

*Report from Language and Social Justice Committee Webinar, 5 December 2020*

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### 0) Introduction

The webinar itself was a series of wide-ranging conversations that presented more questions than it answered. In the future, more narrowly focused sessions could be arranged which may be more useful. This report presents a **summary of the discussion and a collection of resources** shared by participants, none of which should be understood as complete or unanimous. They may provide a helpful starting place.

The original organizers of the webinar (named at bottom of this document), along with the Language and Social Justice committee of the Society for Linguistic Anthropology, thank everyone who participated. For their generous consultation and invaluable advice, we extend special thanks to Lynnette Arnold, Steven Black, Mariam Durrani, Erika Hoffmann-Dilloway, Judith Pine, and Haleema Welji. We also thank our anonymous colleagues who kindly shared sample syllabi in advance.

### 1) Intellectual History and Canon

**Reorganize:** chronologically earlier parts of our (scholars and practitioners in these fields') theoretical canon include a lot of dead white men. We are urged to rethink the organization of (especially graduate) introductory courses so that they do not present only dead white men until the very end of the term. To decolonize our syllabi, we need to craft a historical narrative that is more inclusive and complex. We are faced here with the task of tracing those voices from the past which impacted the canon, or which could help us reformulate a canon.

**Address troubling legacies:** the work of scholars like Franz Boas, Charles Pierce, and Dell Hymes is foundational and considered canonical, but it is also important to critique the damaging parts of their work and academic practice.

**Make visible:** how can we find voices that have been made invisible/inaudible? This question applies to (among others) queer scholars, scholars who are not men, scholars of color, indigenous scholars, scholars from places other than the United States, and scholarship in languages other than (standardized) English(es).

**Look beyond:** include the work of scholars not thought of strictly as linguistic anthropologists – suggested examples are Frantz Fanon and Zora Neale Hurston – as well as drawing from related/allied fields such as Indigenous studies, folklore, sociolinguistics.

**Rewrite history:** how can we incorporate linguistic anthropology into a rewritten canon of the history of anthropology overall?

**Broader examples:** decenter European and imperial languages in our teaching, and actively search for international topics and examples.

## 2) Citation Practices

**Challenge the theory/data binary:** cite people and media which are typically excluded from academic discourse; cite non-academics; recognize that your study participants are also theorists (cf. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1077800408314346> and this essay drawing on it, <https://points.datasociety.net/how-to-cite-like-a-badass-tech-feminist-scholar-of-color-ebc839a3619c>)

**Look beyond (again):** include the work of scholars not thought of strictly as linguistic anthropologists – suggested examples are Frantz Fanon and Zora Neale Hurston – as well as drawing from related/allied fields such as Indigenous studies, folklore, sociolinguistics.

**Diverse formats:** juxtapose academic works with news clippings, photos, social media posts, fiction works, and more. Especially for syllabi, consider using podcasts and videos.

**Suggested practices** for finding sources:

- Follow linguists & other scholars of color on Twitter.
  - (And while on Twitter: watch for discussions of problematic scholars.)
- Learn what students (especially those in marginalized groups) are reading.
- Participate in interdisciplinary reading groups.
- Read AAA abstracts.
- Read the World Anthropologies and Transforming Anthropology sections of American Anthropologist.

**More material support:** in addition to citing marginalized scholars, ensure they are invited to speak and given access to other material aid.

**Pass on good practices:** teach our (graduate and undergraduate) students to ask who is appearing in bibliographies, who isn't, and why. Ask these same questions of your own citations. Practice "excavation" and "tracing" exercises to follow where ideas come from. (Note: references on how to do this practice would be helpful but the organizers compiling this report do not have them at hand.)

### 3) Recommended Resources

Pre-existing lists:

**I. Academic + Non-Academic Resources** (contains notes and recommendations on teaching strategies):

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1NILvezKgDETqXU9AImiIQsJGwRMIOBWsqz2C8Wi9tPo/edit#gid=0>

**II. Black Scholars of Language:**

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1l2\\_E2GFDD6yqPqXEHdpREEnhvFk9gPaCVZgyJECE8Oo/edit#](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1l2_E2GFDD6yqPqXEHdpREEnhvFk9gPaCVZgyJECE8Oo/edit#)

**III. Scholars to read in the field of Language** (somewhat self-selected list):

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1WrZuImK---LByMIqw3n\\_9yaFntq5zOGyttndkhWA1SY/edit#gid=0](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1WrZuImK---LByMIqw3n_9yaFntq5zOGyttndkhWA1SY/edit#gid=0)

Specific resources suggested by webinar participants:

#### Writers

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*Note: as with other specifics in this section, these are specific names mentioned in the webinar, and are not intended as an exhaustive list.*

Marcyliena Morgan

Geneva Smitherman

Barbra Meek

Zora Neale Hurston

John Baugh

John Rickford

Miyako Inoue

Jane Hill

Toni Morrison

bell hooks

Gloria Anzaldua

#### Journals

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Journal for Language Documentation and Conservation

Prose Writing

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April Baker-Bell's anti-racist Black Language Pedagogy

Bolonyai, Agnes. 2018. "Where are you from?": Immigrant stories of accent, belonging and other experiences in the south." in *Language Variety in the New South: Contemporary Perspectives on Change and Variation*, J. Reaser, E. Wilbanks, K. Wojcik, and W. Wolfram, eds. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press. pp. 257-273.

Brantner, Mark. 2010. "Sound and Sanity: Rallying Against 'The Voice.'" *Sounding Out!*, 22 Nov. <<https://soundstudiesblog.com/2010/11/22/sound-and-sanity/>>

Bucholtz, M. (2000). The politics of transcription. *Journal of pragmatics*, 32(10), 1439-1465.

Budjee-Kefen, Ivoline. "Utilizing Sounds of Mourning as Protest and Activism: the 2019 Northwestern Women's Lamentation March within the Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon" *Resonance: The Journal of Sound and Culture*, forthcoming. (African scholars writing on Africa)

Cushing, Ian. 2019. "The policy and policing of language in schools." *Language in Society* 49(3) 425-450.

Decena, Carlos Ulises - gender, sexuality, and immigration: (2011) *Tacit Subjects: Belonging and Same-sex Desire among Dominican Immigrant Men*

Decena et al. (2006) "Los hombres no mandan aquí": Narrating immigrant genders and sexualities in New York. *Social Text* 24(3): 35-54.

Faudree, P., & Phrao Hansen, M. (2014). *Language, society and history: towards a unified approach*. In *The Cambridge Handbook of Linguistic Anthropology* (pp. 227). [9] Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

García-Sánchez, Inmaculada Ma. *Language and Muslim immigrant childhoods: The politics of belonging*. John Wiley & Sons, 2014.

Ilana Gershon 2019 Porous social orders. *American Ethnologist* Volume46, Issue4 November 2019 Pages 404-416

Hill's work on Mock Spanish

Joseph Hill: The hidden treasure of Black ASL; Language attitudes in the American Deaf community

Zora Neale Hurston's *Barracoon*

Robin Wall Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass*, chapter "The Grammar of Animacy"

Leonardo, Z. (2004). The Color of Supremacy: Beyond the discourse of 'white privilege.' *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 36(2), 137-152

Lo, A. (2020). Race, language, and representations. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 2020(263), 77-83.

Chi Luu, "Black English Matters" <https://daily.jstor.org/black-english-matters/>

Matsuda, Mari J. 1991. "Voices of America: Accent, antidiscrimination law, and a jurisprudence for the last reconstruction." *Yale Law Journal* 100(5): 1329-1407.

Preston, D.R., 1985. The Li'l Abner syndrome: Written representations of speech. *American speech*, 60(4), pp.328-336.

Roth-Gordon, Jennifer, Jessica Harris, and Stephanie Zamora. "Producing white comfort through "corporate cool": Linguistic appropriation, social media, and@ BrandsayingBae." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 2020, no. 265 (2020): 107-128.

Geneva Smitherman, *Word from the Mother*

Thiong'o, Ngugi Wa. 1986. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. East African Education Publishers, Ltd.: Nairobi

Tuck, Eve & Yang, K. Wayne. 2012. Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, and Society* 1(1), 1-40.  
<https://clas.osu.edu/sites/clas.osu.edu/files/Tuck%20and%20Yang%202012%20Decolonization%20is%20not%20a%20metaphor.pdf>

Young, Vershawn Ashanti. 2010. "Should Writers Use They Own English?." *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies* 12(1): 110-117.

Textbooks, Handbooks, and Edited Volumes:

- Alessandro Duranti textbook, *Linguistic Anthropology*
- Miriam Meyerhoff, *Introduction to Sociolinguistics*
- Wardhaugh and Fuller *Introduction to Sociolinguistics (for sociolinguistics for education)*
- *Oxford Handbook of Race and Language (for grad students)*
- *Language and Social Justice in Practice*

Writing in other genres

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Good Talk - Mira Jacob (graphic novel)

Friel, Brian. 1981. *Translations*. London: Faber & Faber. (play)

Educational linguist blog, Nelson Flores (<https://educationallinguist.wordpress.com/>)

Vox features (e.g. <https://www.vox.com/2020/6/30/21300294/bipoc-what-does-it-mean-critical-race-linguistics-jonathan-rosa-deandra-miles-hercules>)

## TikTokers

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- @josemedina (Dr. José Medina Gay, Chicano, language researcher & author)
- @txwatson
- @rynnstar (Linguistics | History | Positivity)
- @saybb30 (Deaf indigenous topics)
- @danniegoestoamerica
- @signinngwolf (Deaf culture)
- @mistercapehart (Social justice topics)

## TV shows and clips

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- Gentefied
- One Day at a Time
- Clips/trailer from “Homeland” (for teaching on Islam)
- “Halal in the Family” (for teaching on Islam)
- “Religion” episode from Master of None (for teaching on Islam)
- Key and Peele skits
- Trevor Noah - multilingualism, race

## Films

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- Rising Voices - Revitalizing the Lakota Language (available also on youtube)
- Crosstalk [BBC film] (1979)
- American Tongues (1987)
- Sound and Fury (2008)
- Pidgin: the Voice of Hawai'i (2009)
- Âs Nutayuneân | We still live here (2013)
- Do I Sound Gay? (2015)
- Talking Black in America (Language and Life Project)
- Signing Black in America (Language and Life Project)
- First Language (Cherokee Language Revitalization) (Language and Life Project)
- Ishaare (director: Kusters) - multimodality
- 3 Idiots (2009) - English vs Hindi
- I Dream in Another Language (2017) (for critical perspective on language revitalization)
- Through Deaf Eyes - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tJeAG8tZyf4> (PBS, NEH) 2007, <http://www.pbs.org/weta/throughdeafeyes/about/>
- Ixcanul (2015) - <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4135844/> (filmed in Mayan)

## Other video

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- Aaron Glass's documentary about his relationship with George Hunt - In Search of Hamt'sa: A Tale of Headhunting; <http://exhibitions.bgc.bard.edu/storybox/>
- Jamila Lysicott - 3 ways to speak English: [https://www.ted.com/talks/jamila\\_lyiscott\\_3\\_ways\\_to\\_speak\\_english?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/jamila_lyiscott_3_ways_to_speak_english?language=en)
- Mike Mena's YouTube channel
- Charity Hudley's video "Black Languages Matter"

## Podcasts and audio

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- ❖ On Being podcast, especially David Treuer: "Language Carries More than Words" <https://onbeing.org/programs/david-treuer-language-carries-more-than-words/>
- ❖ Episode 8, Dolly Parton's America (focus group discussion with UTenn students)
- ❖ Lingthusiasm <https://lingthusiasm.com/>
- ❖ Point of Origin podcast
- ❖ Vocal Fries <https://vocalfriespod.com/>
- ❖ Code-Switch <https://www.npr.org/podcasts/510312/codeswitch>
- ❖ Scene On Radio series on men, whiteness, democracy etc. <https://www.sceneonradio.org/>
- ❖ Podcast episode on race and language: <https://soundcloud.com/anthro-airwaves/episode-9-race-and-language>
- ❖ Library of Congress sound recordings: <https://www.nodepression.com/roots-in-the-archive-zora-neale-hurstons-song-collecting-recordings/> and <https://www.loc.gov/audio/?fa=online-format:audio&q=Halpert+Hurston>
- ❖ AILA (Archive of Indigenous Languages of Latin America) recordings

## 4) Syllabus Design

**Start carefully:** the beginning of the course frames the rest of it. Start with the tone and approach we need; we can work backward toward older scholarship if necessary.

**Relevance and stakes for students:** begin with and emphasize contemporary issues close to the concerns of our students (especially for undergraduates). This means different topics for different populations of students.

**Adapt to the setting:** for example, contrast regional news reports along with sociolinguistic work on regional dialect (in the region where we're teaching). And incorporate recent news.

**Reorganize (again):** chronologically earlier parts of our theoretical canon include a lot of dead white men. We are urged to rethink the organization of (especially graduate) introductory courses so that they do not present only dead white men until the very end of the term. To decolonize our syllabi, we need to craft a historical narrative that is more inclusive and complex. We are faced here with the task of tracing those voices from the past which impacted the canon, or which could help us reformulate a canon.

**Recategorize:** we should consider alternative ways to structure syllabi other than topics of 'race,' 'gender,' etc as is common in textbooks. Alternative categories like 'identities,' or even particular places, might allow us to weave these threads together without artificially dismembering intersectional realities. And, consider linking ideas together somewhat independently of their chronological order in history.

**Be critical:** students annotating their readings signals that critique of canon is welcome. We can also assign critiques rather than (or in addition to) original works, to further invite students' critiques.

**Community responsibility:** land acknowledgment is a good thing to include in a syllabus. And, we can bring in community activists and non-academic experts into our classrooms (and conversations) and compensate them appropriately.

**Students' needs:** being attentive to COVID concerns and the well-being of students is a matter of social justice. Furthermore, to address needs for inclusivity and respectful treatment, we should make it clear that all students are expected to provide their preferred name, name pronunciation, and pronouns – this should not be optional or extra.

**Cover more authors:** we can consider including more (but shorter) works by a wider range of authors to ensure that a syllabus does not represent, e.g., overwhelmingly men.

Original webinar organizers:  
Josh Babcock, Dominika Baran, Edwin Everhart, Kristina Jacobsen