

Teachers Use of Own Languages (TUOOLS): Exploring the Use of African American Rhetorical Strategies in the Composition Classroom

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This thesis explores how different African American Rhetorical Strategies are used by African American teachers in a first year college composition classroom. This thesis shows how these different strategies present in different public media, such as in public speeches, and then transitions into how these strategies are employed by teachers in the writing classroom. This thesis argues that African American Rhetorical Strategies are often used by African American teachers as a tools to help foster a student centered pedagogy.

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my father, who encouraged me to take my education as far as possible; my brothers and sister, who supported me through this process; and to my mother, who though far from my life, is never far from my heart. Finally, to Staci Perryman-Clark, a kindred spirit in the fight against the hegemonic practices of the American education system.

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Preface

This thesis is structured in the form of the African American rhetorical strategy Jubilee, which involves “optimistic notes [to] precede the tragic” (Gilyard 6), or in the case of this thesis, where the tragic notes precede the optimistic; for Gilyard, these notes can be reversed, but both are always present. Readers will notice throughout the thesis, I “call” on my Black ancestors, scholars and educators who opened the door so that I, and others like me, may take this discourse further and continue to open doors for others. As this thesis is designed in Jubilee, it attempts to meet four of the six goals Boulware notes: (1) it files a grievance [why you people don’t pay no attention to how us Black folk teach using our language?]; (2) it states a complaint [White folks got to be crazy if they think we talk like them in the class]; (3) it demands rights [Black teachers got rights to be heard]; and (4) it advocate cooperation [showing students that collaboration be a better way to achieve certain writing goals] (qtd. in Gilyard 5). This is not to suggest that themes of racial consciousness and pride do not present themselves within the composition classroom, but this thesis looks specifically at the language and rhetorical strategies used by two African American teachers, one male and one female. When reading this text, readers should attempt to visualize a wave, flowing from the bottom, rising to the top, and flowing back down. Every chapter is designed to take readers on a journey – a struggle – which culminates at the end of each chapter.

Readers will also note that each chapter starts with a narrative, harkening back to previous chapters and other Black scholars and orators. The Introduction (Chapter I) is designed to replicate “the struggle,” keeping in mind that there can be no *Jubilee* without a struggle. I discuss the reasons and the difficulties African Americans have faced attempting to become recognized as contributors not only to American society, but also to American education. One

should think of the Introduction as a particular history of Black people, their language, and the rhetorical strategies of their language that they use to persuade multiple audiences, including students.

While the Introduction provides a history of the struggle, the preceding chapters are designed as the path, the road one must travel in order to attain Jubilee. The struggle and the journey are equally important in order to form Jubilee. These chapters take the reader on a journey from African American Language (AAL) and its rhetorical strategies in the speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr and Malcolm X, to the use of African American Rhetorical (AAR) strategies when teaching composition, shown in data collected on Antoni, my research participant, and myself.

The conclusion is the end of the journey (the Jubilee). The Conclusion chapter is not to be misinterpreted with “and they lived happily ever after.” The final chapter is to be seen as a resting spot between journeys – the previous journey and the one ahead. This chapter presents some possible solutions, asks questions, and calls on current scholars to help lead the way to recognition of Teacher’s Use Of Own Language(s) in the classroom.

Finally, readers will note that I use a good deal of African American Vernacular English (AAVE), sometimes called “Black English” (BE). At a recent symposium, “Composition at Historically Black Colleges and Universities,” hosted at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, Vershawn Young was asked by a participant whether AAVE, BE, African American Language (AAL), and Black English Vernacular (BEV) are all the same thing or if they are different. For Young, these terms are mostly interchangeable, but he noted that sometimes, scholars choose different terms for political reasons; the different terms have different resonances in linguistics, composition, rhetoric, and other circles. Like Young, I have

chosen to use them interchangeably in this thesis. This, you see, be a purposeful choice because in order to challenge and expand views on how academic language is defined, it be mad difficult to explore the rhetorical strategies of one's language and its complexities without, at times, using the very language being defined. And I also use BE to help ensure that readers hear my voice. Although this thesis is written in my voice, The Man's language be my second language. I talk better, think better, and write better when I use my mother tongue. In essence, when I feel like they be only one way to say what I mean, and what I mean be said only in BE, then BE *be* the language I choose. However, when I feel as though an explanation is needed either about my use of BE or its rhetorical strategies, then I will shift into Standard Academic English (SAE) for those non-native speakers of BE.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

The “Struggle,”¹ as so many African Americans have said, “Is Real!” But the struggle for what? The struggle to be what? So many White folk beg, scream, almost yell, “What is it you people WANT?” and “Haven’t we done enough?” We want what we always wanted: freedom. And no you can’t never do enough, because you can’t never wash the stain of slavery from your White skin – Deal with it. We have to. The point isn’t that anyone can fix it. It’s about remembering. And that I suppose, that we suppose, is why White folk continue to oppress us in both subtle and overt ways. One such way is through language. I swear, White folks always meddlin’².

Black English (BE) is not a new concept. In fact, White folk been trying to figure out what us Black folk do when we speak for a long time, but it’s like they ain’t been listening to what we been telling them. The argument over the reality or the validity of Black English, as James Baldwin notes, “has nothing to do with language itself but with the role of language. Language, incontestably, reveals the speaker. Language, also, far more dubiously, is meant to define the other – and, in this case, the other is refusing to be defined by a language that has never been able to recognize him” (649). This lack of recognition and this refusal of a people to turn over and submit their language to The Man³ contributes to the continual oppression, objectification, and subjugation of Black English. This oppression coincides with the attempts to

¹ Readers can find further explanation of terms like “meddlin’” in Appendix A. I have included Appendix to cover any regional terms that may not have wide-spread usage, even among African American people. Each time I use one, I have footnoted with a brief reference to consult Appendix A.

² See Appendix A.

³ See Appendix A.

erase BE from the tongues and lips of Black folk continues. But this oppression and attempt to erase our language is not lost on us. Toni Morrison notes that language is the thing that “black people love so much – the saying of words, holding them on the tongue experimenting with them, playing with them. It’s a love, a passion. Its function is like a preacher’s: to make you stand up out of your seat, make you lose yourself and hear yourself. The worst of all possible things that could happen would be to lose that language” (373).

Scientists note that approximately fourteen languages die a day and as many as 7,000 are expected to be lost this year (Aulakh para 1). Recalling Baldwin’s idea that language marks one as different, then the loss of these languages is devastating to Black folk because ways of making meaning and identity through language are lost. This is why White folk⁴ so worrisome. Instead of just letting’ Black folk talk, or spit, or shoot shit, here they come with their dissections and suggestions of how to “fix” our talk. This concern over fixing’ us and our language has grown with the influx of African American students entering higher education.

Geneva Smitherman, who works in both linguistics and writing studies, notes that the “concern over the speech of blacks and educational programs to bring about change have been generated by two major forces. The first major force was the social change movements (or upheavals – depending on where you comin’ from) of the sixties spearheaded by the 1954 Supreme Court school desegregation decision ... the second major force was embodied in White America’s attempt to deal with this newly released black energy” (2). See, White folks always meddlin’.

⁴ By *White folk*, I mean dominant ideologies in the United States, which include colonization and other hegemonic practices; here “white folk” does not mean specific white individuals, but rather the collective ways that white culture in the U.S. tends to dominate all institutions: government, education, military, etc.

This meddlin' has not left Black communities or our language without effect. As much as Black folk have struggled to be recognized in America, Blacks have, at times, tried to assimilate into this culture – act White, talk White, be White – and from the beginning this assimilation has been neither seamless nor easy. Smitherman writes,

Having thus resigned themselves to a future in the New World, many slaves began to take on what Langston Hughes has termed the “ways of white folks” – their religion, culture, customs, and, of course language. At the same time, though, there were strong resistance movements against enslavement and the oppressive ways of white folks. Thus, from the beginning, we have the “push-pull” syndrome in Black America. (*Talkin* 10)

It's like we can't never do nothing right (according to White folk), so ain't no point in tryin' . Black folk can't be too White if they expect to stay part of the Black community, but Black people cannot be too Black if they expect to gain any measure of respect or recognition from White people. The “push” to be an Uncle Tom/Aunt Jemima⁵ or the “pull” to remain Black and Proud.

The “Push-Pull”

Smitherman defines the “push-pull” syndrome in Black America as “the *pushing* toward White American culture, while simultaneously *pulling* away from it”; W.E.B. DuBois invented the concept of double consciousness to explain the “push-pull” syndrome (10-11). An example

⁵ Uncle Tom is a character in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; an Uncle Tom means a Black person who aids the White man in the destruction of himself or the Black community; the female version of an Uncle Tom is Aunt Jemima. Aunt Jemima was trademarked by Quaker Oats in 1890. Nancy Green, an ex-slave and African American storyteller, became the living trademark of Aunt Jemima pancake mix at the age of 56 (“Nancy Green” para 6). Much like the Uncle Tom, Aunt Jemima is a negative trope in the African American community because she is a Black woman helping White America take advantage of Black people.

of this syndrome is the case of ex-slave Absalom Jones who “took on the white man’s religion, and proceeded to practice it. (The ‘push.’) Yet when he attempted to pray in a white church in Philadelphia in 1787, an usher . . . ousted him from the church. Thereupon, Jones along with another ex-slave, Richard Allen, established the African Methodist Episcopal Church. (The ‘pull.’)” (Smitherman, *Talkin* 11). It is this constant ripping and shredding of the self that I, that we, as Black people go through: Assimilation, Whites call it. Selling’ Out, We call it. Blacks can never fully assimilate because the White culture will still find ways to exclude the Black skinned outsider. In other words, no matter what We do, our face is always Black⁶. And if White folks want us to assimilate, maybe they should just keep some of they promises. It is because of this “push-pull” and the constant intrusion of the dominant culture that Black people, undoubtedly, are apprehensive about institutions run by and made for White people, although they presently include Black people. One such institution is that of American education.

Sociologist John Ogbu argues, “in America, involuntary minorities’ perspectives of undeserved and institutionalized oppression or discrimination have influenced the ways that they respond to White Americans and the societal institutions which Whites control” (47). The reasons Black folk have such a distrust of education is not because, as some people have suggested, Blacks do not value education, but because the dominant culture continuously promises recognition only to find ways to take it away – like our “forty acres and a mule,” the laws ending “Jim Crow” and establishment of Civil Rights – the promise and the promises to be free: all lies. All unfulfilled. Thus, even now, the “push-pull” syndrome is presented in education, pedagogy and composition, as students who speak and write in an English language or dialect other than Standard Academic English (SAE), tend to struggle more in college composition courses (Bizzell 295). Noting this problem, linguists and composition scholars

⁶ See appendix A.

wrote a resolution with the hope that it would provide a way for student home language to be recognized in the classroom. However, Students Right to Own Language (SRTOL), though paved with good intentions, is a catalyst for the very “push-pull” syndrome of which Smitherman speaks.

Students’ Right to Own Language

Before the groundbreaking position statement named *Students’ Right to Own Language*, scholars from the fields of composition, rhetoric, and linguistics “advocated the legitimacy of all language variations alongside the social inadequacy of nonstandardized forms” (Kynard 361). In fact, linguist Donald Lloyd argues that the inability to understand the actual data representations of various languages “and what they mean ... is responsible for the fact that the educational heart of darkness. Emphasis on ‘correctness’ – at the expense ... of a fluid, knowledgeable command of our mother tongue – is responsible for the incompetence of our students in handling their language, for their embarrassment about their own rich ... dialects” (qtd. in Smitherman *Talkin* 350).

There you go. We been knowing this for generations. We been knowing’ our language matter. We been knowing its complex and rich. We been knowing Black folk say stuff different then White folk. Its White folk that made us feel like something was wrong with us and our Black talk. Understand: We know, in our hearts, that there is nothing wrong with us or our talk and there never was. Yet, though linguist realize the damage done when languages are oppressed and subject to ridicule, and even after Lloyd’s rhetorical beat down of composition pedagogy in 1951, it was over 20 years before any kind of change on language use in the classroom would come to composition pedagogy. One catalyst for this change was the assassination of Dr. Martin

Luther King, Jr in 1968. King's death along with the influx of African American students in Higher Learning, helped shift focus to the various home languages students use in the classroom.

Students' Right to Their Own Language is a position statement attempting to answer how teachers should "American schools and colleges have, in the last decade, been forced to take a stand on a basic educational question: what should the schools do about the language habits of students who come from a wide variety of social, economic, and cultural backgrounds?" ("Students' Right" 1). Stuart Barbier notes this "resolution set out to eliminate the contradiction between theory and practice" (259), citing Smitherman who asserts scholars had to advocate "the wider social legitimacy of all languages and dialects...to bring about mainstream recognition and acceptance of the history and language of those in the margins" (349). There is little doubt that this resolution helped pave the way for the recognition of different student voices/home languages within the academy, particularly within the writing classroom. SRTOL's mission states the following:

We affirm the students' right to their own patterns and varieties of language – the dialects of their nurture or it whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style...The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another, such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers, and immoral advice for humans. (2)

Praise the Lord!⁷ Academics done realized our talk matter (to us anyway). Certainly, this position statement "recognizing" students' language and their right to use it in academic settings is needed, but there are those who still question the validity of Black English⁸. Check it ...

⁷ As Mark Vail notes, prophetic voice and religious homiletics are vital to the African American community and rhetorical tradition. I explain this link further in the next chapter.

Scholar Anne E. Bertoff argues, “certainly, we need to admonish ourselves about the dangers of uncritical attitudes towards ‘standards’ of ‘correctness,’ but it is fatuous to set aside the problem of illiteracy in the interest of cautionary sermonizing” (217); she goes on to note that “declaring that everyone has a ‘right’ to his own ‘language’ is sloganeering, very close in spirit and rhetorical form to anti-Communist manifestos and other varieties of response formulated according to a notion of public relations” (217). While Bertoff, in 1975, makes a good argument for those who believe that there is a “proper” way to write and speak, for those students who live in a world outside of the academy – in a world where reading, and book literacy are not on the back burner, but are not on the stove – for these students in today’s educational system, Bertoff’s philosophy of thought is not only invalid, but nearly irrelevant.

Other compositionists believe that SRTOL “is a theory that rarely, if ever, has materialized in the writing classroom,” and as Michael Pennell suggests, “is little more than ‘rhetorical ghosts with no substance below the ink and paper [they] embody” (qtd. in Wible 443). Don’t get me wrong: I feel Pennell.⁹ But fact of the matter is all “resolutions,” “statements,” and “laws” are only as good as the paper on which they are written. Laws work because people want and make them work, and they do not work because people do not want and therefore do not make them to work. Murder, (poppin’ a cap in someone’ ass) for no reason at all, is only a crime because we, as a society, have deemed it criminal to do so. Consequently, the SRTOL resolution is useless if teachers and administrators do not “buy in.”

This buying in is difficult considering SRTOL left writing instructors with “few specific strategies to take to the classroom” (Wible 443). Though some scholars struggle with classroom strategies that encourage home language use in composition classes, Staci Perryman-Clark

⁸ See the Preface for an explanation of how I have used African American Vernacular English, Black English, African American Language, and Black English Vernacular.

⁹ See Appendix A.

provides “a framework for helping college writing students understand the ways that they can make purposeful and strategic choices about language practices in the composition classroom” (470). I am not trying to suggest that designing this kind of course is easy for every teacher, especially those who either do not ascribe to or do not understand the language and rhetorical strategies of African Americans. It be hard to design this course, because it is impossible to ask that anyone teacher understand Black English or the various others she will encounter in the classroom. It be hard and it be tedious. But it be possible with a little knowhow.

What Works with SRTOL: It Ain’t All Bad, But It Ain’t All Good Neither.

For those that argue SRTOL is sloganeering or “a shameful document” (Zorn 311), these scholars must begin to understand the importance an inclusive classroom, not exclusive one where there be one way to write: the White way. Perryman-Clark offers one example of a context in which SRTOL could be implemented. Perryman-Clark presents a “case study of how three African American students enrolled in a first-year writing course employ Ebonics-based phonological and syntactical patterns across writing assignments, including those that also require students to compose multigenre essays” (470). There it is. Shockingly, Black folk use their language to help them compose in many genres, including those requiring the use of Standard Academic English (SAE). Even more stunning is the fact that this codeswitching seems to be done with relative ease.

This should not be surprising, because Black folk been changing they talk for White folk since forever. The assumption that we struggle when writing SAE because of some kind of disconnect from BE to SAE is really rooted in a lack or unwillingness to help students learn another language or dialect using the students home language or dialect. According to this case study and curriculum design, SRTOL can be affirmed in the classroom setting, even though “the

extent to which teachers are sufficiently equipped to affirm SRTOL and teach Standard English in the classroom” remains limited, as Ball and Lardner suggest, due to the lack of “research on the successes associated with affirming SRTOL” (471). This situation is the double-edged sword of the academic: to do something research done supported, or not to do nothing because ain’t nothing been done yet. This system is beneficial and problematic because when one waits until sound research, or at least sound research for the time is done, then one is less likely to make a mistake. However, the world and the classroom move much faster than the academy, and neither students nor the world in which they are to enter can afford to wait on this research. In other words, at times educators must take a chance and do what has never done been done before in a classroom. As Perryman-Clark suggests, when SRTOL is “applied to African American students, affirming SRTOL in the classroom can contribute to student success in that classroom” (471). Consequently, this research and other research done by noted scholars (Gilyard and Richardson 2007; Perryman-Clark 2013) in the field shows the belief that there is enough evidence to suggest that SRTOL is in fact more than rhetorical ghosts and its applicability in the writing classroom need be evaluated.

Many African American students who struggle transitioning from the grammatical and syntactical structure of their home language to the grammatical and syntactical structure of SAE are placed in Basic Writing (BW) classrooms (Bizzell, Shaughnessy, Jordan). Because of this issue, the Basic Writing classroom has become an ideal place to conduct research on African American students and their use of African American Language and African American Rhetorical (AAR) patterns. Such research was conducted by Keith Gilyard and Elaine Richardson.

Keith Gilyard and Elaine Richardson studied the ways that African American students use AAR strategies and patterns when composing in a BW classroom. A panel of external researchers then “looked specifically at rhetorical practices and modes of Africanized discourse used in student essays” (472). The findings of this study showed that Black students who used more “AAR strategies scored higher than those who did not” (472). While previous scholarship by Smitherman, Richardson, Gilyard, and Perryman-Clark do suggest some success in affirming SRTOL in the writing classroom, there is also some research suggesting students who employ AAR strategies still suffer “negative consequences” (473). Szpara and Wylie note the following about AAL use in the composition classroom:

Even at a minimal level, AAL usage holds potential to impact the reader and have the undesired effect of producing stigmatization of the writer (Mohammed 2002). Although a reader may attempt to overlook grammatical and syntactical features inconsistent with [Edited American English], the presence of such features may still cause the reader to devalue content (Santos 1988). (qtd. in Perryman-Clark 473)

Ain't nobody never say this stigmatization be universal; however, they be echoes and latent innuendos within the previous quote that suggests that there is a problem; there be a problem. But the problem is not and never was us. The problem be with The Man. The Man don't like our language, so The Man tell us we can't talk right and we can't write right. We say, we can talk White, and We can write White, but if they want us to talk like them and they want us to write like them, ain't we done shown them we can? Truthfully, does it matter how we write, when the very language in which we are asked to write has and is still used to systematically erase the black from our tongues?

The destruction of our language hurts and as Anzadula reminds us “if you really want to hurt me, talk badly about my language. Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity. I am my language” (250). Our language be marking us as Black. Blackness be inescapable because it resides within us it be us. I am, we are, because of language; therefore without the language, We cease to be. Us Black folk have always fought to stay visible – not to go gently into that good dark night.¹⁰ The systematic destruction of our language in education is the systematic destruction of us. This institutionalized destruction is not lost on linguist Geneva Smitherman.

Smitherman posits that SRTOL reaffirms that the academic elite’s “design reforms to acculturate the oppressed into the dominant ideology” (21), noting that these academic elitists argued that the decision to value academic language over home language was “purely academic to demonstrate, in Emersonian, arm-chair philosophizing style, the legitimacy of the oppressed’ language and culture without concomitantly struggling for institutional legitimacy in the educational and public domains” (21). In other words, White folk putting Black folk in they place. Trust – not all White folk the same and William Clark, he not down with how they treating the language.

Scholar William Clark notes SRTOL, “had for thirteen pages of their pamphlet argued persuasively that there is no reasonable basis for preferring one dialect to another and that the act of preferring one dialect is a devastating criticism of the others” (217), yet it very deftly reinforced the need of Standard English over any other language or dialect of English. Clark suggests that the statement asks “us English teachers to stroke our dialect speakers a good bit so they will know it's nothing personal, and they tell us that only students who are going into

¹⁰ I borrowed from Dylan Thomas’ poem “Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night”; when combined with my sentence, this represents a common way that African American rhetorical traditions operate, through thoughtful borrowing of poetic language, even The Man’s language. This sort of lyrical work is explored further in chapter four.

occupations which require formal writing will need to master EAE” (217). The problems with SRTOL is not that it asks the academy to recognize and value student home language, the problem is that it still requires that after all that recognition, students write in Standard Academic English (SAE).

This oppression ain't nothing Black people don't know about. It's another struggle, but We will rise. Ever since We been here, the dominant culture has tried to erase us – our culture, our people, our language. And ever since We been here We been fighting every step of the way, and We will rise. As much as affirming SRTOL is important to African Americans and other minority students, there is an issue that is not being discussed. Ironically, as SRTOL cares about the different languages of students, there is little question over whether or not teachers have a right to their own language when teaching composition classes.

SRTOL in Composition Pedagogy: The Mo' Things Change ...

Many First Year composition students and Basic Writers struggles composing in SAE is often centered in their struggle to transition from one home language to another. This struggle is often considered a clash of “dialects not discourse forms” (Bizzell 295). Undoubtedly, some African Americans who speak Black English (BE) have fallen in to this group of people “suffering” from a dialect clash. Some African American BEV¹¹ scholars, who were sociolinguists and teachers of first-year composition, developed “writing instruction responsive to the language diversity of students entering universities during the early years of open admissions,” tailoring their descriptions of “BEV grammar and syntax in order to meet the needs of their nonspecialist audience of composition instructors and students” (Wible 448-449); their research also presented a precise analyses of how students’ speech specifically influenced their

¹¹ See the Preface for an explanation of how I have used African American Vernacular English, Black English, African American Language, and Black English Vernacular.

writing” (449). If students’ speech influenced their writing, would not the teachers’ speech influence her teaching of academic writing? As Royster notes, “all too often teacher/researchers in our discipline have centered attention on only one set of the people in the room, the students, with only peripheral attention being directed toward the other set, the teacher” (27).

Consequently, I argue the lens be shifted from SRTOL to Teacher’s Use of Own Language(s) (TUOOLs).

Teachers’ Use of Own Language (s): Why It Matters

Because there is an earnest effort to move away from the “banking concept” of education (see Freire), into a more pluralistic/student driven classroom, and because of the SRTOL resolution asking different languages/dialects of students to be valued and recognized, those within writing, rhetoric and composition studies should begin to explore how African American teachers use the rhetorical strategies of Black English in the writing classroom. This thesis seeks to intervene in the SRTOL conversation by turning the lens away from students’ discursive performances/practices onto teachers’ discursive performances/practices in the composition classroom.

Most research on African American Language (AAL) and its rhetorical strategies in higher academia has explored AAL in African American communities and in African American student writing at the sentence level (Debose; Flowers; Smitherman *Talkin*). However, in order to explore the different rhetorical strategies minority teachers use when instructing students in composition we got to flip the script and focus from how AAR strategies present on the sentence level, to how they present on the whole, in larger patterns.

One of these patterns, on which this thesis is based, is the *rhetoric of community* which “evolves in ancient African culture as a rhetoric of communal deliberation, discourse, and action

directed toward bringing good into the community and the world” (Karenga 6). At its core, African language and subsequently African American rhetoric are about building the community. The importance of the individual is not placed on the self, separate from the group, but on the self as he or she relates to the group. This is what people, especially White people must understand: our language is never about the self, never about the individual, it is and has always been about “us.” The rhetoric of community is a learning space and a space of engagement both for the “speaker” and the “audience.”

SRTOL is a statement that focuses on the learning space and the engagement of the student (audience); however, it puts no importance on the learning and engagement space of the teacher (speaker). With this realization in mind, I designed a pilot study in which I could explore the ways in which an African American male teacher at a large public university in North Carolina, a four-year Predominately White Institution (PWI), used the rhetorical strategies of AAL to teach a first year composition class.

If You Won't Believe, Then I Will Prove It

Because this lack of research on teachers' use of their own languages troubled my soul, I decided to observe a class taught by an African American male teacher in order to uncover whether or not the African American rhetorical strategies of *Clownin* (which I had learned about as the dancing Sambo in high school), *Call-and-Response* (which I learned from *Talkin and Teasifyin*), and *Jubilee* (which I learned about reading Keith Gilyard) were used when teaching first year composition. The class I chose to observe was held on Monday's and Wednesday's from 2-3:15. As this project was for a Research and Design course I was taking at the time, I had a limited amount of time and actual days left in the semester to conduct this observation. Whatever rhetorical strategies I found or did not find would have to come from this one

observation. In conjunction with this observation, I also explored the ways I used African American rhetorical strategies when teaching my first year composition class.

In this pilot study, the African American male instructor, given the pseudonym Antoni, asked that I refrain from explaining what I was looking for in my observation because he did not want to consciously taint my data by giving me what I was looking for. While Antoni ain't never know the reasons behind my observing him, he did ask that I give the results to him straight¹² in the post interview. Therefore, any of the African American rhetorical (AAR) strategies he used in the classroom were employed unconsciously. However, in representing the data from my own teaching, I consciously employed certain African American rhetorical strategies in class before observing the male instructor.

While I had intended to ask a colleague to record one of my classroom sessions and help me understand what African American rhetorical strategies, if any, I had employed in the classroom, as a new teacher I was not allowed to have another person observe me other than my immediate faculty supervisor. Because of this hurdle, I used my cellular phone to record the first 15 minutes of class (the maximum recording time allowed on the phone I owned at the time). This limited amount of recording time was the main reason behind my decision to consciously employ AAR strategies. Although it could be suggested that I biased my own research data with the conscious use of AAR strategies, I also submit that as educators, scholars, and rhetoricians, we constantly decide which strategies are best to get an argument across, encourage students to listen to our points of view, and persuade students to write in various academic writing genres/forms.

In the class I observed, Antoni was teaching his first year writing students how to remix either their reflective or persuasive essay, and turn it into a visual representation of the essay,

¹² See Appendix A.

which in this case was a comic book. Rewinding to the introduction, we can recall me mentioning looking for *Clownin*, *Call-and-Response*, and *Jubilee*. While I found these three strategies, I also found three more which were *Remix*, *Lyrical Repetition*, and *Community*. It was through my data analysis of the transcription of Antoni and myself, where I realized that *Community* (“We”) rhetoric functioned as a rhetorical strategy both on the sentence level, and as a rhetorical pattern on the holistic level. This data collected in this observation is used in later chapters to show how AAR strategies are used when teaching college composition. Because chapters two explores AAR strategies in more famous rhetors, I have chosen to explain my methodologies surrounding classroom observation and data analysis in chapter three when I begin analyzing the data from the class observation.

The struggle, indeed, is real. The struggle to be recognized in America and in American education not as burdens on, but contributors to the fabric of this country and its educational system is real. American Education was not built for the African Americans, therefore, in theory it has not failed us. However, this thesis is just one step in bringing recognition to those at times oppressed in administrative meetings regarding how they can diversify the student body, oppressed in their opportunities for tenure, oppressed in meetings where their presence at times makes it seem like a nod to Affirmative Action than a nod of respect, so that we can open doors to those once and still denied; challenge those who dare tell us our language isn't a language; tear down these hegemonic practices that only seek to conform us, not free us, not in the hope to oppress the dominant cultures' language, but in fact to strengthen both languages. This thesis is but one of many stones that must be laid for African Americans to continue their path to recognition in the academy, and yes, in a way, a path to freedom. This path is shown in Chapter

2 in which the context of the rhetorical strategies of *Lyrical Repetition* and *Jubilee* are framed under “We” rhetoric. The path be clear. The journey be long. The journey be here.

Chapter 2: WE SHALL OVERCOME. YEAH WE DON'T DO THE WHOLE "I" THING

We done talked about how Black rhetorical strategies be showing' up in the classroom under "We" rhetoric. However, before further defining of these strategies and how they present in the composition classroom is explored, why us Black folk done found the need to use "We" rhetoric in the first place needs to be unpacked further. For Black folk all of our language is within context of the entire Black race – the narratives we tell are not of one Black person, but of all Black people. For example, *Roots* is not Alex Haley's familial story of slavery. *Roots* be all Black people's familial story of slavery. Time and history matters to Black folk and it is encoded in our language. As Smitherman argues, "Black dialect relies on either the context of the immediate sentence or the context of an entire conversation" (26). In other words, we get it (the language) because we live it (being Black). Outsiders (anyone claiming not to be Black or refuses to identify as Black), don't get it cause they ain't never been with it (they are not considered Black). Yeah, it's a Black thing. In order to fully explain the language so others can understand the language and its rhetorical strategies, folk need to know where we be coming from.

Community Rhetoric (The Roots of "We")

Community "We" Rhetoric is centered in an African world view. Asante notes that African society is essentially a "society of harmonies, inasmuch as the coherence or compatibility of persons, things, and modalities is at the root of traditional African philosophy" (76). This need for harmony is translated into discourse. Some argue that an African American philosophy of

thought is not the same as an African philosophy of thought. However, while one can separate a people from their home, one cannot so easily separate a people from their philosophy.

Smitherman notes, “recent findings and field studies, especially those of African scholars themselves, point to sufficient patterns of commonality to suggest an interlocking cultural and philosophical network throughout Africa”; she goes on to suggest, “we can thus assert that similar underlying thought patterns do exist amid the unending diversity of African people, and therefore it is appropriate to speak of traditional African thought as a single entity – albeit with complex and diverse manifestations” (*Talkin* 74-75). In other words, while associating and situating African Americans and African American Rhetoric (AAR) within an African worldview can be problematic, there are enough connections to language and cultural practices that this situating is warranted. Therefore, while associating and situating both African and African American Language (AAL) and its rhetorical strategies within an African worldview can be problematic, there be enough connections to language and cultural practices that this situating is warranted. Though this thesis discusses the use of African American Rhetorical (AAR) strategies in the classroom, no rhetorical strategy of any language can be explored or separated from the mother tongue without discussing the mother tongue; without the mother tongue the rhetorical strategy would cease to exist.

As Karenga argues, to engage in “African rhetoric is to enter an ancient and ongoing communicative practice, a practice that reaffirms not only the creative power of the word, but also rootedness in a world historical community and culture, which provides the foundation and framework for self-understanding and self-assertion in the world” (5). Hold up. Stop da music. Remix. What Karenga suggests is that African Rhetoric (AR), and I submit AAR, is a way

African folk and Black folk learn. Yet this fact is not new to the field of composition, so what's the issue? I mean...

African rhetoric is a tradition that “from its inception has been concerned with building community, reaffirming human dignity, and enhancing the life of people” (Karenga 5). As I mentioned earlier, this thesis is not designed to make BE superior to SAE; its purpose is to deconstruct, diversify, unify, and strengthen each language and each rhetorical strategy within the institution. African and African American Rhetoric “is a tradition that incorporates unity and diversity, consensus and disagreement, affirmation and opposition, criticism and corrective, and a critical integration of the past with the understanding and engagement of the present and the aspirations and strivings for the future” (5). All languages are rich and complex; however, when noting all the functions of our language, and all the reasons why our language means so much to us, it is no surprise we would fight to keep it, because to lose our language is to lose ourselves.

To provide further clarity on “We” rhetoric, one must understand Nommo, which evolved in the 1960's, not surprisingly, during the Civil Rights movement. Nommo, meaning *word* is taken from a creation story from the Dogan people located in Mali. “It [nommo] reflects the efforts to recover and reconstruct African culture, and to use the past as a foundation and framework for present and future projects... It is through the word...that weaving, forging, cultivating, building family and community, and making the world good are possible (Karenga 8).

It is the word that matters to Black folk, it is the reason why sometimes words on a page, in a language not your own, simply cannot convey the simplest emotion (I feel some kind of way about this), a fleeting thought (White folk strange), or central truth (Remember, no matter what you do yo' face always be BLACK) that at times, only one's language will do. Nommo is

considered life's creative force – the word (Griaule qtd. in Asante 8) – and it is the word that has the power to create, to ascribe meaning, to or take meaning from. It is the word that has the power to destroy, demean, and unravel. But mostly, we use the word to uplift, to engage, to learn, to survive, to overcome, so that we can bring good into this world. This is not a let's make the world better through language, however, what these strategies allow for is to critically engage academic discourse and rhetorically reposition of the ways we teach students composition.

African Americans and Public Discourse

It is because of this worldview that public discourse is a necessary contributor and “cannot exist apart from the mutual compatibility of the traditional world view. In force, with active form and content operating harmoniously, the speech is logically linked to the society” (Asante 77). The way we do discourse is not as limited as some White folk think. The only way to create harmony is through verbal conflict, and thorough this verbal conflict, we learn, we grow, we mature, and we find new meaning. The possibilities be “abundant” (77). For example, if two people disagree, yet look at this disagreement as a moment of not necessarily conflict, but contention, where both speakers are trying to deconstruct each others argument. Through this deconstruction the speakers learn about themselves, the speaker, the argument or arguments, as well as how to argue with and against said speaker. In other words, a disagreement ain't a disagreement if ain't nothing new been learned or reworked.

To African Americans, it is the written word that is limiting “in what they can teach about survival in the world” (Smitherman, *Talkin* 77). There is a fundamental difference between dominant culture discourse and Black discourse: “a written mode for Whites, having come from a European, print oriented culture; a spoken mode for Blacks, having come from an African

orally-oriented culture” (77). It should be no surprise why Black leaders are those who can spit. They can spit it the pulpit, they can spit on the basketball/football field, they can spit in the hood, hustling on the corner, and they spit when teaching in the classroom. The value in our community is on those who spit to us and spit well. Two of the greatest Black leaders to spit well and help us get over were Martin Luther King, Jr and Malcolm X.

While this thesis analyses these speeches, specifically noting the use of *Lyrical Repetition* and *Jubilee*, the theoretical framework used by Mark Vail is beneficial when exploring how *Lyrical Repetition* and *Jubilee* use voice merging and prophetic voice. Vail he used three theoretical concepts when analyzing “I Have a Dream,” noting the true impossibility of analyzing such a rich text. However, he rhetorically situates the “I Have a Dream” speech within three theoretical concepts to further explain this text rhetorical power (53). Vail explores Voice Merging, the Prophetic Voice, and Dynamic spectacle. For the purpose of this thesis and “We” rhetoric, I will focus on voice merging and prophetic voice as both of these theoretical concepts present in the speeches and in the my observation of Antoni.

Keith D. Miller defines voice merging as a practice whereby African American preachers “create their own identities not through original language but through identifying themselves with a hallowed tradition . . . [and] borrow homiletic material from many sources, including the sermons of their predecessors and peers” (qtd. in Vail 53). Vail, referencing Miller, also shows a few instances of voice merging in the “I Have a Dream” speech. Vail writes,

King travels further back in time as he merges his voice with the Old Testament prophets Amos (“We will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream”) and Isaiah (“I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the

rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together”). (53)

This is what we do, as people as Black people, our history and how we relate and connect the history of those who came before us is through language; we be bringing’ together different voices to be one voice with one story, one struggle: Our Story. Our Struggle. The next theoretical concept used for this thesis in order to explain community rhetoric is the Prophetic Voice. Darsey argues “the prophetic voice ‘achieves identification only when the holy remnant has joined him. . . . the people must come to God; He cannot come to them.’ The prophetic voice is marked by crisis, and ‘[c]ommon to these critical times is a sense of overwhelming threat, a sense that, in its intensity, achieves psychotic proportions a threat to the self-definition of a people” (qtd. in Vail 54).

Because the prophet is a messenger of God, a messenger to the people, if the prophet fails to lead the people to Glory, then he fails to lead himself to Glory. This idea connects back to the African concept of Nommo (the Word), being the creator and the connection to both the body (the self) and spirit (life itself). The power that is the Word (nommo) also has correlations with Gates’ Signifying Monkey.

Monkey See Monkey Do: The Signifyin’ Monkey

According to Gates, the Signifying Monkey, is “he who dwells at the margins of discourse, ever punning, ever troping, ever embodying the ambiguities of language,” the Monkey “is our trope for repetition and revision, indeed our trope of chiasmus, repeating and reversing simultaneously as he does in one deft discursive act” (52). Inasmuch as Nommo (the Word) is the force/power that unites and diversifies, the Signifying Monkey is Nommo embodied – The

Word personified. However, even this explanation is not enough, because there are tropes within the trope of the Signifying Monkey.

Black language, like all languages is multilayered and should be thought of as an onion, where one must peel back one layer only to find another and another, until one reaches its core. Consequently, because of this complexity, BE is neither Broken English and slang, nor a language of the illiterate and poor. Gates posits, “Signifyin(g), which we could regularly identify with the figures of signification received from classical and medieval rhetoric ... The black rhetorical tropes, subsumed under Signifyin(g), would include marking, loud-talking, testifying, calling out (of one’s name), sounding rapping playing the dozens and so on” (52). In essence, the loud angry Black woman: (rhetorical trope); the boasting and the bragging about bricks, stacks, and Benjamin’s (rhetorical trope); the “preach” and “testify” heard in the pulpit (rhetorical trope). The onion, still in peeling stage.

As Gates asserts, the speech of the “Monkey exists as a sequence of signifiers, effecting meanings through their differential relation and calling attention to itself by rhyming, repetition, and several of the rhetorical figures used in larger cultural language games. Signifyin(g) epitomizes all of the rhetorical play of Black vernacular” (53). It is this verbal play that is at the crux of community and identity building in the African American community.

One example of verbal play is Lil’ Wayne’s line in his song *Rich as Fuck* in which he says “I don’t talk to the Cops, I don’t speak Pig Latin” because of its implication and indirect verbal means. To understand this line one needs to understand the cultural context, which includes African Americans hatred of the police (pigs) for their assaults on our community, and the hatred of snitches (because snitches get stitches and wind up in ditches), since talking to the police is a betrayal to the community. Lil’ Wayne further reestablishes himself in the African

American community by claiming he doesn't speak The Man's language (Latin), signifying the love The Man has for a dead language. To further understand this concept, Gates cites Roger D. Abrahams who posits the following:

Signifyin(g) is a *technique* of indirect argument or persuasion ... a language of implication ... to imply, goad, beg, boast by indirect verbal or gestural means. The name 'signifying' he concludes 'shows the monkey to be a trickster, signifying being the language of trickery that set of words or gestures achieving Hamlet's 'direction through indirection.' The Monkey, in short, is not only a master of technique...he *is* technique, or style, or the literariness of literary language; he is the great signifier. (54)

In essence, our greatest speakers, leaders, scholars and educators of African American decent whom ascribe to AAL and its rhetorical strategies, embody the Signifyin' Monkey. No great African American leader would have become great in our community, our hood, our lives, or our culture if she did not possess the power of the word (Nommo). The Signifyin' Monkey and its tropes are not just found in rap songs and other forms of Black culture, this monkey who embodies and holds all the keys to AAR, presents itself in two of our greatest leaders and our teachers.

Conclusion

Keeping in line with the overarching theme of *Jubilee* in my thesis, chapter four on *Lyrical Repetition* and chapter five on *Jubilee be the path (way) out. Our way to get over.* To reach students who are struggling with transitioning from the language of the black people to the language of The Man. This path is not unlike the one paved by many civil rights leaders such as

King and X, who reminded us of the struggle just to get a little respect in this country, even though the cost was high; they paved a way for black people to get some recognition in this country. My chapters on *Lyrical Repetition* and *Jubilee* seek to do this very thing: show the path, the way for Black rhetorical strategies to be recognized, valued, and used within the academy as a way to teach academic writing.¹³ And miles to go before we sleep ...

¹³ I realize this line is from a Robert Frost poem; however, I am borrowing this line and appropriating it to the continues struggle of African Americans in America

CHAPTER 3

“WE” RHETORIC IN KING & X THE MONKEY THAT DON’T OFFEND

I have shown the struggle. I have shown the history and connections to our motherland – The Motherland. I have peeled back the onion to show help trace some of the roots of our language in order to explain why we won’t let go, why we can’t let go, and why, for some of us the fight to maintain language rights be deeply rooted in the right to maintain identity: Our identity. This, in part, is a fight to stay Black in the academy. It is time to make the way clear, in order to show that the language and strategies we use to educate ourselves and our community can be used to educate all. The path, yes the path, is finally clear.

In this chapter, I explore how *Community* rhetoric be embodied or encoded within recognized African American rhetorical strategies of *Lyrical Repetition and Jubilee*. To do so, I first explore how historical African American speakers like Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. made use of these strategies, and then demonstrate their corollary in the classrooms pedagogies of Antoni and myself. My goal in presenting the strategies this way be to show how these strategies be produced in different public spaces or mediums familiar to those within the academy, like the pulpit, barbershop, beauty salon, or hush harbor (Nunley), and then show how these same strategies are used within the context of teaching writing.

While I have consciously chosen to use Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech as one of my examples, I am not doing this simply because this text is familiar. I am doing this for three reasons: (1) remembering African American history and its mythic figures is done both orally and in written language in the African American community; (2) I am looking at both these speeches in a different way as to explain how “we” rhetoric functions; and (3) because of a

general lack of research on AAR strategy use in the classroom setting by African American teachers, looking at familiar texts from familiar Black leaders is helpful in showing the connections between one public space (Public speech) to another (classroom teacher).

Our Moses & Ase¹⁴: Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X

During the civil rights movement of the 1960's many African American leaders, such as Martin Luther King, Jr and Malcolm X, used “We” rhetoric in their public speeches. In Malcolm X’s 1964 L.A. speech celebrating Black leaders, he uses “We” rhetoric as a “rallying cry”, to urge Black people to continue to support their Black leaders, and fight for equality. Conversely, M.L.K uses “We” rhetoric in his “I Have a Dream Speech” to get masses of people, both Black and White, to come together as one body, and one unit for the purpose of ending segregation, in the interest of equality. The transcription¹⁵ below is an example of how community rhetoric is used in this speech (italics added for emphasis):

This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked insufficient funds. *But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of*

¹⁴ MLK was often called “Our Moses” in the Black community. I used *Ase*, which Gates refers to as the rod or the force that stands counter to the Signifyin Monkey, as the power behind the words to Malcolm X.

¹⁵ I chose to do a transcription in order to hear these different strategies as sound, rhythm, and intonation are important to the forming of African American rhetorical strategies.

opportunity of this nation. So we have come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice. We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now.

Notice how the first half of the speech, Dr. King talks about the history and the plight of people of color, specifically Black people, in America. Returning to Darsey's definition of prophetic voice, reasserting "the terms of the covenant to a people who had fallen away, to restore a sense of duty and virtue amidst the decay of venality" (qtd. in Vail 54), is shown in sentences such as "this note was a promise that all men would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," and "America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned." In this case, Dr. King, uses prophetic voice since we, he, only "achieves identification . . . when the holy remnant has joined him. . . . the people must come to God; He cannot come to them" (qtd. in Vail 54). If the mountain can't go to Mohammad, Mohammad must go to the mountain. America¹⁶ must reconcile with Blacks, Blacks cannot reconcile with Whites.

Conversely, King uses Community ("We") rhetoric as a way to unify and motivate people to fight against slavery, oppression, and injustice by saying things like "*we refuse to believe,*" "*we have come to cash this check,*" "*a check that will give us upon demand,*" and "*we have also come to this hallowed spot to remind...*" Instantly, what seemed like a solitary fight of the individual Black female or male, has become the fight of all Black people and it becomes the fight of White people, as well. Again, We rhetoric be bringing people together. And it be foolish to assume a language that be bringin people together, be only for Black people together. Martin Luther King's work with White leaders and legislators to bring about some measure of equality

¹⁶*America* is used in context here to mean Run, Owned, Operated and Funded by The Man

between Black people and White people . Malcolm X also uses community rhetoric in his 1962 speech in Los Angeles:

When Black people who are being oppressed become impatient, they say that's emotional. When Black people who are being deprived of their citizenship, not only of their civil rights, but their human rights become impatient, become fed up, don't want to wait any longer then they say that's emotional. The Negro, so called Negro organizations and leaders should be praised. They should be congratulated. They should be complimented. Because out of all of them combined, the White man has not found one who will play the role of Uncle Tom. But yet he has found no Tom, no puppet, no parrot who is still dumb enough in 1962 to represent the injustices inflicted upon our people. *We don't care what your religion is, we don't care what organization you belong to, we don't care how far in school you went or didn't go, we don't care what kind of job you have, we have to give you credit for shocking the White man by not letting him divide you and use you one against the other.*

Similarly to Martin Luther King, Jr., in his “I Have a Dream” speech, Malcolm X presents a history of Black oppression and how Blacks reacted to that oppression, and how the White man has responded to this reaction. X then proceeds to praise and uplift the Black community and its leaders for their resiliency against the White man's attempt to divide them. In this case, Malcolm X does the exact same thing King does by presenting the history of the individual Black man or woman separately from the group, and then reunites the individual with the collective whole.

X also exhibits some of the prophetic voice which is “marked by crisis, and [c]ommon to these critical times is a sense of overwhelming threat, a sense that, in its intensity, achieves

psychotic proportions a threat to the self-definition of a people” (54). This is presented in the phrases “*the Negro, so called Negro organizations and leaders should be praised,*” “*they should be congratulated,*” “*because out of all of them combined, the White man has not found one who will play the role of Uncle Tom.*” He further continues to imply this sense of urgency, this overwhelming threat in his words “*we don't care how far in school you went or didn't go,*” “*we don't care what kind of job you have,*” and finally “*we have to give you credit for shocking the White man by not letting him divide you and use you one against the other.*” The message be clear. The threat be clear: The Man is coming’ to get us, to destroy us. To weaken us by dividing us. Like Satan, The Man, he come to kill, steal, and destroy. He offer us fools’ gold to turn on our own. We must remain strong. There are those educators who still believe in proper and correct academic language and writing because they genuinely believe there is only one correct way to write, even if they can admit there are several ways to speak. These biases remain etched into the academy and onto the academic minds it produces. These are the types of ideologies and hegemonic practices that oppress and subvert Black language. The prophetic voice of which Vail writes is not only presented in African American leaders, but also in African American educators who ascribe to African American Language (AAL) and its strategies.

Community Rhetoric and Pedagogical Practice in the Classroom

Dave S. Knowlton argues that student-centered learning is “often associated with constructivism and manifesting itself in the active involvement of students” (6) in which “students also are responsible for finding things that they can use to create knowledge and understanding. “Things” are tools to help students engage in a kind of meaning making. In a student-centered classroom, building community is considered to be of the utmost importance

because students are often asked to collaborate with one another on discussion boards, presentations, in group activities, and so on.

I argue that this increased focus on, and in some cases transition to, collaborative learning can be assuaged if educators can build community amongst students through the use of AAR strategies. It is understandable that some composition instructors and rhetoricians might feel some kind of way about this idea; however, one of the best ways to implement this student-centered pedagogy in the classroom, barring a disability inhibiting hearing (such as being deaf or hard of hearing),¹⁷ is through the spoken word. Again, here I am suggesting this notion that it is through rhetoric, and specifically African American rhetorical strategies, that the pedagogical practice of student centered learning can occur at a quicker pace. In “Nobody Mean More to Me than You. And the Future Life of Willie Jordan,” Jordan shows how a classroom that introduces students to texts, specifically *The Color Purple*, which makes use of Black English and then allows her students to transition these excerpts into SAE showing her students how their own language added a richness, depth and quality that is not reproduced when switching from BE to SAE. This teaching of SAE through the use of African American language is further explored in this thesis by looking at how the AAR strategies are used in the teaching of SAE.

For the purposes of teaching writing, educators can use *Community Rhetoric* as a way to build a community of learners, find ways to share power with students, and offer or show students the benefits of working with one another, as well as the teacher. The students and the instructor work towards a common goal of learning and navigating new writing discourses.

Before discussing Antoni and his words, I want to discuss why I choose him.

¹⁷ I am in no way suggesting that those who are deaf do not have rhetorical strategies, only that these strategies may present differently in the classroom than those of hearing people. There is little research of the AAR strategies of the African American deaf community, but it would be interesting to research what impact, if any, AAR spoken strategies have had or are having on sign language.

The data presented in this thesis was collected as part of a graduate-level research methods course taken in the Fall of 2013 at East Carolina University. As a course requirement, we were to design and conduct a pilot study. I chose to explore whether the AAR strategies of *Clownin*, *Jubilee*, and *Call-and-Response* were used by an African American instructor in the classroom. I teach and study at a Predominately White Institution (PWI), and unfortunately, us Black scholars ain't so abundant here. I knew of one African American male teacher who, with three weeks left – I was waiting for IRB approval – in a semester, would allow me to observe his class: Antoni. Antoni, as far as I know, was generally respected by the faculty: he done been married, he done been a teacher over a decade, he done been military (and educated at The Citadel). Antoni has a master's degree and teaches both composition and African American literature at ECU, not to mention and he has been a martial arts instructor for about twenty years. Basically, Antoni is a Boss.¹⁸

Because my methodology is centered in culturally sensitive research approaches (CSRA)¹⁹, and my observations involved both an African American female teacher and an African American male teacher, it has been important that I include parts of his story about why he used African American rhetorical strategies when teaching academic writing. Culturally sensitive research provides me with the opportunity to value both African American community, culture, language and rhetorical strategies as valid data.

I chose to observe myself because through the course of my studies in the masters' program at East Carolina University, I had learned a great deal about AAL, more specifically, the

¹⁸ See Appendix A.

¹⁹ Linda Tillman asserts, “the components of CSRA include culturally congruent research methods, culturally specific knowledge, cultural resistance to theoretical dominance, culturally sensitive data interpretations, and culturally informed theory and practice,” which allows for representing “both epistemological and methodological possibilities” (460).

rhetorical strategies of *Call-and-Response*, *Clownin* and *Jubilee*. As a reader and a listener of AAL and AAR, I noticed that I either read or saw these strategies pop up in language, for example *Call-and Response* (God is good. All the time. And all the time) and *Jubilee* (the struggle be real. Overcome it, we will.) was a strategy I heard and saw in writing. I heard and read *Jubilee* so many times, I realized how very important the *Jubilee* construction must be for African Americans. *Clownin*, however, presented the biggest problem as I was sure I would have to video Antoni as I believed *Clownin* was more of an embodied language as a persuasive tool than as one that is written.

The reason I could only observe Antoni for one class was once again due to time constraints, and quite honestly, while his class was an hour and fifteen minutes long, I had a technology failure of my audio recording device thirty minutes into his teaching of the class. However, because I chose not to tell Antoni why I was observing him in the first place, all Antoni knew was I needed to observe him for my research course. In the end, this series of unfortunate events still demonstrated that African American rhetorical strategies are at play in the classroom and that we should spend more time understanding how African American teachers make use of them. Noting this observation might be problematic, I recorded myself, in part due to restrictions keeping me from allowing another to observe, record, and note any and all AAR strategies I was using. Due to these restraints, I recorded myself teaching intentionally using *We* rhetoric and *Jubilee* constructions when teaching both the contextual analysis (persuasive essay) and the rhetorical analysis assignments to my first year English 1100 course.

I thought that students would benefit from the use of a *Jubilee* construction when doing the rhetorical analysis because the reflective essay that preceded it was framed as a personal essay on a sacrifice that lead to a personal success. Students were allowed to use first person,

contractions, and other “no-no’s” of grammar in order to ease them into the writing community. The rhetorical analysis required them to shift both their audience, from peers or friends to their employers or other instructors, and their purpose, to show how something persuades. Because, I believed these two shifts could be problematic for students, especially since most admittedly had little to no knowledge of rhetorical analyses beyond the terms of ethos, logos, and pathos, the jubilee seemed an ideal construction to inform them of this struggle and then the way to get through the struggle and come out with a solid essay.

I thought “*We*” rhetoric would be particularly effective in the teaching of the contextual analysis because students were asked to read a book, *It Happened on the Way to War* and then relate events within the text to events in the larger/greater world. Because we had weekly discussion of previously assigned chapters and discussed them as a group, both arguing for, against, and alongside certain arguments, positions, and actions taken place in the book, it only seemed logical that students continue to receive the benefit of the community group research, group peer reviews, and group discussions to aid them in the writing of this essay. Because of this desire to continue the collaborative and community environment, I choose “*We*” rhetoric as the appropriate strategy to use to meet this goal. I also transcribed both the recordings of Antoni and myself. In the following section, I will show how Antoni uses “*We*” rhetoric when instructing his students.

Play That One More Again

After going through this journey of the struggle and the reason us Black folk talk like we do, its time I done reminded readers why our talk matter. Our talk matter because students are struggling Black students be struggling and even White students be struggling depending on the

condition they was born. There will come a time where Black faces and other minority faces will be the majority in college classroom. So there must be an exploration of how one teaches, in this case how Black folks teach academic writing. Below is a transcription of Antoni's use of "We" rhetoric while teaching in class:

Antoni: You know, something comedic like there's humor involved. All right, *but we're looking at comics in a different way in which we can use it as a rhetorical tool in order to tell our story or take a piece that was already written and turn it into a narrative, alright? So basically, we're going to take one of your papers and make a narrative out of that.*

Much like the Signifyin Monkey and Nommo, Antoni uses "We" rhetoric to show students how they can deconstruct, reinvision, and reconstruct the ideas, function, and purpose of the comic book. Antoni, "reflects the efforts to recover and reconstruct" (Karenga 8), a central philosophy to Black language, by having students return to their previously formed essays and reconstructing them to use the past as a foundation and framework for present and future projects. Through the power of Nommo embodied in the Signifyin' Monkey, Antoni uses "We" rhetoric to encourage his students in the process of reinvisioning or remixing their essays.

Remember that the Nommo is the power behind the strategy. Nommo is the reason a strategy work. So while yes, this strategy could be read as remix, if one sees Nommo as the scratch, that interruption that Signifyes a change and way of introducing new or reworked thinking, then one can see Nommo at play in this section. Nommo is not *Remix* it is why *Remix* works.

In the first example presented above, Antoni uses the pronoun "We," followed by some sort of phrase when instructing his students on ways they can look at comics differently. Antoni, instead of saying "you" will look at comics in a different way, he instead says "we will look at

these comics” and continues to use this rhetorical format throughout this part of his instruction. The use of this rhetorical strategy suggests and possibly accomplishes three things: (1) informing students they will not have to learn how to tell their story in this visual medium individually, (2) aiding students in the deconstruction and reconstruction of student papers, and (3) teaching students in how to change text written for and to one audience into a text written for and to a different audience.

For purposes of clarity: readers must recognize that in the communicative deliberative practice of Community rhetoric, it is essential that there be some harmony, balance, and collaboration. The act of completing a task with and because of others be of utmost importance in the “We” rhetoric. What Antoni does is instruct while simultaneously creating an environment through discourse, realizing, quite possibly, on some subconscious level, that these discursive structures are important as part of his culture and his pedagogy:

Antoni: Ok, hey you were tasked to read (student walks in late) there she is
[Antoni laugh] you were tasked to read chapter one an excerpt from Scott
McCloud's, *Understanding Comics*, ok? Now, what did we learn from this piece?
*What did we learn? We learned that there are - that comics aren't as easy as we
think, alright?*

In the second example presented above, what is presented is a mix of both *Lyrical Repetition* (further explored in the next chapter) and Community Rhetoric. This mixing happens often in spoken word. However, when just paying attention to the community rhetoric, Antoni reminds the students, what they were supposed to do for homework, which is seen in his declamation “*You were tasked to read.*” Immediately following this declamation, Antoni shifts or makes a discourse move into community rhetoric where the discourse changes from this is what did you

read, to what did we learn? He essentially “incorporates unity and diversity” (Karenga 8) through this joining of SAE discourse patterns meshed with AAR. This shift in rhetorical strategies takes the isolation and responsibility to “know” the information from the individual student and puts it on the entire class community. Wait. Hold up. Stop. I recognize many constructivist teachers use the word ‘we’ as a way to lessen the distance between teacher and student; however, when this is done by an African American teacher, it becomes part of a long-standing tradition of engaging an audience and inserting them into a community – our community – through ‘we’ rhetoric.”

Antoni also be usin some “calling out,” another strategy of the Signifyin Monkey, intentionally as a way to create admonishment and discord; however Antoni returns the community to harmony under the guise of comedy. Antoni accomplishes this in the words “*Ok, hey you were tasked to read (student walks in late) there she is [Antoni laugh] you were tasked to read chapter one an excerpt.*” Through his use of direction to the class “*you were tasked to read*”, he notices a community member out of place because the student done walked in about five minutes after Antoni been started class – rude. Antoni “calls out” this student “*there she is*”, yet deftly, and comically, laughs off this admonishment, as a playful way to both let the student know she has disrupted the community with her lateness, and reinstated the student into the classroom community.

This rhetorical act connects back to Karenga’s definition of AAR as “a tradition that incorporates unity and diversity, consensus and disagreement, affirmation and opposition, criticism and corrective, and a critical integration of the past with the understanding and engagement of the present and the aspirations and strivings for the future” (5) by asking students to disrupt their ideas of composition and writing through ideas of the comic book, asking students to take an already made essay, break it down into parts, and re-envision it for another

audience, possibly an employer. Below is another example of how Antoni uses community rhetoric when explaining key terms about which his students were supposed to have previously read:

Antoni: One of the things he [McCloud] says over here is that the biggest thing is that comics is a what? A sequential art, meaning that things move and work in a sequence *like we were talking about the last time in class, and I didn't have any pens, and now I have some. We're looking at the comic book in such a way.*

Again, Antoni could choose to ask students individually what they learned, which would lead to “calling out a student,” though this does have its benefits in both the African American community and when wanting to ascertain what one individual student has learned. However, the method shown above allows the student learners to yell out answers, which, in turn, aids in student engagement and learning (Knowlton 6). This method is also protective to the community. The support of the group also functions as a tool of encouragement for the students to try again, continue to respond to the call of the teacher until the right answer is given. Below is a final example of how Antoni uses community rhetoric to explain/instruct the students.

We have a panel of a man (draws panel), we have a panel of a banana (draws panel), we have a panel of a man on the ground (draws panel), alright? Three panels. Operating in sequence - I know it's very bad (referring to his stick figures) I don't have time [Antoni laugh]. So we have three panels working in sequence, ok? We see the man, we see the banana, we see the man on the ground. Now, what has happened? Like the last time we said in class? What has happened?

In this final example, Antoni uses community rhetoric to demonstrate how stories are told through comic books. He starts off his instructions using the *Community* rhetoric, which instantly

brings the individual student back into the student body (the community), reinstating harmony. He continues this rhetoric when asking the class to tell the story of what these three panels mean. What this rhetoric allows essentially is for no student during the course of class to really be “wrong,” as the only wrong response in African American culture is not Response. When a student gives an incorrect answer, the African American oral “tradition that incorporates unity and diversity, consensus and disagreement, affirmation and opposition, criticism and corrective, and a critical integration of the past with the understanding and engagement of the present and the aspirations and strivings for the future” (Asante 5) are in fact participating correctly in African American oral practices.

When a student errs, she is quickly negotiated back into the student body by the use of this rhetoric. The deal with rhetorical strategies is that people use them without knowing them, so how do we know they’re effective if consciously employed? Will these conscious employments somehow alter, disrupt, change or queer, what we know about AAR? This would be good and only good. Disruptions lead to making things better. To answer this question, I decided to record myself to uncover what occurs when these strategies are employed consciously.

“We” Rhetoric in the Classroom: Don’t Matter’ If It’s on Purpose or Not, We Do This for the Same Reason

As a First semester graduate teaching student, I was limited in experience and knowledge. With over ten years teaching experience, Antoni clearly has an edge in pedagogical practice. Lacking the lived experience of a teacher, and since it was my first semester teaching in

any educational institution, I choose to do two things: trust my training and trust my language. In the following example, I use we rhetoric when explaining to students the assignment for their contextual analysis essay (a persuasive essay students had to write connecting events in the book *It Happened on the Way to War* to the outside world).

Wonderful: Alright, the semester is winding down and we are on the last project you all will have to write. Now, you all know I will not leave you hanging' on this assignment. *We will work together. We will learn things. We will discuss possible topics, and when it's all said and done we're going to have 25 remarkable essays.*

In the example presented above, one can see that I have used “We” rhetoric similarly to how Antoni uses “We” rhetoric in his class as a way to let my students know they do not go through the writing and learning process alone, as well as fostering a collaborative student-centered active learning classroom. This strategy also uplifts students, who often think or are lead to believe in some unconscious way that achieving their academic goals is always and only an individual pursuit. I told my students that no matter what they were asked to do, and no matter what they were assigned to write, they would never be alone in their journey through the varying types of academic of writing this course required of them, often reinforcing that I would be there with them every step of the way and so would their classmates.

While many teachers will assert they do the same thing, I suggest that the rhythm within community rhetoric and its subordinates *Lyrical Repetition* and *Jubilee*, are what separates this type of rhetoric from those rhetorical strategies used within the academy. The academy wants students to be precise, matter of fact, direct, present ideas organized in a linear form, etc. This philosophical idea is shown in the standards of academic writing. However, more research on the rhetorical strategies of the dominant culture as they are employed in the classroom should be

done in this area in order to see what other differences present and how these mixing of rhetorical strategies may complement one another in the classroom. Smitherman be shedding the light on some of the differences between Black English and White English in the excerpt below:

The pronunciation system of Black English employs the same number of sounds as White English (approximately 45 sounds counting English intonation patterns) but these sounds exist in a few different patterns of distribution. Of course, the real distinctiveness – and the beauty – in the black sound system lies in those features which do not so readily lend themselves to concrete documentation – its speech rhythms, voice inflections and tonal patterns. (*Talkin and Testifyin* 16-17)

This example be why some White folk call us slick tongue tricksters, that don't shoot straight, and spit all awkward like, an don' tell them what we mean. Yet, Black people often tell it like it is. That's why it is what it is and it ain't what it ain't, and while you can what you can, when explaining' our language, you can't what you can't.²⁰ It just bees that way sometimes. But if we are to look at Black English and how its strategies are used in the classroom, one must also accept a change in academic philosophy: from elevating the individual mind to elevating the collective body.

For the purpose of my class and as someone who, admittedly, has never understood why I felt the academy wanted path to knowledge and overall enlightenment to be lonely one, maybe I be more messed²¹ than I thought, as someone who recognized that I never would have achieved nothing in life or academically without the help of others both inside and outside my community,

²⁰ See Appendix A.

²¹ See Appendix A.

I wanted to make sure that at least, in my class, students would feel the support of both me and the rest of the class.

This chapter has tried to show how “We” rhetoric worked in King and Malcolm X and be functioning in the classroom when us Black teachers be using it. It ain’t been no easy task explaining the “We” rhetoric, but readers should at least be left with some ideas about the purpose of We rhetoric in the African American community. But readers should also be able to see how it presents in our African American teachers in their composition classes.

In the following chapter, I unpack how both *Lyrical Repetition* and *Jubilee* present in public discourse and in the classroom. The *Lyrical Repetition* chapter continues to use the speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X to continue to lay the stones upon the path to educational Glory for those African American educators who use AAR to teach composition. As our leaders, our Moses, Dr. King, and his most popular antagonist, the Ase, Malcolm X, that lead us from darkness into lights of equality (Gates 8), *Jubilee* is an answer to this call from our leaders, in a response from student texts, Antoni and Myself. In due time all shall be revealed.

Chapter 4:

THIS IS GOOD. THIS IS ONLY GOOD. LYRICAL REPETITION AND REMIX IN THE WRITING CLASSROOM

When people speak and when they teach, they often repeat themselves because the speaker herself misspoke, her listeners have misheard her, or did not hear her at all. I mean...some folk just pretend they listening but God knows where they head be. Repetition is a rhetorical strategy, but *Lyrical Repetition* is a distinctly Africanized strategy. *Lyrical Repetition* is to be thought of almost as a song. Poet Eugene Redmond who notes the “songified pattern” of the language (qtd. in Smitherman, *Talkin and Trestifyin*, 3). Jesse Jackson be famous for this. One of his most noted lines is from Jesse Jackson’s preach: “Africa would if Africa could. America could if America would. But Africa can’t and America ain’t.” (3). It is this rhythmic pattern, if one thinks of black speech as “having two dimensions: language and style” (3), that is repeated in Martin Luther King, Malcom X, Antoni, and myself. This form of repetition has a lyrical component that is not found in dominant discourse and is a distinctly African and African American rhetorical strategy.

It would take far more words to explain the true meaning in the words spoken by Jesse Jackson in Standard Academic English. But, I, again, peel back the onion of AAL, in an attempt to explain what is an inherent truth in Jackson’s words. When Jackson says Africa would “if Africa could. America could if America would. But Africa can’t and America ain’t,” in essence, Jackson says the following:

White America has always failed blacks and will continue to do so; and that going back to Africa or getting any help from African countries is neither feasible nor realistic because newly emerging African nations must grapple first with problems of independence (economic and otherwise) inherited from centuries of European Colonization. (Smitherman 3)

In other words, we can't help each other because we too busy fighting the colonizers who still inhabiting our homeland on some kind of extended stay. But Black folk, African folk, and Africanized folk can't be held down or oppressed. We fight all the way, every day. Our language is "a mixture adapted to the conditions of slavery and discrimination, a combination of language and style interwoven with and inextricable from Afro-American culture" (Smitherman 3). But it is this very strategy of our language that rhetoricians are beginning to see as useful tools for the composition classroom. Dear Lord, somebody think us black bodies got some things they can use to educate. Please Lord, let them not get this wrong...

Lena Ampadu writes about the four schemes of repetition using Joseph Williams' definition of repetition as characteristic of an elegant style: antithesis, anaphora, chiasmus, and parallelism (40). Antithesis is known as the direct opposite of something. It is a rhetorical term for the juxtaposition of contrasting ideas in balanced phrases or clauses. Anaphora is a rhetorical term for the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses or verses. Chiasmus, in rhetoric, is a verbal pattern (a type of antithesis) in which the second half of an expression is balanced against the first with the parts reversed, and parallelism is similarity of structure in a pair or series of related words, phrases, or clauses. It's kind of like you can get with this or can get with that. You can get with this or you can get with that. You can get with this or you can get with that, or you can get with this...because this is where it's at. I want to say that

Lyrical Repetition is not structurally different from dominant culture repetition; after all, repetition is repetition for a reason. However, what I do suggest is that *Lyrical Repetition* in the African American community is deeply rooted in the historical context of an entire African American race.

Tannen, as cited by Ampadu, defines repetition in the context of the classroom as “an involvement strategy in which a word, phrase, or larger unit is used more than once to create meaning through strategies based on sound” (38). The purpose of repetition, or as I have called it in this thesis, *Lyrical Repetition*, is used as a way to share ideas, captivate the audience, create meaning, and build community. However, before showing how *Lyrical Repetition* is presented in the classroom, a brief overview of how it was used by King and X is shown. The following excerpt is a transcription of King’s historic “I Have a Dream” speech. I have provided italics around the rhetorical strategy being used:

King: This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity. But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free. *One hundred years later*, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. *One hundred years later*, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. *One hundred years later*, the Negro is still languishing in the corners of American society and finds himself in exile in his own land.

In the above excerpt King uses some of the rhetorical concepts mentioned by Ampadu, such as anaphora, shown in the repeated use of the phrase *one hundred years later*. One should think of

the repeated use of *one hundred years* later in a “songified pattern,” that is used before and after the main idea of the sentence. This before and after use of the clause balances and connects the past struggles with the present condition. For example, King says, “**One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity.** He uses the repetition in this way for the purposes of reminding people about the time that has passed since Blacks were “freed” through the Emancipation Proclamation while simultaneously noting how presently Blacks still suffer from segregation, discrimination, poverty and lack of access. The history be our past, our present, and our future. We cannot be separated from it. We carry it with us: this loss of our homeland, this burden of slavery, this fight for justice in a land said to be ours by laws, but not by birth or right. We been done gone through, and we be going through now. Through this use of *Lyrical Repetition*, King is reminding Black people that, in fact, they are still slaves through an emotional appeal.

Malcolm X, considered more “hostile” than Martin Luther King, because of his rhetoric of “Fight the Man” and King’s rhetoric of “Work with The Man.” Certainly, this is one valid positioning of him in American society since he was juxtaposed to King as a figure in the Civil Rights movement; However, Malcolm X can also be heard, read, and seen in a different way. No matter how one “reads” Malcolm X, one can still see how he used *Lyrical Repetition* for the very same reasons as King does in his “I Have a Dream” speech. The exception is that his repetition is shorter, in turn giving it more “bite.” X’s words hit hard. Yet his words still captivate the audience, evoke emotion, and builds solidarity and community like MLK’s words in “I Have a Dream.” Below is a short excerpt of the speech Malcolm X gave to African

Americans eight years after the Supreme Courts' ruling to desegregate schools. This speech, in 1962, was delivered to a crowd of African Americans in 1962 in Los Angeles:

Malcolm X: We must devise some kind of method or strategy to offset some of the events or repetition of the events that have taken place here in Los Angeles recently. *We have to go to the root, we have to go to the cause.* Dealing with the condition itself is not enough. *We have to get to the cause of it all or the root of it all.* And it is because of our effort *that getting straight to the root* that people oft times think that we're dealing in hate....as reverend Woford Wilson pointed out, I think it was eight years ago today that the Supreme Court handed down the desegregation decision.

And despite the fact that eight years have gone pass, that decision hasn't been implemented yet. *I don't have that much faith, I don't have that much confidence, I don't have that much patience, and I don't have that much ignorance* to [crowd cheered] If the Supreme court, which is the highest law making body in the country can pass a decision that can't get even eight percent compliance within eight years because it's for Black people, then my patience has run out.

In this use of repetition, one can see that just as in King's "I Have a Dream" speech, there is a call to remember history (as both mention historic legislation in this country that was supposed to free Black people). At the same time, King and X remind them of their current position in society despite these pieces of legislation. Both King and X use this repetition as a rallying cry against the very system that guaranteed them rights and the very people who denied them access to those rights. X also uses this strategy as a way to devise a plan or method for overcoming the odds and gaining access to places and spaces in this country, and the White folk who rule it have

denied our people. Hold up, it ain't all bad. Remember, African American discourse at its core is about building the community and bringing good into the world through deconstructing, re-envisioning, and reconstructing the world and our places within it. Within a classroom setting, this same rhetorical strategy can be used to help students retain information because of the lyrical nature of this rhetorical strategy.

Lyrical Repetition in the Writing Classroom

Tannen, cited by Ampadu, posits that “texts that include repetition allow the audience to participate because repetition evokes a certain sense of sound; its musical, flavorful rhythms deeply involve the audience by triggering emotions” (39). Yet these emotions that are triggered are not just triggered through texts but also through the AAR strategy *Lyrical Repetition*.

Ampadu asserts that certain Black female preachers had a “potency of the word” (39). They move and fascinate their audience through an abundant use of one type of repetition, anaphora,” a repetition of a word or expression at the beginning of successive phrases, clauses, sentences, or verses especially for rhetorical or poetic effect (Ampadu 39). It is this poetic effect, this “songified pattern” (Smitherman 3) of which Redmond speaks, that presents itself in the writing classroom that this thesis seeks to explore.

Akin to teaching through music, like many American students who learn their ABC's through song, Antoni used *Lyrical Repetition* as a way to get students to retain information that evoke/trigger certain emotions. Tomlin, asserts, “texts that include repetition allow the audience to participate because repetition evokes a certain sense of sound; its musical flavorful rhythms deeply involve the audience by triggering emotions” (Ampadu 39). This is the same emotion that

is triggered in poetry, in ethnic cultures and in Black religious audiences (Ampadu 39). It's the beat, the bass, the "da-dum, da-dum," that get the audience to follow – like marching to the beat of the drum – in an almost euphoric state.

Because of this audience awareness and because the disciplines of rhetoric and writing depend on audience awareness, it is logical to assume that *Lyrical Repetition* can be a strategy for teaching college writing. Below, I present some examples that show how Antoni used *Lyrical Repetition* in his English composition class. In the examples presented below, Antoni instructed students on how they could change, manipulate, and alter the size of comic book panels in order to create a certain look for a feeling or state of mind:

If you click on it one time *you can actually modify the size of the box*. And it makes a ridiculous sound. (Antoni laughs) *Alright, so you can modify the box* and you actually can turn the box around you. Look at the top here, *you can actually turn and modify the box, so this is how you modify the box*.

In the above example, we see how Antoni uses *Lyrical Repetition* to show his students how they can alter boxes, creating a rhythmic pattern bracketing extra information [it makes a ridiculous sound] around the main idea [modify the size of the box]. If one puts a formula to this strategy, this formula would be instruction-repetition-instruction-repetition. Check da sample below for further proof:

That's how you manipulate the boxes. For the first part, alright? *So give yourself a chance and manipulate the boxes*. *Change the size of the boxes* but keep it inside the page whatever you do *even if you modify it*. Anything outside of the page is not going to print or show correctly. *So modify your boxes if you can*. Take that time.

In this example, we have the same formula presented in the previous example, only the terms have changed. Antoni has changed the term from modify to manipulate, using a different word that has the same denotation. In the following example, Antoni again changes the “term” for the main action (modify/manipulate) he would like his students to complete (practice changing the size of boxes), while his the instructions remain the same:

When you modify a box, [demonstrates at the projector] see how it changes down here? When you're not on the individual panel you can actually move boxes too. Like I can change this box, make it oval. Take like that, use it these little things down here, ok so even that can be changed.

In this last example, Antoni has changed the word three times within the same text using words like *modify*, *change*, and *move*. In total, Antoni used *Lyrical Repetition* eleven times to get one point across: “*this is how you alter the boxes of your comic book.*”

In a follow-up interview following this observation, Antoni explained that no matter how much he has gone over something – an idea or concept – students have problems retaining information. Consequently, it be logical to assume Antoni was subconsciously using rhetorical strategies from our culture to get students to remember. Visually, this repetition can look like the African American rhetorical strategy of *Remix*, a series of interruptions in the main track/song (Banks 1). However, there are subtle differences in this strategy that separate it from *Remix*, namely its function: remix attempts to deconstruct and re-envision using previous knowledge, while *Lyrical Repetition* is a way to remember important information not yet ready to be altered, changed, manipulated, or remixed. Left unexplored is what emotions are Antoni trying to evoke, if as Amapdu suggests, repetition evokes emotion? What emotions, if any, actually happen within the student? In other words, we ain’t got no clue whether or not students feel some kind of

way when Antoni uses *Lyrical Repetition*: if they feel no kind of way when he uses Antoni, or if they feel the way he wants them to feel. It should be noted that I, as a researcher, missed the opportunity in the post interview to ask Antoni if he was trying to evoke a certain emotion from students when using Lyrical Repetition. While I admit my error in not asking Antoni about emotion, Antoni admitted he knew nothing of African American rhetorical strategies beyond *Call-and-Response*. Therefore, it is logical to conclude that Antoni's response would get me no closer to an answer.²² The journey, the path is nearly complete. Educational recognition for the usefulness of Black English and its' strategies in the academic institution is near. The path, though clouded and obscured by the ignorance of those who wish to oppress us, is finally near, and the final stone of Jubilee is to be lain to complete this journey.

While this thesis is written in a *Jubilee* pattern, *Jubilee* also can and does occur on the sentence level in other texts and speeches. Jubilee was also used by Antoni as a way to remind students of their struggles with writing or certain parts of writing, while simultaneously showing the "path" or way out of their current struggles, leading into new way to see/envision their writing. In turn, I use *Jubilee* as a way to encourage students and uplift them, noting that their writing. In turn, I use *Jubilee* as a way to encourage students and uplift them, noting that their road to success may be difficult, yet they will get through their struggles with the help of their classmates and their teacher.

²² This is a way to help lead the reader to what is happening next. These words are contextual, "Glory" meaning freedom, heaven, or recognition. Similar to how MLK uses homiletics to carry people through the Struggle, I am attempting to do the same here.

CHAPTER 5: THE STRUGGLE IS REAL! OVERCOME IT WE WILL! EXPLORING JUBILEE IN THE TEACHING OF WRITING

It be closer now. The end. The end of this journey be much closer than it was before it started. I done tried to give context, and I done taken you through the struggle, my struggle, Our struggle. It is only one struggle but it may be coming, not to an end, but to a beginning of recognition. The journey to recognition is almost here. The following sections show how *Jubilee* is formed and used in speeches, student writing, as well as the teaching of college writing. Using Gilyard's framework for *Jubilee*, examples from Frederick Douglass and Francis Grimeke which Gilyard explored be used in this thesis as a framework for the subsequent examples of *Jubilee* use by instructors and students.

What it Takes to Make Jubilee

Jubilee has various meanings, among them, a celebration in anticipation of future happiness. As Gilyard explains, "Black orators relied on keen invective, humor, and distinct...brands of rhythmic phrasing" (6). Again, there is a songified pattern/rhythm that is necessary, as it is for "*We*" *Rhetoric* and *Lyrical Repetition*, to form this rhetorical strategy. Mooseberry defines Jubilee as follows:

A stylistic device of the Negro orators that, perhaps, was contrived as much for its appeal to the emotions as for its rhetorical value was an antiethical refrain that strongly resembles the "jubilee" tones of the Negro spirituals. This 'jubilee' consists of a series of ideas containing a major undertone of tragedy, alternating

with a contrasting jubilant response. The pathetic appeal of the ‘jubilee’ builds in emotional intensity until it explodes climactically in an exultant ‘shout’ of challenge.” (qtd. in Gilyard 6)

This building up of emotional intensity of which Moseberry speaks is found in many present and past African American leaders, such as Frederick Douglass. The following excerpt was given by Frederick Douglass’ 1852 at the “Fifth of July Oration.” Play close attention to the way in which Douglass uses “optimistic notes” that immediately precede the pessimistic notes:

Jubilee

The sunlight that brought life and healing to you

Tragic Undertone

Has brought stripes and death to me

Jubilee

The Fourth of July is yours,

Tragic Undertone

Not mine.

Jubilee

You may rejoice

Tragic Undertone

I must mourn. To drag a man in fetters into the grand illumined temple of liberty

and call upon him to join you in joyous anthems, were inhuman mockery and

sacrilegious irony. (6).

There are two things happening here (1) Douglass is lauding the growth and progress of a nation that “freed” itself from British rule; and (2) simultaneously throwing the fact that us Black folk still ain’t free, and therefore ain’t got no reason to rejoice The Man’s face. Douglass done made us Black folks mad with his words, which is exactly the emotional effect he wanted his words to have. However, *Jubilee* does not always start with a positive (jubilee) undertone, sometimes *Jubilee* begins with a tragic undertone followed by *Jubilee*. Below is an example of this “reverse pattern,” demonstrated by Francis Grimeke (6):

Tragic Undertone

The way is certainly very dark. There are many things to discourage us.

Jubilee

But there is a brighter side to the picture, and it is of this side that I desire especially to speak.

Tragic Undertone

Our civil and political rights are still denied us. The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution are still a dead letter. The spirit of opposition, of oppression, of injustice is not diminishing but increasing. (Moseberry, cited by Gilyard, 7)

This reverse pattern shown by Grimeke is done not to incite anger, but to remind Black people that though their struggle has been long and arduous, with mountains of racism and oppression seemingly too steep to climb, there have, indeed, been moments of victory, of joy, and of jubilation. This reverse pattern is needed because, even as strong as us Black folk be, even we need some conformation that our work, our living, our struggle ain't been in vain. We need to know that when the White man come to oppress us, we can say 'The Devil is a Lie'²³ because we done seen some glimpses of freedom, and now that we done seen them we can fight for more.

It is also important to note that although the patterns are reversible, there outcome is not. In other words, if a speaker starts out with a *Jubilee*, the speaker going to tell us something tragic, and the tragic thing going' make us rise and fight because we mad (and some folks ain't to crazy bout angry Black folks). However, if a speaker starts out with a *Tragic Undertone*, the speech act will always end with some kind of joy or jubilation.

There is even more to our language that even these examples and explanations cannot convey – a central truth about who we are and what we want and need as a people constantly left in the margins. Boulware's study on African American 20th century rhetoric found that the

²³This term means the Devil is a Liar. See Appendix A.

mission of the Black orator “invariably revolved around six goals: (1) to protests grievances, (2) to state complaints (3) to demand rights, (4) to advocate racial cooperation, (5) to mold racial consciousness, and (6) to stimulate racial pride” (Gilyard 7). This rhetoric is constantly reproduced in the pulpits, podiums, songs, etc, of Black folk.

This chapter will look at *Jubilee* in a slightly different way than Gilyard and Moseberry have, meaning, I will look at certain strategies presented in each set of phrases and sentences from Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream Speech,” actual student writing, and data collected from Antoni and myself while teaching our respective composition classes. By looking at *Jubilee* in this manner, readers will notice two different rhetorical strategies at work: “*We*” *Rhetoric* and *Lyrical Repetition*. To explain this differently, if it takes two sentences to create “*We*” *Rhetoric* (what did we learn, today? what did we learn?), and two sentences to create *Lyrical Repetition*, (This is good. This is only good), then it takes *at least* twice as many sentences to create *Jubilee* (on the sentence level). Needing more than one or two lines and more than one strategy to make the *Jubilee* suggests that creating solidarity/unity among people, takes literally more words and rhetorical strategies to work. Getting folks to come together be hard.

Since *Jubilee* is a product of more than one rhetorical strategy, there are connections between this strategy and the Afrocentric idea of from “many” rhetorical strategies (*Lyrical Repetition* and “*We*” *Rhetoric*) comes one (*Jubilee*). As mentioned before, when looking at *Jubilee* in this context readers must look at the whole piece of spoken word. Again, most of what us African Americans do be about the whole and not the parts. Using the “I Have a Dream” Speech, the examples in this chapter explore the ways King’s speech uses *Jubilee*. Because *Jubilee* needs at least two rhetorical strategies in order to form, for the purposes of clarity (the excerpts be long), this speech is presented in the form of a Mixtape.

The set-up of this mixtape is *Original Track, Scratch, New Track*. Banks posits, “the scratch is an interruption. It breaks the linearity of the text, the progressive circularity of the song. It takes the listener or reader back and forth through the song, underneath the apparatus that plays it, either to insert some other song or for the sheer pleasure of the sound of the scratch itself” (1). Yet the scratch is not an interruption just for the sake of interruption. The scratch, in fact, interrupts as a way to clarify and bring together different genres or sounds whether similar or dissimilar to help make one meaning, or to bring unity of meaning to the listener.

In King’s “I Have a Dream” Speech, the original track (History) starts with *Jubilee*, much like Grimeke’s speech, and then transitions into a *Tragic Undertone*. It goes over the historic legislation that freed Blacks from oppression, segregation, and degradation. But King begins to remind the audience that though Black people are no longer slaves, Black people are in fact still suffering oppression, segregation, and degradation. The section where King reminds his audience of this injustice is the *Scratch* of this *Original Record*, and where the rhetorical “rise” (building up in intensity) of the speech. This “rise” starts when King speaks about how Black people have interpreted the *Gettysburg Address* and why they refuse to believe that they should not be included in this historic piece of legislation (Present situation). Now scratch that and go back to what I said before: we done had a taste of “equality” in this country, but let’s be real: Black folk ain’t got half the rights they supposed to. During the *Scratch* is when strategy of “We” rhetoric and *Lyrical Repetition* is used most frequently. Finally, a new track is instituted, again using *Lyrical Repetition and “We” Rhetoric*, that “climaxes” with a promise of a better future through some kind of physical or spiritual action (what will come in the future).

Jubilee in the “I Have a Dream” and Malcolm X Speeches

Original Track (**optimism**): This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity. (**tragic undertone**) But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free. *One hundred years later*, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. *One hundred years later*, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. *One hundred years later*, the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself in exile in his own land. *So we've come here today to dramatize a shameful condition. In a sense, we have come to our nations' capital to cash a check.* (**optimism**) When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, *they were signing a promissory note* to which every American was to fall heir. *This note was a promise* that all men. Yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Scratch (**tragic undertone**): It is obvious today that *America has defaulted on this promissory note* insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds." (**optimism**) *But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. So we have*

come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice. We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now.

New Track (**tragic undertone**): This is not time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. (**optimism**) *Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time, to lift our nation from the quick sands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children.*

The pattern of tragic undertones preceded by optimism is clearly presented in this speech as Mooseberry claimed. However, when looking in between these patterns there are two things of note: (1) there is a history of African Americans that is presented within this text as a historical narrative; and (2) in order to create this pattern in these stanzas for this oration, King uses *Lyrical Repetition* and “*We*” *Rhetoric*.

Original Record (**Jubilee**): The Negro, so called Negro organizations and leaders should be praised. They should be congratulated. They should be complimented. Because out of all of them combined, the White man has not found one who will play the role of Uncle Tom. But yet he has found no Tom, no puppet, no parrot who is still dumb enough in 1962 to represent the injustices inflicted upon our people. *We don't care what your religion is, we don't care what organization you belong to, we don't care how far in school you went or didn't go, we don't care what kind of job you have, we have to give you credit for shocking the White man by not letting him divide you and use you one against the other.*

Scratch (**Tragic Undertone**): *We must devise some kind of method or strategy to offset some of the events or repetition of the events that have taken place here in Los Angeles recently. We have to go to the root, we have to go to the cause.*

Dealing with the condition itself is not enough. *We have to get to the cause of it all or the root of it all.* And it is because of our effort *that getting straight to the root* that people oft times think that we're dealing in hate....as reverend Wolford Wilson pointed out, I think it was eight years ago today that the Supreme Court handed down the desegregation decision.

New Track (**Jubilee**): And despite the fact that eight years have gone pass, that decision hasn't been implemented yet. *I don't have that much faith, I don't have that much confidence, I don't have that much patience, and I don't have that much ignorance* to [crowd cheered] If the Supreme court, which is the highest law making body in the country can pass a decision that can't get even eight percent compliance within eight years because it's for Black people, then my patience has run out.

Just as Dr. King showed us the Promised Land and gave us Black folk some hope, maybe even a little trust that this time White fold do us right, Malcom X reminds us that trusting the White man ain't never got us nothing but heartache and pain from there lies. However, X uses the same rhetorical strategies as Dr. King uses in the "I Have a Dream" speech, what is different is the pattern/type of *Jubilee* X uses. King is trying to instill hope into the Black community and provide unity between Black people and White people. But X is trying to give a rallying cry to the Black community to stand up and continue to fight without bending, breaking, or turning into an Uncle Tom or Aunt Jemima, none of which is easy, but us black folks can't stand two things:

sell outs (Uncle Tom's and Aunt Jemima's), and snitches. It must be noted that while *Jubilee* does present themselves in the popular text of more well-known Black leaders like Dr. King and Malcolm X, *Jubilee* is also seen in student writing.

Jubilee in Student Writing

Ampadu, using student text to show how repetition is an effective AAR strategy for teachers to use in the writing classroom, provides another example (albeit unknowingly) of Jubilee in student writing:

In Due Time

Original Track (**tragic undertone**): What a deplorable state of being have Africans, brought to American, been placed in! *We have been infiltrated in our homeland by outsiders and captured.* However, perhaps the worst part of the whole thing is that *our own people are the ones* who have sold us into this condition. Jealousy, envy, greed, power, and material goods have been the driving forces behind our enslavement. *Would you sell* your brother, sister, or even your own mother for some guns and dried fish? Conversely, *would you offer* me items of value for the lives of my family or even my own life?

Scratch (**optimism**): Surely evil is the driving force behind slavery, the enslavers, and the slave masters. However, to make this whole conspiracy believable and to make it sound like a good thing, those involved mix in some goodness by introducing us to Christianity. Now there is a twist to the whole situation. (**tragic undertone**)*They will take* a line from the Bible that may say something like slaves are to be humble servants to their masters, and *they will use* this line to

keep slaves in check. **(optimism)** That *they won't tell* them is a line like, "the first shall be last and the last shall be first." **(tragic undertone)** As such we remain blind to the fact that salvation shall be upon us in due time.

New Track **(optimism)**: Henry Highland Garner *speaks* of what God requires of us in his "Address to the Slaves of the United States of America." *He speaks* of how *we are to love God and our neighbors as ourselves as well as to follow the commandments*. I Believe he is addressing this to slaves in that despite the condition they are in, they can still live their lives according to God's will. **(tragic undertone)** However this can also be addressed to slave masters in that they are contradicting their words with their actions.

(optimism): To the slaves of the United States of America-- "*The first shall be last, and the last shall be first. in due time!*" (Ampadu 254).

Just as in the "I Have a Dream" speech and Malcolm X's L.A. Speech, the student who participated in this study followed the same rhetorical pattern to create *Jubilee*. In the *Original Record*, the student discusses the history of African American slaves by using the rhetorical strategy of "We" Rhetoric, discussing how some of the African American community are to blame for the very conditions of slavery they endure in America. In the *Scratch* of this speech the speaker writes about the present condition of African Americans and how they are currently oppressed by the White man using *Lyrical repetition*. The student, when speaking about the current oppression by the White man, uses phrases such as *they will take, they will use, they won't tell*, which reinforces the present condition in the *Scratch*. In the *New Track*, the student begins to speak of the hope the slave can have despite their present condition. He tells the slave to follow God's commandments and in doing this they shall one day be the first instead of the

last, in which he uses voice merging, which Miller defines as a practice whereby African American preachers “create their own identities not through original language but through identifying themselves with a hallowed tradition . . . [and] borrow homiletic material from many sources, including the sermons of their predecessors and peers” (Vail 53). *Jubilee* don’t be just presenting in student writing, but it be presented in teaching as well.

Jubilee and the Teaching of Writing

The second writing assignment my students had was the rhetorical analysis. Because I had perceived that some of my students would have trouble shifting from the reflective essay and its lax and laissez faire use of “academic” terms, language and concepts, to an essay that would require them to use and show some knowledge of rhetorical terms such as ethos, logos, and pathos, which many of them were encountering for the first time. With this knowledge, I decided to introduce the second assignment using *Jubilee*.

Original Track (**Tragic Undertone**): *Now, I'm glad you guys enjoyed* writing your first essay. More importantly, *I'm glad you all are happy* with the grades you received on your reflective essay, because it's about to get real. *Now is when we start writing* college essays and *now is the time we start to learn* what is expected in an academic essay. I will not lie to you. *Many of you will be learning* many of these concepts for the very first time. *Some of you may have encountered* these terms before, but I am telling you haven't encountered them and grappled with them the way we need you to in the academy.

Scratch (**Jubilee**): *It will be hard* and *it will be a struggle*, but do not worry. *We will get through this together. You will not fail. I will help you through this. If you do the work, if we do the work.* All of you will do well and all of you will get the

grade you earned. I expect excellence from all of you, now let's help each other get there.

Much as in the examples presented in the speeches by Dr. King, Malcom X and the sample student writing, I first called students to what they had done on their previous essay (Original Track), then I let them know how difficult the transition be from their normal language into the type of academic language the academy requires (Scratch), and ended with their path out or way to a successful essay (New Track). Although, Antoni uses *Jubilee* in his classroom, the pattern is more encoded (implied) in his words when instructing his students on how to visually communicate their story through comic books:

Original Track (**Tragic Undertone**): You don't have to register it just say not yet...I been doing that for years. Ok, follow me closely *we will give you time* to do certain things in class. *I'll give you time* to practice you know, like an few minutes to do something before *we move on to the next part cause all this is done in sequence.*

New Track (**Jubilee**): *We'll start with like panels*, and you know, putting stuff on it, and then *we're going to start with images* and then *we're going to put words in there* and *then we're going to put it all together* in a sequence together, all at the same time in practice alright?

In the New Track, Antoni informs his students of the importance of paying attention as they must follow direction in order to complete the next step (the struggle) After reminding students of the struggle using “We” Rhetoric, Antoni shows students how they will be successful – through collaboration with each other and the teacher – in creating the project by showing the students the various different steps they needed to take in order to design a successful comic book. While

Antoni's use of *Jubilee* does not present exactly the same way as it did in my own class or in the speeches of Malcolm X and Dr. King, there are various reasons for this lack of presentation such as differences in teaching experience, the effect of my conscious use and Antoni's unconscious use in the data representation(s), or the fact that Antoni is an African American male teaching at a Predominately White Institution (PWI) and this demographic may alter the way in which he uses certain AAR strategies in the classroom. In the subsequent chapter, I conclude this thesis with a general overview of key terms and concepts.

CHAPTER 6: WHEN WE GET TO HEAVEN GONNA PUT ON OUR SHOES AND GONNA WALK...ALL OVER GOD'S HEAVEN

This thesis has been part observation and analysis, and part ethnographic journey. I have attempted, through various ways, to explore and unpack how “We” Rhetoric presents in public speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr and Malcolm X, student writing, and educators Antoni and myself. But I’ve also tried to do something else. I done tried to show how Black language be just as good as this thing called academic English. In fact, I ain’t done nothing but shown just how academic Black English be. How are people supposed to define, nuance, unpack and explore a language if they can’t use their language to do it? Everything does not directly translate, and when this occurs, sometimes only the language can explain the meaning of itself.

Although this thesis be designed to challenge the ways we look at Black English both in writing and in teaching. It ain’t never tried challenge in order to destroy the standards of academic English, it challenges in order to expand the standards of academic English. The language of Black people be so rich and complex that to deny that it is academic language, and to deny that it be used when teaching academic language be denying the academy diversity and growth. This thesis does not pretend to explain all the intricacies of Black English or its rhetorical strategies, nor does it attempt to suggest that all Black people speak the same Black English or even ascribe to the use of Black English. This thesis only to explore some of these complexities.

The Reason & The Problem

Student's Right to Own Language (SRTOL) was a resolution that "set out to eliminate the contradiction between theory and practice" (Barbier 259). In order to advocate "the wider social legitimacy of all languages and dialects...to bring about mainstream recognition and acceptance of the history and language of those in the margins" (Smitherman 349). And while certain folks ain't buying' this idea of valuing and recognizing different languages and dialects in the classroom, some scholars who ain't all up in theyselves²⁴ like Drs. Richardson, Perryman-Clark, and Gilyard done designed themselves a class that shows when SRTOL is "applied to African American students," especially in an Afrocentric class, affirming SRTOL in the classroom can contribute to student success in that classroom" (471). These findings suggest that Black folk do alright writing like White folk if folk just teach them in they own language. But this approach is limiting, as there is an assumption that only Black people can benefit from SRTOL; however, this resolution was written for various minority races and people who speak languages or dialects that deviate from Standard Academic English. However, the increased focus on the students at times leaves the teachers voiceless.

As Royster notes, "all too often teacher/researchers in our discipline have centered attention on only one set of the people in the room, the students, with only peripheral attention being directed toward the other set, the teacher" (27). Consequently, this thesis argues the need to explore how African American teachers who ascribe to African American Language (AAL) use African American Rhetorical (AAR) Strategies to teach academic writing. As mentioned

²⁴ See Appendix A.

earlier, if Black folk can't take the race from they face, they can't take the Black from they tongue – remnants will always remain.

The Proof

Under the framing of “We” Rhetoric, this thesis has shown how *Lyrical Repetition* and *Jubilee* present in King’s “I Have a Dream” speech, X’s 1962 L.A. Speech, and within the classroom. “We” rhetoric is centered in an African world view. Asante notes that African society is essentially a “society of harmonies, inasmuch as the coherence or compatibility of persons, things, and modalities is at the root of traditional African philosophy” (76). This need for harmony is then translated into discourse: the “we” in We shall overcome.

This rhetoric is used in the classroom as a community building practice in which the learning and the burden of learning and meaning making is on the group and not the individual. Examples of “We” rhetoric are shown when Antoni repeatedly asks his students “what did we learn today? What did we learn?” Building community and collaboration is the primary function of “We” rhetoric and is therefore an ideal strategy to use. Within this rhetorical frame of “We” Rhetoric are *Lyrical Repetition* and *Jubilee*.

This thesis has shown that Black people speak in a “songified” pattern because we got that rhythm, that bass, da beat of the drum, da dum-dum, da dum-dum that creates the *Lyrical Repetition* in our speech. And it is the struggle, the burden of slavery – the fight to be free, and the fight to be recognized in America that creates the *Jubilee*. Yet even though this thesis does its best to show how these strategies have presented in the classroom, there still be some questions.

The Issue Be

This thesis is not designed to be the end of the journey to academic language recognition for African American teachers, it is intended to be the beginning. Lingered questions remain and because these questions remain, I call on rhetoric and composition scholars – Black scholars and White scholars. I call on Keith Gilyard, Vershawn Young, and Staci Perryman-Clark, I call on myself to do what must be done, what at times only we can do: explain our language to White folk and all other kinds of folk. We must answer not only these questions that follow, but also those questions that come to the minds of readers both believers and naysayers. We must answer these questions:

- Are *Lyrical Repetition* and *Jubilee* presented in other ethnic cultures? If so, how are they presented?
- Since many ethnic cultures are orally based, the focus on community building through oral practice exists in these communities as well as the African American communities. How might these strategies present in the composition classroom?
- What are the rhetorical strategies of the dominant culture and how are they presented in the classroom?
- When does dominant culture rhetoric present the most and when do minority rhetorical strategies present the most or is there an equal distribution/code-meshing of these strategies when teaching composition and what does this even or uneven distribution suggest?
- Finally, how do students perceive minority instruction using AAR strategies or other minority rhetorical strategies used to teach academic writing and how do

they perceive instruction using dominant culture strategies to teach academic writing?

The Promised Land

This thesis was not written without struggle or great pain to the author. I have thought carefully about each time I use my language and its rhetorical strategies, knowing it would challenge the institution. However, this thesis is meant to be challenged, dissected, deconstructed repurposed and re-envisioned in order to further explore the different ways AAR strategies are used in the classroom. This be the point. This be the Afrocentric philosophy many of us Black folk live by.

If this thesis draws questions and challenges, this is good. This is only good because this is how we will learn, grow, and expand our ideas surrounding academic language and writing. We must look at what we have deemed undesirable, we look at what we have deemed to be slang instead of language, we dissect and take a microscope not just to Black language, but to all language. The lens needs to be turned on all of us Black language, White Language, and various other languages alike. Yes...the path be clear, the project be big, the struggle be Real! Overcome it? We will! The path is clear, follow for there is still more to do, more to explore, more to see. And miles to go before we sleep...

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APPENDIX B: IRB Approval

Notification of Initial Approval: Expedited

From: Social/Behavioral IRB
To: Wonderful Faison
CC: Nicole Caswell
Date: 11/12/2013
Re: UMCIRB 13-002515
African American Rhetorical Strategies in Writing Classes

I am pleased to inform you that your Expedited Application was approved. Approval of the study and any consent form(s) is for the period of 11/12/2013 to 11/11/2014. The research study is eligible for review under expedited category #6, 7. The Chairperson (or designee) deemed this study no more than minimal risk.

Changes to this approved research may not be initiated without UMCIRB review except when necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to the participant. All unanticipated problems involving risks to participants and others must be promptly reported to the UMCIRB. The investigator must submit a continuing review/closure application to the UMCIRB prior to the date of study expiration. The Investigator must adhere to all reporting requirements for this study.

Approved consent documents with the IRB approval date stamped on the document should be used to consent participants (consent documents with the IRB approval date stamp are found under the Documents tab in the study workspace).

The approval includes the following items:

Name	Description
Consent Form.docx	Consent Forms
Interview Questions - AAVE Rhetorical Strategies - IRB13.doc	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Research Proposal - AAVE Rhetorical Strategies - IRB13.doc	Study Protocol or Grant Application

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

APPENDIX B: Glossary

- Ain't all up in theyselves is a term used by African Americans when saying someone is egotistical or narcissitic.
- Boss – term used to describe someone either male or female who commands authority and respect. A Boss is not necessarily an employer as much as an authoritative personality that commands respect from others
- “I feel you” – saying commonly heard in African American communities meaning to have a deep understanding of what another is talking about.
- It is necessary to discuss language when discussing rhetorical strategies because no rhetorical strategy comes without a language. Languages form rhetorical strategies. Therefore to ask that one recognize AAR strategies in the teaching of composition is to ask that one recognize BE in the teaching of composition.
- “It is what it is...” Some people in the dominant culture will never understand Black English and no matter how much one may try to educate them, they remain unmoved.
- The Devil is a Lie - Historically, African Americans have positioned White people as the Devil. This term means the Devil is a Liar. Because White people are Devils they are liars.
- The Man – not to be mistaken with the White man – the man is a figurative/metaphorical term for white culture and dominant ideology
- Meddlin’ - In the African American culture, “White folks always meddlin” means, White people, throughout the history of Black people in America, have always bothered African Americans, even down to conducting medical experiments without consent, such as the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment and the Henrietta Lax story.