

ticated... understanding of the symbolic references and cultural history from which the music derives." (*Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip Hop*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 36). Relating this to Barack's speech in South Carolina, Barack put out the encoded Malcolm X call, and his Black audience responded. While there is some scholarly debate about whether or not Malcolm X used those exact words, the important point is that Barack Obama tapped into the symbolism and cultural history of Malcolm. He was also employing another level of signification, one that is central to the Black literary tradition. According to Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s *The Signifying(g) Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (New York/London: Oxford University Press, 1989), signification relies on one's knowledge of previous texts and the author's (speaker's) ability to reinterpret them in new ways. Certainly, signification on a Muslim minister's words to ensure that he was seen as anything but a Muslim qualifies. Barack done did it again.

30. The phrase "exceptionally articulate" was actually used by one White American and "articulate" was used overwhelmingly by White respondents more than any other group. This led us to develop the idea of "articulate as an exceptionalizing discourse." But, yo, check the next chapter for more on this problematic "articulate" business.

31. Or as one 58-year-old African American barber put it: "When you think of a president, you think of an American.... We've been taught that a president should come from right here, born, raised, bred, fed in America. To go outside and bring somebody in from another nationality, now that doesn't feel right to some people." Quoted in William Jelani Cobb's *Barack Obama and the Paradox of Progress* (Walker, 2010, 69). White folks in particular continue to struggle with Obama's nationality and religion. Just recently, during the Republican primaries leading up to the 2012 presidential race, a poll showed that about half of Republican voters in Alabama and Mississippi still believe that Barack Obama is a Muslim. And even scarier is the fact that about a quarter believe that his parents' interracial marriage should have been illegal (<http://articles.latimes.com/2012/mar/12/news/la-pn-poll-obamas-a-muslim-to-many-gop-voters-in-alabama-mississippi-20120312>). Last accessed: 04-19-12). If that's not wild enough, how about recent comments in April 2012 from rock star and Romney-endorser Ted Nugent? In addition to calling the president a "criminal" and his administration "vile," "evil," and "America-hating"—not to mention using extremely dangerous and violent language—he also claimed that the United States would turn into a "suburb of Indonesia" under Obama's second term (<http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/OTUS/secret-service-ted-nugent-violent-anti-obama-message/story?id=16159549#>). T5IFxRzwHn0. Last accessed: 04-19-12).

32. Check the full article at: <http://www.thegrio.com/opinion/reids-negro-dialect-remark-politically-incorrect-but-totally-right.php>. Last accessed: 09-01-2011.

A.W.B. (Articulate While Black)

Language and Racial Politics in the United States

He's the first mainstream African American who is articulate and bright and clean and a nice-looking guy.¹

—Joseph Biden

I didn't take Sen. Biden's comments personally, but obviously they were historically inaccurate. African-American presidential candidates like Jesse Jackson, Shirley Chisholm, Carol Moseley Braun and Al Sharpton gave a voice to many important issues through their campaigns, and no one would call them inarticulate.²

—Barack Obama

Let's paint the picture. We're at the Takoma Theatre in Washington, DC. Packed house. A predominantly Black crowd with a token White person or two in the front rows (you KNOW they gon get called out!). Well-known Black comedian Chris Rock struts across the stage wearin black pants, black belt, black shirt, and a shiny black leather jacket. "Lotta stuff goin on this year. Everything racial this year. What's the big thing this year? Election." Movin his hand across the stage from right to left in that crazy-expressive Chris Rock way, he imitates White Americans' belief in a potential Black candidate for president, "He should ruuun, he could wiiiiin." [Laughter from the crowd]. Rock responds to the suggestion, "He can't wiiiiin. [He] can't win! [He] got a better chance of winnin the bronze in female gymnastics [Big laugh from the crowd]... than being the President of the United States. Get the fuck out! White people ain't votin for [him]." [Laughter]. "Say they are. [They Are. NOT!]" [Laughter and applause]. "Okay! Just gon soup his head up, make him run, he'll get kilt tryna run. Shhhit..." Rock continues with his side-splitting performance, suggesting that White people say they're gonna vote for this

Black candidate "cuz it seem like the right thing to say," just like answering "yes" to the social pressure of being asked to be an organ donor.

Rock continues, "[He] can't be pres-i-DENT. Get the hell outta here. You know how I could tell [he] can't be President? Whenever [he] on the news, White people always give him the same compliments, *always* the same compliments." Imitating White folks again, performing the wide-eyed White supporter with even more exaggerated gestures, "He speaks so *well*." [Laughter]. "He's so well-spoken. He speaks so *well*. I mean, he really speaks *well*. He speaks so well!" [Laughter]. Then, in his inimitable style, he begins to break it down, "Like that's a compliment. 'Speaks so well' is not a compliment, okay? 'Speaks so well' is some shit you say about retarded people that can talk!" [Laughter]. "What do you mean he speaks well? What'd he have a stroke the other day?! He's a fuckin educated man! How the fuck you expect him to sound, you dirty muthafuckas, what are you talkin about?!" [Extended laughter and applause]. Leaving no doubt about his point, he *really* brings down the house with this one, "What voice were you lookin to come outta his mouth?! What the fuck did you expect him to sound like?!" [Imitating an exaggerated style of self-deprecating slave speech, with a big wide grin showing his teeth] "'I'ma drop me a bomb today. I be pres-o-dent.'" [Laughter and applause]. Rock struts back to the other side of the stage, "Get the fuck outta here!"

Chris Rock's hilarious skit was not about Barack Obama. In fact, it was about Colin Powell and was first performed by Rock over 15 years ago.³ Like much of Rock's comedy, the skit is loaded with insightful folk social and linguistic analyses of race in America, touching on issues that played out again and again during the last two election cycles with Barack Obama. As is the case with most perceptive folk analyses, Rock's routine articulated the heretofore unarticulated—putting words to a feeling that Black folks have long felt but not expressed.

We present a metalinguistic analysis of Barack Obama's language—that is, we're gonna talk about *the talk about* the way Barack Obama talks. We consider the racially coded meanings of *articulate* and how they function to reproduce racist ideologies and, importantly, racial inequalities. The "articulate" question is not just cultural and symbolic but also linked to real-life consequences for those on the linguistic margins of American society.

Racism 2.0: Articulateness as a Function of "Enlightened Exceptionalism"

In the run-up to the 2008 presidential campaign, most Americans were taken by surprise by the young, charismatic Black candidate Barack Obama.

As a relative unknown, he seemed to have gripped the nation's imagination in a way that few presidential candidates had before him. Many White folks, in particular, given their extreme isolation from Black communities and other communities of Color, didn't know how to respond to Barack Obama and searched for some kind of interpretive frame with which to understand this incredibly successful Black politician-professor. We know his academic credentials well: a graduate of two Ivy League institutions (Columbia University and Harvard Law School), first African American editor of the *Harvard Law Review*, and a law professor at the University of Chicago. This highly educated Black man also became the Senate's sole African American. This, along with his multiracial background, his global family biography, and his meteoric rise to the top of American politics, threw many Americans off. What do we call this guy? Is he "Black"? Is he "too Black"? Is he a "Moozlim"? Is he even "American"? The questions about Obama's race—arguably America's greatest obsession—went on and on and on.

Given our narrow definition of *Black* in the United States, Barack Obama (the candidate with "the funny name") seemed like an anomaly. This narrow perspective, combined with the pervasive stereotypes about Black men in American society—"stereotypes about black criminality, black intelligence, or the black work ethic,"⁴ as noted by Obama himself—worked to induce many White folks to make sense of Barack through a theory of exceptionalism. Because he's not like "those other Blacks," he must be the exception to the rule that frames all Black people as lazy, dumb, and/or criminal. Thus, according to this thinking, because of his difference, he should be rewarded—even elected—for being "better" than most of his people. As race theorist Tim Wise has written in *Between Barack and a Hard Place: Racism and White Denial in the Age of Obama*, this is not your mom and pop racism, the kind that has plagued the history of this country since its inception, leading to genocide, slavery, incarceration, and so on. "Consider this, for lack of a better term, Racism 2.0, or enlightened exceptionalism," Wise writes. It is a "form of racism that allows for and even celebrates the achievements of individual persons of color, but only because those individuals generally are seen as different from a less appealing, even pathological black or brown rule."⁵ To Wise and others, the fact that candidates such as Barack Obama are called upon to "transcend" their race not only proves that America is far from being post-racial, but it also "confirms the salience of race and the machinations of white hegemony."⁶ Whereas no one would even think of describing a White candidate as having to transcend race, in a hyperracial America, a Black man can't win without doing just that. (Many will recognize the parallel here to gender, where women, in a field dominated by men, are often asked to transcend gender if they

are to "appeal" to male voters—just ask your girl, Hillary. And then tell us, what is a Black woman to do?.

Wise may have overargued the case that this kind of "enlightened exceptionalism" got Barack elected. For one thing, the majority of White people did not vote for Barack Obama. Second, as Tulane University political science professor Melissa Harris-Perry reminds us, while social science research shows that White people unconsciously prefer White faces over Black and even lighter-skinned Black faces over darker-skinned ones, these effects are "negligible in determining election outcomes."⁷ According to Harris-Perry, partisan identification, issue positions, and previous elected office have far greater effects. Still, there is "a there *there*" when it comes to a theory of exceptionalism. Wise's theory of enlightened exceptionalism captures a longstanding Black folk theory of articulateness, where, as Chris Rock argued above, Black folks are praised and rewarded as being "exceptional" for something that they believe is hardly exceptional at all.

Five White Guys and a "Magic Negro": The Policing of Black Language

Using the case of Barack Obama as an example, we have noted a particular fascination, obsession if you will, with his language and communicative behavior, which have been the subject of extreme scrutiny. The intense scrutiny is a type of social monitoring that highlights the fact that his language, and Black Language more generally, are constantly policed by White and other Americans in the public sphere. Further, this type of language policing also throws into relief the complex and inextricably linked relationship between language and race in America. Take, for example, the various media crisis moments that surrounded Barack Obama over the last five years in regard to the word *articulate*. A review of the last five years of the biography of the word shows how one person's seemingly harmless compliment can be another's glaringly offensive insult.

While *articulate* has a long history, the story begins for now in early 2007 when then Democratic presidential hopeful Senator Joseph Biden described Barack Obama as the "first mainstream African American who is articulate and bright and clean and a nice-looking guy."⁸ That same week, in an unrelated incident, former president George W. Bush got in on the action and answered a reporter's question about Barack Obama by saying, "He's an attractive guy. He's articulate."⁹ These two comments created an uproar in the Black community, as the racialized and classed meanings of the word *articulate* began to enter the already troubling racializing discourses of the 2008 presidential campaign. As many Blacks noted, these remarks by two

extremely high profile White politicians merely echoed the numerous comments from many average, ordinary, run-of-the-mill White folks. Why was everybody and they mama callin Barack Obama "articulate"?

Of all the adjectives Biden used to describe Obama, *articulate* stood out for being "so pervasive" and for being used so "differently by blacks and whites" that Lynette Clemetson called for a "national chat, perhaps a national therapy session." Writing in *The New York Times* on "The Racial Politics of Speaking Well"¹⁰—or what some Black folks refer to as "*Articulate While Black*"¹¹—Clemetson argued that, in attempting to explain his remarks, Joe Biden just dug his hole deeper and cast Barack Obama as completely out of the ordinary, describing him as "incredible" and "a phenomenon." The core of the issue for Clemetson is this: "When whites use the word in reference to blacks, it often carries a subtext of amazement, even bewilderment.... Such a subtext is inherently offensive because it suggests that the recipient of the 'compliment' is notably different from other black people." As Georgetown University professor Michael Eric Dyson added, "Historically, it was meant to signal the exceptional Negro.... The implication is that most black people do not have the capacity to engage in articulate speech, when white people are automatically assumed to be articulate."¹²

In his characteristic way, Obama brushed Biden's dirt off his shoulder in interviews, but he released a written statement that pointed out the racialized meanings contained within the subtext of the "compliment." "I didn't take Senator Biden's comments personally, but obviously they were historically inaccurate. African-American presidential candidates like Jesse Jackson, Shirley Chisholm, Carol Moseley Braun and Al Sharpton gave a voice to many important issues through their campaigns, and no one would call them inarticulate."¹³ Obama's statement demonstrates his refusal to be White America's "exceptional Negro," one willing to accept "praise" at the expense of other Black politicians and Black people in general. His comments also highlight the fact that "compliments" like "articulate" and "speaks so well" are too often racially coded to mean "articulate... for a black person." As Brown University Africana Studies professor Tricia Rose pointed out, "Al Sharpton is incredibly articulate, but because he speaks with a cadence and style that is firmly rooted in black rhetorical tradition you will rarely hear white people refer to him as articulate."¹⁴ Speaking on MSNBC in early 2007, Al Sharpton's own comments showed even further complexity behind the "compliment" with this concise but loaded one-liner: "I take a bath everyday."¹⁵ (More on this later.)

After Joe Biden and George W. Bush, a third White man entered the "articulate" narrative but in a slightly different way. This time, it was majority leader Harry Reid, the Democratic senator from Nevada. In one of the

most talked about political books of the year, *Game Change* by *Time's* Mark Halperin and *New York Magazine's* John Heilemann, *articulate* was given new life through a direct linkage between language and race. According to their book, Reid thought that Americans [read: White Americans] might finally be ready to elect a Black president. Then he commented privately that this was especially true because Obama was, relative to other Black candidates like Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton, "light-skinned" and spoke "with no Negro dialect, unless he wanted to have one."¹⁶ While the media went into another tizzy, Obama once again brushed that dirt off his shoulder, knowing that these comments were not intended as Reid's personal beliefs. Rather, accurately or not, they were made within a context of what Reid believed to be White America's attitude toward Obama and Black candidates in general.

Beyond being out of touch with current nomenclature (you basically gotta be older than dirt to use "Negro" as a racial term of reference), Reid's comments suggest several current realities about race in America. First, many White leaders hold the belief that America's dream of postraciality is far from its racial reality. Second, some Americans might, in fact, be hyperracial if voting is based in part on color of skin and shades of color within that. Third, if a Black man was ever going to be elected, it was gonna have to be an "exceptional" Black man. To spell it out even more clearly, that Black man would have to be damn near White—as light as possible, with White biraciality being a big plus, and speaking in a way modeled on middle-class White linguistic norms and as far away from Black norms of speaking as possible. As one *sista* joked, pretending to be a White customer in an imaginary political coffee shop, "I'd like to order a 'Black man' please, with lots of cream, some chocolate and plenty of milk, oh, and with as little detectable 'Negro dialect' as possible!" President Obama himself commented on America's racializing hegemony, the set of ideologies that make Whiteness invisibly "normal" while highlighting all non-Whites as different, meaning less than. The closer one is to a "White ideal," the more palatable they will be to many Americans.¹⁷

The fourth and fifth White men to enter this tale of "articulate" come later in the game but show how this "articulate" frenzy continues into the 2012 presidential election season. This time, we have Republican representative Joe Walsh from Illinois. (This White view of Black articulateness appears to be one of the few bipartisan issues in Washington these days!) Walsh adds a slightly different twist to the tale, suggesting that Barack Obama's election was linked to both race and language, as well as "white guilt," as if Obama were the presidential politics version of an "affirmative action baby":

Why was he elected? Again, it comes down to who he was. He was black, he was historic. And there's nothing racist about this. It is

what it is. If he had been a dynamic white state senator elected to Congress he wouldn't have gotten in the game this fast.... [The media] was in love with him because he pushed that magical button: a black man who was articulate, liberal, the whole white guilt thing, all of that.¹⁸

Aside from the now classic, almost satirical, White rhetorical script of "I'm not racist, but" followed by racist commentary,¹⁹ Walsh's "magical" discourse ties in neatly with the fifth White man to enter the narrative, conservative talk radio host Rush Limbaugh.

Rush Limbaugh, perhaps more directly than any of the other actors in this storyline, makes it painfully obvious that many White Americans vigilantly monitor and police Black Language to the point of obsession. He also makes it clear that there must be no "traces" of Black Language in your speech if you are a Black candidate for President. On his radio show, Limbaugh played a snippet of Barack Obama's speech over and over again, urging his audience to listen really closely because they might miss something. Obama was addressing the National Governors Association when he said, "As a condition of receiving access to Title I funds, we will ask all states to put in place a plan to adopt and certify standards that are college and career ready in reading and math." Limbaugh stops the tape and asks, "D-ahhhh, did you catch, did you catch that there? Did you catch that? No? You missed it.... See, you're listening to the substance here. You missed this." After replaying it, he gives Harry Reid's comments new life:

This is what Harry Reid was talking about. Obama can turn on that black dialect when he wants to and turn it off. The President of the United States just said here, 'As a condition of receiving'—and I wonder if this was on the teleprompter—'As a condition of receiving access to Title I funds we will ask [pause] all states' Who is he trying to reach out here to, the Reverend Jackson, the Obama criticizer? Now, if I use the word *aks* for the rest of the day, am I gonna get beat up and creamed for making fun of this clean, crisp, calm, cool, new, articulate [pause] President?... I'll *aks* my advisors. And I might even *aks* Governor Cumo, as the Reverend Jackson pronounced his name.²⁰

Beyond the obvious race baiting and mockery, Limbaugh displays multiple forms of ignorance here. First, listening to the tape as trained linguists, we noted that Obama's articulation of "ask" was actually "aksk", which threw his timing off, making it more likely that Obama made an error given that the word "access" came shortly before "ask." Anyone who has listened to

Barack Obama speak knows that "ask" is not rendered "aks" in his speech. Second, those like Limbaugh, who berate Blacks for saying "aks" instead of "ask" (including some Black folks like Bill Cosby, Shelby Steele, and others demonstrating linguistic shame) are completely unaware of the linguistic history of the verb. Writing in *English with an Accent: Language, Ideology, and Discrimination in the United States*, Rosina Lippi-Green breaks down the phonological [pronunciation] variation in regard to *ask* in the United States:

The *Oxford English Dictionary* establishes this variation between [ask] and [aks] as very old, a result of the Old English metathesis *asc-*, *acs-*. From this followed the Middle English variation with many possible forms: *ox*, *ax*, *ex*, *ask*, *esk*, *ash*, *ass*, *ess*. Finally, *ax* (aks) survived to almost 1600 as the regular literary form, when *ask* became the literary preference.²¹

Most Americans, including those who mock African Americans for using the historically "preferred literary form" of *ask*, are woefully ignorant of its history. Further, as Lippi-Green notes, this variation is also found in the speech of White Americans in Appalachia, in some urban regions of New York, and in some regional varieties of British English. This last point is important, as many are not aware of that fact that often what makes Black Language unique has less to do with the "ignorance" of its speakers and more to do with the ways that African and British language varieties merged in the process of Creolization.²²

The Limbaugh story is important because it reveals the general ignorance (not just Rush's) about Black Language and exposes those who manipulate existing White fear of anything or anyone deemed "too Black" (or "not White enough"). It was Rush Limbaugh, not Republican representative Walsh (even though he used the term more recently), who popularized the use of *magic* to describe Barack Obama among Republicans. He broadcast the song "Barack the Magic Negro" (based on "Puff the Magic Dragon") on his radio show, and it was later sent out to members of the Republican National Committee.²³ Barack Obama, depicted as the "Magic Negro" by White Republicans is beyond offensive for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the purposeful use of the word *Negro* to describe Obama. With its usage here, we also see yet another way that Barack Obama has been framed as the "exceptional Negro," standing on call, ready to alleviate White fears and enlighten them on issues of race.

The final point to mention here is something that too often flies under the radar. When White people (whether it's Rush Limbaugh, Joseph Biden, or George W. Bush) give Black people the "compliment" of being "articulate,"

they often juxtapose it with other adjectives like "good," "clean," "bright," "nice-looking," "handsome," "calm," and "crisp." This aspect of the use of *articulate* is what makes it really feel like a backhanded compliment. When Reverend Al Sharpton responded, "I take a bath everyday," he was pointing out the insidiousness (no matter how inadvertent) of these kinds of juxtapositions. Black folks' assumption is this: If one needs to consistently point out that an individual Black person is "good," "clean," "bright," "nice-looking," "handsome," "calm," and "crisp," it suggests that White private opinions about Blacks, in general, hold that they are usually the opposite—"bad," "dirty," "dumb," "mean-looking," "ugly," "angry," and "rough." So, it's not merely the use of *articulate* that's problematic, nor the expression of surprise or bewilderment that makes it suspect, it is also the fact that its adjectival neighbors describe qualities that help create these exceptionalizing discourses.²⁴ These common linguistic patterns open *articulate* up to challenges of subtextual racism, one that speakers may not even realize that they hold and perpetuate.

Is This Really about Race, Though? The Media Refer to White Men as Articulate All the Time

In a recent blog post, a Black woman in her late thirties wrote about the White use of the word *articulate*. In her post, she epitomized the Black folk theory about *articulate*'s social meaning:

To me, whenever someone describes another person as "articulate," even if I just see this in written form, I automatically assume that the person doing the describing is white, and the person being described is black. Articulativeness is never pointed out between other groups of people. Therefore, I see "articulate" as some sort of negative euphemism about black people in general. I see it as saying this as a way to actually negate the black person's intelligence. Like they managed to sound articulate by accident or something.

Recently I was watching the show *Snapped*, which chronicles true crimes committed by women. The show interviews relevant parties, including the law enforcement officials involved in the case. One story was about a black woman who had a Ph.D. in chemistry and was an especially successful chemist. The interviewees couldn't shut up about how highly educated she was. One detective described with obvious admiration—an unusual attitude

when talking about a murderer—about how despite all the evidence against her, “She made an excellent witness—she was so articulate on the stand!”

Why was that something to point out? That a woman with a Ph.D. was articulate? Very troubling word.²⁵

This example presents a strong interpretation of the *articulate-as-White-racism* theory and raises some interesting questions. Is the person doing the describing always White? More importantly, is the person being described always Black?

A blogger who refers to himself as the “Undercover Black Man”²⁶ (most probably because he’s White), responds to this interpretation of *articulate* by saying, “I must say, with all due respect: Buullshit!” The White folk theory on *articulate* usually uses a number of tactics to deny that there is any racism involved. Adherents of this folk social analysis claim White people are angry at the insinuation that you never hear anyone referring to a White person as articulate. It’s just not true, they say. They are quick to point out that the media has referred to White politicians as “articulate,” and therefore, it cannot possibly be about race, Blackness, or Barack Obama. In its denial of the racially significant meanings of *articulate*, the argument relies on logic that ignores the social and structural patterning of these events altogether. The argument uses the relatively infrequent examples of *articulate* being used to describe White politicians in order to “debunk” and deny any possibility of racism. As Undercover Black Man writes, “We have the handy example of another well-spoken Democratic candidate in this very presidential race... John Edwards.”

After a half dozen examples of the media referring to John Edwards as “articulate,” Undercover Black Man rests his case: “You know what? I don’t think John Edwards or his sympathizers consider it a freakin’ insult that he keeps being called ‘articulate.’” Of course, right there in his list of quotations (his evidence to support a nonracist reading of *articulate*) is this one: “Edwards is a young, smart, articulate, and a good Southerner with moderate tendencies and a heart for traditional Democratic issues (December 28, 2006).” Undercover Black Man fails on two major points. One, he fails to contextualize these readings of John Edwards, a southern candidate for President, within the pervasive U.S. ideologies about “dumb,” “slow,” or “slowly” southern speech. He doesn’t consider that John Edwards is also being singled out as “articulate” because—as many speakers of southern varieties of English can attest—northern folks often compliment them because they expect them to speak like Gomer Pyle!

Just as with the racializing hegemony evident in Obama’s case, “regionalizing hegemony” in the United States marginalizes southern speech varieties in relation to the supposedly nonaccented midwestern varieties of English one hears on the evening news. So both bloggers’ perspectives are incomplete, partial readings. Black people are not the only ones to be “complimented” as articulate in this backhanded way, nor does the use of the “compliment” toward White people negate the racial and discriminatory patterning. These kinds of exceptionalizing discourses are not only used against Blacks and southerners, they often appear in conversations about immigrants, especially undocumented immigrants. Just recently, in July 2011, National Public Radio (NPR) host Terry Gross was speaking about undocumented Filipino immigrant and Pulitzer prize winning *Washington Post* writer Jose Antonio Vargas. Many well-intentioned supporters exceptionalize Vargas by making a case for a pathway to citizenship because he is “the kind” of immigrant that “we” should be helping become an American. They often point to the “articulate,” “bright,” and “hardworking” undocumented immigrants (especially the DREAMers), exceptionalizing them compared to their presumed unintelligent and lazy counterparts who speak a variety of English accented by their primary languages. In short, the use of *articulate* plays well into exceptionalizing discourses of race and other marginalized social and linguistic identities. So, to answer the question, Is this really about race, though? Well, it’s about race and about more than race.

Reading *Articulate* as an Exceptionalizing Discourse: White, Black, and Multiracial Perspectives

In order to push on some of these theories of *articulate* a bit more, we asked a group of approximately 50 racially and ethnically diverse American college undergraduates one question: “If someone referred to you as ‘articulate,’ how would you feel? Explain your answer.” They were also asked to submit information about their age, race, ethnicity, gender, and biographical background. Overall, the results reflect four major factors. They: (1) Confirm folk theories of *articulate* as racist discourse, (2) Complicate the conversation by looking across racial and ethnic groups in the United States, (3) Demonstrate the multiple problematic links between “articulateness” and “Whiteness” and “articulateness” and “intelligence” across groups, and (4) Reveal that language, in general, and exceptionalizing discourses, in particular, are anything but neutral. Rather, language is often socially charged, loaded with issues of race, class, citizenship, and other forms of social identification.

One general finding is that while there were Americans across all racial and ethnic groups who viewed the adjective as an unproblematic

compliment, this group was predominantly White. Many White respondents expressed "pride" and "happiness" at being considered articulate, as exemplified by this student's response: "In reference to someone describing me as articulate, I believe that I would feel proud. I think I'd feel this way because to me, articulate means being able to express yourself clearly with knowledge of the connotation and meaning of every word you're saying. I like to be able to express myself in a way that is clear to others."

A second general finding is that the overwhelming majority of Black Americans found *articulate* to be problematic, with some downright offended and insulted. In general, Black respondents seemed to go beyond dictionary definitions of the word to think more critically about the social meanings of the word across contexts. The social meanings, the kinds of social messages encoded in the word's use, seemed far more salient for Black Americans. For example, this respondent recalled an early childhood experience:

I remember the first time that someone did refer to me as articulate, I was about nine and had no idea what it meant. Upon finding out its definition I was flattered. I feel that labeling a child as articulate might be appropriate in many contexts because they might display a level of speaking and conveying their ideas above what you would have expected. However, to label an adult as articulate can be very insulting. It implies that you didn't expect them to be able to express their feelings and ideas with such fluency or clarity. I personally would be especially offended if someone non black called me articulate now because it implies that they expected less of me.

This respondent hailed from Chicago and described himself as an "African American (Descendant of slaves in America) ... with a very close extended family," with much of them "from the South as well."

Beyond these expected results, a third general finding of the survey suggested that multiracial Americans seemed not to possess strong interpretations of either side of the *articulate* debate. Further, the data suggests that those Black Americans who identified as Black but were also multiracial—and were socialized in predominantly non-Black communities—also did not view *articulate* as definitively problematic. While we don't want to make too much out of these few responses, they do muddy the clear waters a bit. One example comes from a respondent who self-identifies as "Black" and "African American," yet he also described himself as having a "black father" and a "white mother." He was "usually one or one of a few black

students in class in school" where the "majority of the school were Mexican and Asian." His response shows no awareness of *articulate* as part of an exceptionalizing discourse:

I would feel very uplifted and proud of myself if someone else considered me "articulate." I believe that being described as articulate means that I am good at framing what I want to say into a way that sounds convincing, sometimes, even if my opinion is totally off or wrong. Great use of diction and syntax come with being described as articulate.

This respondent was the only self-identified Black respondent to not consider the complex social meanings of *articulate*.

Another example comes from a respondent who self-identified as "Asian, African American, Native American, Caucasian" and expressed an almost equally uncritical view:

I take great pride in being called articulate and have been called articulate. Both of my parents are extremely well educated people who have had to give many a speech and were both lawyers who had to speak effectively and persuasively to prove a point in the courtroom. I am certainly guilty of mumbling around my friends.... Yet when I got up to give an oral presentation for my class, I enunciated every word, let my personality shine through my speech, and received glowing reviews. My parents tell me all the time, "We know you can articulate, so why not do it all the time?" In the last couple of years I have become much better at enunciating all the time, and from the day I arrived [on campus]... others pinned me as an intelligent and articulate person based on the content and delivery of my comments.... If someone looked at me and were shocked that I was articulate, I might be slightly offended, but so far, the situations in which I've been called articulate have only succeeded in making me proud.

While taking great pride in being labeled "articulate," this young woman might be only "slightly" offended by the "compliment" but, more often than not, would accept the praise as well deserved.

The survey further revealed that American ideologies of articulateness are even more complex and nuanced than they appear. First, it seems that some Asian, Latino, Middle Eastern, and other Americans also view *articulate* as problematic but for different reasons. To this group, articulateness is

sometimes principally about making them the exception to a (racist) rule, and other times, it's about casting them and their speech behavior as White, an identity category they resist. While this was implicit in some Black responses as well, and much of the educational literature focuses on Black youth resisting "acting White" and "sounding White," these responses allow us to highlight the nuances of the problematic link between "articulateness" and "Whiteness" in other groups. The first example comes from a Mexican-American self-identified "Hispanic/Latina." She writes that being referred to as "articulate" would be a "compliment," especially in academic settings. Feeling marginalized in these contexts, she reports that it would allow her "to claim an identity as a student who 'belongs' and 'fits in' with the world of academia." Then she adds another perspective about her home community in northern California: "Talking as I am writing for this response is asking to be ridiculed where I grew up.... Most of my classmates would be quick to say that both the sound of my voice when I speak English and the vocabulary I use make me sound like a white girl. In this case, being articulate is an insult because it gets me the label of sounding white."

The second example is from someone who describes her race as "Asian" and her ethnicity as "Native Hawaiian." Like the Mexican American respondent above, she is able to see both sides of the *articulate* problem; she also resists being racialized as "White" (and classed as "middle"). She writes:

I think being described as "articulate" is a great thing—to me it means that I can clearly express my feelings and thoughts to others in words.... However, I guess there's a flip side where being articulate means speaking clearly and crisply and very prim and proper. This seems very white and middle class. I wouldn't necessarily take that as a compliment, especially if "someone" was referring to my everyday way of speaking.

These last two responses show how, in the United States, powerful language ideologies link articulateness with "standard" English with Whiteness. This occurs largely because race and class inequality overlap to the point at which the language variety that folks think of as "standard" English is straightforwardly (if not problematically) constructed as "White English." For many Americans, these ways of speaking become associated with White folks, especially those born with a "silver spoon" in their mouths. As emblems of dominant White cultural privilege, then, sounding "articulate" or sounding "White" is sometimes rejected by those who have been racialized as Others their entire lives.

"Forcing Our Tongues to Fit into a Western System": Insights from Those on the Linguistic Margins (Bi- and Multilinguals)

Asian, Latino, Middle Eastern, and other Americans complicated our survey results in other unexpected ways. In terms of reading the social meanings of *articulate*, some respondents expressed a "split view" that depended on their linguistic background as much if not more than their race. In many cases, respondents do not view *articulate* as problematic in English, but their responses grow more critical when speaking about the language of immigrants, their family members, or those with "accents." Because these Americans are located on the linguistic margins—either they or their parents learned English as a second language—some felt honored to be referred to as articulate, since it meant that they had fully mastered English. At the same time, however, these Americans were also able to point out the challenges of belonging to communities where "accents" from languages other than English are linguistically marginalized.

This example comes from a respondent who describes herself as "Filipino by culture (little blood) and Lebanese by blood (no culture)" but as having grown up "in a predominantly Mexican community" in Texas. She begins, "If someone described me as 'articulate,' I would feel like I had received a great compliment.... I believe that the term articulate can apply across languages and the situations they are used in to mean a clear presentation of complex ideas. Therefore, I view articulate as a compliment." Then, in what she describes as "a complete side-note," she provides further information about her mother's language:

I called my mother at her work today. As she works in an office and several people could have potentially answered the phone, I was not sure if it was her who picked up. To be quite honest, when I heard the woman's voice on the other end of the phone, my immediate thought was, *Nope, that's not mom.* I asked to speak to Soraya, and she said, "Hi!" I said, "Mom! I didn't recognize you..." Her response? "I know. Different when I talk right, huh?" ... I had never considered my mother's way of speaking as "not right." Granted, she has a Filipino accent (so I've been told), but her own assertion that her way of speaking is wrong made me realize even more how powerful language really is.

In this next example, from a self-identified "biracial (Hispanic and white)" respondent, we see how the split view of those between linguistic

worlds gives *articulate* different meanings. She does not see *articulate* as problematic in English but makes some complex connections in relation to "color" when speaking of Spanish:

I speak the English that my parents do, so I've never faced the additional challenges of feeling like the only "articulate" person in, for example, an immigrant family that doesn't speak English or a family without parents who are lawyers.... Also, I identify as biracial (Hispanic and white) so I've never felt the need to speak the same way as people who look like me. Interestingly, I have felt pressure to speak Spanish because I ended up with the darkest skin of any of my siblings. I have not felt a similar pressure to speak a certain type of English.

For this respondent, the link between language and race is not as salient as the link between language and "color." She does not experience pressure to speak a particular variety of English, but because of her "darker" skin, she has felt social pressure to speak Spanish, as if a higher melanin count leads to higher degrees of Spanish fluency. This respondent's description is similar to existing ideologies of language and race/color expressed by some within Spanish-speaking Latino communities, those that assume that darker-skinned Latinos should or must speak Spanish while giving lighter-skinned Latinos a "pass."²⁷

These next two examples provide heavy insights into the complex nature of the *articulate* debate. They also help to show that the underlying cause of Black suspicion and offense when it comes to the word is due to broader, ongoing social processes that relate as much to the deprecation of Blackness as they do to linguistic marginalization in general. The following insight comes from someone who self-identifies as "½ Korean, ½ mixed white" and represents a great case of the split view. Due to her position on the racial and linguistic margins, she claims that she is not "articulate" and often feels like "she can't gather her thoughts to be expressed in an articulate manner." So, her first response to being referred to as articulate "would be surprise, but also pleased that I'd come across that way." She later complicates her own view by providing an Asian American vantage point to the discussion: "I think, though, that the word contains a bit of surprise in it, as if one is exceeding expectations...if someone told me I was 'articulate' after asking where I was from, or if I spoke English, or anything else pointing to my race/ethnicity, then I'd be annoyed." She then explains why this might be particularly frustrating for Asian Americans, who are often having to battle the "forever foreigner" stereotype.²⁸

Asian-American speech doesn't get stereotyped as inarticulate like black and Latino speech does, but it does sometimes get stereotyped as accented. Maybe the person was trying to give me a compliment, but Asian immigration to the U.S. is not new, the U.S. as a multi-racial society is not new, and multiracial people aren't new. I would feel Othered and out of place, even though this is my place.

The final response in this section is worth quoting in full as it reveals further complexity and the often unacknowledged emotional pain of growing up on the linguistic margins of America. This respondent is an indigenous speaker of Hawai'i Creole English, a stigmatized variety of American English:

Answering this question is difficult. I spent the majority of my childhood trying to prove my intelligence. Growing up in an alternative school was difficult. I didn't learn to read or write in English until the 6th grade and even though I was different from my classmates in that most of the community didn't expect us to succeed in a mainstream school I knew from a young age that I had the work ethic and even more important the support to be successful outside of our community. At the same time I struggled with...being judged for speaking primarily Pidgin. We were taught that Pidgin would prevent us from being successful, and prevent people from respecting us. So those of us who could, or cared enough, tried to force our tongues to fit into a western system that would only patronize us for our efforts. Because of this, a part of me, the part that so wanted to be successful as a child would feel honored almost at the thought of someone calling me articulate. But the version of me that has learned about the motivations for consolidating communities into a singular language variety makes me feel offended to be placed under that hammer. I know that code switching is a sign of intelligence, even if it's not recognized as one. I know that I have the ability, because of my background to effectively communicate with people from a broad range of backgrounds in a way that is meaningful to them. I would call this skill articulate if it weren't already tainted with expectations of covering up any language variety that doesn't agree with what some people call 'Educated English.' So for now, I can do without such compliments—I don't need them.

While speaking from a particular vantage point of the linguistically colonized in Hawai'i, this young woman expresses several shared sentiments

of those on the linguistic margins. First, we can see clearly that Americans on the linguistic margins—whether they speak Arabic, Black Language, Span(g)ish, Tagalog, or Hawai'i Creole English—learn the dominant ideology that links articulateness with intelligence and Whiteness. Second, rather than continue to feel shame, she expresses an alternative ideology that privileges bilingual and multilingual speakers' abilities to switch in and out of multiple languages. Lastly, she frames *articulate* as a political term. Far from neutral, it is loaded with a cultural-linguistic hegemony that imposes itself on people, and praises them for "covering up" their own language varieties rather than rewarding them for speaking multiple language varieties.

White Paternalism, Black Empathy: Nuancing the Black Folk Theory

The Black folk theory of the social meanings of *articulate* is more layered than previously described. In several responses, Black Americans noted that age was a critical factor in their analysis. Most Black folks can get with adult references to children as "articulate." What they can't get with is when Whites refer to Black adults in the same way; it smacks of that same paternalistic attitude that infantilizes Black intelligence, bringing up images of *articulate* being uttered with an accompanying "pat on the head." As one young woman put it, "I would understand a tone of surprise if I was five years old, but at my age (22) it should be an expectation. As an African-American, I am even more sensitive and defensive about how people perceive my linguistic abilities." In other words, to make it plain, there is no normal developmental issue here, where a child is being socialized through praise into adult ways of speaking. Rather, there is a peculiar social issue, where Black people feel similarly rewarded for being socialized into White ways of speaking. Like the previously cited narrative from the Hawai'i Creole English speaker, the assumption is that Black folks should want to leave their language behind and "move on up" to the White high-rises like the Jeffersons. Not only can Black people call the lie on that (as if upward mobility was just about language, not race and class), but there is also the almost inexplicable realization that one is being praised for abiding by White norms, or as one respondent put it, "as someone who talks like an upper-class white boy."

These issues of language and racial politics are heightened for African Americans in comparison to many immigrant populations because African Americans do not consider themselves learners of English as a second

language. These heightened racial politics also have a long history in the United States and are incredibly enduring. It should not come as a surprise to anyone that Blacks might react so negatively to White paternalistic views of their language. These views formed the core of the early scholarship on the language of Black Americans that theorized Black Language as "baby-talk."²⁹ Blinded by a firm belief, a science even, of the biological inferiority of Blacks, other linguists took the baby talk theory to new lows. Writing about Black speech communities in the American southeast, one linguist "explains" the differences in Black speech not as caused by the learning of English and influences from African languages but as caused by "[i]ntellectual indolence, or laziness, mental and physical, which shows itself in the shortening of words, the elision of syllables, and modification of every difficult enunciation. It is the indolence, mental and physical... that is its most characteristic feature."³⁰ Is there any wonder why Black people look suspiciously and contemptuously on White "compliments" of their "articulateness"?

Many in the Black community are aware of how their speech is perceived by White and other Americans. As linguists have noted, there are websites dedicated to the mockery of Black speech and every news report on Ebonics is followed by a litany of disgustingly racist diatribes online.³¹ In terms of our *articulate* analysis, we can historicize this linguistic monitoring within the American institution of slavery where we find ample evidence that the policing of Black Language goes hand in hand with the policing of Black bodies. In their postings to capture runaway enslaved Africans, Whites often distinguished between them by their abilities to speak English. An ad in the *New York Evening Post* in 1774 read: "Ran away... a new Negro Fellow named Prince, he can't Scarce speak a Word of English." And take this ad from the *North Carolina Gazette* in 1760: "Ran away from the Subscriber, living near Salisbury, North Carolina... a negro fellow named JACK... He is about 30 years of age, and about 5 feet high, speaks bad English." Contrast these two announcements with this one from Philadelphia's *American Weekly Mercury* in 1734: "Run away... A Negro Man named Jo Cuffy, about 20 Years of age... he's Pennsylvania born and speaks good English." Thus, we can see that the White practice of separating "good" and "bad" Black speakers of English is an enduring legacy of the African slave trade. Whites made use of exceptionalizing discourses to refer to their "runway slaves" as speaking "good" or "exceptional" English.³²

Despite this long and horrid history, survey results showed that at least one or two Black folks stand on principle and express a sense of empathy toward Whites. Rather than automatically reading *articulate* as part of a system of racist, White paternalism toward Blacks, this respondent

acknowledges the distinct possibility of a racist subtext and then expresses his internal conflict at length:

The hard part about reacting to being called articulate is that I don't want my judgment of the speaker's views to be based on a double standard. I am in danger of making an assumption about the speaker's awareness, or lack thereof, of the issues that affect many urban minority areas so that many kids that live there don't get complimented as articulate....I try hard to approach people, especially people I am just meeting, without bias. This situation is even more difficult because being called articulate is often something that happens to me when speaking to someone I'm just meeting for the first time. Although I am using things like context clues and body language, my reaction in these circumstances is almost impossible to do without assumptions about the person I am talking to that have not had time to be confirmed or denied. Therefore, this situation shows its complexity because of its potential for unfair assumptions to be made on both parts.

This respondent recognizes that White "compliments" about his "articulateness" are probably "linked to [his] being black" yet does not want to fall prey to making similar kinds of race-based assumptions about the White person giving the "compliment." He does not want to prejudge people that he meets for the first time, even as "being called articulate is often something that happens to [him] when speaking to someone [he's] just meeting for the first time."

Some readers might expect us to view this example of Black empathy as admirable, as something to be emulated by other victims of racism in order "to break the cycle of hate," as popular White antiracist discourses go. But there's a different point to be made here. While this respondent's heartfelt narrative displays an empathetic, honest struggle with the *articulate* question, it lacks a critical perspective on racism in at least four dimensions. To begin with, the respondent is right in resisting making assumptions about individual utterances. However, what many people are responding to is how utterances are structured socially so that particular patterns appear far more frequently than others. From our previous examples, for instance, it's important to remember that *articulate* is used by members of the dominant culture to describe the speech of those on the social and linguistic margins, such as children, southerners, immigrants, second language learners, and so on. So, there is a salient link between those characterized as articulate and social marginality.

Second, as we previously stated, it ain't really helpful to look at any one particular utterance of *articulate* and attempt to guess the speaker's intention. What is useful, though, is looking across utterances and noticing, for example, patterns in other juxtaposed adjectives. These other neighboring adjectives simultaneously frame the speaker and the group to which the speaker belongs in opposition to each other. The exceptional "peaceful, patriotic, moderate Muslim," for example, versus her "violent, anti-American extremist Muslim community" is one such opposition heard frequently in post-9/11 American public discourses. So, in addition to the broader, interactional patterns of who utters what to whom, we must also consider the more microlinguistic patterns that we use to construct "articulate" exceptions to the racist rule.

Thirdly, within the empathetic frame, racism becomes the property of individuals, something that lives inside one person's head or heart. Racism is constructed as something that can be denied or refuted depending on a person's real intentions. The problem with this, of course, is that racism is perpetually deniable because no one can ever really know if someone else harbors racist thoughts or feelings and, especially, if those thoughts and feelings will lead to racist actions. As noted by Imani Perry in *More Beautiful and More Terrible: The Embrace and Transcendence of Racial Inequality in the United States*, intentionality is no longer a good measure of racism. People can—and often do—"promulgate racist imagery and ideas without having any interest in identifying oneself as racist."³³ Further, as critical race theorists have long argued, racism is more productively viewed not as an individual, emotional problem but as an institutional, systemic one. The question worth asking is not "Does that particular person harbor racist beliefs when they call me *articulate*?" but "How does the repeated, patterned use of *articulate* draw on racist ideologies and (re)produce racial inequalities?" Rather than trying to prove if one person's utterance is evidence of racism, we can more fruitfully examine the ways our everyday discourse is racially structured. So, in a "postintention" era, whether racist "compliments" are intentional or even conscious becomes far less interesting than how these "compliments" are patterned over time and space and how they perpetuate racist ideas.

The empathetic frame—or not wanting to make assumptions of racism based on a single utterance—assumes that words can be lifted up outta their context and still carry meaning, but context is crucial to how we make meaning. The repeated use of particular words by particular people in particular contexts and situations over time is how words come to take on socially charged meanings in the first place. Black speakers, for example, interpret Whites' use of *articulate* within a body of sociohistorical discourses about White ideologies of race and language as well as contemporary

experiences with White racism and linguistic discrimination. So, when it comes to *articulate*, we have to attend to microlinguistic and broader interactional patterns of use, yes, but we also have to consider how *articulate* articulates (to use our beloved adjective as a verb) with other sociohistorical discourses and ideologies. Further, we need to develop a more critical perspective on racism as not individual or even necessarily intentional but as institutional and most definitely consequential.

Articulate as a Gatekeeping Mechanism: Racial Segregation, Cultural Assimilation and Linguistic Policing

The *articulate* question is a complex, multilayered one. An in-depth analysis brings with it a whole complicated set of issues that raises questions about American society and the American experiment. As an example of the policing of language—specifically, the White policing of Black Language—our analysis raises questions about the workings of multiple forms of linguistic racism in the United States. The *articulate* question is linked to deeper concerns with stubborn, enduring sociostructural and sociocultural aspects of American society. Specifically, we wanna talk about how *articulate* brings to the fore a set of related issues from racial segregation to cultural assimilation and linguistic policing (from everyday social monitoring to patterned language-based racial discrimination).

Earlier we quoted a survey respondent who noted that she would take *articulate* as a compliment if she was 5 years old. But now that she's 22, it should be an expectation and is, therefore, read as an insult. She then went on to add, "As an African-American, I am even more sensitive and defensive about how people perceive my linguistic abilities." The loaded phrase here is "As an African-American," which suggests that being "complimented" as *articulate* evokes longstanding White discourses of Black Language (and people) as "deficient." Another respondent felt that he was being "praised" for abiding by White linguistic norms, or as he put it more directly, for talkin' "like an upper-class white boy." For this respondent, *articulate* links up not only with discourses of Black deficiency but also with hypocritical discourses of racial assimilation and integration. The combination of these two discourses—Black deficiency and racial assimilation and integration—suggests that in order for a Black person to make it in America, he or she must be an exception to the racist rule of Black deficiency and must prove it by not speaking like "those other Black people." Further, the implication is that, unless you talk like an "upper-class white boy," you will not

succeed in America. And this brings us to the real problem with *articulate*, which is the real problem with Black Language.

White America has long insisted on White English (not Chicano English, not Black English, not no other kind of English) as the price of admission into its economic and social mainstream. Even many otherwise liberal and progressive Whites remain rigid and inflexible when it comes to linguistic diversity. While some may deny their complicity in this kind of linguistic hegemony, others earnestly work toward convincing linguistic minorities that the journey to upward mobility will be easier for them once they drop their cultural-linguistic baggage and acquire what they uncritically refer to as "standard" English. (Hey, it sound nicer than saying, "once you talk like me," right?). So, despite America's expressed egalitarian values, linguistic hegemony is framed as beneficial to linguistic minorities rather than harmful, and linguistic homogenization is presented as preferable to linguistic diversity. Black Americans, then, who have developed a language, a way of speaking, that serves as a source of solidarity, cultural pride, creative literary production, artistic expression, and just everyday kickin' it are hypocritically asked to abandon that language in order to "make it" in a "White world." So, when White people praise and reward "articulate" Black speakers, they are also celebrating Black movement toward the White mainstream and away from a threatening cultural separatism. As Lippi-Green once put it:

The real trouble with Black English is not the verbal aspect system which distinguishes it from other varieties of US English, or the rhetorical strategies which draw such a vivid contrast, it is simply this: [Black English] is tangible and irrefutable evidence that there is a distinct, healthy, functioning African American culture which is not white, and which does not want to be white. This is a state of affairs that is unacceptable to many.³⁴

She goes on to pose this difficult, complex question: Given America's national discourses of "one nation, indivisible," and the official "end" of racial segregation in "schooling, housing, public places, and the workplace... what does it mean then to say that there is an African American culture distinct enough from other American cultures to have its own variety of English, a variety that persists in the face of overt stigmatization?"³⁵

On the other side of this coin are some really troubling facts about racial integration. While most White people claim to want racial integration, it's like they be talkin' outta both sides of they mouth. Racial integration in American society is still far from reality, in part, because as Barack Obama observed in *The Audacity of Hope*, "Few minorities can

isolate themselves entirely from white society—certainly not in the way that whites can successfully avoid contact with members of other races.³⁶ In contemporary American society, even in the Obama Era, there is a critical disjuncture between White attitudes and behaviors in regard to racial integration and equity. As Stanford University sociologist Prudence Carter points out in *Stubborn Roots: The Threat of Cultural Inflexibility to Equity in U.S. & South African Schools*, while many middle-class Whites, in particular, have absorbed the discourse of racial integration, their actions militate against it.³⁷ Racial integration is apparently a nice theory, but in practice, folks find all kinds of ways to resist racial integration in school, housing, and so on. So, clearly, the irony—better put, hypocrisy—is that even as Whites promise milk and honey to Blacks willing to accept a particular form of linguistic colonization, they be steady *workin* to deny access to the Promised Land like it was some kinda gentrified gated community!

Since outright racial discrimination is legally banned (though still widely practiced), language has become an even more important vehicle in the denial of access to resources to Blacks, particularly housing. When *articulate* functions as an exceptionalizing discourse, it separates the speaker from other Black people, who are largely working class, the kind of Black people that White gatekeepers want to keep far away from their children and their property values. They are also typically people who “sound Black”—and due, in part, to racial segregation and in part to Black cultural priorities—have not mastered “Ole Massa’s” linguistic norms. Over the last several decades, since the outlawing of racist, discriminatory real estate practices, housing discrimination has become more stealth. We have seen the growth of a new form of racism in housing that relies on linguistic cues as indices of someone’s race, ethnicity, class, nationality, sexuality, region, and so on. For example, if a landlord receives a call from a prospective tenant and denies that application solely because of the tenant’s race, that’s straight-up illegal, Racism 1.0. This does not prevent a landlord, however, from making sociological inferences based on the prospective tenant’s speech (thinking to oneself, “That tenant sounds Black”) and then conjuring up a false reason (“it’s been rented,” for example) to deny the tenant’s application: Racism 2.0.

As scholars, our first experience with this kind of linguistic racism occurred a little more than two decades ago. In 1989, Geneva Smitherman was asked to be an expert witness in a housing discrimination case in the Detroit area suburbs. The chief plaintiff in the case, *Young v. Riverland Woods Apartments et al.*, was a Black woman who had appeared at the apartment manager’s office in person and was told that there were “no vacancies.” This was a *sista* whose speech was, according

to many, “White-sounding.” Smitherman’s role was to establish that people could and did make accurate racial assessments based on the sound of someone’s voice over the phone. To accomplish this, she played tapes of White and Black speakers, most of them colleagues of the plaintiff, to both White and Black listeners from the Detroit metropolitan area. Each speaker was heard on tape saying the same script, a set of statements and questions about renting an apartment. Consistently, listeners were able to identify the “Black-sounding” voices as Black and the “White-sounding” voices as White. Further, both the plaintiff and another Black woman who “sounded White” were also consistently identified as White. However, when the plaintiff had shown up at the apartment building, she was told that there were no vacancies. Between that kind of linguistic evidence and the Black and White testers who visited the apartment complex—pairs, an hour apart—the jury was soundly convinced that Riverland Woods was guilty of racial discrimination in housing. Cost them a nice piece of change too.

The case of *articulate* is directly relevant to this form of linguistic racism. While Smitherman showed that most speakers, most of the time, are able to correctly identify a speaker’s race by the sound of her voice (and volumes of linguistic research have supported this finding), her results also showed the potential for racial misidentification. If Black women, including the plaintiff, were identified as White, then it became possible for landlords to deny their ability to detect race based on voice alone. What is relevant here is that only the Black women who were preidentified as “sounding White” would be likely to receive return calls and/or to be told on the phone that there were available apartments. Whites awarded individual “White-sounding” speakers in much the same way that “articulate” speakers are praised, while “Black-sounding” speakers were punished.

Further, this case highlights the complexity of this form of linguistic racism because it demonstrates how race intersects with class in the minds of the listeners on the other end of the phone. More often than not, Black speakers who receive White “compliments” for being “articulate” are highly educated and middle class. Of course, the glaring irony here is that as Whites reward Blacks for being “articulate”—tying promises of upward mobility and desires of racial integration to one’s ability to master White linguistic norms—White racist practices often reveal the ambivalence (at best) and hypocrisy (at worst) of this “damned if you do/damned if you don’t” language politics. The somber reality for many African Americans is that, still, no matter how “articulate” yo ass is, upon visiting in person, can’t nuthin fool the landlord now, baby—you Black, Jack!

Ten years after Smitherman testified in Detroit, sociologists Douglas Massey and Garvey Lundy at the University of Pennsylvania documented this type of linguistic racism in the housing market in the Philly area. Similar to Smitherman's experiments, the research team designed a study with male and female speakers of "White Middle-Class English, Black Accented English, and Black English Vernacular."³⁸ In an article published in the *Urban Affairs Review*, the authors found that "rental agents now use linguistic cues over the phone to assign prospective renters to racial categories and then vary their behavior systematically to discriminate on the basis of inferred race." Compared with Whites, Blacks were "less likely to get through and speak to a rental agent, less likely to be told of a unit's availability, more likely to pay application fees, and more likely to have credit worthiness mentioned as a potential problem for qualifying for a lease." These effects were "generally exacerbated by gender and class" with "the most disadvantaged group" being "lower-class black females."³⁹

This real and tangible example of language policing has recently been given the name *linguistic profiling*⁴⁰ by Washington University professor John Baugh. H. Samy Alim, as a graduate student at Stanford University, was privileged to be a part of the Linguistic Profiling Research Team from 2001 to 2003, where he was first exposed to perceptual and phonetic studies of linguistic racism. In these studies, linguists concluded that "(a) dialect-based discrimination takes place, (b) ethnic group affiliation is recoverable from speech, and (c) very little speech is needed to discriminate between dialects."⁴¹ Other Linguistic Profiling Research Team members documented the widespread nature of this discriminatory linguistic practice. Ashlyn Aiko Nelson, then graduate student in economics and education, who is currently professor at Indiana University, studied "the sound of equal opportunity" by examining how linguistic profiling worked in terms of credit and housing access for linguistic minorities.⁴² In this work, she presents strong evidence "of unequal access to credit for language minorities" and makes a clear link between race/ethnicity, language, and one's ability to build wealth in the United States. Dawn L. Smalls, then a Stanford Law School student, who is currently Executive Secretary to the US Department of Health and Human Services, investigated linguistic profiling in the law by examining "its use in employment discrimination, housing discrimination, and... the criminal law."⁴³ Since the early 2000s, studies of linguistic profiling have grown in scope, demonstrating the pervasiveness of this practice and its applicability across linguistically marginalized populations, from bilingual speakers to deaf signers. Baugh has edited two volumes of studies that explore this phenomenon in interdisciplinary and global perspective.⁴⁴

Learning to Let Go

In *The Audacity of Hope*, Barack Obama writes that "[i]n general, members of every minority group continue to be measured largely by the degree of our assimilation—how closely speech patterns, dress, or demeanor conform to the dominant white culture—and the more that a minority strays from these external markers, the more he or she is subject to negative assumptions."⁴⁵ Perhaps more important is Obama's consideration of the overall impact of dominant, racist ideologies on ethnoracial minorities in the United States. "It's unrealistic to believe that these stereotypes don't have some cumulative impact on the often snap decisions of who's hired and who's promoted, on who's arrested and who's prosecuted, on how you feel about the customer who just walked into your store or about the demographics of your children's school."⁴⁶ And we would add, too, how one feels about the voice on the other end of the telephone, the family who just moved into the neighborhood, or the prospective tenant who just walked into the apartment office. More than about simply being acceptable or palatable to White America, President Obama's framing of race and language issues as having tangible consequences for people of Color is of critical importance.

The fact that Racism 2.0 is subtle, rather than blatant, and institutional, rather than individual, makes it all the more insidiously oppressive and effective as a system that maintains unequal access to social and economic resources. As we have shown, the policing of language is a fake-out, an excuse for preventing marginalized groups from accessing power, property, and influence. It ain't ever really about "your verbs agreeing" or "enunciating the ends of your words." Because of the strong links between language and identity, linguistic discrimination is often nothing more than racial and ethnic discrimination by proxy. In light of the reality of language-based racism, we are sure that some of y'all are thinking, "In the face of all of this evidence, why don't Black people just let go of their cultural way of speaking so that at least they can escape Racism 2.0 (linguistic profiling), even if they can't escape Racism 1.0 (being visually identified and denied based on race)?"

First, if we truly believe in the American "experiment," the ideal of American equality and democracy does not require cultural-linguistic homogenization. Quite the opposite: The American value of diversity within democracy is touted as one of our greatest strengths. While Barack Obama's common refrain that "[o]nly in America is my story possible" might be an example of American exceptionalism—setting America apart from and above other nations—it also expresses the value placed on diversity in American society.

Second, as most linguistically marginalized Americans are painfully aware, while some individuals can styleshift and codeswitch to an extent that they are racially unidentifiable, many others simply cannot. Even when some folks speak "flawless standard English," they can still be identified as Black by their voice quality, frequency and pitch, patterns of intonation, and so on. Barack Obama, for example, is sometimes identified as "sounding Black" just by the "baritone of his voice." (We in some deep ishhh if our very own pres-o-dent can't escape linguistic profiling!). In the Massey and Lundy study previously mentioned, their inclusion of "Black Accented English" speakers allowed them to test results for middle-class Blacks who could codeswitch into more "standard" varieties of English (in other words, those most often on the receiving end of *articulate*). Those speakers, though, were also identified as Black due to the pronunciation of certain words (pronouncing *advertised* as *advertahsed*, for example).

Third, language and culture are not things that people can just "let go" of. Speakers of marginalized language varieties—shoot, of any language variety—learn language from the community of speakers within which they are socialized. Linguistic styles and accents are not genetic; they're social. Not to state the obvious, but a Black child does not "sound Black" because he or she is Black. Take that same child and raise him or her in upper middle-class White suburbia or in an isolated rural village in the Japanese countryside, and lo and behold, the child will come up speaking the language varieties of the local speech community. The unfairness of the demand to "just let go" of one's language should be obvious then. Asking people to unlearn or abandon their language is like asking them to go back magically in time and select a different speech community to be raised in. How does one accomplish that? And since this point is often difficult to grasp, consider this: How many White speakers, for example, would be able to pass the test of sounding "authentically" Black? Chances are that most would sound like straight-up posers unless they grew up in Black communities and/or have intimate Black friendship networks. There is little, if any, chance that a White person can "let go" of the markers of his or her Whiteness and even less chance of successfully getting a job or housing or a small business loan, for example, if achieving any of these depended on one's mastery of Black linguistic norms.

Being socialized into a language, into a community of speakers, is also being socialized into a culture. Many Black Americans grow up in a culture that privileges alternative meanings of being "articulate," including those that focus on "speaking clearly" as well as those that emphasize the *art* in articulate. The artful use of language, as we saw in the Chris Rock skit, for example, is a source of pleasure, entertainment, reflection, and of course, socialization. It's not only where you learn to speak the language of those

you love; it's where you learn to love and be loved. It's where you have your first formative experiences of being a member of a family, a community, a culture. It's where you develop your first notions of who you are and who you might become. And if you're an ethnoracial minority in the United States, it may also be one of the few spaces where you feel both connected and respected. All of that and more are communicated through language. Why, then, should any American be forced to abandon his or her language variety because of dominant culture's discriminatory practices? If you ask us, it ain't the language and culture that we should be lettin go of; it's these messed-up racist practices.

NOTES

1. Joseph Biden made these remarks in the *New York Observer* in 2007 back when he was running against Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton for the Democratic nomination. For the full story and video, check out: <http://www.cnn.com/2007/POLITICS/01/31/biden.obama>. Last accessed: 09-01-11.
2. Barack Obama's written statement is quoted in the same CNN article above.
3. This skit is part of Chris Rock's HBO special "Bring the Pain," which appeared in 1996. Rock took home two Emmys for his performance, one in Outstanding Variety, Music, or Comedy Special, and the other in Outstanding Writing for a Variety of Music Program. Throughout his career, Chris Rock has been known for his insightful, sharp, witty commentary on race relations in the United States. On November 29, 2007, Chris Rock, along with leading Black race theorist and then-Princeton University professor Cornel West, introduced then presidential candidate Barack Obama at the Apollo Theatre.
4. From Barack Obama's *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2006, 235).
5. Wise is one of the most prominent White antiracist voices in the United States. His ability to explain White privilege to White people has been noted since the publication of his first book, *White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son* (Berkeley, CA: Soft Skull Press, 2004). His discussion of "racism 2.0" can be found in the preface of *Between Barack and a Hard Place: Racism and White Denial in the Age of Obama* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2009, 8-11).
6. Wise (2009), 9.
7. For Harris-Perry's full comments, see: <http://articles.cnn.com/2010-01-11/opinion/harris.lacewell=PM:OPINION>. Last accessed: 09-01-11. Also, Stanford University professor of psychology Jennifer Eberhardt and her associates have shown how racist stereotypes continue to haunt Americans. And for Black Americans, racism continues to be a life-and-death matter. Check out these two articles by Eberhardt et al. as a starting point: "Looking Deathworthy: Perceived Stereotypicality of Black Defendants Predicts Capital-Sentencing Outcomes" in *Psychological Science*, 17, 383-386, 2006, and "Seeing Black: Race, Crime, and Visual Processing" in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 87, 876-893, 2004. And if that don't blow your mind, see also, Goff et al. "Not Yet Human: Implicit Knowledge, Historical Dehumanization, and Contemporary Consequences" in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 94, 292-306, 2008.
8. Check: <http://www.cnn.com/2007/POLITICS/01/31/biden.obama>. Last accessed: 09-01-11. In the article, Biden is also quoted as making other questionable comments: "In a June 2006 appearance in New Hampshire, the senator commented on

- the growth of the Indian-American population in Delaware by saying, "You cannot go into a 7-11 or a Dunkin' Donuts unless you have a slight Indian accent. Oh, I'm not joking."
9. For Bush's comments, see: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/31/AR2007013101304.html>. Last accessed: 09-01-11.
 10. See: <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/04/weekinreview/04clemetson.html>. Last accessed: 09-01-11.
 11. See Philip Arthur Moore in *Racialicious*, <http://www.racialicious.com/2007/01/25/barack-obama-is-awb-articulate-while-black/>. Last accessed: 09-01-11.
 12. In: <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/04/weekinreview/04clemetson.html>. Last accessed: 09-01-11.
 13. Check: <http://www.cnn.com/2007/POLITICS/01/31/biden.obama>. Last accessed: 09-01-11.
 14. In: <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/04/weekinreview/04clemetson.html>. Last accessed: 09-01-11.
 15. Check out: <http://www.time.com/time/quotes/0,26174,1584608,00.html>. Last accessed: 09-01-11.
 16. See: <http://politicalicker.blogspot.com/2010/01/09/reid-apology-for-negro-dialect-comment/>. Last accessed: 09-01-11.
 17. Barack Obama's *Audacity of Hope*, 235.
 18. In: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/plum-line/post/gop-rep-walsh>. Last accessed: 09-01-11.
 19. This and other White discursive strategies to deny racism have been noted again and again by social science research on language and race, from discourse analyst Teun van Dijk's *Communicating Racism: Ethnic Prejudice in Cognition and Conversation* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1987) to linguistic anthropologist Jane Hill's *The Everyday Language of White Racism* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008) to sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and Racial Inequality in Contemporary America* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 3rd edition, 2010).
 20. Check the video yourself at: <http://mediamatters.org/mmtrv/201002220031>. Last accessed: 09-01-11.
 21. From Rosina Lippi-Green's *English with an Accent: Language, Ideology, and Discrimination in the United States* (London/New York: Routledge, 1997, 179). This work continues to be one of the most influential books within and beyond the academy in the area of language and discrimination. Lippi-Green's model of language subordination shows how linguistic discrimination functions in diverse contexts from the classrooms to the courts to corporate culture and cable television. The new edition, released in late 2011, includes a brief section on the media's monitoring of Obama's language.
 22. *Creolization* is a technical linguistic term that refers to the linguistic restructuring that occurs when two language varieties come into contact. The uniqueness of Black Language in the United States is due, in part, to its roots as a contact language that developed in the sociopolitical context of the African slave trade. For a brilliant introduction to concepts such as Creole formation, language mixing, second language learning, and so on, see Donald Winford's *An Introduction to Contact Linguistics* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003).
 23. The term *magical Negro* was popularized by Black filmmaker Spike Lee, "super-duper magical Negro" in 2001 (<http://www.yale.edu/opa/arc-ycb/v29.n21/story3.html>). Last accessed: 09-01-11. It usually refers to a stock character who uses special insights or powers to help, not himself, but the White protagonist and is more generally about the misrepresentation of Black characters in film. For a more complete discussion, see Krin Gabbard's *Black Magic: White Hollywood and African American Culture* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004) and Matthew Hughes's "Cinematic Racism: White Redemption and Black Stereotypes in 'Magical Negro' Films" in *Social Problems*, 56(3), 543-577, August 2009.
 24. In her chapter, "Exceptionally Yours: Racial Escape Hatches in the Contemporary United States" (from her book, *More Beautiful and More Terrible: The Embrace and Transcendence of Racial Inequality in the United States*, NYU Press, 2011), Imani Perry explains that "racial exceptionalism is the practice of creating meaning out of the existence of people of color who don't fit our stereotypic or racial-narrative-based conceptions.... The phenomenon of exceptionalism ultimately serves to support a general stereotyping of the larger populace.... and justifies that stereotyping within a social context in which racial egalitarianism is proclaimed.... When the normal state of people of color is assumed deficient, then the departure from that state puts one into a 'state of exception'" (130-131). In relation to Barack Obama, Perry reads Joseph Biden's "inartful" comments as evidence of "a thematic in American culture in which the idea of Blackness is dissonant to excellence and achievement and in which, in those instances in which excellence and achievement are found in Black bodies, those individuals are cast as necessarily extraordinary and distinguished" (127).
 25. From www.dap.com. [No longer accessible].
 26. See: <http://undercoverblackman.blogspot.com>. Last accessed: 09-01-11.
 27. These language ideologies insist that darker-skinned Latinos (especially those who look "mas indio," or more indigenous) who do not speak Spanish are only "pretending" not to do so, or that they must be speakers of a stigmatized indigenous "dialecto." Alim has heard this ideology expressed numerous times among Mexicans in California, usually accompanied by a hand gesture touching the forehead, "¿iCÓmo que no puede hablar español cuando trae el nopal en la frente?!" [Loosely, "How come he/she can't speak Spanish when he/she looks unmistakably/stereotypically Mexican?"]. Another example of this is found in linguistic anthropologist Jonathan Rosa's University of Chicago dissertation, *Looking Like a Language, Sounding Like a Race: Making Latino Panethnicity and Managing National Anxieties* (2010), in which he discusses a relatively light-skinned student who joked that the number of people who spoke to him in Spanish increased during the summer time when his skin was darker. An already classic volume on how these language ideologies work across contexts is Bambi B. Schieffelin, Kathryn A. Woolard, and Paul Kroskrity's (eds.) *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory* (New York/Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998).
 - Alice Ashton Filmer describes this race/color/nationality/language association as *acoustic identity* in her 2007 article, "Bilingual Belonging and the Whiteness of (Standard) English(es)," *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13, 747-765. Looking across racial and ethnic groups and across various national contexts, she concludes by noting that "[i]n every case, the speaker's acoustic identity and sense of bilingual belonging are negotiated and defined within a complex set of historical/sociopolitical/cultural relations and expectations that ultimately conflate the use of (Standard) English(es) with Whiteness and Western imperialism. In light of this evidence, to insist that Standard English(es) are neutral forms of communication capable of unifying multiracial/ethnic/cultural societies is to fail to recognize these prevalent, and generally unconscious assumptions and expectations. This brand of linguistic ethnocentrism—a major legacy of Euro-American colonialism—is unethical and must be challenged on the grounds of human and civil rights." (761-762).
 28. The various stereotypes that circulate in the United States about Asian Americans are discussed in linguistic anthropologist Angela Reyes's book, *The Other Asian: Language, Identity, and Stereotype among Southeast Asian American Youth* (Mahwah, NJ/London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2007). Drawing on the classic work of Edward Said, Reyes explains that the "forever-foreigner" stereotype "draws on discourses of Orientalism, ideologies which shape the image of Asian and Middle Eastern peoples as Other and thus unassimilable due to innate East-West differences that cannot be resolved" (7-8).
 29. See J. A. Harrison (1884). "Negro English." *Anglia*, 7, 232-279.
 30. See J. Bennett (1908). "Gullah: A Negro Patios." *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 7, 332-347 and Bennett, J. (1909). "Gullah: A Negro Patios." *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 8, 39-52.

For a full breakdown, see Geneva Smitherman's "Discriminatory Discourse on African American speech" in Smitherman's *Talkin That Talk: Language, Culture, and Education in African America* (New York/London: Routledge, 2000, 67-92).

31. See John R. Rickford and Russell Rickford's *Spoken Soul: The Story of Black English* (New York: Wiley & Sons, 2000) and Rosina Lippi-Green's *English with an Accent*, 2nd edition (New York/London: Routledge, 2011), among several others. Rickford and Rickford's *Spoken Soul* is particularly informative for folks who wanna read up on Black Language in the United States and remains a central text in the field.
32. For more on the development of Black Language in the United States and the racial politics of speaking it, see Geneva Smitherman's now classic text, *Talkin and Testifyin: The Language of Black America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977; [republished in 1986, Detroit: Wayne State University Press]). See pages 10-15 for more on these newspaper announcements describing the language of enslaved Africans.
33. Check Imani Perry's *More Beautiful and More Terrible* (New York: NYU Press, 2011), 22.
34. See Lippi-Green's *English with an Accent*, 1997, 178.
35. *Ibid.*
36. Barack Obama's *The Audacity of Hope*, 2006, 236.
37. See sociologist Prudence Carter's *Stauborn Roots: The Threat of Cultural Inflexibility to Equity in U.S. & South African Schools* (New York/London: Oxford University Press, 2012).
38. D. S. Massey and G. Lundy (2001). "Use of Black English and Racial Discrimination in Urban Housing Markets: New Methods and Findings," *Urban Affairs Review*, 36(4), 452-469. The authors described "Black Accented English" and "Black English Vernacular" as differing in their grammar. So, "Black Accented English" was their label for (usually middle-class) Black folks who may have "sounded Black" on occasion but spoke without any Black grammatical features. Those who may have "sounded Black" and spoke with Black grammatical features were labeled as "Black English Vernacular" speakers. Similarly, "White Middle-Class English" speakers were those who spoke with no features of "Philadelphia's distinctive working-class accent." (456). The authors did not have access to any working-class speakers so they were not able to see the effect of class within White speakers.
39. D. S. Massey and G. Lundy (2001), 466-467.
40. See sociolinguist John Baugh's "Linguistic Profiling" in Makoni, Smitherman, Ball, & Spears, (eds.), *Black Linguistics: Language, Society, and Politics in Africa and the Americas* (New York/London: Routledge, 2003, 155-168). Baugh's work and media appearances have raised the nation's consciousness about this issue. His research has influenced public service announcements by the National Fair Housing Association and garnered him the second annual Pioneer of Fair Housing Award from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development in 2004.
41. See T. Purnell, W. Isardi, and J. Baugh (1999). "Perceptual and Phonetic Experiments on American English Dialect Identification." *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 18, 10-30.
42. See her chapter, "The Sound of Equal Opportunity: Credit and Housing Access for Language Minorities," in John Baugh's *Linguistic Profiling in Interdisciplinary Perspective, Volume 2: Social Science and Legal Dimensions* (Final Report: Prepared for the Ford Foundation. African and African American Studies: Washington University in St. Louis, 2009). See also A. A. Nelson (2009). "Credit Scores, Race, and Residential Sorting." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 29(1), 39-68.
43. See D. L. Smalls (2004). "Linguistic Profiling and the Law." *Stanford Law and Policy Review* 15(2), 579-604. One of the most troubling findings in Smalls's legal note is that there is a "blatant lack of consistency" in the way courts treat linguistic profiling testimony. As she writes, "Particularly problematic is the fact that linguistic profiling testimony appears to be subject to a higher standard in the civil context than in the criminal context; whereas courts express doubt about a person's ability to distinguish

a speaker's race in the realm of housing discrimination, courts often categorically accept this premise in the criminal law." (603). In other words, our judicial system avoids placing blame on landlords and rental agents (because they can't infer someone's race by voice 100 percent of the time) but will readily convict a person of color because ear-witness testimony describes them as "sounding" like a particular race. The denial of individual racism upholds institutional racism yet again.

See John Baugh's *Linguistic Profiling in Interdisciplinary Perspective, Volume 1: Linguistic Foundations and Volume 2: Social Science and Legal Dimensions* (Final Report: Prepared for the Ford Foundation. African and African American Studies: Washington University in St. Louis, 2009).

45. Barack Obama's *The Audacity of Hope*, 2006, 235.

46. *Ibid.*, 235-236.