an almost total unawareness of the self and how they control and alter space. I believe this attitude to be influenced by individuality and worldviews that make whiteness invisible (Ratcliffe 4). However, to problem solve effectively and promote inclusive pedagogies one must be aware of how s/he alters space. I often felt isolated and ignored by both teachers and students. Whether my feelings reflect reality or not, I experienced those feelings, and those feelings were real. And even more enigmatic to me is that I sat in graduate seminars and no one seemed to acknowledge that, as the only Black student in the class, I might be experiencing some cultural discomfort. The elephant in the room—pedagogical impasses that give little to no attention to the dynamics of race, culture, group work, and inclusivity—remained hidden in plain sight as everyone discussed how to deal with the elephant.

From experience working with young Oklahomans—ages 15-28—I found that Oklahoma rednecks[1] proudly wear their regalia showing their affiliation with historically racist groups and symbols of white pride, such as the Confederacy and Nazi Germany; they also wear their boots, which signifies their red dirt pride navigating the plains, the frontier, agriculture, farming, raising cattle, wheat, or whatever the crop. Oklahomans value hard work. Nearly all the white student population participated in Ag and 4-H. I found that my students spent their time cow tipping, building bonfires at night, catching

rat snakes for sport, and mud dogging—what the students referred to in their hallway chatter as "redneck" activities. In fact, my students used the word redneck the way a younger Black population would use the word "nigga." Both take a word with general negative connotation and appropriate and elevate the word rhetorically to a position of cultural pride. In hallway chatter and interaction among students, I recognized a western cultural aesthetic—a way of doing and seeing—that had been passed down through the generations. Such an aesthetic creates a rhetoric of exclusivity read through clothing, activities, and fraternization for those outside the culture.

While I met some of the kindest people that first year at Cache High School whom I can and will describe as beautiful human beings, racism reared its ugly head. I was menaced daily by a few who grouped together and displayed confederate regalia tattooed on their arms and T-shirts with the confederate flag juxtaposed with slogans that read "If you're offended, maybe you're the racist"; I had swastikas drawn on fists atop desks, pointed directly at me, creating quite the hostile environment. I wondered what kind of parents would allow a 12th grader to get a confederate flag tattoo on his forearm? I quickly learned that it's a parent who has the same tattoo on his forearm (whose mother subbed in the library), and who was passing the legacy of racism on to his offspring. In 2000, *The New York Times* quoted former President Bill Clinton as saying, "As long as the waving symbol of one American's pride is the shameful symbol of another American's pain, we have bridges to cross in this country and we better get across them" (Lacey A-26). It just seemed to me to be wrong, somehow, for kids to be so openly expressive with historical symbols and icons of hate and racism.

When I expressed my discomfort to other teachers and the principal, I was told, "Oh they're just kids." From my perspective, however, kids are better served when educators help them understand the impact of cultural and symbolic offenses as deliberate literate, rhetorical acts. Had the hiring principal, Randy Harris, and the district superintendent, Randy Batt, revealed to me during the hiring process that I would be an experiment with faculty integration, something I thought unheard of in 2009 considering the broad spectrum of diversity in the United States, my lessons might have been received without hostility and angst toward the students and parents who rejected me and my pedagogies. For I understand that people are conditioned by their culture, location, and immediate environment.

Although there was no African American community in Cache, just white and Native American, Fort Sill Army Base with a population of 50,000 or more soldiers and their families sits only about 12 miles northeast of Cache. In addition, Lawton, with a diverse population of more than 40,000 and three high schools that serve both the local and military communities, sits about the same distance due east. My point is that since Cache has no grocery store, except the local Dollar General, most residents worked in Lawton or on Fort Sill and shopped for groceries and clothing in the Lawton/Fort Sill area, putting them in contact with diverse people and cultures on many different levels. With this in mind, I expected the citizens of Cache to be more sensitive to racial diversity.

In 2010, I was one of the 2.5% African Americans counted in the census that documented Cache's population at 2,796. In 2019 the U.S. Census reported Cache's population at 2,811 (not much growth), Oklahoma's population at 3.9 million, with 65%

of that number being white, 7.7% African American, 9.4% American Indian, and Hispanics at 11%. In 1960, the state population sat at just over 2 million, increasing by 1.6 million over a 60-year span, with approximately 70,000 residents of African American descent (Gibson and Jung 92, Table 37).

Some of the Native Americans in Cache looked of mixed-race heritage of both Black and white, but they all lived together as Natives on the Native American side of town (the north side) in small houses built by the government or in trailers. A row of these houses looked to me much like the projects. Whites tended to live in bigger homes southwest of Cache or east toward the base and Goodyear plant on the12 mile stretch, which put them in the Cache school district. Cache families had names like "Whitepigeon," Lightfoot, and "Komahcheet" reminding me of their Native heritage. In this small enclave of a town, residents were not open to outsiders, and it was clear that if you crossed one, you crossed them all. A case in point: I purchased a piece of property there, and due to irreconcilable differences, I fired the contractor building my home. I quickly learned that no one else in the area would work for me or on my home. This taught me a cultural lesson about small town camaraderie that I will not soon forget! My students were the sons and daughters of the bank presidents (there were only two banks in Cache), the mayor and past mayors, and state representatives. It was not unusual for a parent to walk right into my classroom between classes, at lunch, or after school—without having checked in at the office or anywhere else on campus—and say, "I want to talk to you. [Ashley or John or Whoever] said . . .". Later that year, after I complained several times about being accosted unawares, safety issues, and feeling threatened, the

principal finally agreed to lock the doors to the westside and hallway entrances to the building, much to my relief.

Honestly, I came to hate going to work every day because I saw it as an emotional struggle. At my husband's suggestion, I decided to make cupcakes for my students. I made the cupcakes, and the cupcakes made a difference. Not all at once, but I kept bringing goodies. I made pinwheels (ham, cream cheese, and green chili spread over a flour tortilla and rolled like a wagon wheel and then cut into one-inch sections). I brought donuts, chips, bagels, spread, dip—I always had something, even personal hygiene items. Eating relaxes people, especially kids! A few of them started hanging around. And the "baddest" Black girl in the school, with the worst attitude and behavior problem, would listen or calm down with no one else but me. When there was a problem with Codie, white faculty and staff called me. To me, she wasn't a behavior problem at all because I cared about her "whole" person; if something was wrong in her personal life, I genuinely wanted to hear about it. If she needed something, I wanted to know. Not every educator is capable of giving students this sort of energy because doing so takes emotional intelligence and time. Some students came to have lunch with me or to eat the lunches they purchased across the street at the local Sonic or Subway in my classroom because it provided a safe haven from bullying. That year, I learned a valuable lesson about small town literacies and addressing the whole needs of students, even when they don't recognize they have a need. I also learned that even as a minority, I had to put forth some effort to kindle a relationship. By the next year, things were much better.

I often wondered what would happen when these kids left the small town where their parents and grandparents reigned as kings and queens. As birds hatch and fly the

nest, eventually, they would have to fly off to college or work. I often wondered what would happen when they discovered a world culturally different from theirs—a world with other birds of different colors, sizes, attitudes, and ways of knowing and being. A world where they might not be privileged. What I didn't mention earlier is that just as the white parents came to question my authority in the classroom and my pedagogies, Black parents came for a total opposite reason—to express allegiance. I often found myself mediating race related dress code disputes because African American students felt I would be fair to their cause. A Black girl's skirt being too short or her blouse too low cut—something of that nature. Not only did Black students come to me, but I also had an exchange student from Kazakhstan run into my classroom one 6th period and in broken English and through tears tell me, "I need talk to you. Now! Talk to you." She refused to go back to her classroom because she was being bullied and felt the white classroom teacher ignored the situation.

I found that ignoring a situation involving students, race, and culture leads to more conflict—conflict that manifests itself in ugly ways. However, what I was witnessing was a "border" war, where an outsider crosses over into the space of another and those on the other side refuse to acknowledge the problem brought on by cultural difference—a special kind of ignoring that I don't think we have the theoretical vocabulary that allows for discussion. I experienced such ignoring as both a teacher and a student in Oklahoma. I'm not arguing that overt border conflict does not occur in other places, I am arguing that Oklahoma provides a site for critical inquiry into the problem; the historical racial dynamics in the state, and Black people's push for independence to

govern themselves through the creation of all Black towns, and having only one central HBCU to address the needs of the Black population, makes Oklahoma unique.

The student from Kazakhstan told me later that year that she came to me because, in her words, "We the same Mrs. Ross. White people treat you [i.e. Blacks] like Russians treat Kazaks. We same." It seems that facilitating tolerance among cultures requires multicultural literacies that lead to understanding "lifeworlds"[2] among the races to promote social, political, and racial harmony (Cope and Kalantzis 16-7). But minority students also need some training on entering hostile environments and fostering a culture of dialogue by having an informed awareness of the contributions of their culture and their social and economic standing in the world (Asante 56)[3]; HBCUs like Langston continue to play important roles helping marginalized students strengthen their sense of self and their histories through a historical valuation that honors the contribution of Blacks and other marginalized groups in America (Woodson 62). Educating the whole person and rectifying what Carter Woodson refers to as the "miseducation of the Negro" remains the concern of HBCUs serving marginalized populations throughout the south. Teaching in Oklahoma, I came to understand the critical need for inclusive histories for all cultures.[4]

States like Oklahoma with dark histories of racial hatred and violence created a need for HBCUs like Langston to help African American students strengthen their sense of themselves and their histories in the tradition that Carter G. Woodson describes in *Miseducation of the Negro*. Naturally, we read situations, people, and symbols rhetorically through our own cultural lenses. Sometimes, we are unforgiving in our conclusions—as seen with the recent George Floyd murder which we all watched unfold

live on television. Americans protesting across the U.S. chanting "Black Lives Matter," police tear gassing innocent protestors and sometimes committing bodily harm in the process, perhaps not since the spring and summer of 1968 have Americans witnessed such widespread unrest across the nation. And never in history has all of America been able to watch, simultaneously, as the violence unfolds live. Technological advancements with the cellphone catapults almost every American, like 17-year-old Darnella Frazier who recorded the brutality and death of George Floyd, into the role of news reporter. With recent protests and tensions driven by the BLM movement, I believe examining past pedagogies like those practiced by Langston professors designed to liberate and empower Black students in the 60s to successfully enter racially charged, desegregated public spaces offer valuable curricular and literacy lessons today to address current community and cultural conflicts (Chama 203).

During this pivotal moment in American history, discussing and practicing inclusive pedagogies regarding racial inequality, power, privilege, and literacy are more important than ever before. Adam Banks's assertion that "[s]o many scholars, including African-American scholars, search diligently for ways to pursue research agendas that will have some kind of benefit for the communities who paid and paved the way for their presence in the academy" describes my sentiments toward this project (*Digital Griots*, 47). When I think on a broader and national level, I think of the recent murders of Black women and men by white police officers. A few victims include Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Kentucky (2020); George Floyd in Minneapolis (2020); Pamela Turner in Baytown, Texas (2019); Lajuana Phillips in Victorville, California (2018); Mike Brown in Ferguson, Missouri (2014); Tamir Rice in Cleveland, Ohio (2014); and Michelle

Cusseaux in Phoenix, Arizona (2014). White officers often go unpunished or under-punished, and the underlying causes and race relations contributing to the murders of black bodies with impunity remain understudied in academe. Using rhetorical studies to promote cultural awareness in public and private institutions leads to racial tolerance. Constituents graduate and sometimes become public servants in positions that bring them in close contact with minority groups, not only as police officers but also as teachers and in other areas of government and social service programs throughout the U.S.

We need critical pedagogies—pedagogies that incorporate social and political concerns such as respect for and awareness of the relationship between language dialects and identity (Kates 54). According to Paulo Freire, critical pedagogies help groups understand how they oppress other groups, sometimes, unintentionally, by being uninvolved and by refusing to see or acknowledge a problem (68). It takes critical pedagogies to create space for conversations on privilege and race and how the two factors influence economics and opportunities and space in America.

When Barack Obama campaigned in 2008, he chanted the all-inclusive slogan, "Yes we can. Yes we can." I believe most of America was ready for a change to show their support for cultural diversity and inclusivity. But Oklahoma conservatives proudly dug their boot heels deeper into the red dirt, clinging to the exclusive rhetoric of Fox News in support of the McCain and Palin ticket. Today, that same underbelly embraces the racist rhetoric and rants of Donald Trump. As I walked the hallways of WOSC that fall, all television channels were set to Fox News, and that's what students heard all day—rants by Rush Limbaugh and Sean Hannity and their often times antisocial interpretation of the events and history unfolding. Determining what someone can and

cannot listen to illustrates how rhetorical control takes place in public spaces. I explained that I didn't want to take Fox away from them, but that I wanted them to hear how news sources reported events in different ways. I wanted them to understand how news stations have the power to present people and cultures in a negative light.

Obama won the election that semester, and the next day at school, no one said a word—not one word within my earshot from faculty or students. I found again that silence has its own conservative rhetoric by not acknowledging the "other." Oklahomans voted red in the past 14 elections.

In the spring of 2010, as seniors prepared for graduation, I worked with the high school counselor, Tammy Fritz, writing letters of recommendation and helping students write application letters for college; I found that the majority of white students proudly applied to the University of Oklahoma (OU) in Norman or Oklahoma State University (OSU) in Stillwater. The handful of black students looked to Langston University, mainly because of low test scores. It is also important to say that a majority of the black graduates in Cache came from military families, so they looked to Langston—Oklahoma's only historically black college—more for an opportunity to attend college than as a staple or epitome of Black education in the state of Oklahoma. According to the kids, "Anyone can get into Langston!" The ironically, as a historically black college and university (HBCU), Langston's goal is to offer educational opportunity to everyone and anyone, regardless of race, class or economic standing.

At the time, I honestly didn't know anything about Langston University or the town of Langston. Attitudes toward the institution led me to look more closely at the University, its degree plans, curricula, and social life and opportunities to see what it

offered the whole student in a racist state like Oklahoma. I wondered how educators at Langston prepared students deemed not college ready? I also wonder how Langston educators are responding to their students' needs now, given the events of the summer 2020? And I wonder if I can implement or modify those strategies in a broader setting to enhance my own pedagogies?

Oklahoma has been under investigated for evidence of rhetorical education—reading, writing, and speaking instruction—within black communities and black public schools, particularly those filtering LU before desegregation. Naturally, with segregation laws prohibiting Blacks in Oklahoma from attending white institutions, Blacks from surrounding areas and states flocked to Langston with hope of gaining the skills to participate in a democracy. For example, Roscoe Dunjee, Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher, Clara Luper, Melvin Todd, and even my uncle Ezell Carter from Mexia, Texas attended Langston University. In *Going to the Territory*, Ralph Ellison explains "the uneducated and educated alike saw Oklahoma as a land of opportunity" (132). Inman Page, a graduate of Brown University, migrated to Oklahoma and served as the first president of Langston University. Ellison asserts that the social and political climate in the southeastern part of the US drove refined Black men like Page, and women, to the territory. Hope within creates a powerful emotion and catalyst for change. Langston's administration—like that of other HBCUs across the nation—understood the spirit that drove a thirst for equality.

HBCUs make up roughly 3% of institutions of higher education in America (Foster ix). Because of nature of this historiography of Langston, this analysis draws heavily from personal interviews with former students and teachers of the era, the student

newspaper—the *Langston Gazette*, and the Oklahoma Historical Center archives. Racial and political oppression required that activism take place covertly, as severe consequences such as withholding funding and threats of closure threatened overt demonstrations and resistance. This research is heavily inspired by Susan Kates, Carmen Kynard, Jacqueline Royster, and Adam Banks who laid the theoretical foundations creating space for more research and historiography on Black institutions, their pedagogies, and African American rhetoric in the 1960s.

The first chapter explores relevant theories related to language and literacy learning and composition pedagogies to provide a comprehensive overview of past literature on literacy, pedagogy, and rhetoric. The chapter also details the foundational research methods in literacy and interdisciplinary studies drawn from and the methodologies most influencing the research project and evaluation of data. Language varieties and dialects create exigencies that continue to contribute to conflict and racial violence in America.

Chapter two is a historical overview of the beginnings of the town of Langston and the college as a land grant college. Revisiting history is important for representing the experiences of marginalized groups in the disciplinary narratives of rhetoric and composition studies. Since the project covers the 60s decade, I investigate the Hale Administration's innovative policies to educate faculty and provide a higher quality education for Black students under the oppressive system of segregation. Under Hale's leadership enrollment increased. Hale also managed to secure funding and grants for faculty professional development. Under Hale's leadership, many faculty were able to

complete their doctorate degrees. Hale's well-trained faculty made Langston a true greenhouse for the intellectually undernourished.

Chapter three titled "Help Me Breathe," explores Black liberatory pedagogies and the specialized strategies that helped students survive in spaces dominated by white supremacy literacies. In developing "good enough game" as defined by Keith Gilyard, Langston teachers engaged their past experiences—a remix—to inform their present exigencies to help students succeed post Brown. I cover the pedagogies of Melvin Tolson and Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher specifically. The content of personal interviews with former teachers and students helped provide a more comprehensive view of how Tolson, Fisher, and other faculty engaged transformative pedagogies to "help students breathe." At Langston, this was a collective effort across the curriculum, not just in the English department. Teachers taught students to use the resources available to them, even trickster stunts, to get what they needed. When used in this way, I argue that a trickster pedagogy offered strategies that contributed to liberation in the sense of getting what one needs to move through life unharmed while negotiating systems of oppression.

Importantly, chapter four explores communitas as liberating to both teachers and students. Faculty worked together to meet students personal, financial, and educational needs. I explore the pedagogies of Joy Flasch, the first white teacher to teach English at Langston to show how communitas led to her own critical self-reflection. Flasch developed innovated pedagogies that promoted dialogue and growth for both herself and her students. Flasch's life and values growing up white in Oklahoma show that it is possible for white teachers to engage communitas and critical mentoring if they are willing to look critically at their own values and the systems that shaped those values.

Lastly, the afterword, sums up where I think we are headed post George Floyd, and the types of literacies needed to promote linguistic justice for all. My research goal using Langston University seeks to identify best practices to promote literacy learning, tolerance, and a liberatory education in the twenty-first century classroom that could be beneficial for all cultures, especially socially or economically disadvantaged groups.

My investigation into Langston pedagogies reveals that a Black liberatory education reflects the following characteristics: (1) A consciousness of the achievement of African people, what Molefe Asante defines as Afrocentric teaching; (2) Compassionate understanding (as most of these students come from environments where they had to play catch up academically because they would have been underprepared); (3) A "deliberate" holistic education addressing both personal and academic needs; and (4) Prescriptivist pedagogies. I argue that these four principles practiced by Langston faculty in the 60s, combined with respect of culture, when applied in classrooms today can lead to tolerance and literacy and language learning on all levels.

Those teaching at primarily white institutions can apply the same four principles practiced at separatist institutions by making a conscious effort to integrate multiculturalism into their pedagogy. Inclusive pedagogy acknowledges the socioeconomic and sociopolitical conditions of marginalized students (which sometimes include rural whites as I describe in my narrative experience in Cache). Practicing a pedagogy of care takes effort and reaches deep to help students gain a critical awareness of their cultural selves in ways that promote self-worth and respect for others.

Chapter One

Liberating Pedagogies: Letting the Past Inform the Future

"[V]ery few teachers imagined that the kind of writing and literacy that these students 'needed' was beyond prescriptive grammar, skills-based instruction, thesis statement formulas, and the academic -discourse cloning that were the supposed keys for unlocking new middle-class doors." (Kynard 4)

Historical Overview

The Territorial Legislature established Langston University as a Land Grant College on March 12, 1897 as the Colored Agricultural and Normal University—10 years before Oklahoma became a state. Langston's goal in 1892 was to make liberal arts training and a practical education accessible to newly emancipated working class people of color, by instructing "both male and female Colored persons in the art of teaching various branches which pertain to a common school education and in such higher education as may be deemed advisable, and in the fundamental laws of the United States in the rights and duties of citizens in the agricultural, mechanical and industrial arts" (History of Langston University). This mission gradually changed under the direction of I.W. Young, Langston's fourth and sixth president, toward a DuBoisian notion of the talented tenth which required a good command of English grammar, societal rules, and rhetorical strategies to assimilate effectively into white society and become keepers of the race (Patterson 42).

Although pedagogies centered on "correctness" of language and manners valuing formalist approaches to teaching composition as prescribed by white society at the time, a second curriculum—one of race consciousness—permeated the atmosphere (Favors 6). Jelani Favors appropriates Victor Turner's definition of communitas to describe the

second curriculum practiced at Black colleges. As an intentional racialized space designed to meet the needs of marginalized students, Black Colleges "[offered] shelter from the worst elements of a white supremacist society that sought to undermine, overlook, and render impotent the intellectual capacity of Black youths" (Favors 5).

The following review of literature gives a foundational overview for Black activism birthed from the Black radical tradition beginning with Du Bois and Woodson, moving through the work of Cedric Robinson. In the second section of this chapter, I cover the methodologies and past research on literacy and language that made this study possible. In the final section of this literature review, I attempt to show how current race relations in the U.S. create exigencies for more research to help students and teachers—both marginalized and white—understand the necessity of cultural literacy to promote a better democracy. The goal is to lay the foundation for inclusive pedagogical strategies in the field of rhetoric and composition.

W.E.B. Du Bois attempted a solution to the race problem—i.e. culture problem—in *Souls of Black Folk* in 1903, by proposing his "Talented Tenth" model. The talented ten percent of the race was to take responsibility for teaching and speaking for the majority Black mass. He believed the talented tenth must move beyond the technical education proposed by Booker T. Washington and be "broad-minded, cultured men and women, to scatter civilization among a people whose ignorance was not simply of letters, but of life itself" (Du Bois 47). Only the liberal arts and classical training provided such an education. However, in Cedric J. Robinson's thorough analysis of Du Bois's intellectual motivations and thoughts in *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, he explains Du Bois realized the failure of his "Talented Tenth" model and

acknowledged such in 1933—thirty years after the writing of *Souls*—at a Rosenwald Fund conference at Howard University. Instead of consolidating with the Black masses, the Black elite (the educated and trained classes) distanced themselves from folk people and folk ways (197). Through personal interviews, I found some evidence of distance between Langston the University and Langston the town in the 1960s; however, in many ways, the little school in the middle of the pasture in Langston, Oklahoma, lived up to Du Bois's ideals. The the overall sentiment between folk people and the Black elite at the college fostered critical mentoring and support to work toward racial uplift (Woodson 39).

Du Bois was the first Black to graduate from Harvard and Carter G. Woodson the second, and both theorized race and the Black experience in America. Woodson understood the problem with Du Bois's "Talented Tenth" long before Du Bois himself admitted his err in philosophy. In *Miseducation of the Negro* Woodson warned of Blacks who failed to embrace their culture and who distanced themselves from their roots and their language (67). Furthermore, in *Miseducation* Woodson stresses the need for "commons sense schools and teachers who understand and continue in sympathy with those whom they instruct; . . . Real education means to inspire people to live more abundantly, to learn to begin with life as they find it and make it better" (32). This study centers on literacy and language learning in Oklahoma, and liberating pedagogical practices that cultivated pride in young Black people and helped them gain independence and resist racist power structures through peaceful means.

Cedric Robinson captures the spirit of resistance and revolution in Black Oklahomans in Du Bois's speech at the Rosenwald Conference:

> Some people envisage revolution chiefly as a matter of blood and guns and the more visible methods of force. But that, after all, is merely the temporary and outward manifestation. Real revolution is within. That comes before or after the explosion—is a matter of long suffering and deprivation, the death of courage and the bitter triumph of despair. This is the inevitable prelude to decisive and enormous change, and that is the thing that is on us now. (qtd. in Robinson 198)

Du Bois spoke these words to alert and direct Black leadership. Not all of the Black elite deserted Du Bois's charge. Some embraced the challenge, becoming griots—transmitters of culture—of Black culture at the boot level, as was the case at Langston during the administration of William Henri Hale, from 1960-1969.

As we look to the past to examine literacy and language learning at Langston, significantly, faculty practiced a philosophy of teaching the whole student to prepare them to face the prodigious Jim Crow economic and political systems that dominated the Oklahoma landscape after the Civil War. Presenting a microhistory of pedagogical practices at Langston University in the 60s as a rhetorical lens to re-envision writing curricula today to effectively address the literacy and learning needs students bring to the classroom, reveals how, as Carmen Kynard and Robert Eddy explain, "HBCUs have created a critical space in which the cultural identities of Black college students have pedagogical consequence inside of the arenas of racial inequality in the United States" ("Toward a New Critical Framework" W24). As one example of helping students gain equality inside racialized space is that Langston faculty recognized the role soft skills such as problem solving, adaptability, teamwork, and creativity play in activism.

Kynard and Eddy describe HBCUs as intentional communities with "less told

stories" and as ignored sites that embody intentional practices useful "in definitions of and needs for critical literacy and anti-racist pedagogies at the American university" today (W24; Perry, Steele, and Hilliard 92). Langston University had a kinship to Black communities throughout Oklahoma and neighboring states. My research interviewing Black Oklahomans factually reveals that Black citizens understood and therefore embraced Langston as the only institution in Oklahoma available to them for an opportunity to gain a basic college education. The institution also offered a safe space to learn and grow.

A majority of Langston's administrators prior to the 60s pursued advanced degrees from Eastern institutions because they could not legally attend college in the South.[5] These administrators became radical agents for change as they returned to the south to teach and prepare up and coming Black constituents to take their place as leaders of the race. For example, Inman Page, Langston's first president graduated from Brown University in Rhode Island. The tenth president, William Henri Hale, earned his Doctorate from the University of Chicago. Langston faculty passed on educational opportunity in a rich Ivy League and politically active tradition.

These refined Black men and women focused on language for ethos purposes and are often described as being very articulate and proper. They needed good language skills for public speaking and to communicate with white officials in high political positions within Oklahoma's local state government and abroad. A prescriptivist pedagogy—writing instruction that focused on grammar, punctuation, and usage—helped them and the constituents speak the language of white America. Language served as a distinct literacy to address white supremacy and to assimilate into white society, which was the

goal of a Negro college education in the 60s. Prescriptivism provided a means to an end and, research reveals that prescriptivist pedagogies operated smoothly alongside other traditional approaches to teaching rhetoric.

Activist Isaac William Young (I.W. Young), also known as the father of Black democracy, served as Langston's fourth (1923-1927) and sixth (1931-1934) president ("History of Langston"). He earned a medical degree from New Orleans University. Langston received accreditation under Young's leadership. Significantly, Young served as chairperson of the National Democratic Negro Voters League and president of the Negro Democratic State Convention. The likelihood of Young's political activism impacting administrators and faculty in a radical tradition under his leadership at Langston University cannot be underestimated as evidence of a Black liberatory education for Langston's students ("Young," *Oklahoma Historical Society*).

Although Langston received official accreditation in 1929, the 60s decade reveals significant lessons on how administrators and faculty fostered activism and literacy learning. Former student Rozalyn Luster Washington who attended Langston from 1965-1968 explains:

> Every Wednesday, an hour before lunch, we had a required Assembly. I remember Maya Angelou and Jesse Jackson speaking to us. Every week we had speakers from diverse backgrounds address us about the social and political issues of the day. Also, if any of us had been given funds or grant monies to attend a conference or social or political event, we had to come back and share that experience at assembly. This gave us public speaking skills. The skills I acquired at Langston helped me survive in a white world. I was taught time management,

study, and organizational skills in an incoming freshman orientation class long before white colleges started offering classes that introduced students to the university. Langston knew marginalized students had to be taught how to be successful in college.

The impact of a personal encounter with any civil rights activist in the 60s most certainly would have fostered race pride and critical conversations about race relations in the U.S. amid the struggle to gain civil rights.

Angelou understood the principle importance of finding ways to prosper inside the cage. Race hatred, oppression, and forms of discrimination construct invisible bars that can only be countered through mental exercise aimed to expand space in productive ways. Furthermore, having Angelou or Jackson visit a college and speak to the student body acts as evidence that a second curriculum fostering race consciousness flourished at Langston during the 60s. A visit from Jesse Jackson suggests that President Hale deliberately sought to develop a critical literacy on race relations and promote some type of activism among students. Jackson participated in sit-ins and marches as part of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s inner circle in the 60s.

As evidenced in the success of Langston's graduates, the critically literate student is not a victim of miseducation as described by Woodson;[6] critically literate students understand their culture and the struggle to reconcile hyphenated identities in pluralistic America. In the 60s, most of Langston's student body graduated from segregated high schools across the territory. As Rozalyn Luster-Washington explains, "Black history was nothing new to us because those of us who came from segregated schools studied it [Black history] in social studies. And at Langston, we celebrated Black history every

February. It was a big deal." Similarly, Dr. Jeanne Manning and Joanne Clark—both taught English at Langston in the 60s—explained that Black history was simply an unstated part of the curriculum. Critical-multicultural literacies promote democracy through education because such pedagogies not only value and respect language diversity but also cultural groups as a whole and "competing values that are in constant negotiation" (Richardson 25).

Critical literacy provides an inclusive model to radicalize students using writing and literacy pedagogies more so than previous schools of thought such as cognitive and expressivist approaches to teaching writing that value writing as a process[7]. The critically literate student owns resources to use forms of creative disruption in constructive ways to push back and protest against structural racism that leads to violence against Black bodies, such as those of Eric Garner (2104), Staten Island, New York, Freddie Gray (2015) in Baltimore, Maryland, and very sadly—25-year-old Ahmaud Arbery (Feb. 2020) in Brunswick, Georgia, George Floyd three months later in May of 2020 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Daniel Prude also in March of 2020 in Rochester, New, York. A white father and son vigilante team murdered Ahmaud Aubrey, and would have gotten away with it because a small town "good ole boys"[8] camaraderie system—yet another literacy of white structural privilege—between the vigilantes, police chief, and the DA refused to prosecute (McLaughlin). What I have described here is a basic violation of civil rights and the democratic process through the cultural literacy of white privilege. We cannot sit in the ivory towers and fail to acknowledge our role to speak up and raise awareness of the racist privileges that continue to subvert our democracy.

Langston's atmosphere valued students home language as a literacy, in a way that

respected them as human beings and potential leaders of the race. April Baker Bell posits that "the way Black language is devalued in schools reflects how Black lives are devalued in the world . . . [and] the anti-Black linguistic racism that is used to diminish Black Language and Black students in the classrooms is not separate from the rampant and deliberate anti-Black racism and violence inflicted upon Black people in society (2-3).[9] Learning to effectively address and respect cultural diversity requires cultural literacy, which promotes democracy.

Critically exploring literacy through the lens of white privilege and cultural camaraderie helps us better understand the case of Prude—the Black other, who was having a mental episode at the time of his arrest. White officers placed a bag over Prude's head suffocating him to death. Instead of recognizing the possibility of a mental issue (similar to the case with Sandra Bland in Prairie View, Texas), officers saw a Black body creating a disturbance and reacted too quickly, resulting in the suspect's death. Understanding how Blackness compounds a situation requires a special literacy on the part of the officers. Not surprising, a jury exonerated the officers.

In an interview after the Prude verdict, New York's Attorney General, Letitia James, explained: "My office presented an extensive case, and we sought a different outcome than the one the grand jury handed us today." She further emphasized that "[t]he criminal justice system has frustrated the efforts to hold law enforcement officers accountable for the unjustified killing of unarmed African Americans . . . [when] the death could have been avoided" (qtd. in Craig and Culver). Practicing race conscious, critical pedagogies combined with an ethic of care helps raise awareness of how race influences the rhetorical situation and leads to a disparity in deaths among Black and

white subjects. Critically literate students possess the ability to investigate, identify, and counter oppression by speaking to oppressive power structures and contesting them to work toward true democracy (Macedo 152-4).

Composition theorists miss a pivotal moment in the field if we fail to recognize and document the need for a paradigm shift in pedagogies; we need pedagogies that help students recognize and radically resist injustices. Social justice movements like the Black Lives Matter (BLM) present complex cultural literacies that require students and teachers understand the transgressions that birthed the movement. What are the characteristics of a literacy that allowed a father and son vigilante team to murder an unarmed Black teenager while jogging in his neighborhood? What are the characteristics of a judicial system that refused to acknowledge the transgression and the white supremacist camaraderie that allowed the violence to occur? We need to think deeper about how the law and literacy maintain racial inequality and design pedagogies to counter repressive environments that move us away from King' dream (*Vernacular* 152). We need composition pedagogies designed to prepare writers for university study and the world they will encounter beyond the classroom—a multicultural world in which success depends heavily on possessing the cultural capital to "think through, refine, and solve problems" (Royster, *Traces* 45).

The June following the deaths of Breonna Taylor (March 2020) and George Floyd (May 2020), the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) Executive Committee approved the position statement for Black linguistic justice. For too long, "many of our (well-meaning) colleagues ignore the link between oppressive vigilante and police violence against unarmed Black people and the *'linguistic violence'*

[emphasis mine] that occurs in literacy classrooms against Black people—with practices, pedagogies, and policies that fork Black people's tongue, that not only undervalue but also devalue Black expression in 'these academic streets'" ("This Ain't"). Justice begins with respect for another's culture and language or tongue. First, however, there must be respectful exposure to different "mother tongues." Just because I do not sound like you or express myself like you, does not mean that I'm less intelligent than you. My own intellectual excitement for studying and writing this history of Langston during this important time of civil rights stems from the overt aversions to my own mother tongue that I so often experienced by both teachers and peers. In many ways, this project vindicates my language and the literacies I bring to the classroom.

Breaking the mental aversion to Black English takes both education and training. A teacher can have the best education from the best institutions in America, and still lack training to understand culture, language dialects, and the connection to intelligence. Oftentimes, these teachers hold positions of power at some of America's greatest institutions, which allows them to continue promoting white supremacist racist pedagogies that devalue the experiences of the minority students they serve (Kynard, "Teaching" 5). As an intentional discourse community, Langston created academic space for Black language users and pedagogies to address their needs—pedagogies that trained students in rhetoric, writing, and critical literacies through an ethic of care without devaluing their mother tongue or the communities that produced that tongue.

Literature Review of Yearbooks and Catalogs

I begin my historiography with a critical examination of Langston yearbooks and catalogs from 1960-1970 for evidence of a race conscious curriculum. The third topic

down in the 1962 yearbook under the heading “Career Opportunities” reads like a mission or purpose statement. It states: “Attending Langston University opens more doors of opportunity to one for advancement, because he helps furnish proof that democracy is a two-way street that every institution of higher education can make a contribution which distinguishes it from all other institutions” (6). Langston’s liberating pedagogies helped students gain the confidence they needed to speak up and speak out against the racist systems that caused violence against their school and their communities. The 1962 yearbook also documents that Langston “offers unlimited opportunities for leadership, cultural growth and development, guidance and counseling in an atmosphere of wholesome and constructive understanding of one’s social, cultural and economic problems” (6). Through a critically conscious education, faculty, staff, and administrators strongly encouraged students to participate in clubs, weekly assembly, and other campus activities that forced students to take leadership roles. The mention of key words and phrases such as “leadership” and “social, cultural, and economic problems” provide evidence of the university’s changing mission toward activism in the 60s. Faculty and students were well aware of the racial conflict and violence across America more broadly. It’s important to note that prior to 1960 the yearbooks make no mention of a mission or purpose statement or social or economic problems.

And, although the 1961 yearbook edition makes the first mention of a “Career Opportunities” statement, it fails to mention democracy and cultural growth. However, the 1961 “Langston University” page does say, “For more than sixty years the institution has contributed its full share of clerks, typists, secretaries, accountants, county agents, farmers, agricultural workers, teachers, pre-professional trainees to help supply needed

dentists, nurses, doctors, technicians, and many other needed workers" (6). The services mentioned "overtly" keep step with most of Booker T. Washington's domestic, manual, and agricultural labor goals designed to please white benefactors to secure funding. Zella Black Patterson who published the first historical overview of Langston University well documents the College's struggle to secure funding from Oklahoma state agencies governed by white officials. The statement also emphasizes, "The worth of these services to the State of Oklahoma is also reflected in the improved family life and the sense of civic responsibility displayed by graduates and former students, who now live in the state" (6). The key phrase "civic responsibility" also suggests a second curriculum operating "covertly" because it requires attention to community and community values.

Interestingly, the dedication page of the 1961 yearbook opens with a quote from Gardner Murphey: "Because time is short, because threats are great, and above all, because man is man, the explicit recognition of the fetters upon man's mind and the deeper understanding of human directions of growth are the most pressing of the tasks of self-emancipation, with which modern man is confronted." The school identified itself as a "community agency contributing to the betterment of the cultural, vocational and educational standards throughout the state"; "To provide through general education a common core of information and knowledge in non-specialized courses covering the major fields of learning that will prepare individuals for the responsibilities of citizenship in a changing free society at local, national and international levels" (see 1961 Purpose Statement). The 1961 edition also states: "The Language Arts Program provides opportunity for students to improve skills in speaking, listening, reading, writing, demonstrating, observing and thinking." While speech class required that students record

their speech for class analysis in the formalist tradition, the practice helped students hone and refine language skills for leadership and to resist the ways white culture used language requirements to demean Blacks in the past. Activism required strong speaking and writing skills to gain effective access to white political discourse communities denied to Blacks in the historical past through a precarious creation of the "Negro" as monster (Robinson 3-4).

In keeping with the civil rights energy of the 1960s and a quest for social justice, the 1970 catalog's philosophy reads: "Realizing that education in its broadest sense is designed to improve the quality of individual and social living *[sic]*. Langston University views its proper function as that of developing men and women for productive citizenship, effective service, and responsible leadership. As an integral part of the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education and of the Land Grant Movement, Langston University assumes responsibility for training students in the Liberal Arts and the preparation of future workers for useful professions and occupations" (1970 Catalog p. 9). To support the end goal of developing men and women for productive citizenship, an article in the June 1965 *Gazette*, "2nd Leadership Convention is Held April 21," states the purpose of the convention was "to show appreciation to those students who have accepted the responsibilities of leadership and to try and inspire other students to use their talents in helping give leadership in the school and communities" (1). Cultivating leaders entailed instilling the values of community service in students. I can only speculate on the choice of the speaker, Dr. David Hitchens, a noted white public servant who also served as president of Texas A&M University, and who spoke on the topic of "Making Decisions and Living with Them."

Reflecting on leadership and how I might give back to my own community, George Floyd's death makes the most significant mental imprint for me and the purpose of this research. As a reminder, I invoke Floyd's death and others in the same vein, because I see these transgressions as part of critical literacy and language issues that must be addressed through specialized pedagogies that value race and politics. The public watched the murderous actions of law enforcement and Floyd die, over and over and over again, because of advanced digital literacies such as cell phone technology that allows for live recording and uploading to social media platforms (yet another literacy that this research does not cover and that deserves more attention in composition scholarship) (Boggs, Reed, and Lindblad 322-3). Floyd's death constantly reminds us of social injustices in America and the literacy movements designed to counter those injustices; these pivotal literacy moments allow space for reflection and how to best make our democracy an actual democracy. As I pen this opening chapter with the aim of social justice in mind, I'm also reminded of Amy Cooper and the rhetoric of white privilege, yet another literacy that students must understand to survive in America post *Brown* and post King.

Rhetoric, according to Aristotle, Cicero, and other Roman orators, helps "make decisions, resolve disputes, and deliberate publicly about important issues" to decide the best course of action (Crowley and Hawhee 1). Cooper, a white woman, made two false calls to 911 accusing a Black man, bird watching in New York City's Central Park, of harassing and threatening her simply because he requested that she put her dog on a leash, as park rules require. Both incidents (Floyd's death and Cooper's false accusations) occurred the same day—May 25, 2020. Both incidents testify to the violence that often

occurs toward Black bodies. Although 20 hours and approximately 1,200 miles apart, the strangling grasp of white privilege—unencumbered by time—knows no distance. White privilege and white supremacist attitudes, what I will refer to as community knowledge (Crowley and Hawhee 8), caused Cooper to accuse a Black man of being threating and harassing without giving second thought to her actions. The criminalization of Black skin provided her the rhetoric and key phrases to express her false accusations—"I feel threatened" and "Black male" and "Hurry." The criminalization of Black skin allowed Derek Chauvin to report Floyd as dying in police custody from cardiac arrest and drugs without acknowledging his role in suffocating Floyd (Marable 55).

I use my experiences in Oklahoma as a lens to think more holistically about social justice advocacy and what it means to be humane and empathetic toward people who are dismissed, oppressed, or unheard. Both Floyd's murder and Cooper's accusations, along with the protests of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement create serious exigencies to discuss race relations as a critical literacy in the rhetoric classroom; also how social and political contexts create dynamic cultural intersections in classrooms raises significant concern, which I try to illustrate through my narrative introduction encountering Oklahoma redneck, conservative literacies. How can we justify failing to give space to examine specialized, community literacies in rhetoric and composition studies when rhetoric historically, centered on solving problems and the wellbeing of the polis? The goal is to create dialogue to move toward inclusiveness, transparency, and accountability (McComiskey 56; Boggs, Reed, and Lindblad 322).

Oftentimes, as political contexts overflow into the classroom the space, the classroom and the overall campus become sites for radical behavior and inventive

thought that threaten the very fabric of democracy. Cultural tensions, insensitivity toward difference, and growing multiculturalism create the necessity to explore ways and methods to train students to use rhetoric effectively to find workable solutions to common cultural problems by helping them re-envision the rhetorical situation (Crowley and Hawhee 11-12). One approach to problem solving cultural tensions is to write race into whitenized disciplinary histories so that scholars become more race conscious with research agendas and pedagogies. Critical literacy promotes a nonviolent approach to problem solving by drawing from methods of Rogerian argument that gives serious attention to understanding both sides of an issue to work together to find workable solutions to common race conflicts and attitudes that might help prevent more transgressions similar to that incurred by George Floyd and others like him. Colorblind pedagogies do students a disservice because the world is not colorblind (Marable 13-14). Ignoring race and culture in the classroom promotes disharmony.

A Trump presidential energy focused on border control and "Making America Great" again in the lineage of Adolf Hitler's white supremacist model to "Make Germany Great" again, creates a terrible racist moment in American history in this twenty-first century; a moment that brings Americans to the ugly reality of collective memory that shows this country's move backward at a steady pace away from Martin Luther King's "I Have A Dream Speech" delivered on Washington, August 28, 1963, almost 58 years ago. The rhetoric of white supremacist symbols such as the confederate flag and confederate monuments outrages and continues to initiate protests across the US at alarming rates. Most scholars would agree that a college education graduates a well-rounded person who has been exposed to diverse groups, learning environments, and literacies in ways to

effectively problem solve.

Beginning writers sit in freshman classrooms with the expectation to learn, I reiterate; but what they learn is based on curricula politics. Teachers orchestrate the rhetorical approaches to problem solving and the aim should be to create a better democracy for all. Concerning, however, is white teacher knowledge about the racially subjugated groups they teach—a necessary literacy if the field is to work toward decolonizing pedagogies and epistemologies (Kynard, "Teaching" 7). Sylvia Wynter stresses intellectual and epistemological struggle to undo racial violence. Current conflicts involving race, class, gender, culture, history, and the politics thereof—violence to Black bodies with impunity, the miseducation of multiply marginalized students, and structural racism—epitomize the need for pedagogies that require investigation and promote critical thinking about these issues. The constant everyday occurrences of racial aggressions, micro and macro, signal a move away from the type of critical pedagogies described by Paulo Freire.

Historically, HBCUs traditionally promote culturally inclusive pedagogies, as pointed out by Kynard and Robert Eddy, because the marginalized faculty share the same fate for survival as the students (W27). Kynard and Eddy charge that now is the time to,

> take stock of the historical retooling of higher education that HBCUs have done for the groups that have had the least access. The U.S. public schools serving black and Latina/o students have only become re-segregated and left more under-resourced, as bad as, if not worse than, the Jim Crow era, creating even more obstacles for these high school graduates to attend four-year colleges. Thus, we need to take heed of what historically black colleges and universities have taught

us like never before. (W41)

Students come to the university from legally segregated environments, cultural enclaves, based on the social and economic structure of neighborhoods in America. This is what I encountered in Oklahoma. My research investigating the history of liberating pedagogies at Langston University addresses the critical need to retool higher education following models set forth by HBCUs (Favors 4).

Ultimately, educators from all over the US can benefit from what we learn from investigating Oklahoma as a unique site for rhetorical inquiry. Langston's history is just one small part of a much bigger narrative of resistance that has gone undocumented or uninvestigated or ill investigated. Oklahoma's legacy of twenty-seven Black towns and Tulsa's Black Wallstreet (prior to the Tulsa genocide) attests to the will of Black people's spirit of liberation to escape discrimination to govern themselves (Robinson 181). Their resistance also marks a break from "racial capitalism"—white supremacist, Jim Crowism that allows one group to own another (Johnson and Lubin 6). The liberatory pedagogies practiced at Langston emerged from a strong desire to escape oppression and enslavement (Robinson 3, *Futures*).

I mention Gold and Favors because of the theoretical connection to my own work with Langston. Teachers at Wiley College like Melvin B. Tolson used agonism, personal experience, and Afrocentric teaching methods to produce "a critical pedagogy that honored students' home voices and fostered progressive political action" (Gold xi). Also, Storer College offered an intellectual rhetorical space for activism where W.E.B. DuBois and others hosted the first NAACP meeting in 1906. Favors concludes, "Black colleges produced a wave of foot soldiers unlike anything the burgeoning movement [the SNCC]

had ever seen. The explosion of student activism in 1960 was no accident or anomaly" (2). Indeed, activism among Black youth, because of the active role of HBCUs, developed strongly over the years prior to the 60s. Today we seek to foster inclusive environments and a safe space for productive activism. I define productive activism as activism that works toward bridging racial divides to solve conflicts, not contribute to further conflict through prejudice and racism.

Theoretical and Intersectional Methodologies Drawn From

This project engages autoethnography, historiography, and feminist methodologies to investigate intersecting identifications as critical contact zones within classrooms to foster cross-cultural communication. Specifically, the project investigates the Oklahoma territory and uses the region as a frame to present an analysis of activist rhetorical education in the vein of Black liberation in the 60s. First, I incorporate my own experiences as a Black female teacher and graduate teaching assistant in the state of Oklahoma. Second, I examine historical documents such as newspaper articles and course catalogs to re-envision the time period to write a history of Langston University and rhetorical education at LU during the 1960s. Third, I engage the feminist rhetorical research methods of critical imagination, strategic contemplation, social circulation, and rhetorical listening, as defined by Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa E. Kirsch and Krista Ratcliffe. Critical imagination invites researchers to hypothesize and "speculate methodically about probabilities . . . what might likely be true based on what we have in hand" by engaging different perspectives (Royster and Kirsch x). Strategic contemplation, as a feminist method, allows the researcher to give attention to the spiritual dimension of scholarship by inviting him or her to linger in deep thought while

visiting the site of research or where the subject(s) once walked, worked, or otherwise engaged society (86); this is more of an internal journey of discovery as the researcher meditates by standing back reflecting to connect the past to the present in some significant way. Next, social circulation critically engages societal customs and how they change based on language, culture, and time (101). Lastly, I invoke rhetorical listening as described by Krista Ratcliffe as a method of standing under discourses, listening, as a way of promoting cross cultural communication to both clarify and extend the importance of this research project (Ratcliffe 3).

I tack into and appropriate Adam Banks's theorizing in *Digital Griots,* specifically the mix and remix. Banks contends, "Music is in the mix; writing is in the mix. The constantly new and renewing possibilities emergent in the many complex practices of the DJ providing the mix: selection, arrangement, layering, sampling, beat-matching, blending" (Banks 35). Although at the time they did not know it, teachers at Langston used the sounds and echoes outside the academy to cultivate students within the academy and prepare them to build community and for life and work in America within the community as the landscape desegregated (36). I posit Black pedagogies in the 60s as a remix with the teacher him or herself being the DJ. Banks explains, the rhetorical work of the mix . . . extends [to] the production or the creation of an individual track or text; the second has to do with the way a DJ is able to line up two different tracks so that they connect seamlessly" (37). Of course, the two tracks are racism and segregation. Black teachers such as Melvin Tolson and Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher used their very bodies, language, life stories, and experiences as a mix (the present) and remix (the past) to provide the philosophical base for their pedagogies (Flasch 29). I discuss the remix of

experiences as pedagogical rhetoric in more detail in chapter three, "Help me Breathe."

Prior to Banks's writing, we lacked the critical vocabulary to describe how Black teachers engaged critical thinking by building and sequencing their past knowledge and experiences with Jim Crow racism in America using Black rhetorical traditions (the body, style, and trickster subversion (also discussed in chapter three)) to teach and cultivate students generally. Black teachers at Langston, and I would argue across HBCUs traditionally, "actively engaged the past in such a way that it [obliterated] the boundaries that [appeared] to divide the past from the present, and from the future" (qtd. in Banks 53). These teachers sought to transform students with critical pedagogies that instilled race pride. Teaching critically also requires helping students understand how to negotiate tight spaces involving senior bureaucrats where they are often culturally underrepresented (Kynard 2, "Teaching"). It really comes down to awareness on all levels, from both the oppressed and the oppressor. Awareness of language varieties, awareness of how corporations and capitalism shape institutions of higher learning, and awareness of democratic processes and how and when to push back when necessary; most importantly teaching critically develops a critical awareness in students of how to use written discourse and language to effect change at higher levels in ways that benefit their own lives (Kynard 3, "Teaching").

In Paulo Freire's highly acclaimed *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* he defines a liberatory education by explaining that the pedagogy of the oppressed "is the pedagogy of people engaged in the fight for their own liberation" (Freire 35). This is a pedagogy that demands activism and dialogue. Freire explains,

> The pedagogy of the first stage must deal with the problem of the

> oppressed consciousness and the oppressor consciousness, the problem of men and women who oppress and men and women who suffer oppression. It must take into account their behavior, their view of the world, and their ethics. A particular problem is the duality of the oppressed: they are contradictory, divided beings, shaped by and existing in a concrete situation of oppression and violence. (37)

Although Freire's work initially focused on Brazilian peasants, his theorizing applies to all oppressed cultures, especially marginalized populations in America. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, African Americans made up America's greatest minority group. The Civil Rights and Black Power eras in America showcased values and attitudes of Blacks that positioned themselves against white standards stigmatizing their language and culture in favor of their folk speech and ways; Freire's theorizing is also applicable to other movements involving the marginalized, such as gay rights, women's rights, etc. Providing a Black liberatory rhetorical education requires teaching to liberate any oppressed class of students by helping them understand how class structures control and shape communication practices. Langston faculty used the debate team to teach students about audience and how to capture kairotic moments to achieve one's goal. According to James Berlin, knowledge is a commodity which must be situated "in relation to larger economic, social, political, and cultural considerations" (*Rhetorics* 55). As intentional communities strategically designed to address the needs of marginalized classes, Langston positioned economic, social, political, and cultural activity at the forefront of curricular and pedagogy.

Analyzing the civil rights era and rethinking how economic, social, and political

happenings influenced cultural events provides critical lessons and models on how to empower marginalized students. The 60s proved to be an iconic and troubling decade for racially segregated America's history—especially Black Oklahomans post the Tulsa genocide. The Black Power movement instilled race pride and encouraged Blacks to define their own goals and lead their own organizations; conjunctively, the civil rights movement reached an emotional peak with freedom rides and sit-ins across the country. The assassinations of Kennedy (11/22/63), Malcolm X (2/21/65) and King (4/4/68) shook the very foundation of the nation. Black Oklahomans did not sit idly by as these historical events transpired. I can imagine Clara Luper, Ada Lois Fisher, and Roscoe Dunjee listening to the radio (or watching television) on the morning of August 28, 1963 when almost 300,000 civil rights protestors marched on Washington for jobs and freedom. Giving their political activism in Oklahoma with the local chapter of the NAACP and Oklahoma City's only Black newspaper, *The Black Dispatch*, it is safe to conclude that they followed the politics surrounding the stall of the civil rights bill in 1963. Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 into law on June 2, 1964; historians often refer to the Bill as "the most far-reaching law in support of racial equality ever enacted by Congress" (Franklin and Higginbotham 544-5).

Adding insult to injury, boiling resulting racial tensions led to the massacre at the Edmund Pettis bridge in Selma, Alabama on March 7, 1965, bringing international shame to America. Roscoe Dunjee died in Oklahoma City on March 1st of this same year, just six days before the massacre. Local and international news sources referred to the massacre as "bloody Sunday" as they broadcast pictures around the world of police violently meeting the 600 peaceful protestors, majority Black men, women and children,

marching to Birmingham for voting rights with biting dogs, tear gas, Billy clubs, and fire hoses. That same year, poet Amira Baraka opened the Black Arts Repertory Theatre School (BARTS) in Harlem, jump starting the Black Arts Movement. The viral radicalism gave birth to popular Black based magazines such as *Ebony*, *Jet*, and the *Negro Digest/Black World*, and others. Blacks continued to gain attention in ways that led to progress for the race by way of education and employment opportunities.

Two historically well-known Langston professors, Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher (1948) and G.W. McLaurin, *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education* (1950), filed suit against the University of Oklahoma when the University's president, George Lynn Cross, refused them admission because of race (52); "Langston could not offer equal educational opportunity—which is what the law specified—since it did not have accreditation" (52), a law school, or offer professional degrees. Blacks like Sipuel Fisher and McLaurin wanted full citizenship rights and access to a quality education, but Oklahoma white citizens and legislature only supported funding for Langston for Blacks for teacher education and agricultural programs. Langston University played a central and active role training Black Oklahomans to work and serve. Locally, Langston products served as mayors and leaders of the town. Furthermore, as explained by Bobby Lovett in *America's Historically Black Colleges & Universities: A Narrative History, 1837-2009,* it simply was not standard practice for leaders at HBCUs to speak out publicly against white leadership (155). They understood the political function of HBCUs from a white dominated social and economic system centered on teaching students to work and serve, and public rebellion by faculty could result in institutional defunding, loss of jobs, or even worse—closure; the atmosphere at Langston and attitudes of faculty on the surface

was no different. Langston often struggled with the Board of Regents for financial and political support, so public resistance to white demands was not always encouraged, but resistance did occur in passive ways; one-on-one mentorship and special programs urged students toward independence, activism, and leadership. My personal interviews with former Langston Dean, Dr. Jean Bell Manning, and students from the 50s and 60s found this to be the case.

Considering the struggle for an education and the spirit of Langston professors like Ada Fisher—the civil rights advocate who integrated the University of Oklahoma's law school, and G.W. McLaurin to stand up and fight for a right to attend the University of Oklahoma at a time when society denied them this right, how can we not imagine and speculate, as Jacqueline Royster and Gesa Kirsch invites us to do as researchers, how that spirit overflowed or manifested itself in classrooms at Langston? (Royster and Kirsch 34-5). How could the sprits of Fisher and McLaurin not whisper to other faculty and administrators in hallways, around campus, and in meetings? How could their spirits fail to direct and guide others like their own—seeking change, seeking more, seeking educational equality? Sipuel Fisher joined Langston faculty in 1951, after passing the Oklahoma Bar. She taught for 32 years. George McLaurin taught at Langston for 33 years. Although no article exists documenting that Ada Sipuel Fisher and McLaurin sat down for coffee or dinner together, we know that they knew each other. We know that they taught closely together since Langston's campus is relatively small. We speculate safely that they would have attended faculty or other professional meetings together. We know they knew and rubbed shoulders with Melvin B. Tolson, coach of the debate team. The motion picture *The Great Debaters* starring Denzel Washington and Forest Whitaker

honors Tolson's legacy as a teacher and debate coach. We can also safely speculate that these Langston teachers' life experiences influenced their pedagogies, which I cover in more detail in chapter three. We can only imagine the real-life examples they used in classrooms to enhance understanding of their lessons. We can only imagine—as Jacqueline Royster invites us to do in theorizing social circulation and critical imagination how a double consciousness acted rhetorically to influence private reactions to public spaces for Blacks on Langston's campus during the 1960s (Royster and Kirsch 98).

In *Borderlands: LaFrontera, The New Mestiza*, Gloria Anzaldua extends W.E.B. Du Bois's theorizing of double consciousness to Chicanas who grew up in South Texas negotiating the politics of borders. Anzaldua's theorizing creates space for my work because she theorizes the experiences of those exposed to multiple social worlds and how those worlds influence identity, especially if we accept the premise that knowledge is socially constructed. Bill Cope and Mary Kalantis explain multiliteracies demand pedagogical practices that respect the "cognitive, cultural, and social effects" of language, making language much more dynamic than just words because words work toward cultural purposes and meaning (5). Blacks brought their experiences and layered identities from slavery, failed reconstruction, and struggles for equality in education and employment to real, yet invisible, public boundaries, leading to Du Bois's initial theorizing of double consciousness referring to African Americans' racialized identity in a White dominated society.

Throughout Anzaldua's text, and in Chapter 7 specifically, she captures the layered complexity of knowledge possessed by individuals socially constructed in dual

environments where conflicting cultures intersect. She explains how social and cultural experiences manifests in language, dialects, and idiomatic expressions. Today, multiculturalism demands acknowledgement of multiple consciousness and experiences of Jewish, Chicana, Asian, Middle Eastern, and other minority groups negotiating invisible yet real cultural, borders in the U.S. Showing how being within and without cultures helps clarify my argument of how multiculturalism produces critical literacies and a need to be culturally literate and versed in these critical literacies. Black faculty at separatist institutions like Langston were skilled in the culture that rejected them and actively sought to ameliorate the "education debt by committing to educating black students" (Kynard and Eddy W26); we look to Langston to discover current pedagogical methods to liberate marginalized classes because as an HBCU Langston's "primary locus [was to define and construct] an education for racially/economically subordinated students" (W27). At HBCUs like Langston, "pedagogy, mentoring, and interracial and intercultural communication take on critical meaning" because of an acute understanding of hegemony, racism, and the need to break free and cross borders with the least amount of harm.

A case in point of a real border conflict played out on university soil took place at the University of Oklahoma in 2015. Members of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon (SAE) fraternity were caught on tape chanting: "There will never be a nigger in SAE. You can hang them from a tree, but they'll never sign with me" (Campo). President Boren immediately issued a statement denouncing racism and promising training in diversity. What else could he do? Despite president Boren's efforts to denounce racism and create a more diverse and inclusive campus, in January 2019, another white student surfaced on

video in blackface using the “N” word. Then President Gallogly echoed much of Boren’s declaration expressing intolerance for racism, promising diversity training, and making a commitment to do more to diversify faculty.

Eight months later, another University of Oklahoma white student surfaced on social media in blackface with the caption, “another day, another case” (Jones). His defense? I was home with my girlfriend. In other words, what I do at home is my business and my right to freedom of speech as an American. Never mind if my freedom of speech infringes on someone else’s right to feel safe and secure in a certain space within our democracy. In fact, such transgressions at the University of Oklahoma created the need for the Black Emergency Response Team (BERT) designed to educate and raise awareness to racial injustices on campus. Political and social dislocations—as minorities are dislocated in white space and whites can feel dislocated when faced with multiculturalism—sometimes causes individuals to develop an “unhealthy” agility to navigate these spaces. The academy must acknowledge that she plays a role in helping students develop healthy agility and dexterity negotiating complex social realities involving race, language, sex, and politics. Racial incidents should force classroom dialogue on white privilege to help unpack the ideologies that allows one to put on blackface and contend, “I’m not prejudiced. It was taken out of context.”

To assert that any blackface incident does not involve racism indicates blindness to one’s own “self” and the white privilege that allowed it. Today, white privilege manifests itself as modern-day lynching by allowing violence to Black bodies such as George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. Blackface incidents speak to the importance of

investigating a racialized space like Langston that served marginalized classes in the Territory and beyond through a race conscious curriculum.

I personally understand the need to promote awareness, training, and sensitivity in predominantly white academic space in the ivory towers. As the only African American graduate student in my rhetoric seminars at the University of Oklahoma (I took nine credit hours that semester), not one professor mentioned the growing racial tension on the campus amid the Blackface incidents. Not one professor or white student in the department inquired of my well-being. Feminist research methodologies allows for investigating silence as a literacy. However, I understand that conversations on race and white privilege remain difficult. Kynard addresses white privilege in academia in "Teaching While Black" when she calls for a "rupturing of whiteness, racial violence, and institutional racism of our disciplinary constructs in composition-rhetoric" and describes how white faculty can be "deeply invested in the illogic of their racism" (1). Kynard describes a web of "actors and processes" that condone racial violence by failing to speak out against micro and macro aggressions (3). Using feminist rhetorical practices to investigate racialized spaces like Langston gives us a way into investigating new spaces for literacies that stagnate equality in America.

Like Anzaldua in South Texas, Black people have had to learn to negotiate intersecting borders since the beginning of slavery, and more specifically and critically after reconstruction and the civil rights era. Failing to learn to effectively negotiate white space could result in violence to the Black body. Rhetorical study concerns itself with communication practices at boundaries and intersecting spaces and groups—especially politically charged boundaries and borders that sometimes require careful evaluation of

audience. How we communicate and how we teach others to understand how their presence affects and contextualizes rhetorical borders and spaces remain important. Again, minorities negotiate these invisible borders all the time because of forced assimilation in academic spaces. Furthermore, teachers at HBCUs have been responsible for empowering Black students to negotiate the rhetorical borders of white hostility and racism. Investigating Langston gives us an inside look at how to effectively respond to border conflict on a local level.

Including a study of HBCUs like Langston in historical narratives of the field provides one interventional approach to raise awareness of how these racialized spaces provided safety and a means of survival for Blacks, something most marginalized students do not have today in primarily white institutions. Most white professors and administrators who deal with marginalized classes and who have never suffered fear or discrimination because of their skin color do not fully understand the need for safe spaces; this history is important as we work toward eliminating anti-Black linguistic racism that promotes discrimination from within the classroom. Because of the institution's history overcoming the injustices of white supremacy, Langston is a viable part of this narrative. Individual and community survival rested heavily on the racialized and safe space of the college and the town (see "Separate but Equal" pp. 69-75 of Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher's autobiography).

I take the position with other social theorists that literacy is shaped by politics and literacy is socially and culturally constructed (Kynard, "Teaching While Black" 3; Royster, *Traces* 35). Thus, composition is a political process. How does one fuse the self and the subject of composition? As a reminder, my research interests center on culture

and language and how these two factors influence writing and literacy in classrooms today. Thus, I am acutely interested in presenting ways to move toward inclusive pedagogies that value cultural rhetorics reflective of a multicultural student body.

In the next section, I explore literature on the effects of white pedagogical strategies teaching Black students. I hope to show that a cultural divide exists between students and teachers in a majority of America's white, public educational institutions. We need to work toward bridging these gaps. The majority of teachers and students at institutions of higher education are vanilla, with a few scattered chocolate chips and strawberries to accent the flavor. As a result, the many varieties of spoken English present a problem for those who develop curricula, especially for first year composition (FYC).

Pedagogical Literature Review

Culture cannot be ignored and should inform pedagogy because these spaces, classrooms, are socially constructed and the knowledge garnered thereof directly affects each piece of writing. Subsequently, what we do as teachers becomes a political act. Just as literature is not created in a vacuum, neither is literacy. Understanding the contextual nature of language acquisition—influences from the community and home—is key to helping students succeed in the composition classroom, and ultimately academe. It is this cultural context that shapes how a person thinks and responds in written discourse. Again, thus, ignoring—whether actively or passively—the social context students bring with them into the classroom is a political act in itself. In "This Ain't Another Statement! This is a DEMAND for Black Linguistic Justice" (July 2020), the CCCC Executive Committee poses three heavy questions that all the compositionists in the field should ask

themselves to generate dialogue: (1) How has Black Lives Mattered in the context of language education? (2) How has Black Lives Mattered in our research, scholarship, teaching, disciplinary discourses, graduate programs, professional organizations, and publications? And (3) How have our commitments to activism as a discipline contributed to the political freedom of Black peoples?

Committing to activism and making Black people and their lives matter means looking for ways and methods to effectively integrate and honor the Black experience in our pedagogies, which actually began with the penning of Students' Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL) in the late 60s. SRTOL also marks the beginning of a social justice movement initiated by Geneva Smitherman with her "Black Power is Black Language" speech in 1968 in response to Jerry Farber's essay, "The Student as Nigger" (Smitherman, "Foreword" v). Smitherman felt it her calling and mission to show that university students were not "niggers"—slaves to their masters/professors as Farber proposed (v). Smitherman's research provides a foundational base for culturally inclusive pedagogies that value cultural rhetorics and cultural logics. While Smitherman's research creates an opening for these conversations, she focuses mostly on white institutions; her research does not describe or engage how HBCUs like Langston addressed language issues and barriers in the classroom. This neglect, however, is understandable considering the time period and push for equality and recognition at white institutions. HBCUs simply were not the problem or focus at the time because they were already doing the work for which Smitherman advocated.

Students' Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL) denotes a move away from prescriptivist rhetorics focusing on correctness and grammar designed to eradicate

students' home language habits toward a public acknowledgement in academe that the values promoted in schools reflect prejudice. I emphasize "white schools." The outrage of SRTOL attacks pedagogies that rely on classroom grammar drills, the conjugation of verbs, and rules such as not ending sentences with prepositions—notions of correctness that often strip student writing of voice. While pedagogical practices at Langston did promote prescriptivist pedagogies, the lessons often took place through oral discussion and practice as opposed to grammar drills. Langston teachers would correct a student's speech if s/he said, "I coulda went," for example. But the correction took place through a shared fate that made the correction welcoming in a valuable type way, and not in a degrading, "You're not good enough or intelligent enough" type way. Favors explain shared fate as Black teachers' experiences to survive Jim Crow as being the same as Black students suffering and struggle to survive in higher education—their fate was linked to the fate of the Black masses (9).

Although we have taken significant strides away from drill-based pedagogies that center on correctness, especially since the publication of Mina Shaughnessy's *Errors and Expectations*, if we are all honest, prescriptivist teaching dominates the first-year experience at many two-year colleges and universities today because of the values and White lens instructors bring to the classroom. As a teacher at a community college, each semester I witness the effects of teachers forcing prescriptivist grammars on students. Upon college entry, students must take a placement test in math and English to measure their skill level. Measuring the skill level for English mastery rests almost solely on grammar mastery. Not only do students take a common placement test but they are also required to take a departmental grammar exam designed by our English faculty designed

to measure students' abilities to correctly identify agreement errors involving subjects and verb and pronouns, as well as faulty parallel constructions, and other unimportant usage errors based on standardized English. I think including a copy here would bring national shame to the institution. There are other ways to gauge students' preparedness than with a grammar exam.

An alternative to a focus on standard American grammar, the idea, then and now, is to offer a variety of dialect options for writing. In other words, when appropriate, allow students to express themselves in the language of their culture. Engaging prescriptivist teaching without acknowledging and respecting dialect varieties "shackles student writers and inhibits their production of clear, cogent, lively writing" (vi). Another goal of SRTOL is to raise awareness that the general public, and sometimes teachers, are "uninformed, or misinformed" on how language works (21).

Also foundational for this research project, Elaine Richardson's research in *African American Literacies* describes her own as well as the experience of African American students in the college classroom limning how degradation plays out in the classroom, often through writing assignments—all in the name of literacy. Although a distinguished professor now, she describes, like Smitherman, being forced into remediation and what she dubs as "dummy English" (Richardson 3). Both Smitherman and Richardson spoke dialects reflective of their African American culture and heritage, and both encountered professors at the collegiate level who failed or refused to acknowledge African American rhetorical and literacy traditions.

For example, Richardson recalls reading Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech and Jerry Farber's "The Student as Nigger" in the college classroom. Shockingly, she

explains how her professor covered the text with "no Afrocentric analysis" and no mention of "the Black style in Dr. King's speech" (2). The same professor covered Farber's text "unproblematically, as though we [the two Black students in the classroom] would accept that the average college student (who by the way is the White) has an experience that parallels the African American experience of dehumanizing slavery, rape, lynching, linguistic and cultural oppression, and continued structural inequality in the aftermath of legal segregation" (2). In this passage of text, Richardson effectively captures and explains the problem of how rhetorical and cultural blindness plays out in the classroom, at the hands of often White professors. Richardson published *African American Literacies* 18 years ago, and we still have the same problem in the classroom today.

What, exactly, is the problem with current pedagogies? A white lens or gaze that manifests itself is what I would describe as a rhetorical straitjacket.[10] Many white students, teachers, and administrators are unaware of the privilege they walk in daily. As a result, they continue to transgress oppressed others. Premised on a lack of self-awareness and denial, the person in the straitjacket of propaganda (a repressive white consciousness based on hypocritical values of fairness and equality) possesses a cultural blindness that does not allow him or her to see or move beyond the White experience in America. Like restrained mental patients or prisoners, those in the straitjacket cannot fathom what it is like to live in a culturally oppressive environment where one experiences continued structural inequality. Furthermore, those in the straitjacket position themselves indifferently or apathetic to racial struggles because they do not see a problem, or the situation does not affect them directly. Because the rhetorical straitjacket

continues to surface in pedagogical and classroom practices that fail to acknowledge multiple consciousness and the broader social realities students bring to the classroom, more investigative and ethnographic research is needed in this area to help teachers understand how they themselves exacerbate the problem of multiple consciousness, and thus multiculturalism and border wars inside the classroom. Mainly, this occurs because they are uninformed or misinformed on how language works.

Many marginalized students like those I taught in Oklahoma public schools are unskilled at writing standardized English because it conflicts with their home language. Like Richardson, many of them possess keen intellectual skills, however; Gilyard also describes similar circumstances with his language learning experiences in *Voices of the Self*. Richardson says, "I just felt that I was smart, and never really found out I was illiterate until I went to college and got placed into dummy English" (3). She explains how after being degraded by one professor, another attempted to help her with her language issues:

> Dr. P looked at my paper and said, 'you don't talk like this. Write like you talk.' I was trying not to write like I really talked because I knew that would be rejected. The way I spoke with him was the speech reserved for strangers and White folks. I knew about style shifting from my home and the street. When dealing with White folks you talked like them. But I didn't know how to translate that to the page. My problem was that I didn't know how to write standardized English and I didn't know punctuation. (3)

Perhaps having a teacher familiar and trained in multicultural literacies might have helped Richardson and others like her have a smoother transition into academe. Kynard,

Richardson, and Smitherman maintain that when dealing with marginalized classes, student writing does not always effectively reflect their cognitive abilities. Marginalized students have a better chance of success in racialized spaces where teachers value the literacies they bring to the classroom. We need to continually work toward helping white teachers recognize the need to value the literacies marginalized classes bring to their classrooms.

Rethinking issues of access and critical pedagogies require practicing pedagogies similar to the demands put forth in June 2020 CCCC response to George Floyd's murder. The special committee lays out five demands. This dissertation concerns itself critically with demands 3-5, that (3) political discussions and praxis center Black Language as a teacher-researcher activism for classrooms and communities; (4) teachers develop and teach Black Linguistic Consciousness that works to decolonize the mind (and/or) language, unlearn white supremacy, and unravel anti-Black linguistic racism (I return to this demand in chapter 4); and (5) Black dispositions are centered in the research and teaching of Black language! Langston faculty, historically, have implemented these demands in some form or another since the institution's inception.

Geneva Smitherman shares a personal experience with Black linguistic racism in *Talkin and Testifyin: The Language of Black America* and more recently (2015) in "'Students' Right to Their Own Language': A Retrospect" that compels her to push for language equality. Smitherman, undoubtedly a brilliant student, was given a speech test as an undergraduate to determine if she would qualify for a teaching certificate. She recalls, "I flunked the test and had to take speech correction, not because of any actual speech impediment, such as aphasia or stuttering, but because I was a speaker of Black

English" (146). If Smitherman had teachers who practiced an ethic of care and inclusivity, instead of feeling aversion to Black English (BE), they would have probably attempted to bridge BE and SE by addressing the difference in the context of culture without devaluing Smitherman's experience as a speaker of Black English. In *Talking That Talk: Language, Culture, and Education in African America and Talkin and Testifyin: The Language of Black America* Smitherman presents thorough research on African American language, Ebonics, and culture, without which, much of the research in rhetoric and composition theorizing language and literacy would not be possible.

Former Langston students Sarah Jones and Venora McKinney recalled how teachers such as Melvin Tolson and Olether Toliver bridged the two dialects in the context of the classroom. Their methods—shaming and agonism[11]—worked because teachers maintained mutual respect with students. Shaming, which Flasch refers to as "showering of attention" (37), refers to Black teachers making "smart" (to use Black English) or curt remarks such as "Can't never could" or "I got mine, you need to get yours," as a way of embarrassing students who in some way challenged their authority or who did not seem to take the lessons seriously enough. I address shaming in more detail in chapter three of this dissertation. This tactic might not work with white students, but Black students need to see teachers in an authority role in some way, and shaming took on a similar effect as authoritarian home parenting aimed to instruct (Delpit 35).

When I spoke to Dr. Jean Bell Manning, former professor of English and vice president of academic affairs at Langston, and Dr. Joanne Clark, former Douglass High School English teacher and Langston professor of English, they made no mention of shaming as a pedagogical practice. Dr. Manning expressly explained: "It's called making

you think, pulling out the best in you." Both also explained how they used race centered examples with literature such as Shakespeare in the classroom to help students bridge Black culture and language with white culture and language. For example, Dr. Manning explained that when teaching Shakespeare, she would ask students, "How would we say it?" Again, this is a powerful rhetorical strategy to bridge language and culture. I want to stress that when students possess the skill to effectively bridge the two, it creates a new literacy, giving them "good enough game" using that rhetorical skill to negotiate white society.

No aversion to BEV existed in their environment because that was the language of their lineage, so students were not ashamed of their home language. Instead, they recognized the benefit of being aware and mastering SE and garnering the ability to code shift based on audience if they chose to shift. Importantly, I want to reiterate that I, by no means, advocate code switching as a pedagogy or practice; in fact, I take a direct philosophical stance in the opposite direction. Instead of code switching, I cast my lot with Gilyard supporting a pedagogy that permits students the rhetorical savvy to use whatever language best gets their argument across (Gilyard, *True* 111). Sadly, I think many of us Black and brown students of a certain generation can recall personal experiences like those of Smitherman and Richardson where someone in the ivory towers devalued us and our language in ways that made us feel that we did not belong. Smitherman and Richardson's experiences effectively demonstrate how linguistic violence leads to violence against Black bodies because linguistic violence reinforces racist attitudes toward groups and, therefore, reinforces white power structures (Baker-Bell 16).

In addition, reading Smitherman and Richardson helped me expand my own repertoire as a teacher and avoid the trap of looking for grammar errors in writing; like Langston's faculty practiced, I moved toward more inclusive grading practices that valued Black, Native, and other marginalized classes' rhetorical uses of their languages of nurture. Richardson asserts that "standardized American English is not the possession of any one group and can be used by any citizen as a tool of empowerment" (3); this is my sentiment, as well as Gilyard's and a host of others. Using SE in conjunction with home language, when appropriate, makes writing more vivid (Kynard, *Vernacular* 209).

Langston professors, like those at other HBCUs around the country, understood this often, unspoken principle. I want my students to have a command of SE without devaluing the home language and culture they bring to the classroom, but this type of literacy and language learning develops over time. I hope this project initiates a dialectic on classroom practices that help students understand how to use variations of language rhetorically or in conjunction with other discourses and dialects for a desired effect (Gilyard, *True* 113; Kynard, *Vernacular* 208).

Prescriptivism, Literacy, and Language

Freshman writers should be encouraged to use alternative rhetorics—rhetorics that employ their home language and literacies. Literacies that lend voice and style to their writing. Literacies that allow them to look inward "into [their] own thought and cultural/language patterns and history, while looking outward into the world's, seeking to intervene in [their] own context" (Richardson 116). But this privilege and right—to wield power in academe—comes with having a basic command of literacies of dominant discourses. What am I trying to say here? I'm saying that if the students I encountered at

Cache High School are not exposed to Black language and other discourses in meaningful and respectful ways in the classroom, they will graduate college and continue purporting white supremacist attitudes toward marginalized classes, reinforcing the same white supremacist structures that have long caused division and chaos in our country. Langston professors understood the need to expose students to cultural literacies long before the publication of Smitherman's and Richardson's work. Black professors understood the role cultural literacies played in helping them achieve in their own academic careers (Tolliver).

Richardson's solution to the problem of Black language and identity, which advocates an Afrocentric curriculum, extends to the multicultural and multi skill level nature of the college classroom and demands a multicultural approach to literacies. Richardson explains, "The African-centered approach strives to achieve this [literacy education that helps students develop their talents] by connecting African American students to Black language and literacy traditions and stimulating their critical awareness" (118). I posit that Langston professors used their very bodies as Afrocentrism to teach and advocate literacy learning to a primarily African American audience. I discuss how teachers used their bodies as rhetorical agencies in more detail in chapter three. Faculty promoted literacy learning in context without the cultural degradation that sometimes occur in current classrooms where other cultures intersect with white culture (Barker-Bell 11). Langston teachers used love—a genuine ethos of care and concern for students' well-being because of the sense of community and accountability. They cared about the students they served. They identified with the students they served. They shared the same fate of being Black as the students they served.

Langston teachers brought the unique, yet common, experience of struggle to the classroom; many of them understood the struggle of being Black and having to overcome white oppression and structural racism. For example, Melvin Tolson and Ada Fisher, to name two, lived the discrimination they taught about. They had a solid understanding of white middle class racist, Jim Crow literacies that said "enter through the back door," "whites only," "Colored Section," etc. How do we help college students today at predominantly white institutions understand the literacies of white privilege to help bridge social and political gaps and move the nation toward King's dream of Justice and equality? With the ideas of caring and identifying in mind, more has to be done to help white teachers identify with the cultural experiences of their Black and brown students to promote literacy learning in public schools, an area this paper does not cover and that Geneva Smitherman identifies as problematic.[12] More importantly, as April Baker-Bell explains, "linguistic violence and racial violence go hand in hand" and have become normalized in America (16).

Researchers simply cannot overlook the fact that some students could use a little more help than others understanding structural racism and thinking critically and multi-directionally about the literacies and privileges they bring to the classroom and how these literacies shape their attitudes, especially when such literacies are birthed in small town white supremacist values that ignore the democratic process. As I mention in the introduction, the mothers, fathers, and grandparents of many of the students I taught in the small town of Cache were the mayors, bank presidents, and state representatives. The literacies of the privilege of powerful political positions are reproduced through pedagogical practices that position standard English as "right" and every other dialect

variation as “wrong.” What I said in the classroom as a Black teacher had little value when positioned against this system of privilege. Furthermore, standing up and announcing that one’s a redneck and proud of it (see my example from the introduction), when read rhetorically, says: “I’m white. I’m proud to be white. This is my space. I don’t care what you think. I support and I’m part of the ‘good ole boys’ system.” Of concern also is the white supremacist invisible social and political attitudes masquerading as freedom of speech that encourages discrimination (Baker-Bell 17).

Furthermore, I’ve witnessed the passive classroom response to racial incidents occurring around campus when teachers fail to acknowledge in the classroom the tension and discontent taking place outside the classroom. A simple departmental memorandum as a follow-up to the president’s memorandum, with no physical action, does not constitute an effective response to racial incidents. This dissertation is about all that! All of these examples create literate contexts and exigences that must be addressed through race conscious curricula. Black teachers cannot do this work alone. And it is possible, which is shown in chapter four through the literacy narrative of Joy Flasch. Teachers must follow Flasch’s example and engage critical self-assessment of themselves and the values that drive their pedagogies.

Donald Macedo explains, “Empowerment should also be a means that enables students ‘to interrogate and selectively appropriate those aspects of the dominant culture that will provide them with the basis for defining and transforming, rather than merely serving, the wider social order’” (128). When students leave the classroom, they need tools to better themselves; tools that aid them toward upward mobility in social spaces alien to them; Lisa Delpit offers useful strategies in *Other People’s Children* arguing for

pedagogies that help students understand dominant class structures, which she refers to as "the culture of power" (39). Teachers bring biases to the learning environment, and so do students. Merging conflicting views presents critical challenges for both teachers and students and must be "agitated" from the top down, and not the bottom up (Delpit 40).

Continuously, Freshman Composition's terrain presents challenges for new teachers, and having inclusive discussions of how Langston progressively engaged white and Black literacies to train students in rhetoric in the 1960s might help extend the pedagogical repertoire of those teaching marginalized students today. The research revealed that Langston teachers successfully produced in students both an intellectually literary and rhetorical subject. Students left the classroom with the ability to successfully interrogate white literacies (i.e. power structures) that maintained the racist social order around them, and they possessed the rhetorical savvy to use language—a combination of standard English and Black English—in radical ways to tear down racist strongholds; I speak more to how teachers did the work to develop a literate and rhetorical subject in students in chapter three. However, without a solid understanding of the literacies students bring to the classroom, in this case Black English Vernacular, white teachers really do "fork students' tongues". More exposure to histories of linguistic variations and classroom practices and pedagogies surrounding language varieties promote respect and might help curb what Vershawn Young phrases as "Black linguistic racism and linguistic white supremacy" in his July 28, 2020 CCCC cover letter for Black linguistic justice. The more exposure to language learning and culture as we push forward in the twenty-first century the more we move toward linguistic justice for marginalized language usage learners.

In the introduction to *Vernacular Insurrections: Race, Black Protest, and the New Century in Composition-Literacies Studies,* Carmen Kynard asserts that her motivation to write a revisionist history rested in the fact that as a graduate student in rhetoric and writing studies she "needed a way into [the] field. She explains, "[V]ery little that I had been shown as the cannon, as the key moments, as the critical issues as the seminal edited collections, as 'the' history, as the landmarks and signposts, as the categories, or as the inventive engines seemed to include me" (12). This is a powerful observation about race and culture in the making of knowledge in the field of rhetoric and composition, a field intrinsically linked to literacy studies because of the diverse cultural representations present in our classrooms. Kynard goes on to write an enlightening, field changing historiography that effectively incorporates the Black protest movements—Black Power and Black Arts—into the disciplinary narrative, and which also creates space for more research in the field focused on racialized spaces like HBCUs how they have been represented, misrepresented, or altogether left out of narratives of the field.

Kynard's Chapter two of *Vernacular Insurrections*, "I Want to Be African: Tracing Black Radical Traditions with 'Students' Rights to Their Own Language" critiques Lisa Delpit's work. I cannot say that I agree that, in the words of Kynard, that the "culture of power stuff, as it has been currently used, is just way too played out now anyway" (98). In *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom*, Delpit argues that to produce empowered adults, Black students must understand that there is a power of culture in the United States; she posits that students must learn the political power game and the role language plays in it in order to play the game (39-40). Keith Gilyard also acknowledges that standard English can function rhetorically to benefit

marginalized students (*True* 97). To Delpit, it is the teacher's role to teach the technical skills needed to effectively play the game. Delpit explains: "I believe the world will be diminished if cultural diversity is ever obliterated . . . [and] that each cultural group should have a right to maintain its own language style. When I speak, therefore, of the culture of power, I don't speak of how I wish things to be but of how they are" (39). Here lies the catch 22 as I write the curricular history of Langston University.

Teachers at Langston practiced a skills-based pedagogy but without devaluing Black language users and Black culture. Delpit further asserts that "to act as if power does not exist is to ensure that the power status quo remains the same" (39). Even Gilyard explains: "[I]n the world of trickster figures, which African American culture is to a significant degree, any method by which one can trick someone else [as we see Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher do in chapter four of this study] (and I mean this in a positive sense here) is considered good enough game" (*True* 97) (See also Gilyard, *Voices* 74). Game is a metaphor for, in Black English terms, "making things happen" or "gittin what you want." Teachers at Langston approached literacy learning and skills-based pedagogies as resources for "game" to gain—to subvert the status quo. But more work needs to be done to loosen the culture of power's grip on literacy learning, which both Delpit, Kynard, Richardson, and others have already argued. Researchers and scholars continue to work toward the goal of dismantling the theoretical structures on which these premises are built, but we need more Keith Gilyards, Adam Banks, Carmen Kynards, and April Baker-Bells to achieve the type of liberating linguistic justice Black language learners need today.

When we witness repeated blackface incidents on college campuses, when we

repeatedly watch a George Floyd die at the hands of a white police officer live on television while two other officers stand by, when we remember Trayvon Martin—a Black 16 year old killed by a trigger happy neighborhood watch guy, when we witness protestors storm the nation's Capitol with impunity, we cannot easily accept the claim that "the culture of power stuff" is "way too played out." What Kynard is saying, is that students need to learn writing, but we overemphasize the need to learn it because of the opportunities it will give within the dominant power structures in America. For ethos purposes, speaking the language of the culture of power helps validate Kynard's argument that students need to learn language, but not necessarily to have voice but to subvert that very culture of power Delpit acknowledges. Delpit positions herself as helping marginalized students "understand the value of the code they already possess as well as to understand the power realities in this country" (40). Students cannot change that which they do not understand. I find Delpit's work still relevant today. *Other People's Children* (2006), *The Skin that We Speak* (2008), and *Multiplication is for White People* (2012) provide viable insight and critical background information for those who have good intentions and want to improve their pedagogies and approach to teaching marginalized students. A dominant culture and dominant discourses do exist whether we want to admit it or not. In the same vein of Black protest in the 60s, we have to continue pulling apart the fabric of institutionalized linguistic racism by incorporating pedagogies that expose students to African American and other marginalized group's literacies.

Kynard acknowledges what I believe to be a serious concern in the field. She posits:

> I do not expect that most folk in the field will agree with or follow my

> arguments here. I imagine one of two responses from the majority-white constituency in composition-rhetoric studies . . . : for the old guard, I will be seen as off base, as just going too damn far, or as representative of a bent toward cultural studies that has turned 'us' away from all that good pedagogy, focus on style, and process theory in the days of old; (197)

Kynard carefully critiques Shaughnessy's rhetoric and identifies patterns of otherness, where Shaughnessy uses language such as "foreign," "ethnic enclave," and "ambivalent" to refer to basic writers. I also admire her ability to shift between vernaculars and Englishes to make her point more poignant. Kynard's language and style demonstrates the kind of command of language I want my students to have, a kind of command that I believe she acquired from being bi-dialectical—adept in both discourses (SE and her home language). She asks, "Am I the only one seein that sumthin done gone really wrong here?" (Kynard 198). Kynard's use of "seein" and "sumthin" demonstrates the power of combining home language and academic language for rhetorical effect. And no, she's not the only one who sees that something is really wrong in academe. Melvin Tolson saw it; Ada Fisher saw it; Olether Tolliver saw it, and so did other Black teachers at Langston in the 60s. The job today is to get white teachers to see it and to acknowledge the pedagogical changes that need to take place. Allowing students to use their home language for rhetorical effect makes for a powerful cultural response to border wars.

Min-Zhan Lu, in *Representing the "Other": Basic Writers and the Teaching of Basic Writing* also critiques "politics of linguistic innocence" in Shaughnessy's work (146). The real issues we face as composition teachers are being able to take the focus off "error" and time. Because teachers are not able to dedicate intense energy to one student

or one group doesn't mean that SRTOL has failed, as Kynard charges. It means that we must keep pushing forward, keep examining ourselves and our practices, and keep listening with openness and willingness to face our own biases in the classroom.

I admit that teachers can be justifiably conflicted on how to approach writing instruction when there is a need for both critical pedagogies and basic skills. In "No One Has a Right to His Own Language," Allen N. Smith argues that while there is no such animal as Standard English (SE) because there is no way to "synthesize the speaking and writing habits of some 200 million delightfully varied American citizens" (163), the role of teachers is to "disseminate the standards and values of the past for the coming generation in our respective chosen field" (164). To me, Smith engages equivocation to justify promoting SE pedagogies in a way that might devalue alternative dialects and literacies. My research seeks to show students can use alternative dialects and literacies in conjunction with SE and that combining the two for rhetorical effect can be a powerful tool to engage an audience. How does one engage such pedagogies? The simplest way to begin this work is by using writing assignments to allow students to explore the effects of expressions in their native tongues. Have some discussion about audience and why one variety of language works best with a particular audience. Langston professors allowed their students to examine different literacies and dialects through poetry and other writing assignments, as Joy Flasch explains. Flasch actively sought literature that engaged students' home language and culture, which I discuss in more detail in chapter four. Although in the 60s, she admittedly, as JoAnn Clark also admits, was not aware that her pedagogies were innovative and engaged new strategies to promote language mastery, and not just mastery of SE. In addition, my research seeks to show that, as with the

example of Kynard's use of "seein" and "sumthin," language does not have to be uniform to have a rhetorical effect.

We need more research exploring language bias in composition programs because many hold these attitudes, and instead of expressing and engaging the conflict at the graduate level, it carries over into the classroom after the degree (Kynard, "Teaching" 6). If this were not the case, we would not be having a conversation about language awareness and multiculturalism through this dissertation project at this present moment. Smith says, "Students do not have a right to their own language; they have a right to learn a language which will produce the proper effects on whatever audience they may speak or write to" (167). In the spirit of white supremacy, he says there is "no correct standard of American English . . . but there are certain techniques of tightness, clarity, precision, specificity, and logic which can be borrowed from the best surviving examples of the past and which may on occasion work in something the student is writing for a test, audience, or classroom" (167). My question here is, "The best surviving based on whose standard?" I argue that as illustrated in the writings of Kynard, Banks, Anzaldua, Richardson, and Smitherman, tightness, clarity, and precision can be found in one's home language using cultural vernaculars. Smith's rhetorical straitjacket, blindness due to white culture and privilege, causes him to fail to see the oppressive nature of pedagogies that maintain SE as normal.

As racial incidents propel, the BLM Movement forces dialogue between academe and the general public to reconcile spaces and borders and what constitutes literacy. Researchers in rhetoric and writing studies cannot afford to be silent in this exchange of ideas. Understanding BLM takes knowledge of a special type of literacy. At Langston,

through a second curriculum (a race centered curriculum) such conversations naturally flowed between classroom and community as Ada Fisher and others shared their personal experiences with direct racism. For example, in Fisher's autobiography, *A Matter of Black and White*, she explains: "In my classroom my role was less to fill students' heads with raw facts than to compel them to think and consider. The campus unrest in the 1960s and 1970s made that an even more important mission" (169). Because of their Blackness and idealism, students were made critically aware of cultural issues affecting the stability of American democracy and our future; activist energies encouraged students to think critically about protests, violence, and the violation of basic human rights, such as the right of an education from an institution of one's own choosing. Fisher further explains that "[m]any students moved to the social sciences seeking ways to affect society" (170). She stresses, "Many of those students were labeled as radical. I did not equate radical with criminal . . . . They wanted change, and they were impatient to get it" (170). Looking to Langston and rethinking King's dream and our move backward, it is our civic duty to expose students to literacies that promote respect for cultural diversity and positive engagement, and not in outbursts of violence as recently seen on Capitol Hill.

President Trump used rhetoric suggesting election fraud to incite violence and a full-frontal assault on Capitol Hill—the seat of American democracy. Every major news network in the country covered the violence as a mob of angry, white protestors stormed the Capitol breaching the building and compromising the safety of everyone in the vicinity ("Woman Dies"). Protestors carried Trump signs, American Flags, and banners that read "We Never Concede to Election Treason." The majority all white, protestors' actions show the need for dialogue on race and culture. Marginalized classes today—

Blacks, Asians, Hispanics, Natives, and those of Middle Eastern descent—face continued discursive racial attitudes that perpetuate white privilege and a modern-day Jim Crow. I use the terms race and multiculturalism interchangeably because both involve cultural diversity. As compositionists, we seek ways to have these critical theoretical conversations as well as engage an obligation to students to allow them space for critical exploration of their ideas in a safe environment.

Another point of this research is to effectively connect a study of the racialized space of Langston in the 1960s to how faculty and staff engaged literacy studies and a second curriculum of communitas and activism to meet the needs of the marginalized students they served. The end goal is to promote harmony within a democracy to deflect injustice and prevent violence. Such conversations contribute to developing the "whole" student and moving toward critical self-awareness of how culture shapes and controls space and how others in turn respond rhetorically to cultural dissonance, borders, and boundaries. However, these conversations begin with inclusive pedagogies.

By situating Black struggles and radicalism in the 1960s as pivotal to the development of composition studies as a field, Kynard effectively links literacy and composition studies to inform pedagogical approaches to Freshman composition in ways that grant linguistic justice to marginalized classes (7). My point is that Freshman English provides an important lens to examine how race and politics as critical multicultural literacies shape the field, thereby changing the disciplinary paradigm of how we view a rhetorical education. Susan Kates defines an activist rhetorical education as "rhetorical study that pursues the relationship between language and identity, makes civic issues a theme in the rhetoric classroom, and emphasizes the responsibility of community service

as part of the writing and speaking curriculum" (ix). I position my study of Langston at this paradigm shift in composition studies today, and take the stance that rhetoric and writing instruction—which has no subject matter outside of current events and other social and political milieu involving people and the public—should focus on inclusivity, diversity, and borders contextualized by political conflict that hinders communication between groups and people. My argument seeks to raise awareness and promote tolerance for cultural literacies.

I want to make clear my stance that Freshman Composition, to maximize the learning experience, be a critical site to investigate cultural literacies—as Langston practiced in the 60s—to help both students and teachers think critically about their own lives and how they influence their social and cultural environments. I also want to make clear my allegiance with Kynard that Freshmen English no longer be associated with "oppressive institutional histories" and academic hierarchy that cast it as punishment for working class or under prepared students who "do not belong" as part of the academic discourse community (Kynard 8). We should all fight to teach a section or two of freshmen composition because of the opportunity to create change at a grassroots level. However, changing how compositionists see the field and the polemics of access takes all the compositionists in the neighborhood joining the cause to create a lasting paradigm change. But how can we have these conversations and have students stand under discourses, as suggested by Krista Ratcliffe in *Rhetorical Listening*, without devaluing white students?

Ratcliffe's work also provides a theoretical pathway for my argument in that she, in response to Jacqueline Royster's call to translate listening into language and action,

introduces rhetorical "listening" as a viable part of rhetoric and composition scholarship and pedagogy (2). Ratcliffe invites people to "stand under" discourses of white privilege and listen for understanding. She explains how cultural discourses and one's personal identifications become front and center when engaging other points of view that may be influenced by cultural experiences (3). Ratcliffe and Kynard connect new definitions of literacy, language, and rhetorical studies, as well as provide methods for researchers to re-examine the past by standing under discourses such as the Black radicalism of the 60s.

I choose to stand under the Hale Administration at Langston University from 1960-69, and listen to administrative voices, pedagogies, and classroom speak in the politically oppressive environment of a small and only HBCU in Oklahoma. Kynard, Kates, and Ratcliffe—though writing in different periods—produce an amalgam of theory to tack into current literacy studies to create a lasting shift in the field by examining what students actually experience in composition classrooms, or more specifically, within the department as graduate studies in rhetoric and composition.

Precisely, marginalized students at Langston received an education that extended beyond prescriptivism—acquiring grammar and syntax skills for writing and speaking. They learned to read situations, things, and people rhetorically through a cultural lens to garner methods to achieve equality in America (Fisher 169-70). Building from Kates' definition of activist rhetoric, Kynard posits composition studies as "something that moves beyond skills-based curricula, calls for political neutrality, or a singular focus on voice, fluency, or style . . . [to] ideological investigations of language and simultaneous interrogations of speaking, reading, writing, and designing texts" (7). I argue that Jacqueline Royster's redefining of literacy as a socio-cognitive process involving

language and culture (2000), and Kates' historiography connecting rhetoric to civic engagement, language, and the teaching of composition between 1885 and 1937 (2001) shook the theoretical foundation of composition studies at the turn of the century.

Teaching writing is not about process pedagogies or tracing cognitive development. Like Maxine Hairston's declaration of a paradigm shift from current traditional rhetoric to process pedagogies in "Winds of Change," I declare a paradigm shift from process to critical pedagogies that center on listening to multicultural dialogue occurring at borders that create critical contact zones in the classroom. Royster, Kates, and Kynard also create space for my argument by not only providing the methodological framework but also by providing the vocabulary to describe what I do in the classroom with my Black and Brown students and all those from the lower rungs of the socio-economic ladder—including rural whites. I urge my students toward a critical realization of the self by assigning compositions centering on lived experiences in a supposedly democratic society. I use texts such as Gregory Mantsios's "Class in America" and C.H. Knoblauch's "Literacy and the Politics of Education" that aid in raising a critical awareness of self so students begin to recognize where they fall on the rung of the socio-economic ladder.[13] I give them the freedom to explore how their social and economic class influence their values.

We cannot walk the ivory tower halls with blinders ignoring the culture and lived experiences students bring to the table; instead, we must create critical pedagogies to empower them to effectively face the Amy Coopers of the world and think critically about the social and political circumstances that empowers a person from the dominant group to murder an American citizen from a minority group, live on camera, without

justice or impunity. What historical events have allowed for the creation of a crisis packed, fear mongering situation simply by mentioning the word “Black” when describing a “supposed” perpetrator? It takes a special kind of arrogance clothed in privilege to ignore these public, social and political conflicts and the “silent” conversations they create inside and outside the classroom by way of actions and body language. Students should be encouraged to write about these events and explore their feelings to effect positive change and promote social harmony through dialogue. If we do this, maybe we can prevent angry mobs from storming the Capitol because of false and crafty rhetoric clothed in white privilege. The public nature of current racial injustices such as the murders of Breonna Taylor, Mike Brown, and Trayvon Martin invoke visions of the darkest histories of racial violence in America that took place mainly in the south where HBCUs like Langston helped African American students strengthen their sense of themselves and their histories to become effective citizens. Hasn’t educating students to create an informed populace for participation in a democracy been a goal of rhetoric studies since classical times?

Thinking about my own literate “Black” self in the ivory towers of bourgeois white America, and how the social context of the university erased the cultural context I brought to the classroom, I realize the danger of cultural blindness and how blindness moves us away from true democracy. Cultural blindness leads to social isolation and antisocial behavior. Failing to see race is never a good practice. I also realize how my own “identification” influences how I see others in the ivory tower. I entered the PhD program at the University of Oklahoma in Norman in the fall of 2012 as a working-class teacher and nontraditional Black student at the age of 46. I was also a mother and a wife.

I am from the south, born and raised, and I carry these discourses and my southern drawl and dialect the same as I carry my gender and my blackness. I also realize that teachers contribute to students' feeling "invisible" by ignoring the experiences they bring to the classroom. As Michelle Obama articulates, the burden of assimilation rests on the minority student. It takes a tremendous amount of character to ignore being ignored—to ignore being invisible.

We do not live in a race free, color blind society, so why behave as such in the classroom? Curricula at all levels—especially Freshman English—must take the experiences of the multicultural and multicolored world into consideration when developing and implementing curricula and when training new instructors, especially those new to graduate programs in English. Kynard argues that "Freshman English [as a gatekeeper for success] bears the most dynamic intersection of the competing dialogues and institutional policies that frame how literacy and hegemony have been challenged and maintained for the new century in postsecondary institutions" (*Vernacular* 8).

When I began my Master's program in 1999 as the only black female in the program at the State University of New York (SUNY) in Potsdam, I admittedly felt like an outsider. It didn't take long for professors to validate my belief by pointing out how I fell short in areas of pronunciation and usage such as knowing when to use less and few, and diction—knowing precisely what a "thing" is called and calling that "thing" by its proper name. I have had some most embarrassing moments mispronouncing the simplest of words such as "bough" that I first read with the same vowel pattern as "rough"; and "plethora," by failing to place the stress on "pleth," which resulted in some sound akin to "plea- thor-a." Simply not knowing the proper name for an awning or having not heard of

"solstice" brought about an epiphany that paved a direct path to shame. Surely everyone knows what an awning is, right? Not so, if you grew up calling it an overhang or something of that nature. My point is that Langston professors understood the literacies their students brought to the classroom; they understood and respected the etymology of those literacies. As explained by JoAnn Clark, Jeanne Manning, Olether Tolliver and other Langston professors interviewed for this project, they addressed shortcomings with language or culture with love and care.

As a student, when I used my voice and enjoyed what I wrote, I was often redirected. I had to learn to write what white teachers approved. I speculate how a critical pedagogy from an HBCU like Langston or from culturally grounded Black teachers that acknowledged and reflected my cultural self and what I brought to the classroom as a Black woman might have enhanced my thinking, as opposed to white teachers telling me how to see or explain a thing through their cultural lens. I wonder how my education would have been different if I had been allowed to show my audience the world from my bird's eye viewpoint. And let me add, I should not have to attend an HBCU to gain a quality education. I am also not suggesting that all Black teachers teach with the same ethic of care and love that I discovered in my research on Langston. Like many Black students in predominantly white institutions (PWI), I was forced to engage a respectability[14] politic that did not offend my white teachers and peers, their culture, or their pedagogy; the funny thing is, I did not realize I engaged respectability politics until recently because compromising was so ingrained in what I had become.

Editing processes designed to mimic the aesthetic norms and rules of white middle class stripped my writing of voice. As a teacher, I refuse to create an environment

for students where success requires they deny a sense of their cultural self-reflection and interests. Langston faculty across the curriculum practiced inclusive pedagogies that valued students' home language and experiences with a secondary oral curriculum that helped them bridge their Black literacies with the values of mainstream white society. It is my hope that through this research on Langston pedagogies that program directors at mainstream universities seek new and useful ways to develop more inclusive pedagogies.

I was only able to read *Mama Day, Song of Solomon, Clotel*, and *A Voice from the South* through independent directed studies—alone. I am grateful for the professors who agreed to work with me in directed studies allowing me to pursue my interests in the field, but having to pursue my interests through directed studies also created isolation for me, forcing me to study the literatures without dialogue with others. As a result of my own "miseducation"—theorizing from Carter G. Woodson—as a student of color, and witnessing the miseducation of other students of color mainly due to a dominant white class structure in academe, I join and extend Kynard's argument as I try to think my way out the "political twilight zone of curriculum" and linguistic racism to engage historical relevance of a racialized education in Black space in Oklahoma.

In *The Exceptional Negro: Racism, White Privilege and Respectability Politics,* Traci D. O'Neal explains white privilege and its effect on awareness and schools' failure to understand and provide Black children in low performing schools with a quality education; these children are also likely in largely segregated schools as was the case with both Black and Native students I taught in Cache, Oklahoma who made up less than 10% of the student base. O'Neal urges her audience to wake up and actively resist white power structures and the systemic attitudes and racism that allow incidents like that of

Trayvon Martin and Freddie Gray to go unpunished (18-9). Continuing to write the Black experience into disciplinary narratives of the field of rhetoric and composition provides one small way to continue resisting the white power structures that maintain linguistic racism. Again, as Vershawn Young asserts, linguistic violence contributes to violence against Black bodies ("This Ain't").

O'Neal's argument is not new, but no one's listening. Those in coveted positions in the ivory towers have problems recognizing their own privilege. When they concede in some way, the result often manifests as condescending piety. Krista Ratcliffe published her critique of "whiteness," *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, and Whiteness*, thirteen years before O'Neal's work. What we get from O'Neal, who holds a JD, is a Black elite perspective on the same problem. O'Neal contends that the American dream is "like trying to catch bubbles mid-air, and at its worst, a nightmare for most black people" (32). Ratcliffe, Gilyard, Banks, and Kynard, like Smitherman and Richardson in the past, continue to push to get "jus' a lil' 'genuine' *R-E-S-P-E-C-T*" in the words of Aretha Franklin for African American rhetorics or Black language. Langston teachers practiced skills-based rhetoric because they understood language focused discrimination and that linguistic violence and racial violence go hand in hand (Baker-Bell 16).

We have moved beyond the context of the Civil Rights Era which led to unique political and cultural pedagogies at Langston. Now, we find ourselves in the midst of a unique pandemic and pervasive racial violence across America that create new literacies that cannot be ignored by those in the Ivory Towers. Understanding and effectively addressing these new literacies requires—no, *"demands"* is a better word—critical awareness from educators k-12 and in the Towers of the white linguistic hegemony

perpetuated by white privilege and power; the ideological constructs that silently continue to contribute to the illiteracy of the white dominant class and continues the assault and violence against marginalized classes. In the 60s, Blacks in Oklahoma navigated the hostile landscape created by white supremacy by having a racialized space that allowed them to actively promote race pride through their pedagogies; their literate acts serve as a "turning axis for twenty-first century literary polemics" (6).

During her November 13, 2014 symposium at Syracuse University, Ratcliffe asserts, "I didn't really want people taking a stance of feeling responsible for racism. We were all born into a system that preexisted all of us, but to what extent are we accountable for the now?" We are all accountable for the "now." When Black bodies continue to suffer attack and attempts to eradicate Black language dominate our pedagogies, achieving some sort of social justice demands showing the strength of Black culture and Black language to cast Black youth in a more positive light. To the contrary, however, O'Neal shockingly concludes:

> Collectively, black children are performing lower than every other demographic; they are disciplined more often and more harshly than other students; they are over-identified for special education services and under-identified for gifted services; and they are least likely to have their social-emotional needs adequately met. This is the "national truth. (74)

While what O'Neal describes may be the national truth, these facts do not have to remain unaddressed. Educators need to work toward changing these facts. Such facts would more than likely not be the case if teachers practiced an ethic of care and valuation of the cultural literacies students bring to the classroom. In racialized spaces like Langston,

teachers' perceptions of Black language and culture were more positive. A critical examination of practices of Langston pedagogies offer solutions or approaches for the 21st century classroom.

From this standpoint, I aim to continue pushing toward multicultural pedagogies that value diversity in language and literacy. For example, I imagine whispers of varying dialects circulated around Langston's campus in the 60s. I imagine students laughing and jiving in the classrooms of Jones Hall, which housed the English department. I imagine this humor, comfort, and confidence became literary acts and part of a personal rhetoric—what today's Black youth would call "swag"—that teachers helped students refine as part of their "game" (their personal influence on others). Kynard argues, "Literacy in the twenty-first century is located at the onset of new thematic and disciplinary imperatives brought into effect by the Black Freedom Movement" (6). Kynard claims that "discourses of and polemics around literacy, composition studies, and their multiple contexts" changed in the 60s (6). I hope to connect the history of Langston to the historiography of Black Freedom struggles of the 60s, and to current literacies that move us toward the quest for racial justice today.

The New London Group expresses the problem with literacy learning most clearly:

> Schooling in general, and literacy teaching in particular, were a central part of the old order. The expanding, interventionary states of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries used schooling as a way of standardizing national languages. In the Old World this meant imposing national standards over dialect differences. In the New World, it meant assimilating immigrants and indigenous peoples to

the standardized 'proper' language of the colonizer.

> In this way, just as global geopolitics have fundamentally shifted, so has the role of schools. Cultural and linguistic diversity is now a central and critical issue and, as a result, the meaning of literacy pedagogy has changed as well. Local diversity and global connectedness mean not only that there can be no standard; they also mean that the most important skill students need to learn is to negotiate regional, ethnic, or class-based dialects; variations in register that occur according to social context; (14)

Yes, cultural and linguistic diversity present critical problems in academe because these literacies are further informed and complicated within the cultural context of technology and social media—email, texting, Facebook, Twitter, and so on, which are daily routines for most Americans. Daily routines are the mediums that impact composition and literacy most. Most often the classroom is the only place students are likely to be exposed to SE, and then through carefully constructed texts designed for that purpose. Practical pedagogies that seek to bridge students' language and culture with their academic selves seem more fitting for the 21st century classroom; non mainstream discourse communities constantly conflicts with academic discourse communities because of varying culture and social class in America. What's happening in classrooms today with youth entering the university with their text and community languages is no different from what Black teachers at HBCUs dealt with in the sixties trying to prepare Black students for integration. The change lies only with the variation of the English spoken, whether it be Spanglish, rap or video jargon, or some other nonstandard discourse.

In addition to grading, national tests such as the SAT and ACT, which play a

significant role in college admissions and predicting achievement potential, do not take literacy and a competency in writing that is correct but perhaps considered nonstandard style into consideration. Such ambiguities in language use are related to culture. In short, one issue is that marginalized students have to be fluent in two dialects and in their written and oral forms, and this double consciousness causes confusion for them. Also, digital rhetoric and technology access (as explained in Banks, 2006) as well as school district resources have a profound impact on the discourses of the poor and disenfranchised, and how these students learn and perceive the world around them. It has been proven that poorer school districts and the poor in general are behind the learning curve, and often do not have access to technology in a significant way to effect change in their own lives or in ways to advance or better their situation.

Actually, rhetoricians like Adam Banks and Carmen Kynard shift often to uses of other vernaculars in their own published work, showing as the New London Group claims, that there can be no one standard. I imagine such shifts circulated frequently, orally, in pedagogies at Langston and in classroom discussion. The shift works to liven and give character to the spoken and written word. As I read Kynard's text, I find myself admiring the "command" I hear in her tone as she skillfully uses BEV to point out the politics and polemics of Freshman Composition as a cultural gateway to higher education. I'm reminded of all the times I traded my culture and voice for a grade. I want the opposite for my students. Another goal of my research is not only to push the connection between language and identity but also to expose the evident disrespect for the relationship between language and identity in curricula.

This project in many ways is a historical approach to civil rights in the twenty-

first century, and to address Gold's warning that "we still know too little about the classroom experiences of students and educators at Southern, religious, women's, working-class, and historically black colleges," their missions, and how they contributed to rhetorical education—reading, writing, and speaking instruction—in the early twentieth century (ix). I hope to show how a small HBCU in Oklahoma, amid white supremacist literacies that supported a racist social order, provided Black students a liberatory activist rhetorical education during the civil right era. Langston achieved this goal by honoring students home language and literacies and providing linguistic and social justice through a combination of skills-based pedagogies and a second curriculum of communitas, which I define and discuss in greater detail in chapter 4. Although skills-based pedagogies are frowned upon today, Langston faculty and staff successfully incorporated prescriptivist pedagogies without dishonoring students home language and culture. The racialized space of the university offered a safe haven for Black people at the time and created space for race pride teaching in a way that honored the culture and language of Black people in Oklahoma. I also hope to show, through the voices of former students and the narrative of Joy Flasch, the possibility for primarily white institutions to create a communitas that offers shelter and support for the marginalized classes they serve.

Through this project I also hope to inform past disciplinary histories that neglect to include the pedagogical practices at underrepresented schools like Langston University. A specialized rhetorical education benefitted African American students in the past, and it can do so more broadly today. An activist education also empowered students to resist the social and economic forces around which class lines are drawn.

In the next chapter, I present a history of the establishment of Langston University and the town. I provide some detail on the foundational work of the first president of Langston, Inman Page and the original mission of the college. I end the chapter with an exploration of the Hale administration (1960-1970), and his work to make Langston a "greenhouse for the undernourished."

Chapter 2

Making History and Changing Lives: Langston University, the Beginnings and Hale's Legacy, 1960-1970

> As I focus on white integrationist perspectives in composition, I also resuscitate the place of [HBCUs] and the protest traditions of black teachers. The work of HBCUs and the black teaching tradition must be seen as another important site of the 1960s black student movements and the historical commitment to disenfranchised black students and communities. (Kynard, *Vernacular* 150)

David Gold explains in *Rhetoric at the Margins: Revising the History of Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1873-1947* that we have an incomplete disciplinary history if scholars fail to examine pedagogical practices at underrepresented institutions in the past. Robert Connors stressed the importance of historical knowledge for teachers and students "for imagining the future" of composition and rhetoric studies (Kynard, *Vernacular* 12). Louise Phelps also calls for composition scholars to keep the past alive in the present to help us gain a better understanding of the theoretical directions of the field (*Vernacular* 12). To have a more complete representation of the development of rhetoric and writing instruction in America, examining how a specialized Black liberatory rhetorical education on the cusps of integration benefitted Black students can significantly contribute to informing pedagogical practices today in pluralistic America. Kynard also resuscitates the work of HBCUs and the "black teaching tradition" in the 60s as an important site of inquiry for composition studies (*Vernacular* 150).

While Gold and Favors address a critical gap in the field providing the historical overview and pedagogies practiced at Wiley College, a small HBCU in Marshall, Texas and Storer College in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, in this research I attempt to write Langston into the narrative in a way that we can use Oklahoma as a serious starting point to re-examine current pedagogical practices that devalue diversity. As a reminder, four characteristics of a liberatory education as practiced by Langston faculty are race

consciousness, compassionate understanding, holistic teaching (meeting the needs of the whole student), and prescriptivism.

Birthed in 1898 under the most oppressive conditions of white supremacy in the territory, Langston began in a church, with no land or building of its own, as The Colored Agricultural and Normal University (CANU), set forth by Section One of House Bill 151. Forty-one students made up the student body in a church in the small all Black town of Langston. Ironically, the school is 10 years older than the state! Members of the Black community came together in a spirit of communitas and hosted picnics, auctions, and bake sales to raise money to purchase the land, which later increased to 160 acres under the Page administration (Patterson 13). In the late nineteenth to early twentieth century many Black colleges were established under the second Morrill Act of 1890 (Brown and Ricard 119). These colleges taught rhetoric as a means of actively resisting systematic racism resulting from Jim Crow and other failed reconstruction efforts after the Civil War (Brandt 106). The institution's history, like the constituents it serves, shows resilience and race pride in a tradition that continues to graduate productive, responsible citizens ready for leadership.

The Oklahoma landscape in the 1940s and 50s offered rough terrain for Blacks too, and many lacked the tools to successfully negotiate the hostile territory. The majority of Black Oklahomans lived in either Tulsa or Oklahoma City. According to Jimmie Lewis Franklin, author of *The Blacks in Oklahoma*, the Great Depression drove Blacks from rural to urban areas in Oklahoma. Having a concentration of Blacks in cities had political and social implications that "helped create an atmosphere for change that ultimately spelled the demise of segregation" because their presence forced business

owners and politicians to face issues related to equality in service, housing, and employment (Franklin 48). Without support of the federal government to gain fair wages, Black tenant farmers in Oklahoma engaged grassroot politics by joining with an Arkansas group of tenant farmers and organizing a local chapter of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union (STFU) in Tabor, Creek County, Oklahoma (Franklin and Higginbotham 435).

Similarly, Oklahoma's higher education system was so charged with racism that, beginning in 1935, the state funded out-of-state grants for Blacks to attend colleges in other states. The Oklahoma legislature appropriated a little less than $50,000 each year which averaged about $140 per student, for blacks to fulfill their professional degree desires outside the state of Oklahoma. This amount was not sufficient to cover moving expenses and tuition for out of state college. Franklin explains the habitual insufficient funding of Langston University and inequality of higher education in Oklahoma led to Blacks filing lawsuits for discrimination. Langston University, the only school Blacks could attend legally in Oklahoma without violating segregation laws, offered no advanced or professional degrees before 1960 (49); while whites could choose from any of "forty-three institutions on the eve of desegregation" (49).

Because of strict segregation laws in education the Black community had no choice but to flock to Langston to meet their higher education needs, making the university a critical site for rhetorical education. An effective Black liberatory rhetorical education at Langston—speaking, reading, and writing—equipped Black students for political sovereignty. Furthermore, an effective Black liberatory education contributed to a Black ethos of being equal or good enough to compete in mainstream white society, which explains the reliance on prescriptivist pedagogies. The goal of prescriptivist

teaching aimed to equip students with skills to subvert white power structures. More specifically, a "Black" liberatory education describes pedagogical goals toward Black students' acquired critical literacy skills. As a reminder, Susan Kates defines an activist education as "rhetorical study that pursues the relationship between language and identity, make civic issues a theme in the rhetoric classroom, and emphasizes the responsibility of community service as part of the writing and speaking curriculum" (xi).

Langston University is located in the town of Langston which sits 10 miles northeast of Guthrie, Oklahoma just off state highway (SH) 33. Once you take SH 33 east, about five miles the road forks to the right where an unmarked county road runs 4.8 miles directly through the town—behind the university. From SH 33 only the front of the school is visible in a flash, and none of the town. From the back, the old women's dormitory, perfectly preserved—an exact mirror of the old photos—sits just off to the north and facing the unmarked county road. New residence halls sit adjacent to the school to the southeast. Students walk across the highway to access the school. And about a half mile further the highway splits a post office and the home of the late Melvin B. Tolson, Langston's mayor from 1954-1960, and dead ends back into SH 33. Currently, Langston has a population just over 1,800. During the decimation of the Great Depression the college kept the town alive; and during the turbulent 60s the college emerged as leader and lifeline for the surrounding black communities, and it continues to sustain the town of Langston today (Patterson.

In the early 1900s Langston's population was less than 350, but the school boasted 187 students (Patterson 110). The college was a social center for the town and Black Oklahomans throughout the state. As a normal and agricultural college, the

university successfully trained students toward three missions to meet the needs of the Black community with very limited funding and resources: teaching, liberal arts, and agriculture. The curriculum centered on agriculture and technical training until Isaac William Young's second term as sixth president from 1931-1935. Students came from throughout the state and border states to attend classes (110). Like most HBCUs, Langston served a growing number of recently emancipated African Americans who sought to better their social and economic standing through higher education but were often ill prepared for rigorous university curricula due to having been denied access to education because of race.

Inman Page became the first president of the Colored Agricultural and Normal University (CANU) with a yearly salary of $2,500; he led the college for 17 years. Page understood the unique needs of his community and brought a legacy of race pride and leadership to Langston. To him, success meant understanding the social forces and systems that kept blacks at the margins of mainstream society and equipping students with the tools to resist oppressive forces by teaching them to construct workable solutions to their own specialized situations. To him, this meant an education in the veins of Booker T. Washington's agricultural model. However, while principal at Lincoln in Missouri, for example, from 1888-1898, Page's first significant activist move entailed re-staffing the school. He dismissed all white teachers explaining "educated Negro teachers would serve as a greater inspiration to Negro youth" (Patterson 28), a view also reflected in Irvine and Irvine's research on segregation. Under Page's direction students received both vocational training and a liberal arts education. Although officially enrolled in the classical curriculum, for example, young women in the teacher training program were

required to take homemaking to hone domestic skills, and all men, regardless of major, took agriculture (76).

To educate students along both the classical and industrial tracks, Page immediately established a high school as part of the college as a preparatory school to meet the needs of those desiring to become teachers and professionals. Few students came to Langston with high school diplomas or prepared for the rigor of college level work. In "The Honorable Past and Uncertain Future of the Nation's HBCUs," Brown and Ricard explain that "offering academic programs to students who possessed minimal skills or who were underprepared for college presented Black colleges with a way of manufacturing a niche for their advanced curricula" (120). Having a high school directly connected to the college as a preparatory school afforded Langston more control to mold students and sculpt curricula. Classical prep required three years of study and scientific prep four. From a review of curricula it appears that students following the classical track studied rhetoric, Greek, Latin, chemistry and botany (studying Greek and Latin had been discontinued at most white schools); and worked their way up to more rigorous subjects such as logic, calculus, and physics in addition to the classical if they pursued the scientific track (Patterson 77). Commercial courses such as bookkeeping, typing, and home economics were added in 1920, and Latin was discontinued in 1930. The English Department's philosophy was that "usage is the law of language" (Patterson 78), and students graduating from Langston's prep department were said to be able "to enter the best colleges of the country unhindered by any lack of necessary requirements and prerequisites" (79). The curricula remained static until the high school closed in 1946.

Among the myriad activities, students translated the *Aeneid* to pursue Latin

grammar and studied Latin meter using Greenough and Kittridge, and Greek using White's *First Greek*; the next year required a translation of four Cataline Orations and Plato's *Apology* (214). After intensive preparation, third year education students studied elocution—speaking and pronunciation—using Fulton and Trueblood's *Practical Elocution*, and instructors gave "special attention to correcting mistakes in pronunciation, proper utterance of English sounds, articulation, syllabication, and accentuation" (qtd. in Patterson 215). This skills-based pedagogy continued well into and throughout the 60s to provide students a language ethos to effectively penetrate the racist structures in place throughout Oklahoma. I want to note, that of the Blacks I interviewed for this project, unlike my own speech patterns, I could detect not trace of a southern dialect.

Beginning in 1912, standards required entering freshmen to write a composition that was "nearly correct in respect to spelling, grammar, idiom, punctuation, and division into paragraphs" (215). Although Shakespeare's *Othello* was added to the English curriculum during this time, rhetoric centered readings such as Daniel Webster's *Bunker Hill Oration* and Cairn's *Forms of Discourse* dominated (216). Significantly, *Othello* is one of Shakespeare's Black plays—like *The Tempest*—that explores Black/white perceptions and interactions. A racialized curriculum acutely focused on rhetoric and oration would have not only helped students develop speaking skills in keeping with the English Department's philosophy of "usage as law" but also more likely helped students think and respond critically to current events and other social and political concerns of the day concerning race and culture.

For example, since students delivered commencement orations on such topics as "Education the Hope of Civilization," "The New Negro," and "Ideals, The Dynamic

Forces in American Achievement" as standard practice, it is relatively safe to conclude that students studied and practiced rhetorical education with a civic aim throughout their tenure at Langston (Patterson 102-5). Composition themes, political in nature, provided students much needed practice responding to discourses of power that were systemic in nature and that limited their opportunities. I discuss this more in chapter 3, where I cover Melvin Tolson and Ada Fisher's pedagogical practices. Students wrote about and discussed racism, politics, and access issues contributing to their marginal status. This form of social epistemic rhetorical education stems from a transactional rhetoric coupled with the current traditional model valuing arrangement, invention, and the rhetorical situation, which might have given students the type of agency Paulo Freire outlines in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Berlin 47).

In 1925 Developmental English 100A was added to the curriculum "for those who show evidence of inadequate preparation to do English work of collegiate rank" (Patterson 217). Students were promoted from this course at the instructor's discretion. A developmental writing course would have focused on conventional grammar and sentence structure, and this type of prescriptivist teaching wasn't limited to Langston. In a review of Howard University's 1919-1931 writing curriculum, Scott Zaluda explains that teaching "good English meant practicing writing conventions sanctioned by Anglo-American society . . . and doing so in correct and proper form and style" (qtd. in Gold 51). In sum, a successful writing pedagogy would have been student centered and designed to cultivate individuals by helping them acquire the skills they lacked—a much more complex feat than traditional rhetorical instruction as it is understood today by scholars and theorists who lean more toward cognitive and epistemic rhetorics.

I want to add, however, that a skills-based pedagogy at Langston, prior to and during the 60s did not involve linguistic genocide as has occurred more broadly in curricula at institutions of higher education across America (see Barker-Bell's *Linguistic Justice*). Education, a tool, offered African Americans a chance at independence and an avenue to become part of a body politic, one that included the Negro, with ambitions, ideas, and responsibilities contributing to the building of a democracy (Jarratt 141). Students felt valued and that receiving an education would equip them with the tools to participate successfully in a broader democracy. Necessarily, as I mention earlier, the result was a curriculum with both a strong current traditional and transactional rhetorical focus designed to meet students' language deficiencies that would have been apparent from having long been denied access to education and to equip them with a trade by which they could earn a living. Berlin explains that originally current traditional rhetoric with its focus on error was "designed to provide the new middle-class professionals—white males—with the tools to avoid embarrassing themselves in print" (Berlin 35). Quite the opposite, transactional rhetoric "sees truth as arising out of the interaction of the elements of the rhetorical situation. . . subject, object, audience, and language" (15). For example, nothing in the literature on Tolson's teaching, Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher's autobiography, or the personal interviews I conducted indicate a pedagogy of code switching; however, the research strongly suggests a pedagogy that facilitated the rhetorical savvy needed to move in and out of discourses without violence or harm. This means that students were taught to be acutely aware of audience, language patterns, and the overall rhetorical situation when outside racialized spaces to kick good enough game (Gilyard, *True* 113).

In fact, Gilyard asserts that "the use of additional language varieties to achieve good enough game would only be considered a rejection of native culture [only] if the language user believed, and acted accordingly, that the native tongue had no part to play in the kickin of good enough game"—which I discuss in chapter three (97). Neither Melvin Tolson, Henri Hale (who grew up the son of a small dirt farmer in McAlester, Oklahoma), or Ralph Ellison (the grandson of slaves born and raised by a single mother in Oklahoma City, and the author of *Invisible Man* (1952) and *Going to the Territory* (1986)) speak against their acquired Black dialect. Instead, they speak of language as a rhetorical tool to negotiate the American landscape of Jim Crow and as a skill to be respected (Ellison 62).

Teachers at HBCUs taught rhetoric as a means of empowerment, assimilation, and progression, and rhetorical education was one of their sharpest weapons pre and post *Brown*. Current composition and rhetoric scholars have been too quick to classify current-traditional rhetoric as positivist and hegemonic, for in doing so they ignore its potential pedagogical value when presented alongside other discourses as a "rhetorical choice" and not as "god like" (Gold, *Rhetoric* 17; Gilyard, *True* 112, and Delpit 39). Prescriptivist pedagogies take on hegemonic status only when in the wrong hands and when perpetuated as a standard in ways that devalue the culture of Black and brown people.

The second curriculum at Langston advanced a rhetorical education teaching to liberate the culturally deprived and oppressed class of students they served by helping them understand how class structures controlled and shaped communication practices (Moore 325). The entire college practiced the second curriculum, a deliberate rhetorical

choice to use their very bodies to provide students a race centered education to understand the hostile terrain of desegregation and how to exercise their rights as American citizens. As Favors explain, “Black colleges were complex institutions facing prodigious political and economic challenges” (11). For Langston, this challenge entailed subverting the racist political systems of Oklahoma that often provided far less funds for the one Black public institution in comparison with the eleven white institutions in the state (Moore 323).[1] Because of the critical nature of justifying and gaining funding from whites for Negro education at that time, staging a scene that looked like the school followed the white agenda with curriculum required the second curriculum operate covertly. Honestly, although most Black administrators and teachers at Langston probably understood the college as a crucial waypoint to freedom and citizenship, again, they would not have used the phrasing “activist or liberating education” or “second curriculum.” However, Langston’s mission to produce teachers and citizens “who emphasized self-determination, racial responsibility, and service” (Favors 17), was no different from other HBCUs operating in other areas of the south.

Langston’s English curriculum proved rewarding and remained virtually unchanged in the fifties and sixties and with the exception of a few improvements to further strengthen the rhetorical aim. Tolson joined the English faculty in 1947, bringing with him his deep commitment to epistemic rhetoric (Patterson 217; Gold, *Rhetoric* 33). Youra Qualls, a graduate of Fisk with a Master’s from Radcliffe, served as English department chair in 1955, and in 1955 the Department consisted of five instructors and two professors. Although the curriculum remained the same as in earlier years, the department gained a few new faculty members. The most significant improvement was

the addition of labs. Between 1950-1960 the school added both reading and language labs along with a communications center and the Chester Dialogue equipment that made lectures available on tape (Patterson 219). I'm sure these were costly additions considering the well documented funding issues the school suffered through the years, but necessary because of language barriers and the economic constraints of the students served. In addition, because of well documented instances of systematic racism aimed at denying African Americans an education, it is unlikely the average student entering Langston would have come from environments or homes fully preparing them with the reading, writing, and speaking skills necessary to pursue higher educational studies at primarily white institutions. Subsequently, a focus on reading and language would have been important and extremely beneficial to complement a curriculum grounded in current traditional rhetoric and designed to assimilate students into white society.

Oral interviews with Joy Flasch, JoAnn Clark, and Jean Manning reveled that faculty shared the notion (as reflected more overtly in Melvin Tolson's pedagogies, covered in more detail in chapter three) that teaching rhetoric as a way of understanding and responding to the ways "language is used to control and deceive as well as to inform and persuade" provides a better pedagogical model for present curricula (Logan 9). Their critical, multilayered pedagogies liberated students by helping them acquire the agency to reflect and act in response to adverse environmental factors. David Gold speculates that "[n]ot only did transactional as well as objectivist rhetorics exist at various locations and times at small Black colleges, but they may have existed in the same locations even the same classroom, and on the same day" ("Remapping" 22). Necessarily, at HBCUs, transactional and current traditional models coexisted, and in harmony.

Expectedly, an oppressed community coming out of slavery viewed education as an avenue to gain agency and independence, as I have explained elsewhere in this dissertation. Shirley Wilson Logon's recovery research, *Liberating Language,* on sites of rhetorical education in nineteenth century black communities, stresses that Blacks practiced rhetorical education in churches and social gatherings in their homes. Some of the Black elite strove to be identified with what DuBois defines in *The Souls of Black Folk* as the talented tenth. For example, Valerie Boyd describes this period as a time when Black intellectuals strained to "prove themselves equal to whites" and "sought to distance themselves from the ignorance and squalor, the broken English and country ways of those they claimed as their 'skinfolk' but not their 'kinfolk'" (238). Skinfolk were those who had no desire to aspire toward education or improve their social condition. However, on the Oklahoma front, I believe Blacks coming from religious environments, such as Sipuel Fisher who was hand-picked by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and Roscoe Dunjee to challenge the University of Oklahoma's racist admission policy primarily because her father was a pastor (Fisher 78), sought to improve themselves and their communities, not to distance themselves from those within the Black community.

Becoming highly literate meant learning the language of the oppressor through which they could respond to systems of oppression for the betterment of the race. The spirit of Langston carried this attitude over through much of the 60s. Blacks aspired for civil rights, equality, and uplift, and their teachers nurtured their civic and political involvement through rhetorical education as explained by Ada Fisher in her autobiography.

In the next section I draw from Ralph Ellison's experience in the territory to present a more comprehensive picture of what Inman Page's administration might have entailed. Next, I move to a discussion of the Hale Administration and a discussion of his policies and practices designed to "grow our own"; the phrase "grow our own" refers to policies that allowed to complete doctoral degrees.

Ralph Ellison's Voice on Inman Page and Language

Although Ralph Ellison did not attend Langston University, he was educated in the tradition of Langston because he was educated under Inman Page's administration at Douglass High School in Oklahoma City. In his 1979 address at the Ralph Ellison Festival at Brown University, Ellison fondly and respectfully explains how cultured Negroes like Inman Page, Langston's first President, who spoke beautiful and fluent English became teachers and administrators and taught "Oklahoma Negroes" discipline and made them "aware that great poetry and fluent English were part of [their] heritage." As a result, Black students of Ellison's era "developed an ear for a variety of linguistic idioms."

"Black English [was] a concept unheard of during my school days," said Ellison (137). He explains how English and prescriptivism were promoted in Oklahoma schools. He speaks of folk culture and folk ways in a theoretical sense that positions him against linguists such as Geneva Smitherman who asserts students' rights to their own language (SRTOL). I can imagine Ellison's confusion in 1979 attempting to reconcile the idea of ignoring what would be termed "good English" (Standard English) and proper for a dialect preference. Elite Negroes desired to practice proper etiquette and speech, which is still seen today in the educated Black elite classes born before the 1940s. The problem

lies in the ideological constructs of "good" and "bad" and how these ideas apply to English in light of one's mother tongue. Some still have language reconciliation confusion today. I do not think that Ellison rejected his culture and his language; I think the confusion lies in how we explain standard and non-standard linguistics. The Black elite of Ellison's era saw language as a resource, not as a social justice project attempting to create space, awareness, and respect of cultural differences.

Critical pedagogies in the vein of literacies and civic pluralism require empowering those who use marginalized dialects to negotiate the language, literacy, and discourses of the upper or dominant class. Ralph Ellison saw Standard English (SE) and varieties of idiomatic English coexisting for effective communication. He explains that:

> [B]eing of a people whose backgrounds were in slavery, we were taught that it was necessary to acquire the skills needed for communicating in a mixed society, and we knew from experience that this required a melting and blending of vernacular and standard speech and a grasp of the occasions in which each, or both, were called for. So instead of clinging defensively to our native idiom, we sought consciously to extend its range. Actually, language was our most easily available toy and we played with its capacity to create the unexpected and to blunt its capacity to surprise. (138)

In Ellison's contextualization and expression of Oklahoma traditional language values, his intention is not to lift standard English above nonstandard dialects, but to promote some type of respect and harmony between the two dialects as a rhetorical tool—a choice. The problem, however, as Geneva Smitherman sees it, lies with America's caste

system that has positioned and elevated anything "White" as right and everything else as wrong.

Being educated in a segregated school system in Oklahoma means that Ellison's experiences were with teachers who shared his same cultural background—and fate. As part of his community, they respected and shared his "folk ways" and language because they themselves came from a folk tradition. Like Ellison, William Henri Hale also grew up in the territory.

The Hale Administration

Langston inaugurated William Henri Hale as its tenth president on April 23, 1961 (Patterson 53). Hale served from 1960 to 1969 and was the first alumnus to lead the school. During the 1960s, both Langston's administration and faculty challenged racial hierarchies through policy and pedagogy. According to Jean Manning and James Simpson, Hale was well liked by most of the faculty, staff, and students. His motto and mission for Langston was, "We are a greenhouse for the intellectually undernourished." When Hale took over in the 60s, his expertise helped him identify the limitations related to faculty training and learning resources. Both limitations took funding to address effectively. Because of the difficulty recruiting faculty with graduate degrees, Hale innovatively decided to "grow" his own. Title III and the Ford Foundation grants made this possible (Manning).

At Langston, Hale, a graduate of L'Ouverture High School, continued the legacy promoting pride in Black history. Toussaint L'Ouverture was the former slave who led the Haitian independence movement during the French revolution (1787-99). Well aware of the contributions of Blacks in America and beyond, Hale sought to produce leaders through race conscious curricula and higher education.

In his inaugural speech that April 23, 1961, he addressed an independent struggle of people who desire to govern themselves:

> And in a dialectic of spirit, when a man wakes up one day to realize that mind, creation, knowledge, the active reason, the joy of vision, the certainty of the truth, have been withheld from him whether he is in the rain forests of the African jungle or on a little rocky farm on Peaceable Creek down in Pittsburgh County, he will rebel to the high heavens, and his rebellion might take the strangest possible form. (7)

How does one cultivate such a spirit of revolution throughout the student body without giving students an activist education by which they are politically aware of their circumstances and the methods to best overcome the circumstances of racial oppression?

Although Hale earned his A.B. from Langston, he earned a Master's in sociology from the University of Wisconsin and a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago—Northern institutions. In the 60s, Langston administrators and faculty made up of Du Bois's "Talented Tenth" (as explained in the previous section when I invoke Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher, George W. McClaurin, Melvin B. Tolson, Clara Luper, and Roscoe Dunjee) did not abandon Du Bois's ideals. When Hale came to Langston, enrollment stood at 645 students with 54 faculty members. At his firing in 1969, according to the *Gazette*, enrollment had nearly doubled with 1,225 students and 75 faculty members, which included 20 whites. According to Langston's website, students marched on the Capitol in Oklahoma City to protest his firing.

Hale inspired his faculty to practice innovative pedagogies to help fulfill his vision of Langston as a greenhouse for the undernourished. Faculty dealt effectively with

the outcome of the Black mass movement which brought an influx of Blacks to Oklahoma looking for better opportunities in education and politics and shelter in all Black towns from racist southern oppression (Franklin 8). Faculty both Black and white took responsibility for folk people on a level of equality, not as "skinfolk" as described by Boyd. The majority of Langston's constituents—poor, black, and working-class students— would have come from segregated schools across the south. The classroom waltz required faculty—even white ones, which I attempt to describe later in chapter 4 through the narrative of Joy Flasch—to draw on their past private and public experiences to create change and shape individual students to effectively engage the tensions of desegregation. Hale made clear to faculty, staff, and government officials that "Langston must function to fill both cultural and educational gaps in the lives of deprived or neglected students" (Patterson 54). Hale met this goal by aggressively encouraging and providing the funding for faculty to complete their doctorates.

According to the Zella Black Patterson papers housed at the Oklahoma Historical Society, "One of the most pressing problems Hale had to deal with was integration." The schools enrollment decreased significantly after desegregation (Patterson 53). Dealing effectively with integration meant training both faculty and staff in respectful activism and civic engagement. For example, for the first time newly trained African American students would be teaching "white" students in newly desegregated schools. The March 1960 *Gazette* quotes Minda M. Tomlin who had recently completed her apprentice teaching at the Manual Training High School in Muskogee, Oklahoma. Tomlin reflects, "I have to admit the limitations of our present teacher education program, but I do realize that teaching is a challenge and especially to the Negro teacher facing a future of

integration." What limitations, exactly, might Tomlin have had in mind? Newly graduating seniors earning an A.B. in teacher education would have to effectively communicate with white parents, administrators, and colleagues.

Langston's mission has always been one of excellence, and to serve marginalized students by equipping them to infiltrate mainstream hostile white society with pride and confidence. One important take away from a review of Hale's Administration is his ability to develop faculty and build unity through social relationships. Langston received its accreditation from the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (NCATE) in 1948 under the Harrison Administration, but it was Hale who confronted the racist power structures to secure the funding to grow the school. To upgrade Langston's status in higher education, Hale proposed a ten-year plan, targeting incoming freshmen, to promote reading and testing programs, cultural programs, and tutoring. As part of the nurturing canopy, the greenhouse, administrators and faculty met students where they were. This often involved attending to students' personal needs, which I refer to as the second curriculum and communitas in chapter four. In 1966, Langston's enrollment was 1,160 students, which included 9 whites, 250 non-residents, and 25 foreign students. Of the 75 member faculty, 20 were white, with only one white, Dr. Joy Flasch, being in the English Department. Dr. Hale focused curriculum revisions on general education requirements and Langston's teacher education program and critical thinking about the world. The 1970-71 catalog cites Hale:

> Membership in the Langston University family means that one becomes part of an on-going enterprise whose primary aim is to help prepare responsible

> leaders for tomorrow. In order to achieve this end, we are creating here an advanced learning environment designed to meet the needs of each and every student who casts his lot with us. It is truly a situation wherein one's only limitation is his own indifference. (5)

To this end, the Hale Administration implemented an audio-visual materials' lab, a language laboratory, and a reading clinic (64); together these were referred to as the communication center (65). Hale also increased library volumes available to students (up to 100,000) and instituted an annual conference for high school teachers, and this conference still takes place today ("History of Langston"). My point in providing this information about the Hale Administration is to show the importance of what we already know—to meet the needs of marginalized classes attention has to be given to their unique and specific needs and these needs differ between groups and socioeconomic classes. Though the state sought to disenfranchise the school through funding and policy, Langston fought back through resilience and activism.

Hale made faculty grants available through the Ford Foundation and Title III so faculty could receive their master's or PhDs. According to Dr. Jean Bell Manning in 1968 six faculty members were given one to two year leave, with pay, to pursue PhDs. Both she and Joy Flasch, along with the English department chair, Elwyn Welch, completed their doctorate degrees through Hale's grants. In a ten-year period, he cultivated a well-educated faculty equipped to provide a stellar education to Langston students in the vein of a greenhouse, in a little small isolated all-Black town in Oklahoma.

Hale also pushed Langston faculty to wear multiple hats mentoring students; faculty modeled and demanded professionalism in dress and communication from

students at all times, and former students attest to this fact. I posit that faculty at all institutions wear multiple hats, but critical mentoring of the type described by Kynard and required of Langston's faculty fall mainly on the shoulders of Black faculty at institutions today. More white faculty could participate in this necessary critical mentoring—"showing students the rhetorical power they already possess"—if ideologies are changed (Kynard W34). Critical mentoring is part of that "unwritten" curriculum which involved Langston faculty using their very bodies to teach, mentor, and subvert a respectability politic (which I address in detail in chapter 4). Former students tell of being trained in dress and speech indirectly. Faculty under Hale also served in positions throughout the community organizing and hosting events to get students registered to vote or ready for debates. They were the town's mayors, city council members, pastors, and clerks. Jimmie Lewis Franklin explains that "much of the state's black leadership came from the 'school on the hill'" (14). In addition, they took on the role of parenting students offering meals at their homes and organizing community functions to provide public meals, school supplies, and clothing for students in need, according to former professors Joanne Clark and Jean Manning. Patterson notes that Hale emphasized "Langston must function to fill both cultural and educational gaps in the lives of deprived or neglected students."

Hale's telling 1961 inaugural speech, reprinted in the May 1961 issue of the Langston *Gazette*, best articulates the parameters and values of an unwritten curriculum. He sprinkles Christian rhetoric throughout the speech, at one point quoting Revelation 21:1: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away." By doing this, Hale highlights the religious hypocrisy that

characterizes white Oklahomans and the west specifically, in the form of white condescending piety. He charges, "For too long we have ignored a simple principle, which the most unlettered farmer in Pittsburgh County, where I was born and reared, would have permitted him to do. In this farmer's words, we have insisted on feeding our seed corn" (4). His metaphor of feeding his seed corn—providing knowledge and education to those who desired it—contextualizes his motto and leadership goal to make Langston a "greenhouse of the intellectually undernourished."

When he assumed the presidency of an institution that had served the Black communities of Oklahoma for 64 years, he was well aware of how whites subverted integration in the territory through segregation laws and funding for higher education for Blacks. He grew up the son of a dirt farmer in McAlester, Oklahoma. He attended segregated schools and thereby understood the importance of a race centered curriculum to help Black youth believe in themselves, understand their worth, and value people's contributions to America in light of the racial and class oppression that characterized their everyday experiences. He explained, "We know that given two youngsters essentially equal in native equipment that one will do best who can be given a more satisfaction and inspiring image of himself [read, Black people] and of what he might become" (4).

To sum, Hale created an atmosphere where students developed a critical awareness of language and the power of language to gain or limit access to certain areas of society. In the next chapter, I cover what Keith Gilyard calls "good enough name" to wield enough rhetorical power to be successful in whatever spaces one chooses to enter. At Langston, Melvin Tolson and Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher taught student to wield "good

enough game" and to critique the power structures in place that sought to limit their opportunities. Furthermore, research shows that Tolson and Fisher embraced race pride through their literature and pedagogies. Such pedagogies exposed students to African American ways of knowing and being in the world, and granted them a right to their own language. As Sarah Jones explained, Langston pedagogies equipped them with choices and tools. They came from segregated schools throughout Oklahoma territory, and Langston offered the space and atmosphere to openly interrogate the anti-Black racist ideas of Oklahoma's landscape and history. Hale gave his faculty the political and financial freedom to practice inclusive pedagogies.

In the next chapter, I cover the pedagogies of Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher, Melvin Tolson, and others employed under the Hale Administration. These faculty practiced multilayered pedagogies designed to liberate students through race consciousness and an ethic of care. I connect their liberatory pedagogies during the civil rights movement to the current SRTOL movement and CCCC call for pedagogies that value Black language and Black lives.

Chapter 3

Help Me Breathe! Developing Good Enough Game

> "Despite such a deliberate divestment from black education, a good deal of the literature was showing that the black students at those HBCUs were often more engaged in campus life, experienced more satisfactory and close relationships with faculty, more positive psychosocial adjustments, stronger cultural awareness and commitment, and greater academic gains as they went through college." (Kynard, *Vernacular* 176)

In the 1960s, white colleges in the south did not welcome Black students or teachers with open arms. In the above quote, Kynard addresses both the disparity and resilience of Black colleges to provide Black students a well-rounded educational experience through campus life and critical mentoring by faculty. Melvin Tolson who taught at Langston from 1947-1965 and Ada Fisher who taught at Langston from 1959-1987 practiced inclusive pedagogies –the kind that demanded students interrogate the anti-Black linguistic racism that contributed to their marginalized status. Both used their life experiences to illustrate the connection between teaching, civic responsibilities, and social action (Kates 114). As activist educators, Tolson and Fisher made it their life goal to teach to liberate by engaging racialized pedagogies. Both had preachers for fathers (Fisher 7; Gold 16). I further assert that their pedagogies involved a rhetorical invoking of history, stories from their past experiences, and their very bodies to offer students an education that extended far beyond a skills only education.

Tolson and Fisher could have easily taught at any university in Oklahoma, but they chose Langston—a Black community. While they are not here for me to ask them personally why they chose Langston, their pedagogical practices make clear their goal to provide a politicized education to their students, and they identified and shared the same fate with the students they served. This chapter also covers the pedagogies of other

teachers who helped students breathe under the suffocating duress of white supremacy and white privilege. All Langston faculty possessed race pride and knowledge of the achievements of people of African descent.

Being aware of the achievements of African Americans and having compassion for students provide ways into the culture, a lens, and leads toward more inclusive pedagogies. One cannot teach what s/he does not know or understand. Gaining a better understanding of a culture helps teachers address the personal and academic needs of students under their care (Woodson 32). Teachers must be able to identify with their subjects to some degree to care (Delpit 122). As a result, teachers must be willing to self-educate and more researchers must work toward more inclusive disciplinary narratives. Without identification and care, students succumb to making the grade to pass, and teachers continue to "fork Black people's tongue" or any variant, nonstandard tongue ("Position Statement").

Langston graduates revealed three themes central to their success as students at a separatist institution: (1) Emphasis on African American history, (2) Trust and bond with teachers and the community, and (3) Prescriptivist pedagogy. HBCUs traditionally provided students with a "culturally, socially, economically, and politically relevant education" in an environment that appreciated and celebrated their identity (Brown and Ricard 121). In addition, students viewed education and the school system favorably because they believed teachers and administrators had their best interest in mind. Teachers, especially white teachers, must take measures to help students see them as having their best interests at heart.

Since *Brown*, however, the drop out and failure rate for Black youth has

progressively grown worse, not better. To contextualize the problem, today only 40 percent of African American males complete their degrees (Bridges, B.). And only 52 percent of Black males as compared to 78 percent of white males graduate high school, a necessary requirement to pursue higher education. This statistic should cause alarm considering the fact 60% of jobs require a bachelor's or higher. Some researchers attribute the high dropout rate to push outs and lock outs ("What's Driving Dropout"). Suspensions result in students being pushed out of school, but lockouts are more vexing. Lockouts are due to lack of access to critical resources—critical information that might help improve test scores or school success overall.

Venora and Lafayette McKinney both who earned Master's after graduating from Langston—and Venora was alumni president in 2012 when I began this research—attribute lockouts largely to failed relationships between students and teachers. A staunch supporter of HBCUs, Venora explained that her teachers were an integral part of her community, which also helped solidify her educational experience. They produced confident students who believed in themselves and their abilities. She recalls, "I knew my teachers because they lived in my community. We went to church together, and I knew they cared about me and whether or not I learned." African American students today do not have the same ties to teachers and academic circles. Throughout my research, I found "care" and "relationship" to be recurring themes.

When I initially began investigating the history of writing instruction at Langston University in the 60s for evidence of a Black liberatory education, I quickly learned that rhetorical education took place not only in the English department but also in history and social sciences—throughout the departments; it was a group effort. My research goal,

initially, was to discover how teachers successfully equipped underprepared students for college level rigor and to participate in a democracy amid the chaos, violence, and segregation of the Civil Rights Era. As I mention in my introduction, when I moved to Oklahoma, I had never heard of Langston University, and I certainly did not have knowledge of Oklahoma's legacy of all Black towns and as a territory of freedom for Blacks fleeing the deep south after the Civil War. My interest in the state peeked more when I, as a teacher, directly encountered white supremacist assaults through white supremacist literacies masquerading as freedom of speech in the form of confederate tattoos on minor/underage students' forearms and hands, and offensive slogans on clothing. More alarming, in the predominantly white public school and community where I taught, no one seemed to think the behavior, coming from kids, to be a problem except me, the only Black teacher in the whole school system (and I only had knowledge of one other Black family in the Cache community at the time). This experience caused me to think of race and literacies on an entirely different level, and the type of teaching it might take to raise awareness to and transform white supremacist attitudes and responses to those attitudes.

As I mention in chapter one, Oklahoma has always been a predominantly white, conservative state, and the Cache, Altus, and the surrounding school systems are no different. I also mentioned that I came to know of Langston through a few Black seniors graduating in 2010 who applied for admissions at the all Black college. Researching the college led me to a respect for its legacy graduating civil rights activists, and a special admiration for the civil rights of Melvin Tolson and Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher. The first time I visited the town to satisfy a curiosity, to see what an all Black town looked like. I

later attended an Alumni meeting because I wanted to meet former students to ask about the school and their education in the town. When I inquired about the school, I was met with suspicion. I was proudly told about Ada Fisher integrating the University of Oklahoma law school and that she was a Langston graduate and had taught at Langston for over twenty years.

I was also asked if I knew Melvin Tolson. Admittedly, I didn't know Sipuel-Fisher or Tolson when I started this project. I quickly came to understand both to be activists who transformed the climate of Oklahoma by instilling race pride in students through an amalgam of personal experiences and dramatic story telling as pedagogy; they had lived the discrimination and racism they taught about. In many ways, they experienced more poignantly what teachers face today as they attempt to teach through the literacies and conflicts of #BlackLivesMatter, #AllLivesMatter, and a pandemic that has a greater impact on marginalized communities than Americans more broadly. Disturbingly, oppressive structural racism and inequalities in health care have become chokeholds that drive these movements and push minority groups to resist.

First, Keith Gilyard introduces the phrase "good enough game" in *True to the Language Game: African American Discourse, Cultural Politics, and Pedagogy*. Good enough game involves students having the communicative competence to make the best use of all the rhetorical resources around them (96). Good enough game requires awareness of the social forces that oppress and attempt to limit one's opportunities. Both Tolson and Fisher approached the learning environment using Afrocentric pedagogies—pedagogies that emphasized the achievements of Black people and that pointed out the hypocrisy of American democracy (Asante 26-7). They used all the tools in their toolbox

to convey a sense of race pride within the students they served. Their pedagogies forced students to engage a dialectic that critiqued the racist forces attempting to hinder their progress.

In an attempt to dissect the pedagogies of Ada Fisher and Melvin Tolson, I appropriate Adam Banks's theorizing of the mix and remix to characterize their teaching styles. In chapter two of *Digital Griots*, "Mix: Roles, Relationships, and Rhetorical Strategies in Community Engagement," although addressing community-based literacy work, Banks poses the question of: "How does one build and maintain healthy relationships with communities that somehow do not replicate that miseducation of the Negro"? (36). I also borrow the notion of a musical DJ, his mix, and remix from Banks's theorizing. Banks extrapolates the metaphor by casting the DJ as griot—carrier of the Black cultural experience in America (155), which differs uniquely from that of white America. I posit that in the 60s Langston teachers (and those at other HBCUs) took on a role similar to that of cultural griot. The Griot's role is,

> Binding time, linking past, present, and future, the griot is keeper of history, master of its oral tradition, and rhetor extraordinaire, able to produce or perform on demand for whatever segment of the tribe requires it and whatever the situation demands—celebration, critique, preservation, connection. (*Griots* 23)

When Ada Fisher or Melvin Tolson invoked the legacy of slavery from within their very beings—lest we forget where we came from, and that system which continues to contribute to the marginalization of Black peoples across the diaspora—they become griots in their own right.

The remix, or exchange of information, "is a reinterpretation of a pre-existing

song, meaning that the 'aura' of the original will be dominant in the remixed version" (Banks 90). But instead of discussing digital and multimedia writing, I appropriate these terms to African American rhetorical styles that allow the teacher as rhetor to use and appropriate his or her lived experiences as a pedagogical mix. The mix, then, is all of the social contexts the teacher has been exposed to in the past. For example, the context of segregation and those unwritten rules for survival—how to behave around white folks in public settings. How to maintain dignity when you're a woman and forced to use the restroom in the woods at a train stop because the restroom in the Depot is for "Whites Only." I can hear my grandmother say, "Same ole' coffee, just warmed over." The Remix, then, is taking all of these negative experiences and recasting them as stories of survival to a new generation so that the new generation can create its own means to survive in hostile racial conditions.

Royster and Kirsch posit that "[t]he notion of *social circulation* invokes connections among past, present, and future in the sense that the overlapping social circles in which [people] travel, live, and work are carried on or modified from one generation to the next and can lead to changed rhetorical practices" (23). Using social circulation as a research method allows for re-envisioning consequences and impacts within controlled spaces such as the campus at Langston, "and linking these analyses in an informative and compelling way to forward a larger understanding of rhetoric as a cultural phenomenon and very much a human enterprise" (Kirsch and Royster 23). So I pose the question, "How did Langston University faculty prepare students to negotiate the politically charged and hostile landscape as Oklahoma desegregated after *Brown*?"

First, I turn to Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher's teaching narrative as an example. Invoking the idea of a pedagogical remix casting the classroom teacher as griot—the DJ, helps us better understand strategies used by Langston teachers in the 60s to engage student activism and promote race pride. In 1948 the NAACP arranged for six Black students to apply to the University of Oklahoma, knowing full well they would not be accepted, and knowing full well that Langston could not offer an equal educational opportunity under segregation. Langston did not offer advanced doctoral degree programs. The NAACP chose Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher to be the face of the lawsuit in part because her father was a preacher, which would result in the case getting a broader Black audience. As a result of the victory, the action forced the Oklahoma Legislature to revisit segregation laws in higher education. Although Oklahoma legislature changed laws and allowed Blacks to enroll in state universities, they were "roped off" until a 1950s court decision outlawed the practice" (Franklin 53).

Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher

Fisher's supreme court case, the *Sipuel* story, became the precedent for Thurgood Marshall's arguing and winning *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* in 1954 (Fisher 163).

Sipuel-Fisher describes her experience at Langston in her own words:

> Now at Langston as a professor, I was teaching the first generation of African Americans to begin college since the *Brown* decision. In teaching the history of the Fourteenth Amendment I always related the Sipuel story from the inside. I discovered my students could not relate to the status of African Americans prior to 1946. When I spoke of Norman as an all-white town just as the university was

> an all-white school, a perplexed and surprised look shrouded their faces. When I talked of roped and chained sections for black people, I saw anger in their clenched lips and fingers. When I said my case was the beginning of the end of segregation, the class often applauded and whistled. During the remainder of the year I signed autographs. (164)

Fisher concludes by saying, "My experiences served me as a counselor as well as a professor" (164). I can only imagine the rhetorical force and power of Fisher's presence in a classroom during the civil rights era. I can only imagine what that pride and anger felt like that caused students to "clinch their lips and fingers" as she told her story. Her story was not in the white authored history books. I imagine she told her story over and over again because she says the class "often" applauded. I imagine Sipuel-Fisher would have taught and advised these students in a griotic tradition using her very body as a technological piece as she walked around the classroom, proudly telling her story. She owned that story. I imagine she mixed the present and the past and provided a remix to give understanding and direction for the future. "Knowing my background and attitude about right and wrong," she explains, "students often turned to me with their frustrations and problems" (164).

As Sipuel-Fisher describes her pedagogies, she emphasizes that her "counsel was that the students should consider the consequences of any action they proposed. Every action brought a reaction. My own life had taught me that" (165). Her life was one of activism, even as an undergrad before applying to the University of Oklahoma Law School. She recalls engaging in a boycott of the dining hall in 1944 (Fisher 72). Later that year she joined with a small group of students and called senator Louis H. Ritzhaupt at

the capitol regarding a lack of sidewalks and how they had to walk through red sticky mud to get to class (73). She also met with Roscoe Dunjee, editor of the *Black Dispatch* about the red sticky mud on campus that year "since," in her words, "neither the Lord nor the senator had helped us" (74).

Through her narrative, Fisher taught her students to research, persist, and resist to "kick" good enough game. When marginalized students understand how to counter and subvert the racist systems that seek to ignore, exploit, and control them, we contribute to a socially conscious democracy (Gilyard, True 269). Pedagogies that contribute to a socially conscious democracy are necessary to render impotent the Amy Coopers of the world. Fisher tells the story of the heat going out in Moore Hall where she taught a history class, and after making repeated calls to maintenance with no results, she called the academic affairs office to explain that she would be dismissing class for the day because the classroom had no heat. "That brought action," she recalls, in the form of a maintenance supervisor coming to the class with a thermometer and placing it on a bookshelf to measure the temperature in the room, she explains (166). Infuriated at this response, Fisher took the thermometer in the presence of her class and placed it on an "outside window ledge, and covered it with snow" (166). A half hour later when the maintenance supervisor returned and checked the thermometer, he looked surprised, but the heat came on pretty soon afterwards (166). Keith Gilyard and Henry Louis Gates describe her actions in the African American rhetorical tradition of the trickster figure – the use of rhetorical strategies to subvert authority or gain desired access to desired ends (*True*,97; Gates 21).

Fisher admits herself that she was known to be "highly individualistic. If I could

not conscientiously and professionally accept a project, I just quietly ignored it. I knew the rule: you go along to get along" (167). By "highly individualistic," Fisher means that her savviness was to follow her own mind and engage passive and sometimes subversive resistance when she felt a policy or a practice to be unfair. Gilyard connects Black students' rhetorical and linguistic competence, savviness, and how they use these skills to the trickster figure in African American culture (97). Can trickster methods lead to liberation in some way? I contend that they can and do, when a person learns to subvert power structures to gain what s/he desires. The problem is that these skills can be used in negative ways. Having a toolbox of rhetorical strategies to invoke when facing oppressive structures is to be in a good position to protect oneself from assault and to be cognizant of one's own actions when those assault have the potential to do harm to others.

With all the controversy surrounding students' right to their own language and dialects, having a toolbox of rhetorical strategies—even using humor rhetorically—to invoke when facing oppressive structures is to be in a good position to protect oneself from assault and to be cognizant of one's own actions when those actions have the potential to do harm to others. My last point on Fisher's pedagogies have to do with how her community instilled race pride in her, but more importantly, confidence, which in turn served as a model for her Black students to do the same when confronted with unfair power structures and authority. Her narrative made up a significant component of her pedagogy because her successes as a Black woman made her students proud to be Black. During my interview of former student, Dr. Virginia Schoats, she expressed that when he arrived on Langston's campus that she had never seen so many successful Black people

in one place. As a young lady she was awed. Fisher used her life story to teach students how to survive.

Rhetorical subversion of authority was simply a way of survival back then. To this end, she tells several stories in her autobiography; I will only share one here. She recalls that her community, school, and family gave her "the roots and the shade [she] found so long ago in those old trees" (40-1). With nostalgia, she writes about the community and the people who made her feel valued and special growing up:

> In their [the Black people in her Chickasha community] own way, they were special too. It may not have been the kind of special that shows up in the history books that I later used as a college student or professor. In them [white authored textbooks], you might find the name of Henry W. Grady, and you might find a chapter on the New South. What you will not find are Jasper and Matthew and the Johnson boys [Chickasha, Black community hustlers admired for their commitment to helping the Black community]. Neither will you ever see Dallas Red, Alley Oop, Dinner Bucket, or Molasses (in any of his incarnations) [figures Fisher grew up with in her Black Chickasha community]. In some ways, those books are still like the park at Shannon Springs: for whites only. (41)

Fisher's point is that the people and culture who shaped her were not represented in the textbooks she taught from. She used narrative to teach students about Black culture and how Blacks banned together to meet the needs of the community. One can only tell these community stories if they lived them because these are not the kind of stories white historians record in textbooks.

This excerpt provides a powerful place to end my discussion of Fisher, her

community literacies and pedagogies, and her legacy of providing a rhetorical education to her Langston students—a rhetorical education that loosened the noose of ignorance from their necks. The themes she discussed in her classroom more than likely made up the subject of compositions and exams; ideological in nature—and certainly political—these themes show the powerful relationship between rhetorical study and civic action (Kates 115).

The last two sections of this chapter cover the pedagogies of Melvin Tolson, shaming as a pedagogical strategy, and the voices of students who developed "good enough game" from the mix and remix of the narrative based pedagogies of Langston professors to achieve the American dream.

Melvin Tolson

Melvin Tolson, unlike Ada Fisher, has been the subject of books, dissertations, and even a motion picture. I think of Tolson in the spirit and tradition of a Black preacher that would have been the role model, inspiration, and rhetorical figure for up and coming Blacks pre civil rights era. In this vein, "the speaker consciously operates under guidance from the audience, and effective performance cannot be ascertained apart from audience participation or, more precisely, audience demands relative to expressions, gestures, and tone (Gilyard and Banks 48). David Gold, Joy Flasch, and Tolson's colleagues attest to his dramatic performances in the classroom in response to student behavior or gestures. Tolson provided a rhetorical education through a dialectic, race pride, and shaming pedagogy. All of which are evident in the film *The Great Debaters*. Gold posits that "Tolson's style of instruction, which integrated wide-ranging rhetorical traditions, challenges and enriches our understanding of the development of English studies and

offers lessons for developing rich, responsive classroom practices of our own" (16).

In the movie *The Great Debaters* starring Denzel Washington and Forest Whitaker, Washington gives an award-winning performance as Melvin B. Tolson. Shortly after scene two opens, the film shifts to a dramatic performance by Washington, as Tolson, at the front of the class standing on a chair in a corner looking out at the students while dramatically reciting Langston Hughes's short, three stanza poem "I Too Sing America." Students are mesmerized by his performance. The speaker of the poem reflects race pride and subverts the Jim Crow practice that requires Blacks to "eat in the kitchen when company comes," because he "eat[s] well and grow[s] strong" while in the kitchen. That which is meant to degrade and mock him, ironically makes him stronger. The speaker concludes, "They'll see how beautiful we [Black people] are and be ashamed" (line 8). The dramatic performance to an all Black audience while Tolson represents the Black "we," and the ironic nature of the words convey a strong sense of race pride, and pride in the work of an African American poet—the kind of race pride pedagogies Tolson is known for at Langston, and that Joy Flasch discusses in detail in her book, *Melvin Tolson*.

As an example of how Tolson subverted white supremacist racial structures and policies, Washington walks to the board and writes the word "Revolution" in huge letters, and recites lines 9-10 of Gwendolyn Bennet's poem "Hatred": "Hating you shall be a game / played with Cool hands." Then he proceeds to give the class a lesson on the Jim Crow practice of denying "Negroes" a birth certificates in most states. Tolson looks out at the class and says, "I can lie about my age the rest of my life"! A powerful rhetorical response to a Jim Crow practice meant to make one feel less than human, but the class

chuckles. He asks them: “You think that’s funny? To be born without record?” A rhetorical question meant to make them think about the social circumstances and ideologies that allowed for the condition. For example, “An individual must know who he or she is in the world before he or she can position himself or herself in relation to larger social issues” (Kates 100). The scene ends with Tolson referencing the major Black figures of the Harlem Renaissance.

Any student taking Tolson’s English class would have been exposed to African American literature and literacies in ways that helped them understand their racialized condition in America. Tolson chose to teach at separatist institutions his whole career (Gold 16). James Simpson, Tolson’s colleague in the 60s, refers to him as more of a philosopher than an English teacher. Simpson, 91 years old—and very sharp, taught chemistry at Langston from 1957 to 1993, and who served as Vice President of Development and University Relations for approximately eleven of those thirty-six years, shared that he advised his science majors not to take Tolson for basic English (I understood this to be Comp I or Comp II), but required them to take Tolson for at least one class before leaving Langston. In an interview with James A. Simpson who taught with Tolson from 1957 to 1965, Simpson explained that Tolson “had no interest in English. He might show up with his pajamas hanging from underneath his pants.” Dr. Simpson spoke of Tolson with admiration. His point was that Tolson was more interested in politics and social issues than a skills based approach to education. Students need help learning how to use their knowledge to critique the world they lived in and a safe space to practice these literacies; students have to learn to intervene, when necessary, in responsible ways. Using one’s knowledge to intervene can be as simple as learning the

importance of voting and how government works to meet constituent needs at the local level. Intervening in responsible ways means, like Tolson did, accepting a position as Mayor of Langston—serving four consecutive terms "hoping he could do something to improve conditions in the all-black community" (Flasch 36). Tolson spoke with students about voting and how to vote—where to go to exercise that constitutional right to promote democracy. He spent a lot of time with his students, and "it was an unwritten law at Langston University [as confirmed by Simpson] that every student should take at least one course with Professor Tolson" (36). He prided himself in helping the community, as Flasch explained; "Every time someone wanted a street light placed in front of his house, he consulted the mayor" (36).

Flasch, like Simpson, refers to Tolson as a philosopher (19). For example, Flasch says in her preface: "Tolson was an unusual man as well as an unusual poet. He cared for people intensely. . . . He inspired devotion bordering on adulation in many who knew him well." Then, the next paragraph begins with, "There are those, of course, who cannot comfortably read Tolson's vivid descriptions of the accomplishments of the black man, despite centuries of atrocities and humiliations inflicted upon him by the 'Great White World.' In like manner, his work is not popular either with those black Americans who recognize themselves in his picture of the hypocritical 'Black Bourgeoisie' because of their materialistic, white middle-class values."[15] He valued and respected his Black heritage and Black language; to him, it coexisted with standard English in a way that did not position standard English as Godlike. His teaching methods helped students develop tools to kick "good enough game," one's ability to use the rhetorical resources available to him or her. For example, in her book Flasch explains that in Tolson's class, and let's

remember, he taught literature and writing, that "[w]hatever the subject, it always ended up as philosophy" (37).

However, I see Tolson more in the vein of a rhetorician who interrogates social issues, and in turn, encourages his students to do the same with the intent of bringing them to a critically conscious awareness of reality and where they fit in. Understanding their reality and how to use irony, subversion, and humor to push back against structures meant to demean one' character, helps students develop "good enough" game to use the rhetorical In many ways, that is what this dissertation is about. How can we today, help students become critically aware of community literacies that solidify white supremacy in ways that do violence to others? Kates posits that part of an activist rhetorical education, and I extend to say a Black liberatory education specifically, involves helping students develop a critical understanding of the relationship between language and identity so they can "take on a social identity, to determine what [their] response to particular issues should be" (100). How can we extend Tolson's pedagogies at primarily white institutions in ways that help white teachers understand the ideological bondage that characterize their attitudes toward Black and brown learners. According to Kynard and Eddy, "the intellectual, political, and pedagogical legacy of the HBCUs is the only catalyst that can charge HWCUs with creating a humanistic/human-centered pedagogy and communication that our current world will require for its sustenance (W42). We don't want to witness another George Floyd death, live. We want to perpetuate an environment that causes everyone to think critically about the Amy Coopers of the world. We want to promote cultural literacies in ways that encourage tolerance and not violence—linguistically or physically. True democracy requires literacies that do more than simply

add a multicultural reading here or there. True democracy requires that students be taught to read complex social situations through a political lens that leads to critical self-reflection.

Tolson's popular poem "Dark Symphony," first published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1941, raises the issue of democracy—as he did in the classroom. The poem presents images of Black slaves singing and shifts in the third section to a critique of America (Flasch 61). It reads: "They tell us to forget / Democracy is spurned. / They tell us to forget / The Bill of Rights is burned" (lines). Because limited records exist, and because this project draws heavily from personal interviews and critical imagination as described as research methods by Royster and Kirsch, I imagine Tolson would have presented this content in a 1960s Langston classroom by critically questioning students about the progress of the civil rights movement and the tactics of Malcom-X v. Martin Luther King. I'm certain these conversations took place in both Tolson and Fisher's classrooms. However, due to flooding and poor record keeping, the physical evidence of these pedagogies are lost. We do, however, have Flasch's book.

Another case in point: Tolson shared a story with his speech class at Langston about a young white professor who deliberately tried to insult him while at an all white gathering in New York. The story serves to illustrate for students how to use subversion and humor rhetorically to push back against racism. Turning the young professor's insults aside pleasantly, he realized he couldn't get a rise out of Tolson. He said: "Tolson, you just can't be insulted, can you?" Tolson smiled, and said: "No, my friend. You see, a less intelligent man than I can't insult me, and a more intelligent one won't" (Flasch 29). Again, a powerful rhetorical strategy for an African American audience in the 60s who

would likely be insulted by someone white at some point in their lives. He taught students to always use their humor against their opponent, and never to insult themselves. Not only did Tolson offer students rhetorical strategies by sharing his experiences when confronted with racism, but he also used the African American rhetorical tradition of shaming, or sometimes called "reading" someone (telling them off) when necessary to help students see when they were not using good judgement.

An example of shaming is played out in a scene in *The Great Debaters,* where Tolson asks character who plays Henry Lowe to tell him about his father. Mr. Lowe answers, "Why don't you tell us something about your father?" Tolson advises Lowe that he's just trying to get to know him, and that he (Tolson) is not on the debate team. Lowe poses the question, "Are we not in a debate right now?" Tolson says, "All right, I'll take the affirmative then." Tolson, smiling, then launches into a full shaming tirade about Willie Lynch that draws on a mix of the past to remix with the current situation to teach the student a lesson about respect. Tolson says:

> Take the meanest, most restless nigger, strip him of his clothes in front of the remaining male niggers, female niggers, and nigger infants. Tar and feather him. Tie each leg to a horse facing an opposite direction, set him on fire, and beat both horses until they tear him apart, in front of the male, female, and nigger infants. Bullwhip and beat the remaining nigger males within an inch of their life. Do not kill them, but put the fear of God in them, for they can be useful for future breeding. Anybody know who Willie Lynch was? Anybody? Raise your hand. No one? He was a vicious slave owner in the West Indies. The slave masters in the colony of Virginia were having trouble controlling their slaves, so they sent for

> Mr. Lynch to teach them his methods. The word "lynching" came from his last name. His methods were very simple, but they were diabolical. Keep the slave physically strong but psychologically weak and dependent on the slave master. Keep the body, take the mind.

This full frontal assault delivers a shocking lesson to the young African American students who lack the knowledge of Willie Lynch, debilitating racism, and his diabolical tactics to control Black slaves. Although the movie is fictional, the practices represent the reality of how students were taught Black history. Tolson then, standing eye to eye with Henry Lowe, tells him: "I, and every other professor on this campus, are here to help you to find, take back, and keep your righteous mind because obviously you have lost it. That's all you need to know about me, Mr. Lowe." The confrontation transpires in front of the whole class. The idea of shaming Lowe is to cause "Mr. Lowe" to respect his (Tolson's) authority. Most Black students are familiar with this type of shaming. While the rhetorical strategy might not go over well with a white audience, Tolson is able to make his point crystal clear with a Black audience who understands such tactics. In addition, students received a powerful history lesson—a remix of the past with the present.

Tolson used his body rhetorically to challenge even university structure and classroom expectations; "his unique teaching methods often involved jumping on the desk or showing up to class in pajamas—also confirmed through my interview with James Simpson (Flasch 40). Tolson used his very body rhetorically to demonstrate situational awareness and etiquette, which are forms of literacy not bound by white middle class notions of what counts as literacy in schools. Teaching the whole student

required sharing personal experiences and strategies to overcome racism and oppression in private, racialized space away from the public eye, by infusing race consciousness into the curriculum and extracurricular activities.

Again, oppressed communities in the 1960s and prior viewed education as an avenue to gain agency and independence—and Black students strove to be identified with what DuBois defines in *The Souls of Black Folk* as the talented tenth. Notably, Blacks aspired for civil rights, equality, and uplift, and their teachers, in the vein of Du Bois's talented tenth, nurtured their civic and political involvement through rhetorical education.

Student Voices

Students coming from Spencer, Oklahoma took Clara Luper, the nationally recognized civil rights leader who taught history at Dunjee High School. Luper also served as director of the Youth National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). She encouraged Black youth from the community to actively participate in sit-ins throughout Oklahoma City. Luper graduated from Langston in 1944. She was arrested at least 26 times for protesting across the state, according to the Oklahoma Democrats website, which featured a story on Luper. Luper's students later became Langston students. Activism ran in the veins of Langston students in the 1960s, and they sought full citizenship, equality under the law, and fair participation in a racially divided and segregated Oklahoma. When they got to Fisher and Tolson, they only needed a little priming.

A case in point is English major Wylene Bridgeman, a 1966 graduate of Langston who had Melvin Tolson as a teacher for two semesters of Composition I and II in 1962-3. In a personal interview with me, Bridgeman explained:

> Dr. Tolson taught us about life. He taught us about life and black history. He taught us about the contributions of Negroes in Oklahoma. I kept my notes, and I'm reading from them. I wrote the date 9/26/63 at the top. I see references to the age of exploration, the age of exploitation, the age of explanation. He talked a lot about black people and the mind. He taught us about the parts of speech. Although I had had it before, we did talk about clauses, nouns, adverbs, and how to use them in our writing overall. But the class was really about expanding our knowledge. He told us about books to get that would enhance our knowledge and understanding. He wanted us to be proud of who we were and our heritage. I quoted him in my notes on 9/10/63 as saying that life is a teacher and life will give you a grade. Literature comes from life. He was constantly quoting people. Dr. Tolson was a heavy man, very smart. He was always quoting from T.S. Eliot's *Waste Land*.

As evidenced from Wylene's description of her classes with Tolson, discussing the age of exploration and exploitation more than likely created a heightened sense of social consciousness in the wake of Jim Crow as well as helped students understand that to be included in the American body politic, they must understand how to respond to racism and degradation. Both affected them directly or indirectly, as indicated by Tolson's assertion that "Life is a teacher, and life will give you a grade." A grade indicates success or failure measured by some standard of action based on students' responses to social situations and circumstances.

Flasch also documents similar accounts to those of Wylene's from the notes of

Margaret Williams Wade, class of 1965. Wade wrote that Tolson lectured on the symbolism of the round table, explaining that the round table represented social equality. Although Wade's notes are seemingly random and disconnected, it's clear that the topic of the class was social equality:

> The Round Table was a symbol of social equality.
>
> Forms of definitions: authority, exemplification, explication, implication, and analogy.
>
> "If you don't know where you came from, you don't know where you're going."
>
> (Lincoln)
>
> "The lie of the artist is the only lie for which a mortal or a god should die." (Picasso)
>
> Every person is a tridimensionality: biological, sociological, psychological.
>
> 3 Ages of Man: Exploration, Exploitation, and Explanation. (qtd in Flasch 36-7)

The key phrases that grab my attention are "social equality," "If you don't know where you came from, you don't know where you're going," and "exploitation." These phrases indicate a politically, race conscious agenda and a concerted pedagogical effort to help students understand their place in society.

Wade also noted Tolson quoting Lincoln, "If you don't know where you came from, you don't know where you're going"; and Picasso, "The lie of the artist is the only lie for which a mortal or a god should die" (36). Flasch writes, "[H]e made sure that his students left his classes with a 'black is beautiful' concept long before the phrase was put into those words and popularized" (37). At Langston, Tolson often used an appeal to race pride as a catalyst to send students in the direction of the library (38). Several former students attest to the culture of inquiry that permeated the environment at Langston.

Wylene Bridgeman also recalled that as a teacher, Tolson was deeply engaging, and as a result many of them went to the library for their own fulfilment and research, usually because of some pithy or controversial fact he'd mentioned in class. Indeed, Langston's story of providing a rhetorical education to underrepresented groups is an endearing one.

Langston graduates described an era in which segregation resulted in Black students having the best prepared African American teachers and distinguished faculty of the time—W.E.B. DuBois (Atlanta University), Alain Locke (Howard University), James Weldon Johnson (composer of the Negro National Anthem, Fisk), and Melvin Tolson (educated at Colombia and Fisk, Langston University)—because these teachers were not welcomed to teach in white institutions. In fact, because of segregation Melvin Todd and Venora McKinney both expressed that they felt they received a much better education during segregation because all of their teachers were African American and excellent role models. "Our teachers were well equipped to provide us with a good education. Most had been educated in the finest institutions in the North," states Venora. Neither Venora McKinney nor Melvin Todd encountered a white teacher until their graduate studies.

McKinney and Todd, as well as other Langston graduates, helped me understand that activism characterized Black communities throughout Oklahoma, and Langston and its faculty contributed greatly to the spirit of protest. Luper's sit-ins and protests went viral; as Jimmie Lewis Franklin puts it, "As young blacks saw their friends express their bravery by sitting at a counter, or standing in a picket line, they became more inclined to 'do something for freedom'" (56). For the first time in history, these students would graduate college and become teachers in newly desegregated schools—white schools, creating a crisis packed rhetorical situation for themselves. Langston's students would not

only become teachers, but they also sought corporate jobs in hopes of climbing the socio-economic ladder and having a chance at the American dream.

Pedagogical Overview

Research shows that although Langston used placement tests and students took remedial classes, teacher attitudes differed from those of mainstream universities. Black teachers understood that not having a command of the grammars of SAE did not equate to mental deficiency. As explained in Mina Shaughnessy's *Errors and Expectations,* what counts as error is socially determined (13). In 1977 Shaughnessy's groundbreaking research offered some hope for non-white marginalized students. But, as Kynard's critique of Shaughnessy's work highlights, cultural bias leads to measuring success based on one's own culture which confuses the spoken language with intellect (*Vernacular* 206-7). Perhaps one of the best examples that show how language prejudice affects marginalized classes and the negative effects of measuring an intellect by a dialect can be found in the work of Asian author Amy Tan. In "Mother Tongue" Tan explains that her mother who spoke a broken Chinese American English read the *Forbes* report and *Wall Street Week* without incumbrance, but because she spoke broken English people often treated her as if she lacked intelligence and "as if everything is limited, including people's perception of the limited English speaker" (376).

Of course, in the racialized spaced of Langston, professors dealt primarily with the language dialects of African American culture; teachers such as Melvin B. Tolson and Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher were at some point students themselves. They understood Black dialect and that students make sense of their own experiences in the world through their home culture and language (Baker-Bell 13). These teachers had to learn to use their

experiences negotiating spaces and borders to effectively teach others to do the same. Other high profile minorities besides Smitherman, Richardson, and Tan have shared their experiences with language racism in America.

Take Michelle Obama for example. In *Becoming*, Michelle Obama references her experiences as a minority student at Princeton to limn the dilemma of many minority students who enter the Ivory Tower's white spaces. Learning study habits, how and when to talk to professors, how to drop or add a class, and about resources available to help students succeed (i.e. writing center, math labs, work study, etc.) is sometimes daunting for minority students. She warns, "But even today, with white students continuing to outnumber students of color on college campuses, the burden of assimilation is put largely on the shoulders of minority students" (74). Obama concludes her paragraph with this advice: "In my experience, it's a lot to ask" (74) of Black students. I agree with Michelle Obama—placing the burden of assimilation on the shoulders of the one minority student in the classroom is cruel, and I've lived this cruelty too.

When pedagogies ignore the many cultural literacies present in America, students from other cultures force assimilate the best way they can, and sometimes unsuccessfully. Obama explains that "[i]t takes energy to be the only black person in a lecture hall or one of a few nonwhite people trying out for a play or joining an intramural team. It requires effort, an extra level of confidence, to speak in those settings and own your presence in the room" (75). I hope this study will help white teachers understand that addressing cultural literacies requires pedagogical change, not condescending piety.

Conclusion

Melvin Tolson and Ada Fisher as extended examples are the epitome of how

Black teachers at Langston in the 60s used their life stories and bodies to give students a rhetorical education. Students learned rhetorical skills by example. These skills gave them "good enough" game to resist and respond to racist power structures designed to keep them marginalized. I want to reiterate that in the 60s and prior, the political climate in Oklahoma required Black and brown marginalized students to assimilate. Language assimilation was almost a matter of life and death for Blacks back then—assimilate and survive amid the white supremacist literacies of Oklahoma or resist and die (an academic death, that is, from ostracization). However, Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher and Melvin Tolson resisted this philosophical stance on language assimilation. Both taught students at a separatist institution to have race pride and stand up for what they believed in. Black teachers at Langston and other HBCUs throughout the U.S. understood the politics of language and linguistic survival for Blacks in America.

Although these teachers taught at separatist institutions, and former graduates of Langston attest to the quality of education they received at separatist institutions throughout Oklahoma, as Melvin Todd cautions: "Segregation is never good, even if it seems beneficial." What I attempt in this dissertation then, is not to promote segregation in any form, but to engage the pedagogical practices at separatist institutions so we can learn from the past. I want to encourage meaningful discussions in the field about how rhetorical study was used at Langston to heighten students' social consciousness post *Brown* and what those pedagogies might look like today to promote tolerance. Necessarily, amid the racial turmoil today, we need to move toward moral and political reform in ways that benefit both the individual and the communities we serve (Kates 62).

Gilyard emphasizes, "Our work as teachers is political – whether we construe it that way or not – and our obligation, which we sometimes shun, is to provide clarity of political vision regarding our teaching endeavors. . . . Literacy educators [should] further the development of authentic democracy –enlightened citizenry and all that – by helping to create informed, critical, powerful, independent, and culturally sensitive student voices" (*True* 33-4). Gilyard lays out the characteristics and goals of a Black liberatory, activist education as it unfolded in the racialized space of Langston fifty years prior.

Students today, regardless of race or class, should leave the college classroom like Ada Fisher's and Melvin Tolson's left—as informed, critical, powerfully independent beings, culturally sensitive to others. Fairly educating all marginalized classes seeking an education at both primarily white and Black institutions requires learning from past institutional practices like Langston for strategies to meet the needs of students who desire to emancipate themselves. It also requires that we look deeply within ourselves to examine the values that inform our attitudes.

Chapter 4

The Development and Rhetoric of Communitas at Langston

> "While discourses of literacy educators today often center on how to create bridge-type models for students of color to take their 'street codes' and community identities /literacies and translate them into academic literacy and the norms of the 'culture of power,' the history of black student protest rhetorics and activism flows in the opposite direction: it is the university and school structure, including its literacies and rhetorics, that are in need of change, not the students and thereby, the communities and cultural histories that they represent." (Kynard, *Vernacular* 52)

This chapter describes in greater detail how Langston, as a separatist institution, nurtured and fostered community and problem solving for marginalized students in the racialized space of Oklahoma. According to *World Population Review*, Oklahoma, with a population just under four million, is 72% white. Further demographic information puts the Black population at 7.28% and Natives at 7.62%. These current statistics naturally create segregated spaces unintentionally. For example, as I mentioned in my introduction, Cache, Oklahoma where I taught in 2009 remains over 66% white, with a Black population just over 4% and a Native population at 12%, in 2021 (*World Population Review*). As we push toward more inclusive pedagogies that value the diverse literacies marginalized students bring to the classroom, such as African American literacies, showing how these literacies matter inside the classroom create exigence to show valuation. I posit that white teachers can do this work, but only by acknowledging how white supremacy maintains a racist social order. My research revealed that, in the past, students and teachers overcame racist structural socio-political barriers through a development of communitas. Communitas involves people putting forth the effort to both help and understand each other as part of the social order for the betterment of humanity.

In this chapter I capture the voices of former students Rozalyn Luster-Washington, Venora McKinney, and Sarah Jones through personal interviews. All grew

up in all Black towns in Oklahoma and attended Langston in the late 1950s and 60s. I also present the content of interviews with three teachers who taught at Langston during the 1960s: Drs. Jean Bell Manning, JoAnn Richardson Clark, and Joy Flasch. These students and teachers expressed to me how Langston exposed students to cultural nationalism through a race conscious curriculum that centered around an ethos of help and community. Carmen Kynard and Robert Eddy charge that "HBCUs have created a critical space in which the cultural identities of black college students have pedagogical consequences inside the arenas of racial inequality in the United States" (W24).

Susan Kates identifies the exigence for historians as we pursue microhistories of the field: "Even broad examinations of nineteenth- and twentieth-century rhetoric courses in America offer very little information about separatist institutions that were founded to serve students who could seldom gain access to more elite colleges and universities" (xii). Langston, as a separatist institution in the Oklahoma territory, served a Black population that negotiated shared public spaces and borders with white Oklahomans who maintained the same racist attitudes as those I encountered when I first came to the state in 2008.

In the last section, I present a narrative case study of Joy Flasch's journey toward innovative and inclusive pedagogies as a white teacher. Flasch was the first white teacher to teach writing to African American students in the racialized space of Langston. She came from a cultural consciousness of red dirt pride that initially caused her to fail to see the white supremacist attitudes controlling her environment. After becoming critically aware of the racist landscape, she adjusted her pedagogies; importantly her pedagogical practices serve as a heuristic for white teachers teaching marginalized populations at

primarily white institutions. A reconciliation of former students experiences and Joy Flasch's pedagogies attest that white teachers can effectively provide a critical education to marginalized classes by critically examining their personal values and biases and being open to engaging pedagogical practices that promote critical mentoring (Kynard and Eddy (W34). When white teachers engage critical mentoring with marginalized classes, it shows that the experiences and literacies these students bring to the classroom matters. Moving forward effectively in the twenty-first century means embracing students right to their own language (SRTOL) and practicing pedagogies that demonstrate the importance of lived experiences in America. Valuing literacies means valuing lives.

In the 60s President Hale set a goal to establish the school as a "greenhouse for the intellectually undernourished" to tap into the potential of "uninspired" and "underdeveloped" young people ("Langston Wants"). If we are to engage critical pedagogies and literacies that nourish students' minds, we must challenge them to question the political and social order undermining institutions of higher education in America. In the racialized space of HBCUs, Black teachers engage critical literacies because at some point in their past they generally shared in the same political and social experiences as their students. Because these teachers shared the same fate as their students, they effectively helped them develop intellectually and socially by designing race conscious pedagogies reflective of the experiences of those at the margins.

When addressing the needs of marginalized populations, it is important to acknowledge the role economic disparity plays in education, in the past and now. The March-April 1966 Southern Education Report notes that more than 60 years of inadequate funding left Langston behind other competing institutions. Students had

financial challenges and counseling needs that could only be met with the community working together as a whole to see that each student succeeded. This same work must take place at traditionally white colleges today if we are serious about confronting social and political systems that continue to oppress marginalized groups because of their language and social status. The report also documented that a 1962 study showed that 71 percent of Langston's freshman came from homes with an annual income of less than $5,000 ("Langston Wants"). Seventy-one percent is an alarming number. The community took responsibility for these students to ensure they had adequate housing, food, and school supplies.

Former Langston students stressed the significance of being educated by teachers who loved and understood their needs; they emphasized the challenges of coming from large families (oftentimes 10 children and upwards) and the role the school (Langston) took in providing food and shelter to students, often without compensation. On the surface, this might not seem relevant to writing instruction, but I believe these factors are very relevant. For example, having one's social and economic needs met is a necessary step to not only gain access to higher learning but also to garner the skills needed to exercise control in their personal lives and overall economic health. In other words, hungry students had to be fed before they could be taught, and tuition had to be provided if students were to attend classes. Failing to look critically at students' backgrounds and failing to examine one's own biases and continuing to support the notion of a colorblind society, moves us away from liberating, antiracist pedagogies that push against white supremacist (Baker-Bell xv). As April Baker-Bell charges that [w]e need a pedagogy which teaches us to explore why things are the way they are (xv). My argument is that

looking to the past at how communitas operated at Langston offers an avenue to explore moving forward.

Jelani Favors appropriates the term communitas (which I extend to Langston) to provide a conceptual framework to theorize how the space of Black colleges functioned to offer shelter from the "worst elements of a white supremacist society that sought to undermine, overlook, and render impotent the intellectual capacity of Black youths" (Favors 5). In the 60s and now, statistics show that Oklahoma remains predominantly white space with white privilege attitudes promoted through conservative politics and the social order. Langston served (and currently) as an interstitial racialized space, a shelter surrounded by majority white counties that practiced legalized segregation in stores, schools, churches, and communities specifically. Jim Crow—oppressive race etiquette practices in the south—required that Blacks bow down and honor these unwritten segregation codes or face violence at the hands of whites. Langston continues to admit Oklahoma's marginalized classes who score too low on the SAT or ACT to attend more prominent schools like the University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma State University. The town of Langston and the college acted as an epicenter of hope and safety for Black people during and prior to the civil rights movement, and it functions the same today.

As I have indicated in other parts of this dissertation, one of the worst race massacres in United States history took place in Tulsa in 1921 and went undocumented for over 80 years except for oral accounts among Black communities throughout Oklahoma (Krehbiel 81). Whites murdered more than 300 African Americans in one evening. They looted and burned Black owned businesses along the strip known as Black Wallstreet with impunity. Fleeing Black business owner, J.B. Stradford, recalled seeing

white rioters break into the drugstore next to his hotel, the Stradford Hotel, and take money from the register and handfuls of cigars and tobacco (Hirsch 6). A culture of terror and silence ensued and prevailed until a 1997 government investigation began and Oklahoma's long kept secret—The Tulsa genocide—made national news. This history is important if we are to push toward rupturing institutional racism; more importantly, as Kynard and Eddy explain, "Speaking the truth-of-racism-to-power tends at HWCUs [historically white institutions] to be met with intense silent resistance from students, faculty, and researchers" (Kynard and Eddy W35). Helping white faculty and students recognize institutional racism is difficult because, when coming from a position of privilege and power, it is difficult to see how that privilege, whiteness, causes minority students and faculty to suffer (Manning 34-5). Describing that privilege becomes an even more daunting task because of the invisible nature of ideological constructs (Kynard and Eddy W34). This process, like brain surgery, is delicate. Helping white teachers understand how communitas benefits minorities might help them to see the ideological constructs holding their mind hostage (Kynard and Eddy W35). Furthermore, an exploration of communitas in Oklahoma might help white teachers understand that they must do a little more work to counter systemic racism and that individual acts of microaggressions are really part of a structural whole (Kynard 8,"Teaching While Black"). I also want to note that more work needs to be done to explore racialized spaces and communities surround HBCUs in states other than Oklahoma. This research is only a small piece designed to confront institutional white privilege that promotes oppressive racist pedagogical practices.

However, Joy Flasch, by critically examining her own small town values shaped in the pride of white Oklahoma's working class, successfully integrated into the racialized space of Langston. I present the etiology of Flasch's experiences later in this chapter. Over the years Oklahoma has not been friendly to its Black residents, which is part of a structural whole. The Oklahoma Historical Society documents: "The irrational belief by whites of possible black domination in the state, fear of economic competition, and efforts to silence blacks politically, helped to foster an atmosphere for violence" ("African Americans"). In addition, "Spurred by free land and then by oil, [Oklahoma] attracted whites from the Deep South" who "established racism as custom and wrote it as law" (Hirsch 6). Blacks flocked to the Territory because it was not part of the Confederacy, and they believed they could experience a measure of political freedom. Boosters such as Edward P. McCabe, founder of Langston, described Oklahoma as the "land of opportunity and freedom" ("African Americans"). More than 100,000 Blacks settled in Oklahoma between 1890 and 1910. It is important to note that Blacks owned land in Oklahoma prior to 1890; Blacks originally entered the territory with their Indian masters on the trail of tears. After the Civil War, the federal government ordered tribes to allot lands to their newly freed Black slaves ("African Americans"). The mandatory giving of land to freed slaves was unique to Oklahoma. The government made no provisions for land for freed slaves in other southern states. The sheer number of all Black towns such as Langston, Boley, Red Bird, Tullahassee, and Tatums attests to the hope and idealism of freedom and equality that Blacks brought with them to Oklahoma. According to the Oklahoma Historical Society, in the 1920s Oklahoma had more than 50 identifiable Black towns. Now, only 13 survive ("Throwback Tulsa"). Oklahoma holds a

unique chapter in American history: “Nowhere else, neither in the Deep South nor in the Far West, did so many African-American men and women come together to create, occupy and govern their own communities” (“Throwback Tulsa”).

Black folk in the territory had to stick together to survive amid the widespread culture of racism. Despite the law, Oklahoma did not fully integrate until 1977, which attests to the depth of resistance. In the fifties and sixties as well as decades prior, the Black community was the “crucial nexus for the achievement of its children” (Irvine and Irvine 301). Irvine and Irvine also conclude the *Brown* decision “considerably altered the nature of the African American community, diluting its collective whole, collective struggle, and collective will” (301). Black students were disbursed into white classroom space, spaces where they were often devalued by white teachers and looked down upon by classmates because of their language and skin color (299). Failing to acknowledge Black language today continues the trend of “ignoring the anti-Black skeletons in [your] own closet”, as Vershawn Young so clearly articulates in “This Ain’t Another Statement! This is a DEMAND for Black Linguistic Justice!” The law could and did place African American students in white classrooms. Understandably, most Blacks entered these spaces with the hope of gaining access to better educational resources, as explained by Gary Orfield, former co-director of Harvard’s Civil Rights Project. Back then language adaptations offered the most immediate access to better educational resources. However, the law could not make white teachers bond and develop relationships with black students, the nature of which had sustained students in the Black communities prior to desegregation.

Former students Venora McKinney, Sara Jones, and Rozalyn Luster-Washington

all stressed Langston as the school of choice because of funding and safety. They came from poor families (with the exception of Washington) and could not afford to attend any other college. And the racialized town and campus of Langston provided a safe space. At Langston, they were welcomed by teachers and faculty who wanted to see them succeed and who sought to develop their strengths. In a personal letter to me, former teacher Olether Tolliver expressed that she understood what students needed because she knew what she needed as a Black college student entering the segregated spaces of America. Langston accepted students even when they could not pay tuition or their meal tickets! Both Jones and McKinney recalled the struggle for a meal ticket. Coming from a family of eight—all LU graduates—Jones explained that she and her siblings often did not have the money for their meal tickets. She said, "My ticket had so many holes, I knew it was past 30 days, but they always let me eat." Langston faculty and staff understood that no matter the cost, food was important if a student was to learn. "If that school hadn't been there, I wouldn't have been able to go to college at all," Jones explained.

Rozalyn Washington explained her father's fear and rationale for insisting she attend Langston in 1965 despite her receiving other scholarship offers: "Safety was an issue. Not knowing how your daughter could navigate the integrated world was a huge personal risk academically, emotionally, and socially. Society had not evolved to the level of trust, especially for girls." Many Black families made the journey to the small community of Langston to drop their kids off at college—roughly 80 miles or so from Tulsa. Cultural anthropologist, Victor Turner, describes communitas as the practice of building unity through social relationships within the collective space of religious pilgrimages (Favor 5). Dr. Rozalyn Washington returned to Langston in the 1980s to

direct the Physical Education Program; she retired from Langston in 2006. Within the racialized space of Langston University, communitas—the second curriculum, a race centered curriculum crafted to meet the specific needs of the people of the Black communities it served, thus cultivating race pride, racial responsibility, and cultural nationalism—provided the weapons to subvert the limitations of funding, shelter, and security placed on the college, faculty, and students. Personal interviews with former students and teachers also reveal that teachers worked to naturally build social relationships with students because they saw it as their duty to personally help each student develop and succeed by helping them understand how Blackness functions rhetorically in white space. Ironically, these teachers are very modest about the personal impact they had on creating the base of the Black middle class of today.

Langston's collective goal involved developing in each student the appropriate social skills to successfully cross into white spaces, and too often this centered on language and manners, and the community of teachers and staff accepted their part in cultivating students. Weekly assembly, sororities, fraternities, and clubs provided mediums for administration and faculty to promote communitas and refine the language, manners, and other skills they felt necessary to help shape a certain kind of character in students to help them be successful in the real world (Beale 626). The atmosphere at Langston demanded students attend weekly assembly and actively participate in developing their educated selves by getting involved in extracurricular activities and research to solve problems. Specifically, students were required to speak at assembly on occasion, and this gave them practice speaking publicly. Several former students and teachers attest to faculty and staff instructing students to "speak up," "hold your head

up," and "look a person in the eye when you speak." These commands helped develop self-confidence, self-respect, courage, and perseverance, as Dr. Jeanne Manning explained. They needed not be ashamed of their race or the social and economic class they came from. Teachers and students understood the oppressive conditions of slavery that shaped their past. As emphasized previously, these pedagogies operated covertly, because, as historian Bobby Lovett explains, "HBCUs were supposed to serve black students in Jim Crow days, send them out to 'work and serve,' but not give leadership and certainly not challenge white leadership" (155). Again, as was the norm, funding for Langston depended on the support of white government officials. The school and its administrators—Hale particularly, since he grew up in Oklahoma—understood the principle of white supremacy in the state of Oklahoma.

For example, in an article for *The Journal of Negro Education*, F.D. Moon, retired Principal of the all Black Douglass High School in Oklahoma City, reported that in the 1960-61 school year, of Oklahoma's 12 public institutions, Langston's income amounted to $632,501 in comparison to Oklahoma's eleven white public institutions that reported an income of $28,318,020. All twelve public institutions charged the same tuition of $5.25 per credit hour for residents and $13 for non-residents, with the exceptions of Oklahoma University and Oklahoma State University charging $7 for residents and $18 for non-residents (Moon 322). The great gulf between income demonstrates the prejudice toward Langston. Furthermore, because integration decimated Langston's enrollment, per capita cost averaged $960 at Langston and $670 at Oklahoma's public white institutions (323). Desegregation pushed Blacks to Oklahoma's white institutions as rumors of Langston closing spread throughout the Black communities. Since "Negro youth"

frequently come from "culturally deprived backgrounds," they struggle to fair well in white institutions, Hale explained (325). In the interview Hale also emphasized:

> Many once Negro high schools have been discontinued. The pupils were taken into white schools but the great majority of Negro teachers had to seek employment elsewhere. The strange environment in which the displaced Negro pupil found himself did not provide the psychological security so conducive to learning and the drop-out rate increased. The condition seriously affected the number of Negro youth who finished high school. (324)

I wish Moon had asked Hale to elaborate the meaning of "psychological security." However, Moon did not ask this follow-up question because, obviously, prejudice and lack of care from white teachers for their Black students would have negatively affected their well-being. White teachers were not a part of the Black community and were not sympathetic to Black struggle or vested in Black students' success. Hale further explains, "A token support [of funding] was given which resulted in minimizing our ability to compete for top faculty personnel" (324). But, as explained in chapter two, Hale grew his own faculty with Title III and Ford Foundation grants. Unlike states in the deep south that resisted desegregation and gave generously to their HBCUs to "divert" Blacks from white institutions, Oklahoma used desegregation as an excuse not to give sufficiently to Langston to keep the school in operation (325). However, Oklahoma's House Joint Resolution #538 pledged full and adequate support to keep Langston in operation (326).

From Hales's acknowledgements, it's safe to conclude Langston's students received a literacy education that emphasized speaking, reading, and writing as political acts—an activist education, though not called by that name. It's important to remember

that these were intense radical times and desegregation required radical pedagogies. Administrators of HBCUs and segregated public institutions in the 60s and prior, like Hale, understood that culturally deprived Black youth needed an activist education to integrate effectively into white society, and Oklahoma was no different than other areas across the South. Again, these were radical times. To do this, Blacks had to be trained to be rhetorically savvy and understand the exigencies of the communication situation when in white space; next, it was imperative to help Black youth understand their contributions to American society so to understand their worth and did not give way to an inferiority complex, as Carter Woodson articulated so well in *The Miseducation of the Negro*. The curriculum had to emphasize the importance of voting and community involvement because of the conflict of the era.

Blacks who graduated from segregated schools and became teachers carried these same values into their classrooms and embraced encouraging activism as a duty. Having felt the sting of racism and denial—whether at lunch counters, with employment opportunities, or with everyday shopping experiences where they were often denied the opportunity to even try on clothes in a fitting room before purchase—these teachers understood what it meant to provide students with an activist education, although it was not called by that name at the time.

Student Learning within the Communitas

Faculty took on the role of parenting students, offering meals at their homes and organizing community functions to provide public meals, school supplies, and clothing for students in need. Ms. Patterson notes that Hale emphasized "Langston must function to fill both cultural and educational gaps in the lives of deprived or neglected students."

Naturally, faculty attempted to shape students through socially transformative and liberating pedagogies based on Hale's liberatory philosophies of hard work and activism. Hale and his Black faculty came from politically repressive systems aimed at keeping them and their children in the field of manual labor; as a result they understood the importance of activism and liberation. Langston systematically pushed against the circulating repressive policies and ideas of capitalism. Instead of workers, Langston's administration and faculty sought to produce voters and politically active citizen students who could be successful in the workforce as well as in graduate programs. Carmen Kynard explains that "the history of black students at HBCUs suggests a specific location for the sustained fight against the racial structuring of opportunities in higher education in the United States" (42).

Rozalyn Luster-Washington best describes how a second curriculum functioned at Langston and credits Langston for her ability to apply herself. She attended Langston University from 1965-1968, and her father, Frank Luster, graduated from Langston in 1948. It was well understood throughout the Black communities within the territory of Oklahoma that Langston was their opportunity for an education. She explained, "Teachers knew you before you got there. They would tell us, 'We know your people.' Knowing someone's people placed learning on an entirely different level than simply learning and becoming educated. "If someone knows your people," Washington explains, "that makes a difference. You know at that point that it is a personal relationship and that everyone—parents and teachers—is working together to make sure you succeed. And we knew not to disappoint them. There was longevity and loyalty." Teachers and the Black community at large understood that the more they had their hands on the personal lives of

students, the greater the impact and chances of success. Washington credits Langston with teaching her to investigate and research to find answers and solve problems. For example, when she decided to search for a Master's program with kinesiology and physical therapy, she says, "I went to the encyclopedia and wrote every school that had the program I wanted. That's how I got into UC Berkeley. As students educated in separatist institutions we were told to never say, "I don't know. We were taught to draw from what we did know, but never to say, 'I don't know'."

When asked about a race centered curriculum, I got an answer that I have heard from many older Blacks educated in segregated schools. Many of the students came from homes where standard English might not have been spoken, but it was understood that during pre-integration, teachers and students came from the same community. Teachers loved their students. They cared about students' achievements and the achievements of Blacks as a people. Washington explained that Black history was nothing new to them because "those of us who came from segregated schools studied Black history in social studies. Our teachers made us aware the contributions of Blacks in America. We were proud to hear about successful Blacks on every level." At Langston, Washington recalls a class that all freshman attended called surviving in college. Many primarily white colleges today serving underprivileged classes offer a one credit course titled "The First Year Experience." While offering a first-year experience orientation course is relatively new practice at primarily white institutions, it was standard practice to offer such a course at HBCUs. In this class, students learned time management and study skills, as well as how to make a schedule or add or drop a class. College skills classes are standard at most colleges today, especially those serving first generation students; but in the 60s, such a

class was innovative and designed to meet the needs of Langston's marginalized population or marginalized populations served by HBCUs.

Dr. Virginia Schoats was born June 25, 1931. She turned 90 years old this year. She graduated from Langston in 1955 and served as Vice President of Langston in Tulsa. Her husband graduated from Langston in 1951; she experienced fully the legacy of communitas which helped her succeed as a student in the 50s. In interviewing her, I sought to verify the accounts of Sarah Jones, Rozalyn Luster-Washington, and Venora McKinney, all of whom I found to be cultured and the epitome of the character HBCUs seek to graduate and send back into society. The majority of those I interviewed went on to earn doctorate degrees, become dedicated alumni, and give back to community that gave so much them.

When asked about Langston's curriculum and race consciousness, Schoats explained that Black history permeated their culture; schools were named after successful Black people. They lived race. For example, in 1949 Shoats graduated from Attucks high school, named after Crispus Attucks—the Black patriot who took the first bullet in the American Revolution. When asked about how the community helped her achieve her educational goals, she explained that the church ensured she had transportation to get to Langston. And that once at Langston, faculty and staff made sure she had a place to stay and food. For example, Dr. Schoats explained that she worked as a live in baby sitter for shelter, not money, and there was always a family that needed a sitter.

Teaching within the Communitas, Appropriating Whiteness

In this section, I seek to present how the upbringing and experiences of a white writing teacher and her pedagogies reflect communitas based on small town, Oklahoma

values. Teachers who respect community literacies meet students where they are (Fleckenstein). The narrative of Flasch's upbringing helps us gain an understanding of her journey to reflect critically on herself and values. Critical self- reflection led Flasch to communitas, the building of unity through social relationships. Flasch sought ways to educate herself on Black lives and literature and incorporate changes in the classroom. For example, she visited the classrooms of other Black teachers like Melvin Tolson and went to the library and specifically asked for literature by Black authors. If white teachers today put forth even half the effort as Flasch did in the 60s, I am convinced that primarily white institutions would be a more welcoming space for Black and otherwise marginalized students. Flasch engaged critical mentoring, "showing students the rhetorical power they already possess" (Kynard and Eddy W36), by using literature to expose students to the notable contributions of Black people in history.

I recently had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Joy Flasch, author of Melvin B. Tolson's 1972 biography, titled simply *Melvin B. Tolson*, published by Twayne's. Flasch was a colleague of the poet from 1964-65 at Langston University where she progressively broke the color barrier at the cusp of integration, becoming the first white teacher to teach English at the university. I made the 55 mile trip from Norman to Langston in silence, consumed with thoughts of what to ask her and to recreate the scene of a 1960s campus environment from a white teacher's perspective. She was open and easy to talk to, and she genuinely wanted to help with my project. I anticipated the difficulty contextualizing and recovering this historical period because many find it difficult to discuss race in America; doing so requires exposing an intimate part of ourselves and offering it up for public scrutiny in some way.

After talking with Joy Flasch, I realized that teaching writing—genuine good teaching—comes from who we are on the inside, and the literacies we bring with us to the classroom. Flasch brought the literacies of the white working class, and the values of hard work and community. In the 60s, not many white teachers had the opportunity to work with marginalized students in the racialized space of an HBCU. Therefore, documenting experiences like Joy Flasch's inform histories of the field and enrich our understanding of the ideological, theoretical, and practical work required to meet the educational needs of marginalized and racialized populations. Again, many of Langston's students in the 60s were underprivileged, first generation and underprepared who came from rural segregated landscapes across America that were not always friendly and welcoming to them (Patterson 202). Even Flasch admitted that growing up in and around Durant, Oklahoma, restrictions prohibited Blacks from the city limits after dark; and, because of the normality and nature of that rule as a way of life, she really never thought critically about the Jim Crow practice.

However, she explained that after attending a basketball game between her Alma Mater, Southeastern, and Langston University, for the first time, she felt ashamed of being white in the presence of Blacks. To her dismay, she witnessed whites publicly hurl racial slurs at the Black players with the seeming condoning of the referees. The racially charged atmosphere felt wrong. She said, "I decided then and there that I'd never go see another game. It struck me as being so wrong." She explained, "I wasn't teaching at Langston at the time, but I guess it was around the time integration first started. I felt terrible being a white person sitting there, and thought to myself, "Why didn't I see this a long time ago?" Although Flasch's unique position (being a white teaching at an all

Black college during the civil rights movement) positioned her as a progressive educator, she did not operate under what theorists posit as a colorblind philosophy that fails to acknowledge how race affects experiences in America. She understood fully and acknowledged how race affects experiences in America. She desired to take whatever measures she could to educate herself and to integrate smoothly and effectively.

Flasch sat in on several of Melvin Tolson's classes and experienced his unique race conscious teaching, She also visited the library and asked for works by Black authors because this literature was not available in the humanities textbook she used to teach literature; the text began with the Greeks with a full omission of the African culture and experience. Flasch understood racialized rhetorical agency and the struggles her students faced and offered them what Kynard and Eddy refer to as "safe excursions into the edges of a contact zone, where white comfort zones remain the center of gravity, reality, and control" (W34). Kynard and Eddy use the phrase "ideological hostage" to describe how systemic racism creates a crisis that sears the conscience of white teachers and students and causes them to fail to both see and understand how systemic racism contextualizes spaces for Black and brown peoples, specifically students. Furthermore, citing David Holmes (2006), Kynard and Eddy posit that designing curricula that explore the past and present struggles Black people face communicates a desire to understand race consciousness (W34). I discovered that Flasch found innovative ways to integrate an awareness of Black struggle in Oklahoma through what Molefi Asante refers to as an Afro-centric curriculum. Asante explains that an "Afrocentric paradigm is a revolutionary shift in thinking proposed as a constructural adjustment to Black disorientation, decenteredness, and lack of agency" (9). More specifically, witnessing white supremacist

racist outbursts—condoned by a white authority figure, the referee—brought about an epiphany that helped Flasch understand how white supremacy disorients, decenters, and refuses agency to Black people.

Rhetoric, which is expressed through verbal and nonverbal language literacy, is important to any epistemology—how we know things—because we need language in whatever form to communicate that knowledge. One's process of rhetoric can either limit or expand the communication process, for rhetoric is an engaging, intellectual, and material art. A culture, like Flasch's white rural experiences with literacy in Oklahoma, constructs reality based on that experience. Importantly, Flasch explained how reflecting on the shame experienced during the Southeastern and Langston basketball game on Langston's home court, Black space, led her to question the Black White dichotomy in Oklahoma. She explained that while at Southeastern, white English/drama students put on a "Negro minstrel," which she took part in. She said, "Looking back, I thought about why that didn't seem wrong to me. The teacher orchestrated the entire program, so I didn't think much about it until I experienced that shame. I thought of how I wanted to be treated, and I was taught to treat people how I wanted to be treated."

Going forward with the spirit of treating others as you want to be treated as part of a community, Flasch saw her students as she saw herself. She recalls that literacy was a community event. She said her mother read magazines and newspapers to her, so she exposed her students to literacy in the same ways . She used her humanities textbook, but she supplemented the readings with literature relevant to students' lived experiences in America.

Joy Flasch and I met at the local Dollar General, one of only two stores sitting off

highway 62 in an almost deserted location, except for being able to look east and see the Langston campus. Joy has an attractive openness about herself and a twinkle in her eye that makes her name fitting. She has lived on the farm for over 60 years and hosted many Langston students over the years. The farm sits just across the prairie roughly five miles from the college. Although the college is not visible from her front yard, the sounds of the band and other campus activities can sometimes be heard in the prairie winds. The campus appears to sit in the middle of nowhere off highway 62, with the Dollar General and gas station being a good walk for students if they chose to make the trek. Ms. Flasch pulled in driving a light blue Honda CRV splattered with mud and red dirt on all sides, which rhetorically attests to her life as the wife of an Oklahoma farmer. At the time of our meeting in 2018, she was 82. I parked my car and got in the vehicle with her. We drove about five miles down two red dirt roads, deep into the farmland of Coyle, Oklahoma. Joy had warned me, "I don't think you want to drive your car up these roads." She was right!

We took about three turns, and I knew that if I had to find my way out on my own, I wouldn't be able to do so. I also knew my car would have taken a beating the clay dirt road and deep pot holes. We talked the entire ride. As we drove, she explained how the rain makes it difficult to travel the road to get out, and that she and her husband had gotten stuck and had to walk the 2-3 miles home once or twice from one particular bad area of the road. I snapped a picture with my cell phone as she explained that students from Langston sometimes park along the road at night because of the vicinity to the college, and its darkness offers a measure of privacy. She shared that the third dirt road we turned on was once called "Lover's Lane." She said they'd (she and her husband)

come out sometimes and see cars parked along the road, and they knew it was students from Langston. To the right, the gulley looked to be about 15-20 feet deep, if not more—a costly drop for students out on lover's lane or for anyone not familiar with the area if there had been a lot of rain!

Initially, we made small talk about life~~,~~ and hard work as she showed me around the farm: the huge red barn her husband, Harold—now 92—built with his own hands and the roof he replaced on the home they still lived in inherited from his parents. The pride she took in personal projects—the barn, the roof, and garden—speaks to her philosophy connecting pride and hard work to success. She recalled the first time she thought about teaching at Langston. At the time she was teaching at Oklahoma State University (OSU), a 25 mile commute (50 round trip). She and her husband were standing in the yard gardening, and she could hear the Langston band playing. She turned to her husband and said, "I think I might apply to teach over there." He encouraged her to do so. She did. Although she was not hired the first time she applied, she reapplied and was hired during the spring of 1965. She brought an open mind for different cultural experiences and a spirit of communitas based on her experiences learning to read and write in a white working, class family where she was exposed to a rural dialect.

Language and dialect are big components of any person's cultural experience. We talked about her own language learning and that of her father's, who dug water wells for a living. Flasch's linguistic and theoretical approaches to teaching writing were contextualized by her everyday interactions with her father's language—the language and literacy of the "white" working class. Because of her experiences with her father, I think it's relatively safe to conclude that Flasch would not have viewed the African American

vernacular as damaging, but she might have viewed it as a limiting nonstandard dialect not likely to help with advancement within academic and business circles.

On the other hand, her mother moved comfortably between the languages of both the white working class and the white middle class providing Joy informal instruction on usage. As Joy worked with Black students at Langston, she didn't focus on their language as a product of their blackness, but as a product of cultural enclaves as she had experienced with her own father. She recalled being a student in the 1940s and having to give examples of "bad English" as part of homework assignments. She said with a chuckle, "I could get all the examples I needed from the kitchen table listening to my father speak." I could also discern when discussing her father's language that there was no aversion to his dialect, and her use of the word "bad" had a different connotation than what we have today and from what might have been purported toward Geneva Smitherman and Elaine Richardson, which I discussed in chapter one of this dissertation. What this told me as a researcher is that she didn't look down on the language a person used. She saw their language as part of their culture and part of what made them who they were, like her father. Again, she believed, like most people of that era, that adhering to formal grammatical structures in speech and writing was the correct method to teach writing. She didn't see a deficiency in those who spoke differently, but, she did see her role as a professor as that of helping students achieve the standard of the dominant class.

She would not call her practice creating a tripart grading system that valued content and clarity over prescriptivist grading methods that focused on grammar, word choice, and a dominant style as race conscious pedagogy. For example, each student paper received two grades from her. One grade for content and form, the how; and one

grade for mechanics, the grammar. By doing this, she explained to me that students felt a sense of accomplishment in their finished product and understood the importance of having something to say instead of purely focusing on grammar. What Flasch devised, was a grading system designed to help Black students achieve the type of success she understood to be the desired outcome of a college education. Her pedagogies achieved communitas in that the conceptual framework of assessing based on ideas and not grammar skills usurped the power of white supremacist pedagogies that overlooked or rendered impotent the ideas of Black students in favor of prescriptivist pedagogies that often highlighted weaknesses in writing according to the rules of standard English. Eventually, she gave in to the workload by creating a dual grading system. The dual grading system was Flasch's attempt to reconcile the process of learning to write standard English with students own cultural language and reality.

Communitas refers to the building of "social relationship[s]," and living in the same community is not required to achieve communitas (Favors 5). White teachers can participate in the communitas and engage critical literacies if, for one, they are willing to acknowledge the critical role race plays contributing to systemic racism, that in turn influences attitudes and ultimately opportunities available to students. And two, if they acknowledge the need for inclusive, race centered pedagogies. Flasch saw it as a welcoming duty to introduce students to material that showcased the contributions of Africans in the world (such as African folklore with which she began each semester). While the humanities text began with Greek society and mythology, as explained earlier, she created and introduced a packet that supplemented the text and allowed her to begin the first few weeks of the course discussing African folklore. A specialized grading

system and introducing African folklore are race conscious approaches to teaching in a racialized space to ensure student success.

Pedagogical adaptations made to allow Black students to achieve success writing in their home language—regardless of how the hand guides in the process or how the evaluator views correctness—is a race conscious pedagogy. Flasch recalls being assigned five composition courses her first semester at Langston. Although she initially practiced an early form of process pedagogy, allowing students write and rewrite to earn a passing grade, she did not view her strategy as process writing; she saw it as her duty as part of the communitas to allow students to practice writing to learn to write well. In her words, "This allowed me to reward them for their strengths in writing compositions, and it gave them a sense of accomplishment and achievement." The tripart grading system mentioned earlier also served the practical purpose of eliminating some of the revisions to manage the workload of teaching five sections of composition. Student compositions were handwritten, which is harder to read and grade, as typewriters were not widely used at Langston in the 60s. Once corrected, Flasch allowed students unlimited revisions. She admitted that allowing unlimited revisions created a heavy workload for a composition class, but she felt it necessary to allow students to achieve at the level they desired. I spoke to several former Langston students who remembered taking Flasch's course in the 60s. All of them described her pedagogies as gentle, lovingly instructive, but strict. Although she encouraged writing and revision, she understood, as with most teachers in the 60s, current traditional rhetoric to be the standard and the goal. To her—and even Black teachers at HBCUs in the 60s—editing for grammar and correctness of expression measured achievement. It's important to keep in mind that in the 60s, teachers and

theorists did not view "correctness" and "standard" as dehumanizing terms. The majority of African Americans welcomed the classroom model for correctness and saw this as a way of achieving a standard necessary for societal upward mobility. And Dr. Flasch explained that she treated all her students the same—Black and white; she kept her standards high in keeping with the current traditional model. She expected her students at Langston to achieve at the same level as those she taught at Oklahoma State University (OSU).

In addition to keeping standards high, Flasch understood that students needed learning material reflective of their culture. This attests to a race centered curriculum. She describes making a packet, as I mentioned earlier in this section, with African folk tales and poems and writings by Black authors because she could not find a mainstream textbook with publications by Black authors. This was certainly a progressive pedagogy and one that Gilyard and Banks advocate for now. Flasch's pedagogies demonstrate an understanding of linguistic racism, and she attempts to address the problem through inclusive pedagogies. Gilyard and Banks cite Carter Woodson's *Miseducation of the Negro* to encourage a race centered pedagogy: "African –American students should be exposed in school to African folklore and proverbs as well as to the works of African-American writers (Gilyard and Banks 105). Flasch taught at the height of the civil rights movement, and she recognized the exigence of the kairotic moment. Simply stated, students wanted to read more diverse literature and about themselves.

With individualized packets created with her students' needs and interests in mind, Flasch created a specialized curriculum highlighting the achievements of Black people. For example, she explains that she began with African Folk tales and moved into

mainstream literature such as Shakespeare, Faulkner, and Hemmingway to name a few. Flasch explains, “I did what I could to help them be proud of who they were and their heritage.” How can we get teachers today who teach in predominantly white spaces to adopt pedagogies reflective of the experiences of the few minority students with which they might come in contact? Perhaps expanding narratives of the field to include and reflect the experiences of how writing instruction unfolded in racialized spaces of HBCUs can bring about an awareness of Black linguistic consciousness to promote an understanding of how linguistic racism unfolds in the classroom.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* Paulo Freire defines critical pedagogy as “the pedagogy of people engaged in the fight for their own liberation” (35). In this vein, a critical pedagogy requires that students be taught to think critically about themselves, their social and political places in the world, and how to overcome adversity by reflecting on who they are and where they come from. More political classroom discussions on language varieties moves pedagogies in the direction of liberation. An important demand of the 2020 CCCC Special Committee on Composing in “This Ain’t Another Statement” is that “teachers stop teaching Black students to code-switch and teach Black students about anti-Black linguistic racism and white linguistic supremacy instead!”

Although Flasch guarded her conversation about the racial climate on campus in the 1960s, she brought good will and a respect for all people, which her parents instilled in her at an early age. Being the first white teacher to teach at the only Historically Black College in Oklahoma didn’t seem out of the ordinary to her or cause her any discomfort at the time. She simply wanted relief from the daily drive to Stillwater where she taught English at Oklahoma State University (OSU) and to be closer to home. We talked about

life and her pedagogy. She brought her same professionalism, pedagogies, and practices from OSU to Langston. She explained, "People are people; I don't care what color they are." Once we sat down to talk, it was clear that helping people has been a genuine part of her life story.

My initial inquiry, as stated earlier, was to find evidence of politicized rhetoric and writing instruction in Langston's curriculum during the 60s. Traditionally, as pointed out by Kynard, Eddy, Favors and others, historians of the discipline have neglected to include HBCUs in narratives of the discipline. In *Activist Rhetorics and American Higher Education: 1885-1937*, Susan Kates explains that politicized rhetoric not only emphasized the relationship between language and identity but it also made civic issues a theme by emphasizing the responsibility of community service (Kates xi). Flasch also practiced the second curriculum by modeling community responsibility. She offered her farm as a site for "treasure hunts," where community members purchased and donated school supplies and other items to help meet the needs of indigent students Flasch and other faculty hid the donated notebooks, pens/pencils, paper, baby diapers, can goods, and clothing items around the farm, and students searched them out similar to an Easter egg hunt, for an evening of fun and games. At the end of the evening, the community had met a few basic needs of the Langston students.

After her first semester at, she made two significant pedagogical shifts—she let the students write about topics of interest to them and she developed her own curriculum through an adaptation of texts. It appears that Flasch understood how language worked in its natural social setting aside from academe because of her exposure to white community language and literacies. I also believe that, although she did not study popular

language and linguistic theories at the time, she understood how the historical circumstances of slavery and racial oppression affected the Black population that made up her constituents. As I mention earlier in this project, unlearning racism is a deliberate intellectual and epistemological journey for whites. They have to first recognize and put forth an effort to understand the ideological "tangled webs" of systems that maintain white privilege in academia, such as hiring practices, research funding, journal publications, etc. (Kynard, "Teaching" 2-3).

Growing up in Oklahoma in and around Durant where Blacks served as maids, washer women, farm hands and in other low-level roles. Living and witnessing this every day, normalized the position and condition of Blacks. Understanding the systems of oppressive, Jim Crow attitudes that forbid Blacks from being in town after sundown took an intellectual and epistemological leap looking critically at how attitudes and customs reproduced racism. Flash wanted her Langston students to be successful. To her, this meant teaching them the language of the dominant white middle class. According to the New London Group, defining the mission of education is difficult to say the least. They conclude, "One could say that its fundamental purpose is to ensure that all students benefit from learning in ways that allow them to participate fully in public, community, and economic life" (60). Flasch and those who taught alongside her in the Ebony towers of Langston understood the role of the university classroom as a space of opportunity for personal growth to participate fully (socially and politically) in public civic life.

Her keen understanding of the social circumstances of segregation and how it shaped both student and teacher perspectives back in the 60s, created a politically charged environment both in and outside the classroom—although faculty, staff, or

students would not explain their interactions in terms of politics. Dr. Flasch explained to me that growing up in the Durant area that, "As a child, I saw it as normal for Blacks not be allowed in town after dark. I didn't know any different. Of course, I saw them during the day, but I never thought much about the rule. It was just the way things were. They [Blacks] worked in town, but at dark, it was understood that they were gone." I will add, it was understood in the racialized space of "whiteness" that Blacks were not allowed to cross the invisible border into the township after dark. Such practices of social segregation are political in that these practices provide mental constructs of reality that normalize white privilege (Manning 34). Again, segregation was not something she thought about; it was simply the way things were back then. When I stepped into the academic spaces of Western Oklahoma State College and Cache High School, students simply were not accustomed to having a Black person in position of authority. Carmen Kynard, April Baker-Bell, Keith Gilyard, Adam Banks, and Vershawn Young to name a few current researchers in the field continue to publish on language and literacy and the Black experience to help those in the field understand how stereotypes continue to maintain white supremacist attitudes.

Dr. Joy Flasch turned 89 years old this year. She was born March 23, 1932, a time when women were not encouraged to pursue education outside of homemaking. Despite the social conditions for women, her mother instilled a love of learning and sharing that learning from as far back as she could remember. According to Flasch, her mother's teachings were unincumbered by race; as a result, she saw people as people—not in terms of Black, white, or other. Regardless, people were to be respected. Her philosophical stance on race relations led to her becoming part of the Black liberation movement in

ways that she was unaware. She overcame traditional approaches to grading and the limitations of current traditional rhetoric by extending her pedagogy to address multiple linguistic and cultural differences involving regional dialects. Her mother laid the foundation for fairness and a love of education back in the early 30s, when she was just three or four years old. She told me the story of her growing up near Durant, Oklahoma, and how her mother put forth every effort to ensure she had educational opportunities. When she was about four years old, her mother went to the little one room schoolhouse and persuaded the teacher to let her young daughter in with the "big kids." Joy, of course, in her words, "just wanted to play." However, this incident was the beginning of a philosophy of communitas—the social bond that creates the blueprint for Black liberation (Favors 6). Her playmate who was a few years older had started school and she wanted to go too. Once she got in, she came home in the evenings and taught whatever she'd learned in school that day to her dolls and her mother—and ethos of sharing, when her mother had the time to listen. This practice became a standard, and this standard became her goal—one to share knowledge with whomever was open to receive it, regardless to race, creed, or color. This is the context she brought to Langston University; one of sharing and one of caring, regardless of race or social class. Because of how she was raised to help and share education, she was willing to move beyond Pythagoras's screen—she was willing to see and encounter dissent in a positive and constructive way (Murray 100).

According to Deborah Brandt, "From a contextual perspective, literate abilities originate in social postures and social knowledge that begin well before and extend well beyond words on a page" (4). When a little girl comes home at the end of the school day

from kindergarten class and teaches her mother and her dolls everything she's learned that day, her genuine act and practice becomes the very engine of literacy learning. A good Samaritan helps everyone—even dolls, the inanimate, because it is the right thing to do. It is with this mindset that Flasch participated in building communitas at Langston by perpetuating the second curriculum. In fact, as Flasch grew older, teaching and practice became a critical pedagogy to boost expectation and success in the classroom for her students. Because she believed in the power of practice, she allowed unlimited revisions on writing.

Flasch's story is important because she grew with her students and allowed her personal experiences to inform her pedagogies in ways that valued the home culture of Black students. In the "Multivocal Midwife: The Writing Teacher as Rhetor," Phyllis Ryder et al., explain the philosophical approach I apply to Flasch's life narrative as being the theoretical approach that informed her teaching:

> Embracing the midwife-rhetor, we argue for a rhetorical theory that refuses to split composition from rhetoric but instead pushes us to see composition as a crucial site for developing rhetorical theory. Embracing the midwife-rhetor, we resist separating the personal from the professional, believing that what has long been delegated to the "private" has a profound impact on the public world.[1]

No doubt, Flasch probably never read Janet Emig's work on process pedagogy or any of the debates published in the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC or 4Cs) during the late 60s concerning students' rights to their own language, but what she did have was her embodied self and the understanding of the literacies she had

experienced and brought with her to the classroom. She understood the value of practicing writing to become a "good" writer, and she understood the value of showing interest in the individual.

Furthermore, Flasch explains that teachers who took interest in her along the way helped create the confidence she needed to pursue higher education at a time when it really wasn't expected of women to do so. Her goal was to create that same confidence in her Langston students by pointing out their strengths. Using the midwife/writing teacher metaphor allows for a blending of "social-epistemic and expressivist rhetorical theories that have been set at odds by scholars in contemporary debates" (Ryder et al., 33). Because writing teachers have professional experience that they bring to the classroom, much like the "professional" midwife standing in for the doctor, Ryder and her colleagues are able to posit the very act of teaching as rhetorical and as a site where teachers actively produce knowledge, but this knowledge does not necessarily stem from theory (34). Langston's second curriculum of race consciousness came from the personal experiences of faculty, not theory. Joy Flasch's strong sense of the democratic process and citizenship, although she's white, helped optimize the learning experience so that culture and language were not barriers but an assets to the learning environment (

Continuing in the vein of the midwife, Ryder, Abordonado, Heifferon, and Roen point out that doctors are often trained to handle "high risk" events, and this training can often get in the way of seeing the obvious (36). Similarly, composition theorists are often so bogged down with the theory itself or constructing the theory that they often miss practical situations unfolding daily in the classroom—situations that can disrupt the learning environment by posing kairotic moments that cannot be ignored; or a need to

shift and adapt a lesson in a daily unit to address a concern rising from the social and political context of the classroom based on the discussions of the day. Joy Flasch overcame traditional approaches of grading and the limitations of current traditional model by extending her pedagogy to address the multiple linguistic and cultural differences of her students, to enable them to achieve the language of power at the time. Keep in mind that in the 60s current traditional rhetoric still held an honorary place in academe, and the dethroning thereof did not fully begin until the 80s. Flasch recognized a kairotic moment to help Black students negotiate their socio-political identities in the safe, racialized space of Langston University by helping students feel valued. As Sarah Jones, a 1968 Langston graduate fondly recalls: "She attended church with us and other functions in the community and at the college. Flasch's Afrocentric pedagogy pushed against the racial injustices of segregation by promoting a sense of pride for the accomplishments of Black people.

Using Langston as a lens to investigate pedagogies at a separatist institution, we see that teaching involves much more than basic curricula. Good teaching that promote inclusive pedagogies requires the community coming together to meet the needs of students—personal and academic. Teachers helped students become independent by leading them to resources to get their basic needs met. Teachers understood and identified with their students. Security and safety preceded teaching. Liberating pedagogies that grant political and social equality for all Americans require critical thinking about how white privilege contextualizes and destabilizes the American experience and how it is maintained through systems (Kynard, "Teaching" 4). Unchallenged racist stereotypes

passed down from generation to generation become acceptable and normalized (Manning 34).

As Marable Manning points out, “When something is viewed as normal, then there’s nothing unusual about it, so there’s nothing to talk about” (320). Through Flasch’s transformation, we see the possibility in decolonizing the white mind. We also see the possibilities of power in building social relationships and community, but doing so requires teacher engagement and a commitment to openness and understanding of the experiences of nonwhite people. Failing to expose students to Black language and other discourses/literacies in meaningful and respectful ways contributes to violence against Black bodies by purporting white supremacist attitudes toward the culture of nonwhite students. The ethos of communitas is one of help and respect that promotes harmony.

Afterword

The end goal of this research is to provide a foundation for multicultural teaching in the twenty-first century—the kind of teaching that transforms and values students home literacies, teaching that promotes true democracy. Keith Gilyard charges, "There can be no democracy in the full sense he [Thomas Jefferson] envisioned without universal, critical literacy" (*True* 34). Critical literacy, language, and pedagogy go hand in hand. Educators and administrators sometimes contribute to the maintenance of racist power structures in America, perhaps unknowingly, when they fail to educate themselves in the critical literacies of the students they serve. By writing Langston into our disciplinary narratives, I hope to show that importance roles of race and care in constructing liberating pedagogies.

History matters! Historically, the experiences of intentional racialized spaces of HBCUs have been left out of disciplinary conversations seeking best practices to serve marginalized classes. The Hale Administration aggressively penned grants and sought funding for Black faculty to earn their doctorates and "grow their own" in making Langston a true "greenhouse for the undernourished." Faculty transformed education for Black students by combining prescriptivist pedagogies with a politicized rhetorical education that taught students life literacies. This was necessary in the 1960s amid the stress of desegregation. A race centered pedagogy promoted Black pride. Faculty at Langston understood their student base and the literacies they brought to the classroom. They shared the same fate as their students, so helping students succeed was personal.

Teachers fail students when they fail to educate themselves on the cultural literacies students bring to the classroom. Teachers also need to seek out methods to

generate conversation on cultural difference and systemic racism. Critical pedagogies promote self-reflection that helps students examine their own prejudices and biases. We fail students when we act as though white privilege and white supremacy doesn't exist. Students need help understanding the literacies of white supremacy and white privilege that shape and control academia in America—and so do teachers. Race and politics must take front row seats in rhetoric and composition classrooms if we are to contribute to a true democracy.

Furthermore, educators today must work together to dismantle the foundational power structures that seek to force others to conform to language standards through classism, racism, and degradation. As the research has shown, language bias leads to violence against Black bodies. We begin resistance with inclusive, multicultural pedagogies, critical mentoring, and speaking out when we recognize microaggressions. Carmen Kynard explains in "Teaching While Black: Witnessing and Countering Disciplinary Whiteness, Racial Violence, and University Race-Management" that white teachers in the academy perpetuate, reinforce, and support white privilege by refusing to speak up against microaggressions toward minority faculty and students (3). They discuss microaggressions, but fail to speak against these aggressions publicly when they witness them.

When I moved to Fort Sill in Lawton, Oklahoma in May of 2008, I had no idea of the unique histories of all Black towns and the legacy of Langston University as the only HBCU educating the masses of marginalized Black people across the state. Living in Oklahoma also taught me a valuable lesson about small town, white privilege literacies and how they maintain white supremacy through systems. To provide the Black base an

effective liberatory education, Langston faculty made students aware of how racism influences the learning environment. They effectively offered students a race conscious education that praised the achievements of people of African descent.

When students arrived at Langston, the entire academic community embraced them and took their success personal. Compassionate understanding characterized Langston pedagogies. Because teachers understood the unique needs of their students, they practiced prescriptivism—skills-based pedagogies that taught grammar and usage. However, but not in the way prescriptivism has been traditionally used at primarily white institutions to promote SE as the law of usage. In the 60s, amid the struggles for civil rights, students needed those skills to enhance their rhetorical repertoire to push against white power structures. Teachers delivered prescriptivist pedagogies through love and an ethic of care.

When I initially began my research on Langston University, I wanted to understand how Langston English faculty, specifically, addressed language diversity, racism, and under preparedness in the classroom to promote activism and develop the whole student. After conducting several interviews, I found that Langston's entire faculty across the curriculum—not just the English faculty—participated actively to give students what I have defined in this project as a Black liberatory, activist rhetorical education in the 1960s.

My research also revealed that the Black base graduating from segregated high schools and filtering into Langston came very well prepared to engage rigorous academic work, despite reports by Marion Mayo (1913) and Doxey Wilkerson (1934) that placed Black children functioning at a much lower level than whites (Davis 8). Despite

language varieties and patterns and the lack of funding at both the public school and university level, Langston's administration and faculty accomplished more with less. I sensed a strong Black nationalism in all the interviewees; an appeal to the 'essential' realities of Blackness: African ancestry and American enslavement" (Gilyard 179). Highlighting the significance of the Black nationalism permeating Langston's campus in the 60s helps us understand how they effectively countered Jim Crow and white supremacist power structures.

In a *New York Times* article published in July 2020, "America's Enduring Caste System," Isabel Wilkerson goes to great length to illustrate that America does, in fact, have an "unspoken, race-based caste pyramid" that relies on "stigmatizing those deemed inferior." Smitherman understood the stigmatization of the Black vernacular when she wrote *Talkin that Talk: Language, Culture, and Education in African America*, which is her attempt to at least shake the foundation of America's caste system regarding language. Our views on language stem from systemic racism whose thumb print is the legacy of American slavery which gives social relations "their character by the ideology of white racial superiority" (Robinson 200). Ralph Ellison and other older Blacks educated in segregated systems attest to the quality of education they received in Oklahoma by refined Black men and women who proudly held them to high standards and who cared about their success. Teachers who taught in segregated environments, I believe, were more effective than those teaching in multicultural settings today because in multicultural settings the faces in the classroom looking back at the teacher are not of her own.

Krista Ratcliffe maintains that teachers should "listen to the stories of others and offer students opportunities for listening to the stories of others—all others" (*Rhetorical Listening*, 39). Ratcliffe also explains, and I've tried to show, that "whiteness is a privileged norm split from other cultural categories in ways that render it invisible, hiding its violence behind parlor manners and polite language" (39). In other words, "whiteness" is an unspoken and invisible caste system that has an adverse effect on curricular and pedagogical practices that disproportionately affect marginalized classes. Smitherman also explains that "Language is critical in talking about the education of people because it represents a people's theory of reality; it explains, interprets, constructs and reproduces reality" (*Talkin* 154).

As we see in chapter two, Langston's administrators, during and prior to the 60s pushed to offer general education requirements that met the unique needs of people newly freed from slavery. What do students need today to understand white power and privilege that incubates racism that ultimate spreads through systems of power such as schools? Any effective critical pedagogy naturally binds itself to language and cultural awareness. In chapter three, I raise the importance of teaching to liberate. But acceptance and respect of differences rests with white teachers and administrators who must make a conscious effort to engage inclusive, liberating pedagogies. Learning to develop this type of pedagogy takes time and commitment to openness and learning. Failing to interrogate how white supremacy continues to shape our education system through unchallenged policy, practice and attitude, and failure to develop policy and training to counter those practices and attitudes will only lead to future unrest. Manning asserts, "One of the great paradoxes of being Black in a racist society is that we must become preoccupied with

understanding, as thoroughly and completely as possible, the very thing that we are determined to destroy: racism."

Constructing unwritten histories not previously written requires patience, diligence, and effective listening. Sitting in a decade of history, listening to personal stories and combing archives and public records helps us understand the current moment and perhaps facilitate constructive conversations surrounding white privilege and white supremacist attitudes—attitudes that allow white students to transgress Black and brown students as well as Black teachers, as I experienced teaching in a majority white school in Oklahoma. No one should be able to tout freedom of speech when that freedom dehumanizes someone else in that same public space. Power, privilege, and prejudice—the "unquestioned belief in the natural superiority of white people over nonwhites—provide the main pillars of structural racism that continues to lead to violence against Black bodies and Black language users, and other marginalized classes who speak nonstandard dialects.

It is my hope that this dissertation speaks to the larger social, cultural, and historical realities shared by Black people not only in Oklahoma but also throughout the diaspora. Underprivileged minority students –in the 60s and now—need help negotiating the university, and oftentimes financial support, and exposure to the arts and high culture for the best chances to succeed. HBCUs understood this fact long before CUNY's search for education, elevation, and knowledge program (SEEK) began in 1966 (Shaughnessy 107). Developing good enough game for Black students coming from marginalized communities today, involves developing a sense of race pride and sometimes studying prescriptivist grammars—minority students need all of this to breathe in white

institutions. Most students' spoken language is so dissimilar from the composition of the academy that they must first be able to decode their own language before they can become successful applying new literacies writing Standard American English (SAE) (See the Oakland Ebonics controversy). Factually, when Black teachers teach Black students, this process is much smoother and without violence because they understand the literacies their Black and brown students bring to the classroom. Students left the classrooms of teachers like Tolson and Fisher feeling, "I'm Black and I'm Proud!"

Teacher attitudes continue to affect curricula change, as can be seen in some of the writing reflected in the *Critical Sourcebook* for SRTOL. Also, in "Schooling and the Culture of Positivism," Henry Giroux explains that classroom teachers can sometimes be unaware or insensitive "to the complex transmission of socially based definitions and expectations that function to reproduce and legitimize the dominant culture at the level of classroom instruction. [They] ignore questions concerning how they perceive their classrooms, how students make sense of what they are presented, and how knowledge is mediated between teachers (themselves) and students" (19). As I have said earlier, pedagogies should reflect the needs of the community and the student body being served. The material doesn't have to change, but the approach, examples, and lessons—how the material is presented—should change. Rhetorical listening [active listening with an intent to understand] is another way of helping us continually negotiate our always evolving standpoints, our identities, with the always evolving standpoints of others" (Ratcliffe 209).

The historical legacy of slavery conditioned Black language, negatively, in a continual vein of subservience. Carter G. Woodson critiqued the Black elite's aversion to

their mother tongue in *Miseducation of the Negro* (10); we can all take a lesson from Woodson—Black and White alike. What I hope will emerge from this exploration of language and how Black teachers at Langston used a race centered pedagogy—also called the second curriculum—to promote cultural awareness and pride, is a clearer picture of how their pedagogical dance covertly subverted systemic racism among the Black community in Oklahoma and promoted activism. Nothing in the research or interviews indicates that Black students attending Langston pre or post civil rights era rejected the language of their parents and grandparents.

This research solidified my belief that a Black liberatory rhetorical education—one that met the educational needs of culturally deprived marginalized students in Oklahoma to prepare them for independence and full participation in a white dominated democracy—addressed student needs on all disciplinary levels. For example, personal interviews with students and past faculty at Langston revealed that teachers across the curriculum actively took part in engaging students' language and learning needs as well as their personal needs, providing a rhetorical education. I would argue this to be the case with HBCUs broadly.

Langston faculty would have been well aware of the research referenced in many academic circles that placed Blacks as inferior to whites in intellect. In addition, to trying to overcome racist attitudes towards Blacks generally, they also inherited the task of helping first generation students learn to navigate the university setting, an unfamiliar discourse community. At traditionally white institutions, marginalized first generation students often seek out the faculty or staff member with which they feel most comfortable, which is usually the minority woman teacher.

Issues of literacy, learning, and writing instruction are complicated. I do not mean to simplify those issues here. So where do we go from here? How do we get conservative teachers and faculty to change their attitudes—or at least to explore their attitudes (their own black spots) toward learners who bring alternative literacies to the classroom? Linguistic diversity in the classroom is a reality, which was acknowledged 46 years ago with CCCC's adoption of the Students' Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL) policy. Furthermore, it was 20 years ago that the New London Group declared "Literacy teaching and learning need to change because the world is changing," (41), explaining that "English is fracturing into multiple Englishes" (42). The issue here, to me, is that students must have a strong enough command of cultural literacies to use whatever Englishes" rhetorically—persuasively—and strategically enough to achieve their desired end. However, these skills must be taught with respect and as a resource only. I realize that the subjective element of reading and evaluating (what the teacher brings to the communication situation in the evaluation process) complicates what it means for a literacy language to be effective. To unpack this thought, my point is, "How do we teach or expose students to SE in a way that it is just another discourse and not a privileged discourse when teacher attitudes often position SE as "right"?

Geneva Smitherman provides an example of why this project is important. In her discussion of the speech demons campaign of New York City schools and the Oakland Ebonics controversy, Smitherman quotes a Black English teacher who describes being discouraged from becoming a reading and English teacher because of how he spoke—his dialect (*Talkin* 153). How can we get educators who engage microaggressions against Black language to be cognizant of their behaviors and attitudes in the classroom?

Studying the history of Black institutions like Langston and the liberating pedagogies that permeated the atmosphere is a start to educating oneself on the literacies students bring to the classroom. STROL demands white teachers' acknowledgement and respect of differences—and not in a condescending, pitiful type way; but in a way that recognizes one language variety is not inferior to another. How can we get teachers to love, respect, and care about the culture and experiences students bring to the classroom if they are not exposed to cultural literacies in a meaningful way?

Strategically contemplating, as Jacqueline Royster invites us to do, and as I've attempted to do in this project, and reconciling my experiences with the white working class racist literacies I encountered in Oklahoma, and the needs of the underprepared Black students I served in Oklahoma, led me to this research. I believe these students would have fared better if they had been educated by teachers who understood the literacies they bring to the classroom; juxtaposing sociolinguistic and academic needs of students with the literacies of white supremacy that exploit racism and ultimately marginalized classes is vital to educating students in a liberating rhetorical tradition.

Notes

[1] "Redneck" is not my term; it is the term my students used to refer to themselves. White students used term in an endearing type way to describe their country activities of mudding, cow tipping, and building bonfires. I use it here for rhetorical effect to help better contextualize the rhetorical situation unfolding in the classroom.

[2]Cope and Kalantzis define "lifeworlds" as the complex, multilayered identities that are in constant relations, such as an individual's community, interests and hobbies, ethnicity, sexual identity, etc. See chapter one, "Changing personal lives," pp. 15-17 for a more detailed discussion of lifeworlds.

[3] See Chapter four "In Search of an Afrocentric Historiography" in Molefi Kete Asante's An Afrocentric Manifesto (2007).

[4] It's important to note that the community of Cache hosts several events at the school to promote awareness of Native culture; however, I found this same rigor lacking in regard to the Black, Hispanic, and Asian populations.

[5] See Zella Black Patterson's Langston University: A History, chapter three, titled "The Presidents and the University. Pages 26-65 covers the first President up through Hale's successor.

[6] Carter Godwin Woodson was the second African American to graduate from Harvard University. In his notable work, The Miseducation of the Negro, he advocated for an Afrocentric curriculum—a curriculum that recognizes the achievements of people of African descent. He also started Black history month, which is celebrated every year in February.

[7] See Composition in Four Keys, Inquiring into the Field: Nature, Art, Science, and Politics by Mark Wiley, Barbara Gleason, and Louise Wetherbee Phelps.

[8] See pp. 60- 62 of George M. Fredrickson's The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914, which explores the idea of a democratic and egalitarian society for whites only, which refuses to acknowledge Blacks as part of the human community. I use "good ole boys" in the vein of white supremacy camaraderie that protects and promotes white power and white supremacy.

[9] Also see "This Ain't Another Statement! This is a Demand for Black Linguistic Justice." Vershawn Young et a., also quotes April Baker Bell's argument connecting the current struggle for Black civil rights to Black linguistic violence in academe.

[10] The ideas for a rhetorical straitjacket stem from theorizing with Dr. Catherine John and her conversations with Chris Carter of Oklahoma (OU). Carter described himself as "wriggling" out of the straitjacket of propaganda represented by evangelical fundamentalism and anti-communism while his peers of the baby boomer generation remained entrapped. I coined the term rhetorical straitjacket to describe the repressive literacies that exist in places like Cache, Oklahoma.

[11] See page 37 of *Melvin B. Tolson*, by Joy Flasch. Flasch includes an excerpt of shaming which she calls a "showering of attention."

[12]See Geneva Smitherman's conclusion to *Talking That Talk: Language, Culture, and Education in African America*, pp. 396-397. Smitherman explains, "The classroom, then, is a major player in shaping language attitudes, and the classroom that is particularly crucial for the formation of ideas about language is the K-12 level. And here is where 4Cs, as a post-secondary organization, has very limited influence" (396).

[13]Gregory Mantsios's article, "Class in America" is available on the web at, https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=N2pyIc8VoWcC&oi=fnd&pg=PA182&dq=class+in+america+by+gregory+mantsios&ots=J6HK2oe1R&sig=jHWBr99SjAOK4bq4AAK_77FETAg#v=onepage&q=class%20in%20america%20by%20gregory%20mantsios&f=false. C.H. Knoblauch's work can also be accessed through a simple Google search, at https://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=Knoblauch+%22Literacy +and+the+ politics+of+ education%22&hl=en&as_sdt=0&as_vis=1&oi=scholart. Following these links will lead to similar sources on literacy and politics in America.

[14] See Cooper, Brittney C. *Beyond Respectability: The Intellectual Thought of Race Women*. Champaign, U of Illinois P, 2017.

[15] See the "Preface" of *Melvin B. Tolson* by Joy Flasch, published by Twayne in 1972. The Preface page is not numbered for parenthetical citation purposes; the Preface comes directly before the Acknowledgements. Both precede the table of contents in the book.

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